

# Asia Leadership Fellow Program

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2008 PROGRAM REPORT

## Unity and Diversity: Democratic Dimensions

Unity and Diversity: Democratic Dimensions

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## Preface

In 1996, the International House of Japan and the Japan Foundation jointly created the Asia Leadership Fellow Program (ALFP). The ALFP provides selected public intellectuals in the Asian region with the opportunity to reside for two months in Tokyo and to engage in collaborative research and exchange activities on common subjects pertinent to the region. Through such intellectual dialogue, the program seeks to create a close, personal, and professional network of public intellectuals in Asia, deeply rooted and committed to civil society beyond their own cultural, disciplinary, and geopolitical backgrounds.

There are now nearly eighty fellows, who all come from diverse professional backgrounds, including academia, journalism, publishing, law, education, the arts, NGOs (nongovernmental organizations), and nonprofit organizations. The general theme set for the 2008 program was, once again, “Unity and Diversity: Envisioning Community-Building in Asia and Beyond.” From September 8 through November 7, 2008, the seven fellows resided mainly at the International House of Japan in Roppongi, Tokyo, and took part in workshops, resource seminars, field trips, and a retreat with scholars, journalists, and NGO/NPO leaders based in Japan. At the end of the two-month program, on October 31, a public symposium entitled “Unity and Diversity: Democratic Dimensions” was held to report on the outcome of the collaborative interaction as well as on the research interests of each fellow. This program report includes the reports submitted by the fellows after the program was completed, as well as a summary of the resource seminars and other activities in which the fellows participated.

The Program believes that the fellows’ critical voices challenging the status quo as well as their proposals for alternative solutions will lead to the development of new norms and value-orientations, which will have significant benefits for the future of the region.

The International House of Japan  
The Japan Foundation



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## ALFP 2008 Fellows

### Atiya Achakulwisut (Thailand)

Opinion pages editor, *Bangkok Post*



Ms. Atiya obtained her bachelor's degree from the Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University, majoring in American literature. She received her master's degree in Environmental Studies from the University of Oregon, United States. In her role as the editor of the Opinion and Analysis pages of the *Bangkok Post* (the leading English-language daily newspaper in Thailand), Ms. Atiya seeks to bring out diverse views about what is going on in the country and the region and attempts to present views and analysis of what these events mean and where they may be taking us. Ms. Atiya is interested in finding out what common values and interests hold the region together as China continues to rise and the United States is receding further into recession and political difficulties of its own, exacerbated by continued involvement in the Middle East and the war on terrorism. Some of the common trends being experienced across the region, she believes, include the ageing of the population and the tendency among youths to be increasingly cocooned in their individualized interests, ignoring the problems of people from other backgrounds or social classes.

### Chito Gascon (Philippines)

President, LIBERTAS (Lawyers' League for Liberty)



Mr. Gascon is a lawyer, political activist, and social reformer. He served as the youngest member of the 1986 Constitutional Commission that drafted the Philippine Constitution and was also the Youth Sector Representative to the 8th Congress. He was the principal author of the legislation that institutionalized youth participation in local governance and introduced special protection measures for children from all forms of abuse. He was also the Undersecretary for Legal, Legislative & Special Concerns of the Department of Education and a member of the Philippine Government's negotiating panel in peace talks with the National Democratic Front. His advocacy work involves areas such as access to justice, political and electoral reform, conflict resolution and human rights, civic education, and transparency and accountability. He was also a founding trustee of the International Center for Innovation, Transformation & Excellence in Governance, the policy group for the 'Hyatt 10' - a group of former Senior Officials of the Arroyo Government, who collectively resigned in 2005. He obtained his Bachelor of Arts and Law degrees from the University of the Philippines, Diliman. He also read for a Master of Law (LLM) degree at St. Edmund's College at the University of Cambridge.

