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Colonial Effect: the Impact of Japanese Colonialism on Discursive Construction of Post-Colonial South Korean National Identity

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Abstract

The memory of Japanese colonial rule still lingers in the everyday life of the South Korean people. This thesis examines the influence of Japanese colonialism in the construction of South Korean national identity. National identity is constructed in the narratives of the past and the national conscious of self is moulded through the differentiation from others. Colonisers have endangered the distinctive culture and history of their colonial subject through assimilation or structural reformation, and thus the memory of colonial past is an important cite for understanding the self. This study selected the March First Independence movement and Liberation Day of Korea as important sites of memory of Japanese colonialism and explores how this past is positioned and constructs South Korean national identity. In order to address the puzzle, this research conducted a case study with a discursive analysis of presidential commemorative speeches in the time frame of 2013 to 2019. Japanese colonialism is narrated as symbolic victory brought internally, the birth tale of Republic of Korea, the site of national heroes, and on-going reality, each of which reinforces the national solidarity and consciousness and highlight different characters of South Korea.

Key words: National identity, colonialism, post-colonial, South Korea, Korea, Japan, narratives of the past

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1. Introduction

On March 1, 1919, starting with signings of Declaration of Independence by thirty-three selected national representatives, people started a non-violent demonstration shouting 'great Korea independence' in Seoul. Despite arrests and violence by the Japanese police, it quickly developed to be a nationwide movement, which lasted until May (Podoler, 2011). This is what is known as the March First Movement. Although Korea did not gain official independence until 1945 when Japan surrendered to the western forces, this movement occupies an essential position in South Korea's historical memory.

South Korea is one of few countries that commemorate its independence at two ceremonies—one commemorating March First Independence Movement (*Samiljeol*) and the other celebrating official liberation (*Gwangbokjeol*). This indicates that South Korea gives great importance to Japanese colonialism and its independence. Indeed, President Moon Jae-in addressed that "forgetting one's history is tantamount to losing one's roots" at the 72nd anniversary of the liberation. Such ingrained determination 'not-to-forget' leads to the postulation that the colonial past holds ideological significance in defining South Korean-ness.

This study is theorised around a constructivist notion of nation and national identity with a postcolonial theoretical perspective. A nation is a mental construct as Anderson (1983) explicates that a nation is an imagined political community. National consciousness—imagining the same nation—does not simply arise from sharing common ethnocultural traits, but national identity is moulded in the narratives of past (Hall 1990; 1996). The discursive practice of national identity formation entails both manifestation of the sameness amongst members and differentiation from Other. Particularly Triandafyllidou (1998)'s notion of significant other calls attention to the implication of a coloniser to colonial subjects.

Colonialism is not a distant past or 'finished' product but instead, continuously shape the present through narration (Bhabha, 1994).

Thus, this paper explores the impact of Japanese colonial past upon the formation of South Korean national identity. The guiding research question is:

What is the role of Japanese colonial past in the construction of South Korean national identity in the postcolonial period?

By conducting a discourse analysis on the commemorative speeches at the March First Independence Movement Day and National Liberation Day of Korea, this paper aims to demonstrate how particular narratives of the colonial past evoke national solidarity and patriotism to the nation.

South Korea is a unique case regarding its nation-building process and a decolonisation process. Unlike other colonised nations, independence did not arrive within but without and soon Korea entered the period of civil war despite high ethnic homogeneity, leading to the formation of 'South Korean' nation (Campbell, 2016; Kim, 2006; Shin, 2006). The author regards the investigation into the role of colonial memory the construction of national identity not only provides a new insight to the studies of South Korean national identity but also contributes to studies of the colonial legacy in the construction of national identity. In a broader sense, this research can contribute to the modernist account of the rise of the nation by demonstrating the fluidity of South Korean national identity.

The structure of the thesis is as follows. Chapter 2 demonstrates how South Korean national identity has altered and how it has been studied in academic literature. Chapter 3 provides a theoretical framework of national identity formation. By developing onto the studies of Hall (1990; 1996) and Triandafyllidou (1998), this chapter conceptualises national identity is a social construction through the narration of the past and discursive representation of self and others. Chapter 4 provides a research design covering case selection, data

selection, operationalisation of measuring national identity and method of analysis. Chapter 5 expounds findings and discussions, which is followed by conclusion.

2. Literature Review

This section offers a critical overview of the emergence and evolution of South Korean national identity. In the academic endeavour of what constructs the collective sense of oneness in South Korea, the target of studies was often 'Korean-ness' rather than 'South Korean-ness'. This is because South Korea did not emerge from a vacuum, and there was a sense of continuity from the Korean dynasty and the Japanese colony. Another reason is that the high ethnic homogeneity led academics to focus on the formation of Korean ethnic identity, which is the key in uniting not only South Koreans but also all Koreans who live in the North or overseas (Shin, 2006).

In the discussion of where Korean-ness emanates from, Shin (2006) categorises Korean nationalism as ethnic nationalism centred on kinship. However, rather than considering national solidary is a natural result that all Koreans are part of a large family as the descendant of *Tangun,* a mythical founder, he argues Korean-ness is "embedded" in a specific historical process "in which the nation rose, was contested, overrode other contending forms of collective or categorical identities, and came to be conflated with ethnicity and race" (Shin, 2006: 7-8). Koreans recognised the self under colonial racism, and this ethnic-national identity was further strengthened by modernisation and globalisation, which brought cultural and social disruption. Shin does not limit himself to elucidate the birth and development of Korean nation but also argues the supremacy of ethnic-based unified Korean national identity over the modern South Korean national identity by referring to the persistent demand for the Korean reunification.

Henry Em (1999), unlike Shin, regards the Korean nation as a modern construction brought by colonialism. He particularly pays attention to the experience of Japanese colonialism as the critical moment in overcoming class and regional divisions that have existed in the pre-modern period and coming to envisage the same imagery. Em articulates that Japan's assimilation policy during the colonial occupation including the prohibition of the use of Korean language and the forced alteration to Japanese name was not merely a threat to ontological security of Korean nation, but created the dichotomy between Korea self and Japan other and constructed the homogeneous and inferior Korean subject vis-à-vis superior Japan. This study highlights the colonial influence on the formation of the Korean national identity at that time, and yet it does not probe the association between colonialism and the construction of South Korean national identity.

As the time as post-independence South Korea far advanced, the focus of discussions shifted from 'the foundation of the Korean nation' to 'the prominence of South Korean-ness over ethnic Korean-ness'. By calling attention to the waning support for the reunification of the Korean peninsula, Moon (2012) argues that South Korean national identity has been shifting from the ethnic-based to the civic and politic based. Ha and Jang (2016) finds the correlation between ethnic identification of the national identity and negative attitudes towards North Korean defectors and the unification, suggesting that the South Koreans have started to view the North Koreans as the outgroup. This appears to be an unsurprising consequence of national division; "the subordination of Korean nation to states" has made the South Korean people perceive their difference from North Koreans (Kim, 2006: 152).

