Nationalism, Collective Memory, and the Dokdo/Takeshima Dispute

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Abstract

The ideas of self, others and community are crucial in the social constructions of nationalism and collective memory. The subject of my research is the Dokdo/Takeshima dispute, and the roles these two elements play in it. I examine what made the sovereignty of the islets significant to South Korea and Japan, and the mutual link between the dispute and the production of collective memory and nationalist sentiments in both countries. Dokdo/Takeshima dispute between Japan and Korea is a relevant research case for understanding the social production of collective memory. In South Korea, the dispute has been framed within the context of colonialism and Japanese aggression and therefore is considered a national issue whereas in Japan, the dispute has connections to other disputed territories, and moreover, it also affects the shaping of new national sentiment. One of the hypotheses I present is that not only the governments regard the islets as important because of their perspectives on national identity and the past, but they also use the dispute to maintain or create certain narratives of collective memory that gives a new sense of national identity and purpose.

1. Introduction

Dokdo/Takeshima islets are located approximately 210 km from the east coast of Korea and 65 km from the southwest coast of Japan in the Sea of Japan/the East Sea. It is made up of two islets and other tiny rocks, and its entire size is 187,453 m².¹ How come two modern and advanced countries in East Asia are so concerned with those small rocky islets? How do history, nationalism, and collective memory of both countries play a role in this territorial dispute? Those are the main questions that I will attempt to answer in this paper.

I examine what made the sovereignty of the islets significant to South Korea and Japan, and how nationalism and collective memory were a driving force for this. Additionally, I analyze how the dispute plays a role in maintaining national pride and sense of belonging, and how it reshapes narratives of national identity and collective memory. In order to research this subject, I analyze primary sources from South Korea and Japan. First, the formal positions of both governments in regards to the dispute and second, newspapers articles. Since I use English-language articles published online by South Korean or Japanese newspapers, I am aware that it may cause certain limitations to my conclusions.

My initial hypothesis is based upon Bong's suggestion: "rather than examining the strategic and economic benefits that the possession of Dokdo would bring, it is the desire to redeem their respective past in the collective memory of the Japanese and South Koreans that has made the Dokdo issue so critical."²

Thus, in this paper I will not discuss the legal aspect of the dispute, which country has the most persuasive arguments, nor attempt to conclude who should receive recognition as the sovereign of Dokdo/Takeshima. In addition, although North Korea also claims the islets, I decided not to focus on this aspect of the dispute.

For the purpose of this research I followed two main definitions for the term collective- also called cultural- memory. Heller sees cultural memory as what constructs and maintains a group's identity, which can be expressed through certain material signs and objects, repeated practices, or be linked to particular places. As long as a group of people cultivates a common cultural memory, the group continues to exist.³ Furthermore, according to Olick, on the one hand, collective memory in this context is the social and cultural structuring of public and personal memory. Groups and institutions provide the definitions by which particular events are subjectively defined as meaningful and should be remembered. Those patterns cannot be explained by the interests or activities of individuals. On the other hand, individuals are central too, since ultimately it is only individuals who do the remembering; shared symbols and perceptions are only real if individuals treat them as such. Collective and individual identity, in this view, are two sides of the same coin rather than different phenomena.⁴

The paper has been structured in such a way that the first part contains general background to nationalism and identity formation of both South Korea and Japan in addition to a historical review of the dispute. In the second part, I present and analyze the primary sources. The third part contains a discussion, based on the sources I have examined, on how collective memory and nationalism are being expressed and have shaped the dispute, and moreover, how the dispute affected South Korea's and Japan's national identity formation and their collective memory narratives. Lastly, I will outline my conclusion.