## Asia Leadership Fellow Program: 2008 Program Report

### Gu Yi An (China)

Actor, Director, and Professor at the Acting Department, Shanghai Theatre Academy



Prof. Gu is well known as one of the few avant-garde directors in China. He has devoted his life and work to experimental, innovative theatre, constantly pushing the boundaries of what is or has been the norm of what is acceptable to be performed on stage. He came to the Shanghai Theatre Academy as a student in the acting department in 1978. After obtaining his master's degree in acting/directing, he became a faculty member at the Academy in 1989. To increase cultural exchange between the East and the West, Prof. Gu set up the Shanghai International Performing Arts Research Centre (SIPARC) at the Academy. Through this centre, he has invited many international master teachers to collaborate in his research into traditional and contemporary theatre practice and training. In 1989, he directed the play "Owls in the House" by Zhang Xian, which was first performed in Shanghai, and later in China's first National Experimental Theatre Festival, held in Nanjing. In 1992, he was awarded the Cultural Award for directing the play "DaQiao-Big Bridge," and in 2004 he received the Chinese Golden Lion Award for Best Director. His methodology is cross-cultural and multinational, based on mutual understanding and acceptance. He is also mentor at the University of Theatre Nations/International Theatre Institute/UNESCO.

### Kim Haechang (Korea)

Vice President, The Hope Institute



Mr. Kim has been a reporter for 17 years at the *Kookje Daily News* in Busan, Korea. He has written numerous reports and also published several books on environmental issues. With the support of the LG Press Foundation Fellowship program, Mr. Kim became a member of AMR, Japan's environmental group in Tokyo, between 1997 and 1998. In 2002, he served as a labor chairman of the *Kookje Daily News*. In 2003, he was awarded the Kyobo Life Security's Environmental Culture Award, Korea's renowned environmental award. Since 2007, he has held the title of vice president of the Hope Institute, an NGO think tank in Korea. As a social designer, Mr. Kim collaborates with diverse networks and local communities. He recently completed a doctoral program at Busan Graduate School, majoring in Environmental Economics.

### Chandra Kishor Lal (Nepal)

Columnist and Commentator



Mr. Lal is a columnist for the *Nepali Times* newspaper and *Himal Southasia* magazine published in Kathmandu. He also writes regularly for the trendsetting Nepali newsmagazine *Himal Khabarpatrika*. He reads and writes in four languages—Maithili, Nepali, Hindi, and English—and is widely read, heard, and seen by readers, listeners, and audiences of South Asian publications, radio stations, and television. His notable contributions include the chapters "Imagining South Asia in an Unipolar World," "The Complexities of Border Conflicts in South Asia," "Nepal's Maobaadi," "Cultural flows across a blurred boundary," and Nepal's Quest for Modernity" in different books. He has also coedited the volume *Chhapama Dalit* (Dalit in Print) in Nepali. Two of his books tentatively titled—*State of the State in Nepal: Retrospect and Prospect* and *Towards Plural Unity of South Asia: Issues of Human Rights, Democracy and Governance*—are in the process of finalization for publication. He was voted the most influential columnist of Nepal. Mr. Lal would like to explore the bonds that develop under shared hardship and shape the idea of plural identity.

**Lee Soo im (Japan)**

Professor, Department of Business Administration, Ryukoku University



Prof. Lee received her doctorate in Education from Temple University majoring in Education, Curriculum, Instruction and Technology. She is actively working to improve the human rights of foreign residents in Japan and currently serves as a member of the Osaka City Committee for Policies on Foreign Residents. In 2007, she was chosen as a Global Scholar by the Educational Testing Service (ETS), USA. Her past research on the importance of equity in language testing has been globally recognized. A naturalized citizen of Korean descent in Japan, she is actively exploring the political and social contexts of the range of diversity in Japanese society. In her book, *Japan's Diversity Dilemmas: Ethnicity, Citizenship, and Education*, Prof. Lee examines the decades-long experience of Koreans in Japan from their early migration during the colonial period, through the loss of their Japanese nationality at the end of World War II, to current efforts to promote naturalization and the recovery of ethnic names. She is also looking at how the forces of globalization undercut the notion of homogeneity and give rise to new notions of diversity and multiculturalism in Japan.