Campbell (2016) went beyond the analysis of South Korean national identity through the lenses of ethnic versus civic dichotomy. She conducted comprehensive research on the new South Korean nationalism, particularly amongst the youth by organising interviews with university students. The democratic and global environment of South Korea and the everyday

manifestation of banal South Korean nationalism widened the youth's perceived difference from the North and led to the emergence of new globalised cultural national identity. By this, she means that South Korean nationalist sentiment is evoked in its successful economic development, cosmopolitan outlook towards other countries and cultures, and the international recognition of South Korea as an economic and cultural leader more than traditional ethnic traits (Campbell, 2016).

Nevertheless, her interpretation is unconvincing that youth's nationalist manifestation in the disputes with Japan as merely because of the "desire for appropriate international recognition and respect" (Campbell, 2016: 99). All the listed contestations between South Korea and Japan originated in the memory of Japanese colonialism or at least comes from the act of decolonisation—the disputes of history textbook (contending views on the nature of colonial history), Sea of Japan naming dispute (dispute over the name of sea located between Japan and South Korea), and Dokdo/Takeshima island disputes (territorial disputes over a symbolic island of the Korean liberation from the Japanese occupation) (Kimura 2019; Wiegand, 2015). Therefore, it is more plausible to assume the ideological importance of those disputes in defining the South Korean-ness.

Indeed, there exist voices claiming that historical identity centred on the legacy of Japanese colonialism remains influential in evoking South Korean nationalist sentiment. For instance, Varga (2009: 293) delineates how the pains of individual comfort women (sexual slavery by the Japanese military under the colonial period) is "elevated to a symbolic level, to represent the sufferings of an entire nation". In the discourse illuminating the comfort women as the military prostitution under the imperial colonial system, "the shift between nation/ethnicity and gender turns individual sufferings into collective victimisation, thus homogenising the nation into a single unified entity" (Varga, 2009: 294). Similarly, current South Korea's diehard sentiment about the Dokdo island comes from their dissatisfaction

with Japan's insufficient recognition and regrets for the colonial wrongdoings (Wiegand, 2015).

Lee (2014) carried out the discourse analysis of South Korean presidential speeches and exhibitions at the War memorial museum. While no direct criticism towards Japan was observed, there was "a state-endorsed refusal to forget" of the colonial legacy (2014: 7). In this way, Japan was depicted as a perpetual victimiser that enables the Koreans to be the permanent victim. This echoes with Oh (2009: 378)'s finding that "the colonial history has left South Koreans with indelible psychological trauma, and deeply and perhaps irreparably hurt their national pride, implanting shame and resentment in them". These studies demonstrate the existing anti-Japanese nationalist sentiment ingrained in the memory of Japanese colonialism and yet needs a further explanation why and how colonial memory continues to shape South Korean national identity and not a pan-Korean national identity.

3. Theoretical framework

In the quest to explore the role of Japanese colonial past in the construction of South Korean national identity in the present time, the author conceptualises the notion of nation and national identity with a constructivist approach.

Central debates over a notion of a nation can be narrowed down to dichotomy between primordialism and modernism. Primordialist argues that a nation has existed in the pre-modern period and nationalist sentiment derives from ethnic, native attributes of the same ancestry, language, and culture (cf. Geertz, 1963). In the case of South Korea, the adherents of primordialism would emphasise ethnocultural traits of Korean-ness such as Korean language and Korean ethnicity as the key for cohesive national feeling. Meanwhile, modernists hold a view that a sense of nationhood developed in the process of modernisation, for instance, by industrialisation (Gellner, 1983), print capitalism (Anderson, 1983), and by

inventions of traditions (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983). Their emphasis on construction, however, should not be understood as "nationalism has nothing to do with ethnicity" (Calhoun 1997: 30). In order to construct a nation, rather, it is essential to elicit a sense of continuity from the pre-modern era by highlighting the similarities between modern culture and ancestors such as language. Furthermore, inventions from scratch do not have a capacity "to forge a national community out of ethnically heterogeneous populations" (Smith, 1998: 130). The construction and manipulation have an impact on the popular image of the national community only when elites appeal to characteristics that citizens originally share.

As Shin rightly claims, the application of primordialist versus modernist debates to Korean nation (by Korean nation he discusses nationalism in South Korea) is futile because "the very notion of nation we use today is modern and western in its origins" and "there is no compelling evidence to show a direct connection between the pre-modern conception of a political community or identity and this modern sense of nation" (2006: 7). As the previous chapter demonstrates the fluidity of national boundary amongst South Koreans, this research posits a nation is a mental construct and follows Anderson (1983)'s concept of a nation as an imagined community. It is imagined because it allows nationals to believe other co-nationals whom they have never met or heard of belong to the same community. It is imagined therefore the boundary of the national community can change, exemplified by South Koreans' fluid view of North Koreans as ingroup for one time and out-group for the other time.

Before theorising national identity, the concept of identity needs to be clarified first. Identity is a contested concept because the same term is utilised to mean (1) identification of self and categorization by others according to given classifications (e.g. student, male and Asian); (2) self-understanding of who I am through locating self in the social context in relation to others; and (3) the sameness and groupness of self amongst members in

collectivity through differentiation from other groups (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000). With national identity being a collective identity, identity in terms of understanding of the collective self in the social context (e.g. what it means to be South Korean) and the sameness amongst members (e.g. who the South Koreans are, who can be included as South Korean) are relevant in this research.

National identity is "a collective sentiment based upon the belief of belonging to the same nation and of sharing most of the attributes that make it distinct from other nation" (Guibernau 2007: 11). The key elements of national identity include historic territory, common myths and historical memories and a common, mass public culture and the combination of these elements produce the sense of continuity and shared memory, based on which people develop "the collective belief in a common destiny of the unit and its culture" (Smith, 1999: 228). Nevertheless, it is not that national identity is pre-given or fixed, or that people conceive the same nation just because these attributes exist; but it is through representation that people come to recognise them (Wodak, 2009). Representation entails discursive practice, and therefore national identity is a discursive product.

Here, Stuart Hall (1990; 1996)'s notion of cultural identity formation is useful in highlighting postcolonial consciousness of relation between identity and narration. He locates national identity as a form of cultural identity constructed "within the discourse of history and culture" and discerns the narratives of past is an integral part in the formation of identity (1990: 226). The past history is not simply discovered or remains factual, and yet the past is shaped "through memory, fantasy, narrative and myth" (1990: 226). National cultures are represented in this narration of the past, which "produc[e] meanings about 'the nation'" and "infleunc[e] and organis[e] both our actions and our conceptions of ourselves" (Hall, 1996: 613). The national culture and values do not come into existence overnight; this accumulation of the narrated history and possibility to revisit the past through interpretation and

reinterpretation suggests that an identity is not about 'who we are' at the present moment but about 'whom we have become' in the process (Hall, 1990). Thus, depending on the representation of the past, national identity can change.