2. Background

Nationalism and Collective Memory in South Korea and Japan

The Korean peninsula was colonized by Japan from 1910 to 1945. Even after Korea's independence, resentment and bitterness towards the Japanese remained a significant part of South Korea's collective memory. According to Lee, the commitment to a collective South Korean national identity is facilitated by continual reminders of the Japanese 'Other' and of the colonial past, which are being used to stabilize national loyalty. Thus, a state-endorsed refusal to forget can be seen as an element through which the state preserve national sentiment.⁵

However, since the end of the 1980's, changes occurred in South Korea, along with democratization. The ethnic dimension of Korean national identity that was very strong until then, seemingly lost its relevance for younger generations who supported South Korean state-centered nationalism. Thus, they focused on status-related goals: developing the national brand, improving personal well-being, and dealing with historical issues and territorial disputes. For many Koreans, the country has overcome "the stigma of being a victim of colonization." They support efforts to make Korea more "global" by raising its international visibility as an equal and responsible member of the international community. This advocating for a more positively defined self-image, stands quite in contrast to the victimization inherent in the traditional

understandings of nationalism in South Korea. Tensions between those identities are especially visible when acting towards Japan. Here the resistance to external forces (anti-imperialism) and the significance of selfautonomy, clash with the idea of a conservative, anti-communist and pro-US identity.⁶ I claim that in the context of Dokdo/Takeshima dispute, the opposition to Japan as the 'Other' and as the former colonizer of Korea is stronger than the "global" image of Korea, as I will further discuss in the following parts.

In Japan, the construction of national identity was formed vis-à-vis Asia and Korea as a particular 'Other' during the imperial period. The first discourse of Pan-Asianism in Japan was based on the notion of a certain bond between Japan and the rest of Asia based on racial sameness, in which Korea had a unique connection with Japan. On the other hand, at the same time, a Japanese version of Orientalism construed Japan as spatially located in Asia but superior to its Asian neighbors that belong with the West. In this context, Korea's position as a 'primitive self' in imperial Japan's identity corresponded with the broader role of the Orient in this construct. After Japan's defeat in 1945, the Pan-Asianism disappeared almost completely from Japan's identity construction but the hierarchical identity was only slightly modified. Accordingly, in the post-war years, democratic, industrialized, prosperous and 'westernized' Japan was constructed in opposition to unruly, authoritarian, impoverished and 'Asian' Korea.⁷

The end of the imperial period marked the beginning of the remaking of Japan under the US-led occupation forces. It included a demilitarization of the country, an adoption of a new constitution, and an establishment of a liberal education.⁸ The construction of the collective war memory in Japan has consisted of the need to come to terms with Japan's identity of the 'yellow' imperialist aggressor whose war ended with an A-bomb and the Tokyo Tribunal.⁹ Dealing with a difficult war past that had caused enormous devastation at home and abroad made the attempts to 'normalize' Japan's international relations more complicated, especially with its close neighbors in East Asia, most notably China and South Korea.

Moreover, attitudes to war history within Japan have varied throughout the post-war period and included anti-war and anti-nationalist identities. Many of those perspectives resulted from personal experiences as well as broader perceptions of how Japan conducted itself after the war. In the international relations context, the politics of apologetics has been driven by the continuation of debates over war memories within Japan, provoked by various actors who used war and peace symbolism for their own purposes.¹⁰

The role of the state and of patriotism became essential elements in contemporary nationalism in Japan. The contemporary nationalist groups oppose to what they call the "defeatist view" of Japan, the notion that the country was involved in immoral and unjustifiable wars and that Japan well deserved the punishment it received. They believe that the re-making of the nation in the post-war decades stripped the Japanese people of any sense of national pride. To overthrow this legacy, the nationalists demand that the Japanese people embrace patriotism as an essential element of the national identity. They advocate for a renewed interpretation of the war, a state-centric view of Japan, and an assertive foreign policy. The nationalists deflect both domestic and international criticisms of Japanese wartime acts, and selectively reconstruct Japan's past in their image to frame their discourse on the major challenges facing Japan today. Within this discourse,

China and Korea, and to a lesser extent the US are given a prominent role. The nationalists had found a powerful ally in Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who personally shared many of their political goals and take action in order to promote them.¹¹

Historical Background to the Dokdo/Takeshima Dispute

Dokdo/Takeshima islets were officially incorporated into Japan's Shimane Prefecture in 1905, five years before the beginning of the Japanese colonial rule over Korea. After Japan surrendered at the end of the Second World War, the San-Francisco Peace Treaty (1951) outlined the abdication of Japanese colonial territory but made no explicit reference to the islets. In 1952, South Korea declared national sovereignty over a sea territory within a line known as the Peace Line or Rhee Line, which included Dokdo/Takeshima. Korea then built a few structures on the islets, in spite of Japanese opposition. In the following years, several clashes between fishermen and coast guards from the two countries have occurred. In 1965 Japan and South Korea signed a treaty which regulated the fishing rights in the waters surrounding the islets and a joint regulation zone in the water surrounding Dokdo/Takeshima was established.¹²

