

# Identity Politics in the Developmentalist States of East Asia: The Role of Diaspora Communities in the Growth of Civil Societies<sup>1</sup>

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EAST ASIAN REGIONAL INTEGRATION—in which China, Korea (North and South), and Japan can coexist peacefully—is a question commonly discussed in contemporary Japan, if not the region and the rest of the world. However, the matter is generally posed within the context of the now prevailing global order, with its present neoliberal leadership structure. It does not look into the fact that East Asian regional integration, if not general political reform, must take into account the crises facing the East Asian developmental states and the emergence and increasing prominence of diaspora communities and civil societies within the region.

This commentary goes beyond a conventional assessment of regional integration and poses new ecocultural leadership alternatives to the prevailing leadership style in the four developmentalist states of China, North and South Korea, and Japan. Such alternatives are based on a multilayered, post-Westphalian notion of identity. And they can be found in civil society movements that include diaspora communities, who are often in partnership with local, sedentary citizens.

## **The East Asian Developmental State**

The developmentalist states of East Asia arose in no small part as a modernization project and as a response to colonialism and imperialism in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Through a three-phase, colonial-

imperialist infiltration, the states of region successfully became Westernized and modernized. The first phase corresponded to the internalization of colonialism through the formation of the reactive-colonial nation of Japan, which became the first developmentalist state.<sup>2</sup> It turned a colonial power in order to counteract Western colonial pressures.

These states later went through the bipolar, hegemonic-colonialist division of the world during the Cold War and fell under the hegemony of neoliberal economics, which polarizes nations between North and South, between a rich sector extracting surplus from its poor(er) counterpart. Similarly, the global neocolonial world order has split the Westphalian state system into two types of competing states; on the one hand, the hegemonic industrial democracies, composed by North America and Europe (with Japan admitted as an honorary white country), consider the democratization of other states in the nonWestern world as a civilizational mission, combining internal democratic governance with international neocolonial expansion; on the other, the counterhegemonic developmentalist states, defined as latecomer modernizing nations mobilizing all their national capital to one end, seek to acquire power and compete with Western industrial democracies. To be precise, the latter developmentalist states can be subdivided into antidemocratic developmentalist nations like Libya on the one hand and those that strive to become industrial democracies, such as China and the Republic of Korea, on the other.

*Mutatis mutandis*, the four developmental states of East Asia compete with hegemonic industrial democracies. North Korea aspires to become a nuclear and military power and tries to obtain maximum concessions from the United States. It maintains a total war state system based on a strong national unification of its people. China competes in the neoliberal financial market through its economic growth, which relies on a massive population of peasants and cheap labour workers. Japan and South Korea use their technological knowhow as aspirants to industrial democracies. These four states all exercise their respective competing power to survive within the neoliberal global market. The problem is that they

are not prepared to meet the effects of the worldwide crisis of neoliberal governance and a rapidly deteriorating global financial system.

### **The Crisis of East Asian Developmental States: Impact on Regional Integration and East Asian Society**

Despite the success of these East Asian states, both geopolitics and internal trends helped undermine the foundations of regionalism. First, the development of Japan as a War State (Noguchi 2007)<sup>3</sup> and colonial power has been one major obstacle to regionalism. The double colonialism in and of the Cold War is yet another, dividing the Korean peninsula into two states, one of which turned into another total war state, North Korea. The third hindrance came in the wake of the global emergence of the BRICs, especially China, who, as a new champion of State-led development, became an eventual counterhegemon to the United States. Lastly, busy adapting themselves to the neoliberal rule of the globalizing interstate power game, the four countries, which were supposed to build a common house of East Asia (Kang 2001),<sup>4</sup> follow mutually exclusive trajectories of developmentalist statism.

All these factors undercut the three conditions for East Asian regional integration: overcoming internal conflict between Japan, a colonialist aggressor state and its targets; resolving North Korea's antagonistic relations with the global hegemon, the United States; and creating a mutual agreement among China, Korea, and Japan, one based on the principles of peaceful coexistence and mutual benefit.

But the crisis of East Asian developmental states extends not only to regionalism but also to society and economy. The developmentalist states have also been transformed into arenas of identity politics because of the polarization of rich and poor local communities and the globalization of migration. The latter has resulted in a direct encounter of different identity communities within and between the developmentalist states of the region (Mushakoji 2003).<sup>5</sup> Three recent events highlight the nature of this crisis.

In the case of Japan, the combination of 9/11, 3/11 and the Lehman Shock has polarized Japanese civil society between the supporters and opponents of the Developmentalist Total War State Project. 9/11 strengthened support for a Total War State project that wanted to control suspicious foreign migrants and keep American military bases in Okinawa. But it also triggered a variety of counterhegemonic citizen movements against unconditional Japanese support to the United States. These movements included the sedentary residents of Ryukyu-Okinawa and the indigenous residents of the annexed Kingdom of Ryukyu; another came in support of migrant worker communities, who were concerned about the violation of their rights to live in peace.