This notion of the past shows the postcolonial perspective that the past continues to influence and transform our present culture and history (Bhabha, 1994). Cultural identities do not exist as essence but are about a positioning in the narratives of the past, by which he means what people say is put into a particular context (Hall, 1990). Particularly, the colonial history is essential for the construction of national identity in the postcolonial period because "it is also the scene of intense discursive and conceptual activity, characterised by a profusion of thought and writing about the cultural and political identities of colonised subjects" (Gandhi, 1998: 5). The colonial past is not merely a product of objective history, but it is remembered, distorted or sometimes dismembered from the perspective of the present.

Another guiding notion is that the discursive formation of national identity is an external as well as internal process. Triandafyllidou (1998) clarifies the role of Other from which the ingroup differentiates itself. This is because national identity becomes meaningful only in relation to other nations or groups; national members are not just "very close or close enough to one another, they are closer to one another than they are to outsiders" (Triandafyllidou, 1998: 599). Cultural traits are important markers for members to perceive and reinforce the identity of the nation; its real significance lies in its capacity to "differentiate the ingroup from the outgroup and thus [to] justify and make *real* this divided view of the world" (Triandafyllidou, 1998: 597, emphasis original). She aligns with Hall on that collective memories and national culture can be represented and reinvented in order to highlight the difference between self and other(s).

Triandafyllidou then argues that the formation of national identity is closely linked with its significant other, which is another nation or ethnic group that "threatens, or rather is

perceived to threaten, its ethnic and/or cultural purity and/or its independence" and every nation has had at least one significant other (1998: 600). This notion of the significant other can be applied to the relationship between a coloniser and the colonised. A coloniser not only deprives the colonised of its sovereignty but also puts their cultural purity at risk through language or assimilation policy. For example, imperial Japan's assimilation policy exemplified by the sole use of Japanese language and adoption of Japanese name menaces the distinctive culture of Korea. This explains why anticolonial nationalism tends to show the will to differentiate from the colonisers (Gandhi, 1998). Hence, by theorising around Hall and Traiafyllidou's notion of national identity formation, this research postulates that national identity is constructed within discourse; the representation of the past, particularly the past with a significant other, exemplified by the coloniser for the colonised, poses significance in the formation of national identity.

Previous studies exploring the relationship between colonialism and post-colonial national identity mostly are based on the cases of Western colonisers and Asian or African states. Amongst those theorising national identity around discursive construction, some delineate the domination of western discourse on the recognition of the Orient and the concept of the nation-state itself (cf. Gandhi, 1998; Said, 1978). Others demonstrate how the former colonial subject mimics the superior culture of their coloniser (cf. Bhabha, 1994; Chatterjee, 1986). These approaches, however, cannot be applied to South Korean case because of Japan's ambiguous imperial status as the colonialist standing along with the West on the one hand, and as the forefront of the subalternised Asian on the other hand. Japanese colonialism is deviant one because of the lack of "the very epistemology of racism at the core of the modern, (neo)colonial world" in the Korea-Japan relationship (Watson, 2007: 187). The author, therefore, strictly limits the sense of postcolonialism in this study to the persistence of colonial influence for the national identity formation in the form of memory or

narration. Hence, regarding South Korean national identity formation, this paper postulates that the Japanese colonial past is positioned in a particular way to provide the specific meaning about South Korean nation and through which the South Koreans come to develop national identity.

3. Research design

3.1 Case selection

This research is based on a case study of South Korean national identity formation in political discourse. South Korea offers a unique case in the study of continuing colonial influence on its national identity in addition to the characteristics as mentioned above. While South Korea, a former colony, achieved the same level of economic and political development with its former coloniser Japan, the lingering memory of colonial period in the society and politics implies the legacy of colonialism on its ideology. This can be evidenced by the 7th Japan-South Korea Joint Public Opinion Poll conducted by the Genron NPO and East Asia Institute (2019). Throughout 2013 to 2019, there has been somewhat widespread anti-Japanese sentiment at the popular level. In 2019, 49.9% of respondents expressed that they hold a negative view on Japan when those who hold good impression account for 31.7%. More importantly, the major reasons for such negative impression of Japan were Japan's lack of regret for invasion of South Korea (76.1%) and Japan's claim for Dokdo Island[1] (57.5%). In return, the respondents recognise that resolution of historical disputes such as comfort women, wartime labour (84.5%) and that of territorial disputes (75.6%) are the two most necessary conditions for the improvement of South Korea-Japan relations. The fact that Japan's

[1] Regarding Dokdo Island, this is not a simple territorial dispute. Dokdo symbolises the restoration of sovereignty and therefore the territorial disputes are associated with the memory of Japanese colonialism (Wiegand, 2015).

opposing perception of the colonial past evokes a high level of negative feeling itself suggests the ideological significance of Japanese colonialism in the South Korean public.

Further, the case of South Korea is a relevant and intriguing example to demonstrate the fluidity and complexity of national identity. Having undergone an external division of a homogenous nation after the liberation of Japanese colonialism, South Koreans developed national identities with two conflicting national boundaries (the Korean peninsula and South Korea). The investigation into how the colonial past plays a role in the construction of complex national identity will contribute to the modernist claim that a nation is a social construct. By selecting political discourse as a site of production, this study will also enrich our understanding of the role of political leaders in the construction of national identity by narrating the past. The result can also be beneficial to comprehend South Korea's decision-making mechanism over the issues related to Japanese colonialism and the cyclical aggravation of South Korea-Japan bilateral relation.

3.2 Methods of data collection and operationalisation

As for political discourse, the author analysed commemorative speeches[2] of two South Korean presidents Park Geun-hye and Moon Jae-in at the March First Independence Movement Day (*Samiljeol*) and the National Liberation Day of Korea (*Gwangbokjeol*) in the time frame of 2013-2019. The years 2013-2019 were selected firstly to observe the existing colonial influence on present South Korea in the process of colonial past becoming the 'distant past' (in a sense that the time is irreversible in real life). The second reason is that there was a fertile ground for growing anti-Japanese sentiment, which might enhance the importance of colonial memory. This time frame covers crucial junctures at the

[2] Presidential speeches are cited with year and date when the speech is addressed. For instance, commemorative speech at the 75th anniversary of Liberation of Korea is referenced as 20150815 and one at the 100th anniversary of March First Independence Movement as 20190301. The complete list of commemorative speeches is available at Appendix.

commemoration of Japanese colonialism: the 70th anniversary of the national liberation of Korea and the 100th anniversary of the March First Independence Movement. Besides, Japan-South Korean relation deteriorated significantly in these years over the Comfort Women joint Agreement and the compensation for wartime forced labour.