**Jyotirmaya Sharma (India)**

Professor of Political Science, University of Hyderabad



Prof. Sharma is currently working on the thought of Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, Tagore, and Gandhi (to be published in 2009), while simultaneously working on a book exploring the life and ideas of Gandhi. He is also editing an anthology of Indian Thought. His recent publications include *Hindutva: Exploring the Idea of Hindu Nationalism* and *Terrifying Vision: M.S. Golwalkar, the RSS and India*. He has been a fellow of the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies and the Indian Institute of Advanced Study and has lectured at the universities of Baroda, Hull, Oxford, and St. Stephen's College, Delhi. He was a visiting professor on democratic theory at the South Asia Institute, Ruprecht-Karls University, Heidelberg, in 2005. Prof. Sharma has been among the founders of the Kalakriti Art Gallery and the Sreenidhi International School and has been a strategic advisor to the Naandi Foundation (an organization working in the areas of malnutrition, illiteracy, and water conservation). He also held senior editorial positions at the *Times of India* and *The Hindu* between 1998 and 2006. He continues to write for several newspapers and journals as a columnist and is also a trained Hindustani classical musician.



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# ALFP 2008 Schedule

Sep 8	Orientation/Welcome Reception
Sep 9	Introductory Seminar “Sinking Japan: How do we survive in Asia?” by Yuji Suzuki, Professor, Hosei University
Sep 10	Country Reports 1 (Kim, Gu, & Achakulwist)
Sep 11	Country Reports 2 (Gascon & Lee)
Sep 12	Country Reports 3 (Lal & Sharma)
Sep 13	Retreat Day 1 (Lawson Guest House)
Sep 14	Retreat Day 2 (Lawson Guest House)
Sep 15	Retreat Day 3 (Lawson Guest House)
Sep 17	Workshop on Public Symposium
Sep 19	Lee Soo im Workshop
Sep 22	Seminar “Dealing with Social Issues in Japanese Theater” by Yoji Sakate, Founder, Theatre Co. <i>Rinkogun</i> /President, Japan Playwright’s Association
Sep 24	Seminar “Politics and Policy for Elderly” by John Campbell, Emeritus Professor, University of Michigan
Sep 25	Seminar on Minamata Disease Incident by Yuta Jitsukawa, Secretary General, Minamata Forum
	Seminar on Japanese Politics and Economics by Masahiko Ishizuka, Board of Trustees, Foreign Press Center
Oct 2	Seminar “Documentary Films in Asia and Japan with emphasis on Minamata Documentary” by Kenji Ishizaka, Director, Asia Division, Tokyo International Film Festival
Oct 5–Oct 9	Field Trip to Kyushu, Kyoto, and Osaka
Oct 10–Oct 26	Individual Activities Period
Oct 27	Workshop on individual activities
Oct 29	Seminar “Democracy as a part of Japan’s Intellectual History” by Kūichi Fujiwara, Professor, University of Tokyo
Oct 31	Public Symposium “Unity and Diversity: Democratic Dimensions”
Nov 6	Evaluation



# PAPERS OF THE FELLOWS

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# Thailand's Tipping Point: Politics of Instability

ATIYA ACHAKULWISUT

## INTRODUCTION

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In the past few years, Thailand has found itself the subject of international news owing to the dramatic twists and turns in its political situation. The word “instability” is often used to describe the aftermath of the turmoil that continues to grip the nation. What, though, are the implications of the concise, seemingly inoffensive word? Indeed, instability is a mild description of what Thailand has gone through during the past decade, the outcome of which remains an enormous challenge that the country has yet to overcome.