The conflict arose again in 1996 when Japan and South Korea joined the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and declared their respective Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ). Both countries included Dokdo/Takeshima as their sovereign territory. Another agreement was signed in 1998, in which South Korea and Japan agreed to separate claims of sovereignty from fisheries-related issues and outlined their respective EEZs. Since then, the Japanese government has been more vocal about its territorial claims. In 2004, Japan's Shimane Prefecture announced February 22nd as 'Takeshima Day,' a step that triggered widespread protests in Korea. At the same time, the territorial dispute gained a nationwide interest in South Korea. In August 2012, the Japanese made a formal request that the countries discuss the dispute at the International Court of Justice, which Korea rejected.¹³

3. Presentation and Analysis of the Primary Sources

Formal Statements and Attitudes

When examining Korean and Japanese arguments about the territorial sovereignty of Dokdo/Takeshima, there are noticeable contradictions in the interpretation of the same historical evidence or international law.¹⁴

The basic formal position of South Korea is that the islets are an integral part of the Korean territory, and that "no territorial dispute exists regarding Dokdo." Moreover, Dokdo "is not a matter to be dealt with through diplomatic negotiations or judicial settlement." In its formal statements, the government highlights that the sovereign of Dokdo is, in fact, South Korea.¹⁵ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) maintains a wide-ranging formal web-page dedicated to presenting its position in regards to Dokdo. Among many other texts and sources, the Ministry's website introduces a video clip, which presents the formal position and can be found in several languages.¹⁶ I would hereby discuss this video, as I consider it as a possible example for

the way the government shapes a certain narrative in regard to the dispute, a narrative which is being displayed to an audience outside of the country. The video opens with a slide that shows a quote of the minister of Foreign Affairs from 1954 saying "Dokdo was the first Korean territory to fall victim to the Japanese aggression." Then the announcer describes the island: "it harbors deep scars from a painful past," and says that "Japan illegally incorporated Dokdo [...] calling it a [...] no man's land." The video presents pictures and explanation of historical Korean maps and documents that show Dokdo as part of Korea. Moreover, the video discusses Japanese historical sources that marked Dokdo as Korean territory. "But now, Japan is changing its words, contradicting itself by insisting that Dokdo has belonged to Japan all along. At first, Japan claims that Dokdo was a no man's land but now it is claiming that Dokdo has always been a part of its inherent territory. [...] Japan far-fenced claims over Dokdo is another reminder of its history of aggression over the Korean peninsula." While the announcer saying this sentence, a video of Japanese lawmakers visit Yasukuni shrine is playing. "We call on Japan to stand humbly before the truth of history and become a partner moving forward together towards a brighter future." While this line is heard, a picture of Willy Brandt is showed.¹⁷ "Dokdo will forever remain a peaceful island of Korea in the East Sea," is the last sentence of the video clip.¹⁸

I claim that the Korean video expresses an emotional and passionate tone. It highlights the way Korea sees this dispute: within the historical context of its colonial past. From the very beginning of the video, the claims and terminology that is being used in the video underline the "Japanese aggression" and suggests implicitly that Korea sees Japan's contemporary claims as related to the colonial past. Moreover, the video critiques Japan's coping with its past. By showing the Japanese ministers' visit the Yasukuni shrine, Korea touches upon another disputed issue which is related to the way Japan remembers the war and treats it nowadays. By presenting the picture and the quote of Willy Brandt, Korea suggests that there are other possible ways to deal with a problematic past, a better way for Japan to adopt, according to the Koreans.