South Korean presidents, being the final decision-maker, possess substantial power to influence the norm and are recognised as legitimate and authoritative figures to narrate the past and shape a particular perception (Son, 2006). Park Geun-hye was a leader of the conservative Liberal party with her presidency lasting from 2013 to 2017 while Moon Jae-in is a representative of the Democratic party, serving from 2017 to the present. No clear ideological contrariety over policies towards Japan and the treatment of the colonial period is observed along the party lines, but their ideological difference is most evident in their policies towards North Korea (Milani, 2019). While both of them put unification as an ultimate political goal, Park employed the conservative North Korean policy and strengthened military cooperation with the US. Meanwhile, Moon has taken an engagement policy, exemplified by the cooperation in Pyeongchang Olympics and several inter-Korean summits. The analysis of speeches by presidents with two opposing ideologies on North Korea can portray a comprehensive representation of the colonial past by South Korean elites. Presidential speeches at these two commemorations are published on news media subsequently every year so that they receive wider public attention than other commemorative speeches, which justify the use of these speeches as a popular narration of the colonial past.

Both *Samiljeol* and *Gwangbokjeol* are national holidays and memorial days for commemorating the independence of Korea from Japanese colonialism. *Samiljeol* is a commemoration day for the nationwide public demonstration demanding liberation from Japan on March 1st, 1919 and *Gwangbokjeol* is a national holiday commemorating the

liberation of the nation from colonial rule on 15th August. March First Movement is not a single day event but embodies the entire anti-Japanese struggle under the occupation (Podoler, 2011). Commemoration is not simply the site of recalling the past but also signalling what is worth remembering. It also has a religious dimension through which the concelebrants indoctrinate their sense of good and bad; and in this ritualised way of recalling the past, we "[question] our very existence, [we ask] why we do what we do and whether it matters if it is not remembered" (Schöpflin, 2000: 74, 76). Therefore, two commemorations of the liberation not only amplify the significance of colonial memory in the present national existence but also tell what aspect of Japanese colonialism the South Korean people should remember.

With this paper holding a position that national identity is discursively constructed, the role of Japanese colonialism is measured regarding the ways in which South Korean presidents narrate the colonial past in the commemoration of March First Independence Movement (*Samilundong*) and the liberation (*Gwangbok*), how such representation reinforces the national consciousness of South Korea and what kind of South Korean national identity is constructed within narration. The concept of national identity—whether the memory of Japanese colonialism stirs up national sentiment—is operationalised by the use of *uri* (우리) which can be translated as 'we' 'our' 'us', the structure of 'us' and 'them', and any reference to common culture, national symbols, beginning, continuity, myth, and destiny.

3.3 Methods of data analysis

As for a method of textual analysis, the study employs Discourse Analysis (DA). DA is one of the most popular methods to study national identity (Kotowski, 2013; Lee, 2014; Wodak, 2009). Discourse is defined as not simplistic linguistic communications but more as a collection of utterance which meaning varies depending on the context. Discourse is socially

constituted and simultaneously constructs reality (Gee, 1999). The objective of discourse analysis is, therefore, to unravel the specific given meaning of language in a particular context. Context, which Gee (1999) calls situation, consists of five aspects: semiotic, activity, material, political and socio-cultural aspects. What language is used and how the meaning is conveyed and expressed, in what activities, where and when speakers are delivering information, power relations between speakers and listeners, personal, social, cultural knowledge shared between speakers and listeners respectively shapes the situation and provides specific meanings (Gee, 1999). Further, there is a power imbalance between the speakers (presidents) and listeners (the public) in terms of narrating the national past so that the audience is more likely to find the narrations credible and the occasion of the commemorative ceremonies can reinforce the importance and validity of the content.

These commemorative speeches are also given in the specific context. In addition to the act of commemoration, these events serve as the official occasions for South Korean presidents to show their position over the interpretation of the past against Japan. The ruling party in Japan does not fully agree with South Korea's interpretation, in South Korean's eyes, Japan has not sincerely apologised for or regretted the wrongdoings (Kimura, 2019). In what follows, the paper discusses how the colonial past is positioned in the narrative of the past and what kind of South Korean national identity is shaped.

5. Results and discussion

5.1 The narratives of Japanese colonialism

This chapter begins with the question of how South Korean presidents narrate Japanese colonialism in order to explore the meaning of the colonial past for South Korean national identity formation. Throughout the speeches, the different narratives of the anti-Japanese independence movement and Japanese colonialism are identified. In each narrative, the

colonial past is positioned as a momentous event where defining dispositions of South Korean are established.

5.1.1 Japanese colonialism as a symbol of hardship and victory

One main narrative for the memory of Japanese colonialism is a self-obtained victory. There is a consistent implication of Japanese colonial period as the time of difficulties, distress, and challenges. However, the focus is not on the hardship itself but how South Koreans have overcome these difficulties as shown by President Park's remark on the 68th anniversary of Liberation Day.

> "Some 100 years ago, we lost our nation, and we were put in crisis where our history was also almost erased; we nevertheless did not lose national spirit and disposition, and the fight for independence arose by those who devoted their lives for the country." (20130815).

In this part of the speech, Park utilised the expression of 'losing the nation and history', which is a more dramatic statement than simply 'losing sovereignty and being a colony', and this gives an impression that the essence or unique characteristics of South Korean-ness was put in danger because of Japan, because of whom 'we lost our nation'. By underscoring the menace that Japan posed to Korea, Japan is represented as a significant other, as delineated by Triandafyllidou (1998). The description of the victimhood is soon to be followed by that "we nevertheless did not lose national spirit and disposition" despite the political subjugation, giving preeminence to the spiritual victory of South Korea even before the actual liberation of the country. Park then continued that "the spiritual victory "eventually brought us the much-longed-for liberation 68 years ago today" (20130815).

In this success story, two presidents repeatedly refer to the 'spirit of March First Independence Movement (3•1 운동의 정신)'. According to Park Geun-hye, this spirit embodies "the devotion to the nation and people and the great solidarity of the Korean

people"; it is this very spirit that "led to the establishment of the Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea" and enabled the people to "realis[e] long-yearned-for independence" (20160301). That is to say; it was the solidarity of the people that brought the independence of the Republic of Korea. This narrative of internal victory should be noted because Japanese colonialism officially ended as a result of its surrender to external western powers; Korea's liberation did not come from the struggle of the Korean people (Kang, 2011 cited in Bukh, 2016: 188). Hence, through the success narrative, presidents are reenacting decolonisation, when people recognise their nationhood the most.

The effect of the spirit is not limited to the glorious restoration of the nation; yet it "has laid the groundwork for our history of miracles—the accomplishment of democracy and economic prosperity at the same time in just half a century amid poverty and the ruins of war" (20150301). There is a parallel of liberation from the colonial subjugation and national achievement despite difficulties in the post-colonial period. President Moon upgraded the spirit of March First Independence Movement to "spirit of self-reliant independence, self-development, world peace and co-prosperity" (20170301). With the spirit being a marker for Japanese colonialism, Japanese colonial past now has an associative power to remind people of the other national memories.