What set of events or circumstances precipitated one of Asia's young but steadily progressing democracies down a treacherous path, complete with a military coup d'état, violent street protests, and calamitous closure of international airports, to the point that it is now viewed as teetering on the edge of anarchy? What tipped Thailand, known as the land of smiles, laid-back beaches, and *Mai Pen Rai* (never-you-mind attitude), in such a disastrous fashion and seemingly so quickly as well?

Instability cannot be said to be a desirable characteristic for any country's political affairs. As Thailand reels under the collapse of and challenge to its traditional political order—rules, norms, and ideologies—because of competing interests, the one thing most political observers, investors, and analysts would like to know is whether and when the country can get back on track.

The problem with this inquiry is an assumption that there was some kind of “right track” or a state of normalcy in the recent or distant past that the country can return to and that will restore it to a state of equilibrium. The current situation, however, does not seem to suggest this. Thailand is trying to move on—there is no doubt about that—but where is the country headed? Does “normalcy” mean the largely ineffective administration with power more or less shared among a limited number of the ruling elites and the urban-biased policy prior to the powerful rise of the former Prime Minister-cum-fugitive Thaksin Shinawatra in 2001?

Does it mean a return to the “expedient democracy” after the confluence of the 1997 reformist constitution and strongman-style Thaksin administration that resulted in the strengthening of the executive branch to the point that it overcame parliamentary/electoral politics, check-and-balance mechanisms, and curtailed basic rights for the sake of overall progress?

More importantly, is there still a physical or conceptual state of “normalcy” for the country to return to after all the tearing down and questioning that have occurred along with the political strife? Under what conditions will the country's leading populace as well as general public—all of whom are divided by crisscrossing political, economic, and ideological lines brought alive by the protracted conflicts—agree to co-exist?

Many more questions must be asked as Thailand is picking up the pieces and figuring out how to move forward as one country again. Can normalcy be equated with the idea of a national reconciliation government that some people are demanding? Or is it nothing but a lull in the middle of the past confusion and cataclysm that is to come unless the country tackles the root causes of its conflicts?

This article argues that there is no past right track to which Thailand can safely return after the series of political confrontations that have rocked the country to its core. Thailand must either systematically tackle the economic and social inequalities by developing and implementing an ambitious plan to create a more egalitarian society, or face a vicious cycle of money politics, undemocratic intervention, never-ending conflicts, and protests that will keep the country locked in the politics of instability for a long time to come.

## BACK FROM THE BRINK

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“Return to normalcy” and “back in business” have become the favorite slogans for all Thai authorities and government figures during their many road shows abroad. These were the key messages during the 14th ASEAN Summit, held at the end of February this year instead of mid-December last year, as originally scheduled, because of the closure of airports. During his meeting with Japanese businessmen on Feb 6, 2009, Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva reassured them that Thailand is “getting back on track” and that political stability has now returned to the country.

Late last year, Thailand was all over the news owing to the seizure of its two main international airports, Don Mueang and Suvarnabhumi, by protesters opposing former premier Thaksin Shinawatra, who grouped together under the banner of the People’s Alliance for Democracy (PAD). This incident caused more than 300 billion baht in damage to the country’s tourism industry and other businesses and was billed by many as a terrorist act. The rule of PM Abhisit might be an appropriate change as compared to this situation. At least the new government led by the Democrat Party has a Government House to work in, unlike its predecessors, who were blocked from the government’s seat of power by PAD protesters who took over the premise as their protest site. However, to assert that Thailand is now politically stable would be stretching the facts. Only a week before PM Abhisit’s trip to Japan, about 20,000 “Red Shirt” pro-Thaksin (thus, anti-government, now led by the Democrat Party) protesters had marched to the front gate of the Government House and issued a few demands, including one for the PM to dissolve the House and call for a general election. They threatened to regroup if the PM failed to meet the demands.