Japan's formal Position, on the other hand, is that Takeshima is an inherent part of Japan's territory, which South Korea occupied illegally. Japan states that it will continue to seek a settlement for the dispute on the basis of international law in a "calm and peaceful manner." In addition, Japan claims that as far as it concerns, South Korea has "never demonstrated any clear basis for its claims that it had taken effective control over Takeshima prior to Japan's effective control over the islets and reaffirmation of its territorial sovereignty in 1905."¹⁹

The Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, similarly to the Korean Ministry, maintains a formal website, in which one can find statements and sources to support the government's claims. The Japanese MOFA produced a video clip as well, in order to present some of the formal claims in different languages. The video begins with a statement, according to which Takeshima became part of Japanese territory in the seventeenth century. In 1905 the Japanese government "reaffirmed its intentions to claim sovereignty over Takeshima by a cabinet decision." Then there is a description of the San-Francisco peace treaty when it was "internationally recognized that Takeshima belonged to Japan." The video outlines the 1952 events, when Korea "unilaterally drew up [the] so-called Seungman Rhee line [...] in violation of international law," and

illegally occupied the islets. The video ends as follows: "Japan has proposed on three occasions referring this case to the international court of justice, but the Republic of Korea has rejected all such proposals. Japan will continue to seek a peaceful settlement of this dispute with the Republic of Korea based on international law."²⁰

In comparison to the Korean video, the Japanese terminology is more plain and straightforward, since it mostly highlights the legal claims and aspects of the dispute. Japan puts forward documents and events from the twenty century and repeats claims of Japan's lawfulness acts as opposed to unlawful Korean acts. In my opinion, Japan tries to create an image of a reasonable and rational nation (unlike Korea) and most importantly, an image of a nation that pays respect to the international law and wishes to follow it.

As I see it, Japan's MOFA chose to not highlight patriotic claims and motives in this video that oriented toward an audience outside of Japan. Moreover, Japan avoids from replying to the Korean claims that frame this dispute within the colonial background: the video presents events that occurred in 1905 and then move straight forward to the 1950's. Japan emphasizes several historical and many legal claims, and treats the Korean refusal to solve the dispute in the ICJ as an evidence that Japan is right, and that it is indeed a lawful nation, unlike South Korea.

Main Tendencies as Appeared in Newspapers Articles

Occurrences and Events

In the last few years, South Korean and Japanese newspapers published a large number of articles and news reports that are related to the Dokdo/Takeshima dispute. Both governments took steps to promote their arguments and to raise awareness in their respected countries. Therefore, the issue is being constantly reported in the media. The details and topics are highly varied. Articles may include a very specific presentation of the leaders' speeches or discuss formal steps the countries have taken. At the same time, one can find reports on minor events, like ones concerning a formal South Korean state dinner, in which the Blue House served shrimps from Dokdo/Takeshima to the US president,²¹ or an article that covers a request made by Japan to make Lufthansa delete the name Dokdo on In-Flight Map.²²

Different events are being used in order to make statements regarding the dispute. On March 1, 2018, South Korean President Moon Jae-in gave a speech at a ceremony marking the 99th anniversary of the March First Independence Movement. Not surprisingly, Moon used this opportunity to put forward his perspective regarding the disputed islets and his nation's history. A Korean article reported that the President "strongly urged Japan [...] to sincerely reflect on its past wrongdoings and apologize for them."²³ On the other hand, a Japanese report claimed that Moon "gave Japan a mauling over colonial-era issues" and that he used "harsh words."²⁴ Another article regarded Moon's claims as "unacceptable."²⁵

The Pyeongchang Winter Olympics of 2018, held in South Korea, triggered some symbolic acts as well. In an exhibition match of the unified Korean women's ice hockey team, the team used a flag showing the islets as part of a unified Korean Peninsula, which generated Japanese protests.²⁶ "The Japanese government was irked that the flag includes the Takeshima islets,"²⁷ stated a Japanese article. Moreover,

Korea's ice dancers performed their dance to a traditional folk song called '*Arirang*,' which was reported in the Korean media as an act that "has been at the center of public attention, as the song caused controversy with its lyrics containing Korea's easternmost island Dokdo, which Japan continues to claim. As the International Olympic Committee bans political statements by Olympians, they removed the words about Dokdo."²⁸

Supporting the Government's Position

Many newspapers openly or implicitly supported their respective government's formal positions; it can be expressed by using certain terminology, highlighting certain historical details in an everyday news report, or criticizing leaders or acts taken by the other country.