In similar regard, both presidents likened the past adversities and current crisis, which denotes the current citizens' potential to overcome the difficulties and expected triumph. Moon Jae-in, for instance, referred to the difficulties that the youth are facing and states for this problem, "we will uphold the spirit of the March First Independence Movement, by which we overcame the tribulations in history, and will tide over the current hardships, by all means, to usher in a future of hope for our nation" (20170301). It was 'we' who "overcame the tribulations in history" and it is also 'we' who "will uphold the spirit" and "will tide over the current hardship". This juxtaposition of successful liberation, postcolonial achievement,

and expected future victory foregrounds the continuity of the nation and provide a sense of destiny with the people (Smith, 1999). The spirit of March First Independence Movement has become a panacea that transcends time and space for all national hardships, and the term has a timeless effect of uniting South Koreans. The narrative of Japanese colonialism as a South Korea's success story not only unite the audience through self and other structure but also boost the national confidence, leading the public to feel attached to the nation.

5.1.2 The end of colonialism as '(re)birth of the nation

Another narrative of the colonial past is the birth story of the South Korean nation. The March First Independence Movement did not bring actual independence from Japanese occupation, and yet presidents underline that it laid the foundation for the current Republic of Korea. President Moon articulated 'we' as South Koreans of today have, not small, but "a huge 'root' in the form of March First Independence Movement" or in a broader sense, anti-Japanese struggles (20180301). President Moon mentioned that the Provisional Government established during the Movement "bequeathed Article 1 of the Constitution and the name of our country as well as the national symbols of the *Taegeukgi* (South Korean national flag) and the national anthem" (20180301); President Park stated that "its legitimacy is carried on in the spirit of the Constitution of the Republic of Korea" (20150301). National flags, anthem, and the provisional government are all identifiers for the Republic of Korean nation, and these are what differentiate South Korea from North Korea. Although the myth of *Tangun* still offers a notion that all Koreans belong to the same lineage, the verified beginning of the Republic of Korea signifies the legitimacy of the South Korean government over North Korea. By referring to the creation of national symbols in the anti-Japanese struggles and the continuity between the Provisional Government and the current South Korean government, the presidents not only claim its political legitimacy over North Korea

but also signal that Japanese colonialism is the indispensable part of the South Korean history, as when the foundational ideologies are founded.

In the 100th anniversary of the March First Independence movement, President Moon compared the status of citizens in the past: “On that day, we were reborn as citizens of a republic; we were no longer subjects of a dynasty or a colony of Imperial Japan. The great journey toward a democratic republic began at that time looking beyond independence and liberation” (20190301). The comparison of subjects of a colony and citizens of a republic formed a dichotomy of the times before and after the independence, giving prominence to the renewed nature of Korean people and successful transformation to an independent state. This strategy allows the South Koreans to detach the old self (unified Korea under the Japanese colonialism) who was inferior to Japan and to grow confidence in the new successful image of South Korea. Thus, the memory of colonial past is narrated as the foundation story or myth of the Republic of Korea, and Japanese colonialism is presented as a historical event of the nameable beginning, which shows the current South Korean citizens having the same ancestry and elicits the high level of national solidarity. This explains why colonial memory continues to occupy an important place in the history of South Korea and why the South Korean government and people are preoccupied with the colonial past. The defining characters of South Korea are moulded during the anti-colonial struggles, and therefore, in remembering the colonial past, South Koreans are reminded of their South Korean-ness.

5.1.3 The creation of national heroes

The memory of Japanese colonialism plays a vital role in the construction of South Korean national identity through the creation of national heroes. National heroes are national symbols, through which the public can imagine that they belong to the same lineage, and this linkage inspires national pride and cohesion in the citizens (Smith, 1999). Every address

starts with calling to the 'South Korean people, Korean independence activists and the bereaved of the independence activists, and other Korean nationals living outside South Korea'. This customary practice gives prominence to Korean independence activists. They are "the founding fathers and mothers of the Republic of Korea" (20180301). They have been presented and represented as national heroes that have devoted their lives for the nation and realised the creation of South Korean nation and to whom we should show 'respect' and 'appreciation' as Park comments: "Had it not been for the sacrifices of our patriots and martyred forefathers who devoted their lives for the country's independence, the Republic of Korea would not have been possible…I bow my head in tribute to their souls" (20140815).

It is a fact that there were independence activists who fought for independence. Nevertheless, the author names this process as creation because there is an ongoing effort to discover the stories of national heroes. Moon declared that the government continues to "identify every possible forgotten independence activists" (20170815). The second reason is the government's inclusive interpretation of independence activists. Moon Jae-in described these independence activists are not limited to those who called for independence and were incarcerated but also include "countless mothers and wives who stayed in the alleys in front of the prison and looked after their imprisoned children and husband" (20180301). Additionally, female labour activists who fought for the increase in payment and better treatment under the Japanese rule are discerned as independence activists (20180815). This broad definition of independent activists contributes to the increasing significance of colonial memory in the South Korean national history.

Furthermore, Moon emphasised that such activists are not elites but ordinary people: "the protagonists of the March First Independence Movement were ordinary people such as labourers, farmers, women, soldiers, rickshaw pullers, gisaeng, butchers, serfs, street merchants, students and monks" (20190301). This accentuation of the commonness of the

activists attracts attention to the affinity between the past activists and the current South Korean people, making it easier for the current citizens to empathise with the stories of their forefathers. Through the construction of national heroes who are ordinary like 'us', this narrative of the colonial past not only summons up the high level of national solidarity but also inculcates the people with moral values of dedication to the nation and being anti-Japanese. While both presidents show special respect to the activists, President Moon employed this type of narrative more often.

5.1.4 Japanese colonialism as a present reality

In this narrative, Japanese colonialism is not a product of the past, but it is represented as a present reality. This narrative was most evident in the 100th anniversary of the Movement Day when Moon Jae-in mentioned: "the March First Independence Movement is still progressing" (20190301) and so is Japanese colonialism. Even after 74 years since the national liberation, he still holds the settling of the vestiges of pro-Japanese collaborators is "a long-overdue undertaking" and a necessary task before "we can move toward the future" (20190301). Here, the term pro-Japanese has a strong negative connotation, equivalent to that of a traitor. Since imperial Japan brought division between those who fought for the national liberation and those who sided with imperial Japan. At present, when not all the collaborators are adequately punished, South Koreans are still trapped in the Japanese colonialism. This implies a timeless anti-Japanese sentiment and the unfading sin of pro-Japanese collaboration.