Hot on the heels of the Red Shirt protest, former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, sentenced by the Thai court to two-years imprisonment for a conflict of interest over an auction of a state-owned plot of land and now on the run in exile, made a phone call to his supporters in the Puea Thai Party (whose original root is in the now-dissolved Thai Rak Thai (TRT) Party founded by Mr. Thaksin himself) and promised to fight what he believed was political persecution to death, in heaven or in hell.

The rival yellow-shirted PAD countered this move by calling for a rally in which one of its leaders made a threat to “invade” the northern region, which was believed to be the stronghold of the Red Shirts. Although no new round of violence has erupted yet, these vocal threats of a rally and counter-rally have raised fears of clashes and social melee.

Against this turbulent background, the opposition Puea Thai Party proposed a draft law called the National Reconciliation Act that seeks to give a blanket amnesty to any politically related cases filed after the 2006 coup. The pardon will cover executives of political parties whose political rights were withdrawn for five years by the Constitution Court when their parties were disbanded for association with election frauds and protests related to the closing off of the Don Mueang and Suvarnabhumi airports in November 2008 and the alleged mishandling of the PAD-led protest on October 7, 2009, by state authorities, which resulted in civilian deaths and many injuries. The proposed law generated another round of controversy and it was finally shelved. It is believed, however, that the issue will be revisited and it will plunge the country into another phase of profound conflicts, both at a philosophical and practical level.

Besides, the amnesty move is intricately linked to the 2007 Constitution, drafted and promulgated under the coup-installed government led by Gen. Surayud Chulanont, as it is the charter that stipulates the dissolution of a party and withdrawal of political rights as punishment for election fraud in the first place. Moreover, any attempt to amend the current charter—even if almost everyone agrees that it must be amended—is guaranteed to evoke a belligerent debate and cause further rifts among the already divided public. The country will again descend a thorny path where priorities must be reset, power rearranged, and the laws redrawn. The questions are how and at what and whose cost?

For now, however, PM Abhisit can tell foreign investors that Thailand has returned from the brink. Still, the façade of normalcy belies a host of simmering conflicts and incongruities—some of them structural, others cursory—that are waiting to erupt.

## THE ROOTS OF INSTABILITY

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Throughout Thailand’s tumult, news reports produced by both members of the local media and (probably more) the foreign press corps focused on a single theme: the political rift is mainly an urban-rural one. The

headlines read “In Thai protests, a divide between urban and rural”<sup>1</sup> and “The urban-rural fault line running beneath Thailand’s tumult.”<sup>2</sup> The news was often illustrated by a photo of a farmer standing alongside his emaciated cow on parched land. There were also portraits of urbane protesters with tiny Thai flags painted stylishly on their cheeks. The same old urban-rural divide in Thailand was revisited both in text and in picture time and again, becoming a favorite “democracy drama” for the international audience.

But does this vision fit the reality?

Maybe not.

This is considering that one discernable phenomenon in Thailand during the past few years is for members of the same family, friends, or co-workers to disagree politically: some may support Mr. Thaksin, while others may root for the opposition, PAD. If relatives, friends, and colleagues who surely move in similar circles cannot agree on the former Prime Minister and the PAD phenomenon, does the notion that the political problem in Thailand is a result of the urban-rural divide still hold true?

While the fact remains that the pro-Thaksin vehicle, the People Power Party (now disbanded) won the most seats in the relatively poorer North and Northeast, can we be certain that their voters are rural people? Even if they are from the rural area, they can no longer be categorized as rustic going by their current lifestyle.

It is true that during the 1980s, Bangkok was the center of all activity in Thailand. The growth of Bangkok led to the development of the country as a whole. From then on, however, many things have changed. The rush to become industrialized during the 1990s’ East Asian take-off saw Thailand becoming rapidly urbanized, and not only in Bangkok. Clusters of urban growth have sprouted in every major city around the country. In fact, there are estimates that up to or more than 50% of Thailand has now become urbanized.