For example, in an article titled "Steady Efforts Needed to Enhance People's Awareness of Territories," 'The Yomiuri Shimbun' outlined its position which was very similar to the Japanese government's position. "Despite the fact that the Takeshima islands are an inherent territory of Japan both historically and also in light of international law, South Korea has been illegally occupying the islands. [...] Shimane Prefecture and other organizations held a ceremony [...] to mark Takeshima Day. The Japanese government officially incorporated Takeshima into Shimane Prefecture on Feb. 22, 1905."²⁹ In another article, 'the Mainichi Japan' discussed 'Takeshima day' ceremony as well and provided a quote of one of the government officials, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga: "Takeshima is our country's inherent territory from a standpoint of history and based on international laws."³⁰

In a similar manner, Korean newspapers tend to follow their government's position. In a report regarding a formal state dinner with the US president, one paper phrased its report as follows: "The rightwing government in Tokyo was duly incensed when Korea served US President Donald Trump shrimp caught near Korea's easternmost islets of Dokdo, to which Japan maintains a flimsy colonial claim."³¹ Like the Japanese articles, the Korean reports provide various quotes of government officials, especially ones made by the newly elected President. "President Moon Jae-in urged Japan to sincerely reflect on its imperial invasion of the Korean Peninsula. [...] Moon also criticized the country for its repeated territorial claims over [...] Dokdo, claiming to deny Seoul's sovereignty over the islets was 'no different from rejecting self-reflection of its imperialistic invasion."³²

National Sentiment and Framing of Collective Memory

Media can be a useful tool through which leaders are able to send out a certain message and reshape the nation's collective memory and narratives. In the Dokdo/Takeshima case, states representatives try to use different opportunities to put forward their arguments.

In many articles, the writers use a specific occurrence to write about the history of the dispute and remind the readers its history. Several Korean articles discussed the opening of a government-sponsored exhibition center in Tokyo, which is called 'The Territory and Sovereignty Exhibition Hall'. The articles regarded it as a step that "added fuel to the historical row after Moon asked Japan to 'squarely face the truth

of history and justice with the universal conscience of humanity.³³ Another newspaper sent a journalist to visit this exhibition and report it. According to him, "the exhibition does not display any of the sources that work against Japan's claims, such as a message sent from the Great Council of State (the supreme administrative body of Japan during the Meiji period) to the Interior Ministry in 1877 making clear that Dokdo has no relation to Japan.³⁴

Another issue that was discussed in both Korean and Japanese media was the Japanese Education Ministry's curriculum guidelines, which were revised in January 2014, and outlined some of the government's instructions to what school textbook should include in their curriculum. Some reports provided statistic data regarding the teaching subjects, but the main topic for discussion was the government's instructions regarding how disputed territories should be presented. "Schools are required to teach students that the Takeshima Islands in Shimane Prefecture, effectively ruled by South Korea, and the Senkaku Islands, also claimed by China are part of Japan's territory. Moreover, schools are supposed to teach students [...] that Japan is trying to peacefully settle the issue of sovereignty over Takeshima. [...] As such, new textbooks deeply reflect the views of the government of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe."³⁵

Korean articles reported that "this is the first time that Tokyo has specified its territorial claim in guidelines for high school textbooks. The guidelines serve as state-enforced standards for writing textbooks. Dokdo, which lies closer to South Korea [...] has long been a source of tension between the neighbors. South Korea has kept a small police detachment on Dokdo since its liberation from Japan in 1945 and has made clear that Tokyo's claims are utterly groundless."³⁶

Moving Forward?