Another site that South Korea fights against the legacy of colonial subjugation is over the perception of colonial history. The topics that gained domestic and diplomatic attention the most in the time frame of 2013-2019 were comfort women (the sexual slavery by the Japanese military) and forced labour. Park Geun-hye stated that "the Korean Government has

continued to call on Japan's leaders to take a correct view of history and specially to take proactive measures acceptable to the comfort women victims of the Japanese military, while they are still alive" (20140815). Since Japan has refused to have a correct perception of its colonial history, and because of that, the victims are still suffering for whom the South Korean government and the society should fight. Even after the South Korean government and Japanese government signed the Japan-South Korean comfort women agreement in 2015[3], the Moon administration maintained the position that "pain from the forced mobilisation during the Japanese colonial rule persists 70 years after liberation" and "the whole picture of the damage has yet to be revealed" (20170815). The reference to existing historical issues and refusal to acknowledge the agreement implies the continuity and resemblance of the current Japanese government with imperial Japan. In similarity, regarding Japan's claim over its sovereignty over Dokdo Island, which South Koreans regard as a symbol of the liberation from the Japanese occupation, the South Korean Government discerns that "Japan's current denial of this fact is no different from rejecting self-reflection of the imperialistic invasion" (20180301).

In the past, Koreans fought against imperial Japan in the aim of liberating the nation; in the present, South Koreans are still fighting against Japan in the aim of making Japan accept a correct view of history and reflect on their past wrongdoings. By just discussing the current problems in South Korea-Japan bilateral relations, today's South Koreans remember the colonial past as their own experience and regard themselves as the victim of the colonialism. Given that the external actors realised South Korea's independence, the victory of this diplomatic contest over the interpretation is not limited to the psychological process of decolonisation but also the battle that they cannot and should not lose.

[3] With the Japan-South Korean comfort women agreement in 2015, the Japanese government paid a compensation of a billion yen and both governments this agreement to be the final and irreversible one.

On the whole, there was underlying theme of Japanese colonialism as the history of national unity. The remembrance of the colonial past as the success story brought by the Korean public provides national pride. As Hall (1990; 1996) argues that national culture and values are construed in the narration of the past, the South Korean government gave extra significance to the colonial past as the nameable beginning, a site of constructing national symbols in these different narratives of the past, anti-Japanese and the victory over Japan has become the important quality of being South Korean. Narrating the past with the established dichotomy between (South) Koreans 'the colonial subject' and Japanese 'the coloniser' enables South Koreans to perceive its unique attributes, and evokes national coherence, affirming Triandafyllidou (1998)'s position that national identity is constructed through the comparison and differentiation with others. The unchanging ability of Japanese colonialism to induce collective sentiment upholds postcolonial perspective that the past continues to influence the present.

5.2 South Korean national identity in relation to Japanese colonialism

The previous sections addressed how the different narratives of Japanese colonial past and the utilisation of 'us' and 'them' structure invoke the national solidarity and pride. For an individual to have a collective sentiment, she or he needs to understand the national self. The following part delineates four identified aspects of South Korea national identity in the narration of colonial memory.

5.2.1 South Korea a victim

There is a consistent representation of South Korea as a victim in all the probed presidential speeches. South Korea is victimised by a clear description of Japanese as a 'perpetrator' or 'victimiser' and through the use of passive verbs to illuminate South Korea as the subject of

Japan's actions. President Moon described the severity of damage that Japan incurred to Korea as follows: "Some 7500 Koreans were murdered with 16,000 injured. The number of people arrested and detained reached as many as 46,000…In contrast, however, not a single Japanese civilian was killed due to attacks by Koreans" (20190301). The numerousness of Koreans casualties is contrasted with 'not a single' Japanese casualty, underscoring the ruthlessness of imperial Japan. Additionally, while there are more details about the number of those killed, injured and imprisoned, the notion that Japan did not receive possible harms is generalised by not referring to the number of the injured and imprisoned. Although who killed Koreans is not mentioned, it is evident that the government implies Japanese as the killer given that the speech was given in the commemorative events of Korean lives under the Japanese occupation. This establishes a clear-cut dichotomy between South Koreans as victims and Japan as victimisers, inducing the collective sentiment amongst South Koreans.

Moon Jae-in expanded the victimhood further: "The division of the nation is the unfortunate legacy of the colonial era that made it impossible for us to determine our destiny on our own amid cold war rivalries" (20170815). The state of being colonised put South Koreans in a position that they could not 'determine [their] destiny', which implies that not only South Korea was a victim of Japanese physical aggressions but also, they are a victim because the forcible subjugation of Korea to Japan took away their autonomy. The sense of victimhood has extended to the present by treating the division of Korean peninsula as the result of colonialism. Hence, South Korea was not only a victim but remains to be a victim.

5.2.2 Righteous South Korea

In contrast to imperialist Japan and the current unremorseful Japan, South Korean has illustrated as a righteous figure. The emphasis on the peaceful nature of the March First Independence Movement indicates the rightness of that South Korea's actions: "[it was] a

non-violent resistance campaign for self-reliant independence movement in defiance of the Japanese imperialists who had forcefully taken over our land and enforced harsh military colonial rule" (20170301). In this passage, President Moon represented South Koreans as peaceful and righteous for conducting 'a non-violent resistance campaign' against wicked and violent Japan who 'forcefully' and illegally takes the possession of South Korea and treated South Koreans 'harshly'. Hence, in remembering the colonial past, South Koreans can conceive the righteous national self.

The negative depiction of today's Japan as insincere, inconsistent, and unjust over the settlement and compensation for its past behaviour also signals that Japan as evil has not changed. In return, it suggests the unchanging nature of South Korea being sincere, consistent, and righteous. President Park criticises that "the Japanese Government must remember its past wrongdoings and make an effort to translate the intent and spirit of the agreement into practices so that it will be remembered as a lesson for the future generations" (20160301). In a similar vein, Moon Jae-in also deprecates Japan's position by pronouncing "the Japanese Government should squarely face history and have sincerity and consistency in educating future generations and reflecting on its past wrongdoings" (20170301). The use of modal verbs, 'should' or 'must' shows the moral superiority of South Korea over Japan. South Korea has this capacity and right to give advice or order that 'Japan should' or 'must' do something. Thus, within the narration of Japanese colonial past and remains of Japanese colonialism, South Korea's righteous nature is identified, which not only reinforces the difference from unrighteous Japan but also boosts the public confidence and justifies its diplomatic position.

5.2.3 Successful South Korea

Meanwhile, there is also an attempt to detach the image of South Korea as subaltern or marginalised by Japan. This imagery of South Korea is not established against the differentiation from Japan but from the old Korea who was inferior to a coloniser Japan and from other former colonies. By narrating the success stories of South Korea in the site of the commemoration of the colonial past, South Korea is represented as a victor or a successful nation. Firstly, such depiction of victorious South Korea was observed in the narratives of Japanese colonialism as successful independence brought by the people. Secondly, in order to illuminate the great achievement that South Korea earned, the economic conditions at the points of liberation and the present are compared; for instance, President Park stated: "with no capital, no technology, no experience to speak of, we nonetheless managed to erect steel mills and shipyards on barren grounds…Now, the Republic of Korea is tapping into its expanded economic and national strength to proudly play a leading role in the international community" (20150815). The rapid economic development can highlight the difference between South Korea and impoverished North Korea and inspire national pride in the South Korean public. This comparison and differentiation from external others are more evident in President Moon's address when he compares South Korea to other previously colonised nations: "among nations that achieved independence from colonial rule following World War II, Korea is the only country to succeed in achieving both economic growth and democratic progress" (20180815). In fact, the statement is exaggerated because Taiwan also achieved both economic growth and democratic progress after the experience of Japanese occupation. Although economic development realised after independence, the colonial experience is not unrelated as it made South Korea's success stand out.