The trend is the same in the region. According to the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), last year represented a turning point in human geography in the Asia-Pacific region. For the first time in history, more people live in cities than in rural areas.<sup>3</sup>

Considering the changes, a more precise analysis of the democracy drama in Thailand would be to attribute it to the explosive mixture of the economic and social inequalities (which need not be between the urban and rural sectors) and limits of electoral democracy that former PM Thaksin Shinawatra shrewdly exploited to his utmost benefit during his political empire building.

Let us first consider the limits of the electoral democracy.

Thailand’s democracy is a young one. The country was swept by a revolution that replaced absolute monarchy with a constitutional one in 1932, only 77 years ago. During the past seven decades, it has experienced some 12 successful military coup d’etats—roughly one every six years—and been through 18 constitutions. Under the circumstances, the “spirit” of democracy—the unwritten norms, ethics, and culture—have not been allowed to take root. The only aspect of democracy that the Thai people have dealt with extensively is its form—the electoral and parliamentary process.

The decentralization of politics prescribed by the 1997 Constitution and the entry of Thaksin Shinawatra, a billionaire telecom tycoon, and his TRT party drastically changed the face of politics in Thailand. Until then, the country’s political affairs were a power-sharing game among a few prominent politicians. Political parties did not pay attention to their policy platform. Elections were won by individual charisma and well-established patron-client networks from the national level down to the village. Money played an integral part in the operation of these networks. Vote buying was rampant, but very much based on personal networks. It was part of the scene but not yet systematized.

To make a long story short, the TRT’s winning formula is to top the same old money politics with populist policies, some of which include free handouts and temporary relief projects. Although such policies were popular among electorates as they received benefits directly from the state coffer, they have been criticized for compromising the country’s financial discipline and long-term development in the end.

According to a study by Viengrat Nethipo, a lecturer at the Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University, Thai politics during the 80s to the 90s was governed by what she termed “networks of influence”—informal networks loosely organized around influential individuals in localities.<sup>4</sup>

1 Mydan, Seth, ‘In Thai protests, a divide between urban and rural’, *The International Herald Tribune*, October 13, 2008.

2 Montlake, Simon, ‘Beneath Thailand’s tumult, a rural-urban fault line’, *The Christian Science Monitor*, December 15, 2008.

3 <http://www.unescap.org/stat/data/syb2007/ESCAP-syb2007.pdf>

4 Neipho, Viengrat, ‘The Networks of Influence of Local Politicians’, *Bangkok Post*, December 19, 2007, p. 12.

“These influential networks,” she argued, “were present in every part of the political process: manipulating the mass electorate, organizing political campaigns, and utilising political positions for private interests.”

Notably, before the decentralization of the administrative power in 1997, which resulted in local politicians holding more state power and a larger share of the state budget, and the establishment of the TRT party in 1999, the influential networks did not strictly engage with any particular political party or formal political groups.

“The influential persons and their groups attached their support in electoral campaigns to individual candidates rather than a party. They therefore shifted their support or stance from one party to others and from one individual candidate to another depending on the circumstances,” Mrs. Viengrat wrote.

The TRT party has successfully linked up with the local populace directly through their modern marketing campaigns and populist platform and its ability to channel the central budget to local administrative organizations. Consequently, the influential networks that had existed as an agent between state power and citizens in the past had no choice but to adjust themselves and side with the TRT party, or they would lose the elections and witness their influence disappear.

Mrs. Viengrat did not specify if the change should be categorized as the “institutionalization of influential networks” or the “political institutionalisation that leads to the weakening of influential networks.” However, one thing is clear: Thailand’s electoral politics, being already prone to manipulation, leaves a lot to be desired by the democracy yardstick.

The arresting of electoral democracy in Thailand is also made possible mainly because of the social and economic gap, one of the worst in the world. The 20 percent at the top of the income scale earn 12 to 15 times more than the 20 percent at the bottom. This is not to imply that the uneducated poor (either rural or urban) are foolish to trade their votes for the promise of a new road, access to cheap funds, or healthcare benefits, knowing that they are perpetuating the vicious cycle of money politics, abuse of power, and corruption. The argument is that these people are probably fully aware of the quid pro quo they strike when they vote for these politicians. Then, the question is, why do these people have no choice but to accept such a raw deal?