The Lehman Shock was the occasion of an antipoverty movement of sedentary citizens, as well as a joint campaign of local (Japanese) residents and migrant communities, who were suddenly facing massive loss of jobs and an involuntary return to their home country where a(nother) jobless situation was waiting. This was the case of the Brazilian migrant communities in different parts of Japan.

These people-based, counterhegemonic manifestations were, however, unable to change the developmentalist thrust of the State,<sup>6</sup> which was supported by the majority of Japanese citizens. Many consented to and supported the financial policies of the Government, who, in alliance with the corporate sector, allocated funds in support of big industries, whose prospective bankruptcy would lead to the default of the Japanese economy. This and other policies contributed to forcing sedentary and migrant citizens to a life devoid of job guarantees.

The 3/11 Earthquake, especially the explosion of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Plants, also polarized Japanese public opinion. On the one hand, a hegemonic project sought to reactivate the Japanese economy rather than tend to the victims of tsunami and the radioactive fallout from the nuclear plant explosion. On the other, popular campaigns for the support of the victims were organized by both sedentary citizens and migrant groups. A series of large-scale antinuclear plant manifestations

mobilized ten thousand participants; citizens supported their activities, sharing information hidden to the Japanese public through Facebook and other SNS systems.

The 3/11 Earthquake and the explosion of Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Plants also triggered three post-developmental, citizen-based projects. One was a political-economic movement to transcend a developmentalist high-growth policy that wanted to continue using electricity derived from nuclear energy. A second was an ecological project that sought to develop local ecocultural communities and reorganize top-heavy industrial development, which ignores the need to coexist with nature and seeks to raise national power and wealth through exploitative planning. A third movement advocates that life and society must not be demolished by a civilization which ignores cultural diversity. This project links sedentary and migrant citizens, reevaluating the diversity of ecocultural local wisdom in Japan and in the communities of origin of the migrant workers.<sup>7</sup>

9/11, 3/11, and the Lehman Shock were all used by Japanese developmentalist technocrats to redress and strengthen the Japanese economy. In the process, however, they sacrificed migrants from Islamic countries, victims of the tsunami and hibakushas, and destitute citizens, sedentary and migrants alike. These victims of high human insecurity learned to help each other, however, when and where the developmentalist state did not extend any help or support. They are now, sedentary and migrant alike, beginning to search for an alternative to the developmentalist state.

These citizen and diaspora movements posit counterhegemonic social forces that are based on multiple identities and multilocal livelihoods,<sup>8</sup> which are combined according to the principle of subsidiarity and strongly anchored in an ecocultural local community as a matrix of endogenous intellectual creativity.<sup>9</sup>

This new identity comes amidst the gradual deterioration and the deconstruction of the individualistic citizenship model, which is based on the security contract between states and its citizens under a Westphalian

state system. This deconstruction is inevitable because of, among other things, the failure of exogenous imposition of Western individualism. Although the hope to modernize in the Western manner still exists in the four states in varying degrees, it is no more possible to keep an illusory hope to follow the West in building a civil society along the lines of the Western Enlightenment model. The new citizen is no longer in a contractual relation with the state<sup>10</sup> and is attached not only to her or his native community but also to the community she or he enters as foreign migrant.<sup>11</sup>

This multilocal communitarian approach requires openness to the massive input of various identity groups, whose demand for recognition will have to be satisfied. It will, more importantly, replace the standardization of identities forced upon the citizens of the developmentalist states. This pluralism is necessary in view of the massive influx of diaspora communities, each with specific identities. It also requires an overlapping multilevel hierarchy of such identities, which is quite different from the State/individual Westphalian security contractual system.<sup>12</sup> It also implies a democratic component.

A new democracy may evolve out of a common antihegemonic front composed by sedentary and mobile citizens.<sup>13</sup> This new identity-political development follows the example of many macrohistorical situations of social transformation, which had been brought about by the interaction and cooperation between sedentary and nomadic groups (Tsurumi 1993).<sup>14</sup> Their encounter can develop an alternative vision combining values well embedded in past traditions and an entirely new perspective free from local constraints.

This new politics, based on multiple identities, builds alliances between diaspora communities and sedentary citizens, and can help them overcome their zero-sum opposition under a neoliberal system of winners and losers. The peaceful coexistence, and potential, mutual benefits between these two groups are likely to become a precondition of any sustainable alternative to the neoliberal order. It is a multicultural, local-dominated, and self-organized bottom-up alternative.