In many cases, the message that was sent out by the media in the context of the dispute is that the two countries need to move forward together. Usually, each country underlines its own will to do it peacefully and rationally, and that it is just the other country that needs to change its conduct. "The bilateral ties cannot improve without changes in Japan's attitude," states a Korean writer. "Moon stressed that he only hopes the two countries will move together for the future as closest neighbors on the basis of a sincere reflection and reconciliation. Tokyo [...] must take them seriously for the development of bilateral relations."³⁷ Another article argues that "Japan's claim to sovereignty over Dokdo asserted in line with Japanese colonialist history runs counter to the most basic undoing of colonial imperialism, which is, abandoning the land exploited by greed and violence. As such, Japan is left with responsibilities to fulfill under international law to build a Northeast Asian peace community in the 21st century."³⁸

Japanese articles responded to those arguments. "Does South Korean President Moon seriously think his one-sided criticism of Japan, based on a self-righteous view of history, will lead to the building of a future-oriented relationship?" asked a Japanese article. "The anti-Japan assertions of his left-wing administration cannot help but raise concerns."³⁹ In another article, the writers understood Moon message as if he wishes to separate historical disputes from other aspects of bilateral ties in order to build a forward-looking relationship.⁴⁰

4. Mutual Links of Collective Memory

Framing the Dispute in the "Big Picture"

The Korean government frames the Dokdo/Takeshima dispute as part of the memory of Japanese colonial rule. For the Korean people, Dokdo symbolizes the brutal Japanese occupation, in a narrative that was incorporated into the Korean collective memory.⁴¹ In this context, Korea's claim over Dokdo is fundamentally based on national pride. Japan's taking Dokdo would be considered as a national humiliation second time around.⁴² Japan's contemporary claims to the islets are seen as proof of its unapologetic attitude. Essentially, Dokdo is considered a symbol of Korea's continued dissatisfaction with Japan's (lack of) sufficient recognition, apology, and compensation for its past behavior.⁴³ The Dokdo/Takeshima dispute is one of a few other disputed issues between South Korea and Japan, like criticisms that was brought up regarding Japanese political leaders' visits to the Yasukuni Shrine, the "comfort women" issue, the history textbook controversy,⁴⁴ and the conflict concerning the name of the East Sea/Sea of Japan.⁴⁵

The Japanese government, however, frames the Dokdo/Takeshima issue as separate from the historical narrative on which Koreans tend to focus. For Japan, the relevant context for the dispute with Korea is Japan's involvement in other territorial disputes: with China and Taiwan over Senkaku/Diaoyutai, and with Russia over the Kurils/Northern Territories. Hence, Japan's conduct in regard to one dispute could have an effect on the others. However, Japan's emotional utility of Takeshima is probably lower than that of its other disputed territories. Japanese feel that Russia is unlawfully claiming the Kurile Islands even if they were historically Japan's territory, and do not want the Senkaku/Diaoyutai Islands to be a disputed territory with China or Taiwan, as it is Japan that is currently exercising sovereign rights there. Nevertheless, Japan's position may be motivated by a concern that showing weakness on the Dokdo/Takeshima issue could hinder Japanese claims against the other disputed islands.⁴⁶ It is reasonable to assume that the Japanese might not want to highlight this aspect, so it cannot be reflected in the sources I have examined.

Features of Collective Memory in the Dispute

Repeated Ceremonies and Events

According to Heller, "cultural memory is embodied in regularly repeated and repeatable practices: festivals, ceremonies, and rites."⁴⁷ The sources I have examined show that both South Korea and Japan engage with such rituals or use other repeated national events to put forward claims regarding the dispute. As a possible example, we can consider the Japanese 'Takeshima Day,' held on February 22nd. Shimane Prefecture has held 'Takeshima Day' ceremonies annually since 2006. The central government has sent a representative each year since 2013.⁴⁸ The day, which started, according to Bukh, as a prefectural campaign to secure its self-perception as a victim of Tokyo's negligence, eventually became an important factor that brought the Dokdo/Takeshima dispute to the center of nation's attention.⁴⁹

On the other hand, Korean president has used the ceremony which marks the anniversary of the March First Independence Movement, to remind his nation (and to Japan) Korea's position and claims regarding Dokdo/Takeshima. This is related to the framing of the dispute within the colonial narrative and can highlight the message that Korea will continue to fend off Japanese "aggression," similarly to the actions of the March First Movement during the colonial period.

The nature of those repeated events and the fact that they happen regularly help create a sense of tradition, something that the people can look forward to, have certain emotions, and develop expectations towards. That allows leaders to use those as circumstances to repeat and form messages, and frame them in their desirable context and narratives.