This disposition of victorious South Korea is perpetuated through the president's reference to the blood relation of the ancestry who achieved independence and economic development and current South Korean citizens. Park Geun-hye articulates that "the fortitude

of spirit passed down to us by our forefathers" (20140301), and the current citizens have "DNA to overcome crisis" (20150301). By recalling the past where South Korea was devastated in the hands of Japan, the post-colonial successes is highlighted and the successful image of South Korea is fortified in the narration of colonial past.

5.2.4 Liberal democratic South Korea

The final illustrated aspect of South Korean national identity is its liberal democratic disposition. What being 'liberal democratic' means is the respect for the will of the ordinary people, which President Moon explains with a term popular sovereignty. He expresses that it is "the ideology of the independence movement and the founding ideology of the Republic of Korea" (20170815). Therefore South Koreans people are "the protagonist of South Korean history", "the forefathers of the Republic of Korea" and "the rightful owners of the country" (20190301). Popular sovereignty is not "a term our contemporaries used for the first time" in the candlelight rallies[4], but it is embedded in "the Declaration of Great Unity and Solidarity announced in Shanghai by 14 independence activists in July 1917" (20170815). President Moon then interprets "National humiliation Day in 1910, when the Japan-Korean Annexation Treaty[5] was signed, was not the day when our national sovereignty was lost, but the day when popular sovereignty was born" (20170815). His representation of the Japanese occupation as the birth point of popular sovereignty sends a message that the liberal democratic quality of the South Korean government has a longer tradition than the officially democratised South Korea. This image also has an impact to illuminate the difference from authoritarian North Korea. Hence, the legitimacy of the South Korean government is grounded in the memory of Japanese colonial rule.

[4] It is the 2016-2017 mass protests against President Park, Geun-hye, who was suspected to be engaged in a political scandal. Hundred of thousands of people demonstrated for the resignation of the president in November 2016-March 2017, which resulted in successful impeachment.
[5] With signing the Japan-Korean Annexation Treaty, Korea became Japan's colony.

The discourse on liberal democratic South Korea is relatively new, and only appears in the Moon presidency. The author ascribes this to two main reasons. First, it is a reaction to waning confidence in South Korean politics after Park's political scandal. Second, given that there has been increasing youth dissatisfaction with the life in South Korea despite high living standard (Kim, 2018), the discursive construction of the people-centred nation aims to inspire confidence in the public. The repeated presentation that the public (audience) are crucial figures aims to make the audience perceive the national matter is their matter and encourage identification with the nation.

In summary for the section, in the different narratives of colonial past, South Korea nation is represented as the victim, righteous, victorious, and liberal democratic by comparing and differentiating from imperial Japan, contemporary Japan, pre-independent Korea and other former colonies. This affirms external as well as internal definition of the national identity (Triandafyllidou 1998). While Japan is not the only Other with whom South Korean defines itself, the contrast between self and other is the most evident between Japan and South Korea, which suggests that Japan's position as a significant other for South Koreans. These constructed images, in return, have an effect to illuminate the uniqueness of South Korea from others. Therefore, Japanese colonial past, through narration, has a role in foregrounding the values and significance of the South Korean nation and constructing the South Korean imagery.

5.3 History of Korean ethnicity or history of South Korea?

This paper hitherto discussed how the Japanese colonialism has a significant place in the construction of South Korean national identity. The Republic of Korea, current South Korea was founded amidst the struggle against the colonial rule, and yet, it is worthwhile to note

that there was no North or South Korea at the time of independence. Technically the Japanese colonialism is a history not only for South Korea but also for unified Korea, and a question rises whether Japanese colonial memory reinforces the collective sentiment amongst the whole Korean nation inclusive of North.

Indeed there are portrayals of Japanese colonialism as a history of the Korean peninsula. One way to do so is a reference to locations currently under North Korean territory. President Moon emphasised unified Korea by telling "[f]rom Seoul and Pyeongyang to Jinnampo, Anju, Seoncheon, Uiju and Wonsan[6], loud chants of manse erupted on the same day, and these calls for independence spread like wildfire to every corner of the country" (20190301).

Another way to illuminate the unified Korean nation is through the lexical difference. In the Korean language, there are different terms, each describing the different boundary of 'nation'. *Minjok* (민족) refers to Korean people and the nation as Korean ethnic group or race, including North Koreans, whereas *gukmin* (국민) denotes specifically South Korean people. For instance, both President Moon and Park employed the term *minjok*:

> "This significant day commemorates the March First Independence Movement that marked a very critical watershed in Korean *minjok* history" (20170301).
>
> "The liberation of Korea was the result of the efforts of all *minjok* on the Korean peninsula as well as across the world coming together in unity with indomitable grit irrespective of differences in ideology, religion, social status or class, generation or region" (20160815).

Given that how effective the Japanese colonial memory and liberation in bringing the sense of solidarity, the contrast with Japanese other not only blurs the difference between North

[6] All the names apart from Seoul are now located under the territory of North Korea.

Korea and South Korea but also allows South Koreans to imagine North Korea as one of 'us'. Thus the description of the subject as Korean *minjok* summons the sense of unity between two Koreas amongst South Koreans.

Moreover, the presidents reaffirm the national boundary of unified Korea through discussion on the 'genuine liberation' (*Jinjeonghan gwangbok* 진정한광복). Both presidents addressed that "genuine liberation…will be complete when peace is realised on the Korean Peninsula and South Korea and North Korea are reunified as one" (20130815) and "genuine liberation is to take the path to unite the Korean *minjok* that were divided by foreign powers" (20170815). This signifies that although South Koreans obtained formal liberation, the current division of the Korean Peninsula itself is the legacy of Japanese colonialism that they need to fight against. In this sense, Japanese colonial past has called audiences' attention to the unified Korean national boundary.