The same is true about people who march along with the controversial PAD. These people are not stupid either. I think it would also be misleading to assume that those who joined the anti-Thaksin protests agree with everything the PAD has proposed or done. The rallying base of the PAD attempts to censure the government, to hold it accountable when all other democratic channels have failed. Further, it is this core idea that holds its supporters from various backgrounds and objectives together, not the group’s ever-evolving agendas.

It is true that there are people who would agree or disagree with the PAD just because of the Thaksin factor, but viewed in a larger context, the existence of the PAD reflects a yearning for other aspects of democracy—behavioral norms or ethics—to govern the all-too-frivolous ballot ritual and supremacy. It can be argued that unless the political situation is reformed, so that politicians become more aware of this desire and the obligation to respond to it, the PAD-style street politics will continue to exist, if not in the present form then in another, as a destabilizing factor in the system suffering from an election-supremacy syndrome.

On the economic front, it has now become clear that the rise of Thaksin and his pro-globalization agenda went against the old elites—the traditionalist and establishment groups—whose interests were tied to the less exposed, more protected Thailand. The 1997 financial crisis hit the old elite groups the hardest—many lost control of their business to foreign investors in a bid to stay afloat. The economic bust has deepened their paranoia about the volatility of the globalized economy.

Thaksin, meanwhile, is as globalized as any successful international businessman can be. A self-made billionaire, he amassed wealth through the highly internationalized, highly connected telecom business. He is all for opening up the Thai economy to the global market. He has an entrepreneurial spirit and is fully confident he can take advantage of the so-called free trade. In this light, the ongoing struggle is less a result of rural-urban tension but partly a reflection of the conflicting economic agendas and interests—a tug-of-war—between the old and new elites of the Thai economy.

Both Thaksin and the old elites have supporters, the first, mainly among the poorer, marginalized people who never benefited from the state policy and the latter, among members of the more privileged upper-crust segment of the population. As there was no popular venue or forum for these groups, or others who might have a different vision of what Thailand’s economic future should be, the divergence was left as it was. I would like to argue that unless the country dares to break this impasse and come up with a comprehensive roadmap for the future, especially one that would correct the underlying cause of the political conflict—namely, the stark economic and social inequalities—there will be no way for the country to step out of the state of instability.

## THE WAY FORWARD

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There is no denying that Thailand is at a critical juncture. It is clear that the presence and influence of former PM Thaksin will continue to be felt in the local political scene even if he himself remains in exile, a fugitive of the country's legal system.

The ruling coalition led by the Democrat Party is a shaky one at best. A House dissolution is expected anytime after the annual budget is disbursed. The country will again return to general elections and its contested consequences.

Under the scenario, the return to electoral democracy, with its promise curtailed and limitations made potent by the unique sociopolitical context discussed earlier is unlikely to solve the protracted, deep-seated division in Thailand. However, at this point, if we agree that the crisis gripping the country has many dimensions and is embedded in the easy-to-manipulate structural inequality, we can safely assume that no single action would. In a sense, there is no "normalcy" for Thailand to return to, except as an in-between state of political truce before a new conflict erupts. The economic and social inequality has become too heavy for the age-old political structure to hold.

PM Abhisit floated a proposal of political reform as a way out of the protracted conflict, but thus far, he has failed to offer details about how the process would be put to work. The political think tank King Prachadhipok Institute took up the task of studying the procedure as well as coming up with a new draft for the country's charter, but insisted it would take at least 19 months. The effort was criticized and largely shunned by the opposition from the very start.