The Islets as a Collective Site

According to Penrose, Territoriality can create spaces which seem to satisfy material needs and moreover emotional requirement of belonging, taking into account that our understanding of who we are is grounded in where we come from. He claims that through processes of nationalism, the territory became significant and thus transformed from a geographical expression of cultural identity into the fundamental basis for defining a group and individual identities.⁵⁰

Similarly to individual memory, cultural memory is linked to places.⁵¹ Therefore, from my perspective, we can think about the islets as a national territory in two ways. First, the islets can be used in their 'objective' meaning, as a specific place. Dokdo/Takeshima can be seen and used as a territory that belongs to the nation, a lost territory that should be given back,⁵² or even a site with meaningful resources for the nation. Moreover, the islets can be used to unite the 'imagined community'⁵³ through something concrete. Second, Dokdo/Takeshima can carry another, perhaps deeper meaning. That is to say, the islets can be used not as a tangible territory and space but as something abstract that exists in the nation's imagination and that the nation is struggling for. In that sense, the islets are seen as something that defines and bring the nation together, and thus are even more significant.

In this context, I find Moon and Li's theory of proactive and reactive nationalism in Korea useful to understand both Korea's perspective but also Japan's. Moon and Li consider two distinct forms of Korean nationalism: proactive and reactive. Proactive nationalism is a deliberate political agenda to achieve national goals, such as independence. It usually has mass movements and is characterized by a defined ideology and aims. In this context, the driving force of the Korean nationalism was to liberate Korea from the Japanese colonial rule and restore state sovereignty. Meanwhile, reactive nationalism is the collective expression of nationalist sentiments toward external stimuli that hurts or threatens national identity or interests. It is not fixed and there are no associated ideologies or movements since it mostly involves spontaneous and voluntary mass participation. There are many actions that might trigger reactive nationalism. In the Korean case, most prominent has been the domestic actions of neighboring countries that undermine South Korea's national identity.⁵⁴

Within the discussion of Dokdo/Takeshima, it is possible to identify both proactive and reactive actions. Proactive nationalism can be found in both Japan and South Korea's struggles to receive sovereignty of the islets. The two nations are constantly engaging with the dispute through their institutions or civic

groups. I claim that after the foundation of the nation-states and the end of the imperial period, the nations needed a common goal to fight for. Although that is not the only conflict the countries are involved in, it is a goal for which governments put efforts and resources to achieve. As an example of this proactive attitude I consider the governments' formal websites that are kept available and are an institutional tool to present their agendas and goals. On the other hand, reactive nationalism can be seen in the way the governments and the people from both countries are responding to the other side's actions in the context of the dispute. Responses are constantly being expressed towards different acts or statements of the other side, through governmental declarations and speeches, protests and civil acts. They are visible in newspapers articles that discuss issues that are related to the islets, and the media itself has an important role in raising awareness to the dispute by advocating certain narratives in this context.

Creating New Narratives and New Identities

One aspect of collective memory construction is the way political changes may reshape narratives of the past, to better suit particular interests.⁵⁵ In this way, the past is remade for present purpose.⁵⁶ As I see it, this aspect is particularly prominent in the Dokdo/Takeshima dispute. Obviously, each country chooses to highlight different historical events, facts, and documents while providing and shaping their arguments in regard to the dispute. Thus, each nation creates its own story and explanation to the dispute. Of course, this is not a unique character in disputes between countries.

Additionally, I claim that since the Dokdo/Takeshima dispute carries further significance, both Japan and Korea are using the dispute to develop other national narratives. In South Korea, president Moon promotes new narratives of the nation's history by claiming that South Korea's roots go back to the provisional government launched in 1919, during the colonial period, as opposed to the conservative perception that the country was officially founded in 1948.⁵⁷ Since those claims are rising in the context of debates regarding Dokdo/Takeshima, it could be an example of the attempts to reshape the past and build new collective memory in this context.

In Japan's case, the approach towards Takeshima can be related to the nationalists' call to adopt a patriotic sentiment and pride and move forward from the apologetic, "defeatist view," by demonstrating firmness on territorial disputes. Furthermore, I see the attempts to create an image of Japan as a lawful nation, as the primary sources suggest, can be used to give the Japanese a "new sense of purpose" and national identity and image.