Once local citizens and migrant citizens arrive at a win-win coalition, they can play a major role in the regional reorganization of East Asia. They can create a multilayer, multicultural regional order, one that inherits the positive universal values of Western enlightenment, integrating them in the context of a multicivilizational global system. This system is made sustainable by its isomorphism with the ecological and cultural diversity among local communities with specific combinations of multiple identities.<sup>15</sup>

The emergence of this new type of order—local, national, regional and interregional—will be based on a non-Westphalian type of citizenship (as described above), one which recognizes, regionally integrates, and lowers the borders between and among different identity communities.<sup>16</sup> This will help develop a new, East Asian regional identity shared by citizens of China, the two Koreas, and Japan; it is an identity that will be built on top of local community identities, subsumed under national ones, but cognizant and respectful of divergences and differences.<sup>17</sup> It involves a renouncement of the demand to make national identity the only legitimate one under the prevailing developmentalist state hegemony. This is where the role of migrants, in cooperation with sedentary citizens, will become essential. Indeed, migrants are already multi-identity groups who live in the local communities they have migrated into as well as in their states of origin.<sup>18</sup>

### **Towards a New Regional Order Based on a New Citizenship: The Role of Diaspora Communities**

The diaspora communities in the East Asia developmentalist states are free spaces where a *homo novus* can emerge, along with the necessary conditions for a new democratic counterhegemonic agency that is indispensable for a post-Westphalian global and regional order proposed here.<sup>19</sup> This alternative order is essential because of the following: the inadequate identity structure of the Westphalian states' crises; the need to respect ecological specificities; the anti-Development Racist human rights culture towards newcomers in the civil societies; and the presence of migrant

workers affected by the feminization and the informalization of contemporary global migration.<sup>20</sup>

The developmentalist states of East Asia, especially Japan, have developed a system of social reproduction, which combines education, media, and other cultural institutions, to create a passive citizenship docile to the authoritative decisions of the ruling elite and the technocrats in their service. Moreover, because the developmentalist states are only concerned with the reproduction of their national identity with its “glorious past,” they cannot accept diaspora communities as equal partners. This is so especially in the case of Japan and its relations with the North Korean diaspora. Indeed, diaspora communities from other parts of East Asia are frequently made the victims of discriminations.

The counterhegemonic alliance between sedentary citizens and migrant citizens will have to turn this situation of human insecurity into a situation where Japanese citizens and diaspora communities can unite and help transform the identity politics of the country, among others. And there are encouraging trends, one of which is the cooperation between Japanese citizens and overseas Koreans in the fight against the Japanese government’s refusal to address the issue of “comfort women.”

Diaspora communities will help open (further) East Asian regional integration to the outside world. Organic and free-floating, migrants and diaspora groups live embedded in two societies, and yet keep a certain distance from local conflicts. They are also citizens with a multilocal livelihood, playing a double role, negative for them and positive for their communities of origin and destination. Overseas Koreans in Japan, for example, are caught between Korea and Japan and are not treated as true citizens in both countries. Yet they are the ones who created a “Kanryu” boom, a boom of Korean drama and music among the Japanese youth, by translating the scripts of Korean films into Japanese. The North Korean migrants in Japan have also been traditionally contributing to the economic development of their home country, and help open North Korea to the outside world.

Through their economic activities, the East Asian diaspora communities within East Asian states can help build a social capital common



to the four countries. This includes the cooperation between informal sectors excluded from civil societies by the developmentalist states; victims of human trafficking, for instance. Diaspora communities can develop capacities for social promotion and move people out of the informal sector into the local citizenship.

As the new foci of multi-identity, multicultural families and communities, diaspora communities are developing fair-trade exchanges, linking their livelihoods, both present and past (in their home country). They bridge the two communities of North and South and develop equal mutual benefit exchanges, economic as well as cultural. Under the joint efforts of the sedentary and migrant citizens, East Asian diaspora communities within the region can also become the foci of intellectual creativity where the Chinese, Korean and Japanese cultural specificities will mix and may enrich the region with new forms of arts and lifestyles.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> This commentary is based on a paper presented in an international symposium organized by Ritsumeikan University (Kyoto) on 24-25 March 2012.
- <sup>2</sup> The term “developmentalist state” refers to non-Western emerging states in which the State Project was and still is to emulate and become equal to the Western colonialist states. They develop into Total War States even in peace time. Cf. Mushakoji, Kinhide. 2011. “State and Immigrant Community in Contemporary Japan: From Developmentalist State Ethics to Development Ethics of Common Human Security.” In *Transnational Migration and Human Security: The Migration-Development-Security Nexus*, edited by Thanh-Dam Truong and Des Gasper. Berlin and Heidelberg: Springer-Verlag.
- <sup>3</sup> On the Total War State project in post-WW II Japan, cf: Noguchi, Yukio (2007). *Sengo-Nihon Keizai-Shi* [Economic History of Post-War Japan]. Japan: Chikuma Shobo.
- <sup>4</sup> Cf: Kang, Sanjung. 2001. *Touhoku-Asia Kyoutsu no Ie wo Mezashite* [Towards A Common-House of North East Asia]. Heibon-Sha.
- <sup>5</sup> Cf: Mushakoji, Kinhide. 2003. *The Phenomenon of Xenophobia: In Relation to Racism and Racial Discrimination*. Report Submitted to UNESCO. UNESCO.
- <sup>6</sup> This thrust of the State is part of the “imperial common-sense” which triggered the emergence of a “postmodern Prince” supported by organic intellectuals. Cf: Gill, Stephen. 2012. “Towards a Radical Concept of Praxis - Imperial ‘common sense’ Versus the Post-modern Prince.” *Millennium*. 40(3): 505–524.
- <sup>7</sup> On the three projects and their respective roles in the Anti-Nuclear-Base Movement, cf: Mushakoji, Kinhide. 2011. “*Gendai Nihon no Rekishi-chiri-teki Shiza to sono Shiou-teki Kadai; Post-311 Nihon ‘Han-Genpatsu’ Undou to Sekai no Shisou-teki Houkousei*” [The