Particularly such strategy to appeal to the sameness between two Koreas is utilised by President Moon more than President Park. In the 100th anniversary of March First Independence Movement, Moon Jae-in uses the repetition "one hundred years ago today, we were one…one hundred years ago today, there was no South and North Korea" (20190301). This is a clear message that the Korean nation is what we should return to. It is not surprising because President Moon is in the aim of promoting the inter-Korean summit. Park Geun-hye, on the other hand, often condemned the North Korean government, for instance: "North Korea now has to get out of the rut of division and confrontation and abandon its nuclear weapons…"; "I hope the North Korean delegation will take part…" (20140815). This articulation of North Korea or North Korean government accentuates the division between the South and the North. In Park's speeches, North Korea has been represented as out-group, if not a significant other: North Korea is not the "responsible member of the international community" (20130815) and who "spurn inter-Korean dialogue" (20150301). Therefore

differentiation from Japanese other and North Korean other reinforced the national boundary of South Korea.

Further, the speeches are given in the context of divided Koreas where the South Korean president addresses to the South Korean citizens. The reunified Korean Peninsula the initial remark always started with the phrase "fellow South Koreans (*gukmin*)". When there is no mention of *minjok*, it is unlikely for South Koreans to perceive that the term 'we' includes North Koreans because of such context and the speech always touches upon the success story and problems of post-independence South Korea. Even when the president uses *minjok*, it is after all 'South Korean president' who suggests or advocates that the reunification of Korean *minjok* and peninsula is the goal that we as South Koreans should aim. Therefore, while there is an illustration of Japanese colonialism and independence as the memory of unified Korea, it has been reshaped as a history of South Korea by looking at the history from the lenses of South Korea. The changes in the owner of the history evince that a nation is a mental construct.

6. Conclusions

More than 70 years have passed since the Japanese colonialism ended in the Korean peninsula. While time kept flowing, the colonial past still exists vividly in the present time. South Koreans still live in the legacy of Japanese colonialism. This paper investigated the role of Japanese colonialism in the construction of South Korean national identity by analysing commemorative speeches between 2013 and 2019. The effect of colonialism in South Korea has not been the major interests in the colonial and postcolonial studies, and the South Korean case can contribute new insight to a branch of the study. By taking a position that national identity is discursively constructed through the narration of history and culture,

the author examined how the memory of Japanese occupation is narrated and what kind of South Korean imagery is constructed in the narration.

In the post-colonial period, the main narratives of the colonial experience are victorious liberation attained by the Korean people and the genesis of the Republic of Korea. The memory of colonialism has a capacity to unite the South Korean people because it inspires the will and confidence to overcome any future crises in them and moulds a nameable beginning. The rediscovery of independence activists and the creation of national heroes meant the creation of national symbols through which the people recognise their nation. The colonial past is reenacted in the present through the narrations, and the past became timeless for not being able to find a landing point in the discussions on the historical issues between South Korea and Japan. Therefore, as Hall (1990; 1996) delineates the role of narration in the formation of national identity, the historical memory of Japanese colonialism has given the significance of the existence of South Korea, and it has turned to be an apparatus to elicit national solidarity and nationalist sentiment. In this narration of the colonial past, South Korea is represented as a victim, righteous, successful and liberal democratic nation. The first two images require the differentiation from Japan, and the latter two characteristics are anchored in the experience of Japanese colonialism. Hence, the colonial past plays a constructive role in the formation of South Korean national identity, explaining why such a high level of anti-Japanese sentiment exists amongst the public.

In the act of remembering and narrating the past, South Korea aims to ideologically liberate from the colonial influence by emphasising the internal victory. In other words, the commemoration and narration of the colonial past is a crucial process of decolonising for South Korea, who did not acquire independence on their own like other former colonies. Nevertheless, its act of differentiation from Japan itself insinuates that South Korea's ideological dependence on colonial Japan to highlight the uniqueness of Korean-ness. Here,

the significance does not lie in the negativity of the representation of colonial Japan, but the occupation in the memory of the colonial past when thinking about South Korean-ness. The representation of the colonial past as the foundation history of the Republic of Korea demonstrates that a nation and national identity do not exist as essence, but they are the result of discursive constructions. The study confirms postcolonial account that colonialism is not just a 'raw' experience or a product of the past, but it continues to influence the present history and culture.

Nevertheless, this study also has its limitations. The research did not take into consideration other forms of political discourse as data, which might have limited the possibilities of finding different narratives on colonial memory. Another weakness is that the production process of national identity was the sole target of analysis in this study. Although the 'official' account of colonial past is and will be increasingly important in the time where the majority of the people do not experience colonialism first hand, the extent that the public embraces such accounts and share the same national identity needs to be investigated in future studies. Besides the landing point of national identity formation, further studies shall explore other sites of production of national identity such as history textbooks and media discourse on how the Japanese colonialism is narrated.

The colonial memory is likely to remain an essential constituent of South Korean national identity, and therefore, disagreement over the perception of colonial history will continue to exert its influence on the development of Japan-South Korean relations. While South Korea's criticism over Japan's settlement on the colonial past appears to be an obsession with the victim history in Japan's eyes, it is a natural and logical reaction because the South Korean government claim its legitimacy in the remembrance of colonialism. Perhaps this study can be replicated when Japanese colonial period becomes a distant past where no one has direct experience of the colonialism or hears the history from a direct war

victim, in order to probe whether Japanese colonialism continues to exert the same influence to unite the South Korean people. Its presentation as the history of South Korea suggest the difficulty to utilise the colonial past as apparatus to overcome all the other odds between two Koreas; however, perhaps, in the possible future of unified Korea, the memory of national hardships and liberation can be employed to evoke a sense of unity amongst the whole Korean population.

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Appendix

1. A list of Presidential speeches

20130301. Address by President Park Geun-hye on the 94th March 1st Independence Movement Day, delivered on 1 March 2013.

20130815. Address by President Park Geun-hye on the 68th Anniversary of Liberation, delivered on 15 August 2013.

20140301. Address by President Park Geun-hye on the 95th March 1st Independence Movement Day, delivered on 1 March 2014.

20140815. Address by President Park Geun-hye on the 69th Anniversary of Liberation, delivered on 15 August 2014.

20150301. Address by President Park Geun-hye on the 96th March 1st Independence Movement Day, delivered on 1 March 2015.

20150815. Address by President Park Geun-hye on the 70th Anniversary of Liberation, delivered on 15 August 2015.

20160301. Address by President Park Geun-hye on the 97th March 1st Independence Movement Day, delivered on 1 March 2016.

20160815. Address by President Park Geun-hye on the 71st Anniversary of Liberation, delivered on 15 August 2016.

20170301. Address by President Moon Jae-in on 98th March First Independence Movement Day, delivered on 1 March 2017.

20170815. Address by President Moon Jae-in on the 72nd Anniversary of Liberation, delivered on 15 August 2017.

20180301. Address by President Moon Jae-in on 99th March First Independence Movement Day, delivered on 1 March 2018.

20180815. Address by President Moon Jae-in on the 73rd Anniversary of Liberation, delivered on 15 August 2018.

20190301. Address by President Moon Jae-in on 100th March First Independence Movement Day, delivered on 1 March 2019.

20190815. Address by President Moon Jae-in on the 74th Anniversary of Liberation, delivered on 15 August 2019.