Another point is that both Korea and Japan have formed their national identity in consideration of the other nation as an ultimate 'Other'. Generally speaking, having a longstanding dispute with the other nation, can be beneficial in order to underline a national sentiment and sense of a shared national "enemy." It can create a sense of shared goal and belonging for the nation's members.

In Korea, I claim that in the context of the Dokdo/Takeshima dispute, the rejection of Japanese "aggression," as it is called, is more prominent than the new "global image" that was discussed above. In fact, Wiegard, who examines the effects of the dispute over Japan and South Korea collaboration, claims that

politicians "should be cautious about engaging in any policies that contradict nationalist rhetoric since such actions will very likely damage their credibility, threaten their reputation, and more importantly, increase the likelihood of domestic punishment."⁵⁸ Continuing this view and based on the primary sources, I argue that politicians in Korea use that national rhetoric in the context of the dispute and the overall colonial narrative to gain power and to get public affection and support. In this way, the dispute is being used to gain political power through the encouragement of national sentiment and strength.

In Japan, the dispute had a stabilizing effect on forming a national identity. The narrative of Takeshima made the Japanese focus on a somewhat modified but nevertheless hierarchical construction of the Japanese 'self' in regards to the Korean 'other.' Korean emotionality, lack of respect for international law, and overall conduct and narratives all became, to a certain extent, factors in Japanese identity formation as the opposite of those features. Korea is seen as an "uncivilized nation engaged in collective lying,"⁵⁹ in contrast to Japan. Thus, the attitude towards Dokdo/Takeshima became an important element in the understanding of the hierarchical differences through which Japanese identity is constructed as superior.

Overall, it is possible to conclude that the dispute is not only driven by collective memory and national sentiment, but also being used to build new collective memories, and to increase national sentiment and pride in both South Korea and Japan.

5. Conclusion

Self and other are topics that are constantly being questioned, discussed and defined through contradicting positions. The Orient versus the Occident, the 'civilized' versus the 'barbaric,' us and them. When the self is a collective self, like in the case of the nation, the Other becomes an even more useful tool for nationalists to define the community's boundaries, include and exclude members of the nation, and create a common and shared identity which can be defined vis-à-vis that Other.

In this paper, I attempted to explore the way nationalism and collective memory are related to the Dokdo/Takeshima dispute. I examined two different types of primary sources: the formal positions of the South Korean and Japanese governments, and the coverage of the dispute in the English-written Korean and Japanese media. Through this analysis, I was able to see the way the dispute and the attempts to achieve sovereignty over the islets are related to the nations' collective memory and nationalist sentiments. On the one hand, the islets carry a significant meaning because of collective memory. In South Korea, the dispute has been framed within the context of colonialism and Japanese aggression and therefore is considered as a national issue. It also affects the formation of new narratives of Korean collective memory. In Japan, the dispute has connections to other disputed territories, but it also affects the new, national sentiment and attempts to strengthen patriotism. In both countries, the dispute itself is being used to shape collective memory and even gives a new sense of national identity and purpose. In the contemporary global world, constant debates are taking place, questioning the relevance of nationalism and patriotism. Examining the dispute of Dokdo/Takeshima islets can be seen as a good example

to reflect how national sentiment and collective memory narrativization still play an important role in today's politics and societies. Furthermore, within the context of South Korea and Japan's relations, the question of Dokdo/Takeshima is likely to stay a major controversy that shapes the countries' domestic conduct and mutual relations with each other.

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⁴⁷ Heller, "A Tentative Answer," 1032.

⁴⁸ Kyodo, "Tokyo Highlights Claim".

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⁵¹ Heller, "A Tentative Answer," 1031.

⁵² I would like to point out here that as I see it, although Korea formally claims that "no territorial dispute exists regarding Dokdo," the government still make efforts and invest resources to promote this issue, and therefore I claim that to a certain extent, South Korea treats the islets like a lost territory or at least an unrecognized territory.

⁵³ As Benedict Anderson defined the Nation: "it is an imagined political community- and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign." (Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism, revised edition, 2006).

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