Historico-Geographic perspective of Japan and Its Intellectual Problematique: The Anti-Nuclear-Plant Movement in Japan and the Intellectual Orientation in the World]. Paper presented at the Sino-Japanese Symposium on “The Philosophy in a Time of Global Transformation” at Beijing University.

- <sup>8</sup> At the base of the concept of multilocal livelihood is an awareness of the fact that localization of livelihood intensifies with globalization. Cf. De Haan, Leo. 2006. “Globalization, Localization, and Sustainable Livelihood.” *Sociologia Ruralis* 40 (3): 339–563.
- <sup>9</sup> The Rio+20 Global Forum was an occasion for such a world order to be proposed. This order is a radical ecological democracy based on local bio-regions as units of governance, with which States should cooperate according to the subsidiarity principle of this new democracy.
- <sup>10</sup> Rio+20 has published a draft of a sustainable treaty on “Radical Ecological Democracy.” It proposes a democracy where citizens are no longer in a contractual relation with their State, and where their eco-cultural local community becomes the basic unit through which decisions are implemented by states and international organizations. Cf. Rio+20 Portal, Information-Proposals-Radical Ecological Democracy. <http://rio20.net/en/propuestas/radical-ecological-democracy>.
- <sup>11</sup> Cf. Mushakoji. 2011. “State and Immigrant Community in Contemporary Japan.”
- <sup>12</sup> Cf. Mushakoji, Kinhide. 2003. *Ningen Anzen-Hosho-Ron Josetsu: Global Fascism ni koushite* [Introduction to Human Security Studies: Opposing Global Fascism]. Kokusai-Shobo. 122–125.
- <sup>13</sup> The creation of multicultural communities requires close cooperation between local sedentary citizens on the one hand, and the migrants, victims and transformer of the societies they migrate into, on the other. This is why common security between citizens and migrant communities play a key role in building a new citizenship detached from States. Cf. Mushakoji, Kinhide and Mustafa Kamal Pasha, eds. 2008. *Human (In)Security in the Networks of Global Cities: The Final Report*. Kasugai, Japan: Centre for Human Security Studies, Chubu University.
- <sup>14</sup> Tsurumi, Kazuko. 1993. *Hyohaku to Teiju to* [The Nomads and the Sedentary]. Chikuma Shobo.
- <sup>15</sup> See end note 10.
- <sup>16</sup> We proposed to replace developmentalism by a developmental ethics which recognizes the right to identity of all identity communities, including diaspora communities. Cf. Mushakoji 2011, “State and Immigrant Community in Contemporary Japan.”
- <sup>17</sup> The development in China of the concept of *zhonghua minzu* (Chinese Nation) defining a multi-ethnic identity of China including non-Han-minorities is an interesting example of such pluralism.
- <sup>18</sup> The inclusion of overseas fellow Koreans as a third actor besides North and South Koreans in building a unified Korean Nation is an interesting recognition of the role of migrants in the official documents of the DPRK.
- <sup>19</sup> An Asian Ontology/epistemology is at the basis of this position. Cf. Komamiya, Hiroo. 2011. “Seibutsu-Tayousei Jouyaku 2020 Nen Target Zenbun ni Tetsugaku wo” [Formulate the Philosophy of CBD in the Preamble of the 2020 Target Document]. In *Seibutsu-Tayousei Jouyaku Shimin Network teigen 2010*, 138–148. Seibutsu Tayousei Shimin Network.
- <sup>20</sup> They cannot accept the development racism of the developmentalist states. On this racism, cf. Mushakoji, Kinhide. 1992. “Development and Racism in Asia and the Pacific.” Volume 4 of *International Movement Against Discrimination and Racism Yearbook*.