The opposing Puea Thai Party meanwhile remains keen on first pardoning all politically related cases initiated in association with the 2006 coup and then restarting the country's democratic process. The tug-of-war is likely to continue for a while as no solution that would be acceptable to all the stakeholders is in sight.

An ideal scenario would be to use the vacuum before a new election constructively. With Thaksin in exile, the PAD would have no reason to continue its protest. A "third power" of people who are in the middle, who are neither pro-government nor PAD, should be allowed to emerge.

The coalition of the middle (moderates) must initiate a process to set a new agenda for the country beyond the personalized conflicts. The assembly must focus on what the new agenda should involve, whom it should engage, and how it can form a new consensus.

Economically, the Establishment must be made to realize that they cannot fight globalization. However, the internationalists must also accept that they will always face a backlash from those who are left out unless they try to make Thailand a more equal society.

One roadmap toward the future is to seriously implement a welfare state policy so that the poor do not have to pin all their hopes on promises made by politicians. Welfare benefits should not be a favor from politicians but a basic right for all citizens regardless of their political affiliation or social status. When the citizens do not have to trade their votes for these benefits, it is hoped that they will then have a true choice when it comes to electing their representatives.

Land reform and implementation of a progressive tax system will be crucial as they are means to finance the expensive welfare policy. Both measures have proven to be difficult to push forward, but the country must be made to realize that unless we tackle the inequality issue, there is little hope that the young democracy will stabilize.

ATIYA ACHAKULWISUT is Editorial Pages Editor, *Bangkok Post*, Thailand.

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# Building Solidarity for Human Rights and Democracy in Asia

CHITO GASCON

**D**espite rapid economic development in many parts of Asia and the vibrancy owing to the multiplicity of cultures therein, there remain serious challenges across region with respect to established standards of *democratic governance*. The absence or lack of such standards has a negative impact on the quality of life of Asian citizens who represent close to half of the world's population.

Today, across most of Asia, states are grappling with the dilemma of providing the benefits of liberty, participation, and accountability to their people—despite the global trend toward democratization and respect for human rights. Thus, notwithstanding changes in this regard in other continents, only a few Asian countries have successfully set on the road to full democratic consolidation. As efforts are made toward envisioning a *shared community for all Asians*, we must consider whether such a project is sustainable in the long run without it being firmly grounded upon the universal values of respect for human rights and a genuine commitment to the dual principles of popular consent and the rule of law.

There are, of course, many practical obstacles and real hurdles that need to be overcome for the full realization of an Asian democratic community. These constraints cannot simply be imagined away as they require creative intervention in order to be fully resolved. Still, it is possible to build human solidarity networks within countries and across borders and hope that they will nurture human values and develop strategies to progressively achieve social change. We thus hope to engender the institutionalization of workable regimes that encourage popular participation and ultimately prioritize the dignity of individuals.

## DEMOCRATIZATION IN ASIA

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While most of modern Asia had long been associated with authoritarian regimes, in recent years, there have been some remarkable transformations that may create the impetus to guarantee more people living in the region the benefits of a democratic ethos. The fact that the “wave of democracy” has swept across countries as diverse as Indonesia, Mongolia, South Korea, and Taiwan is testament to the capacity of the Asian people to embrace democratic values, even as efforts toward state-building in a post-conflict context in other Asian countries such as Nepal, East Timor, and Cambodia offer the possibility of achieving sustained peace through institutions of democratic governance irrespective of how imperfect they may be.

The initial democratic inroads made within Asia in the wake of the so-called Third Wave (which began with the downfall of the last dictatorships of Western Europe, had swept across many parts of the developing world including parts of Asia, and reached its peak at the end of the Cold War with the democratic transitions in Eastern Europe) might now be overwhelmed by the resurgence of new manifestations of authoritarianism even as other parts of the continent have yet to experience their first taste of freedom.

In recent years, political turmoil appears to have become the order of the day with violence gripping Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and the Philippines. The military has time and again exercised its prerogative to forcibly assume power in countries such as Pakistan and Thailand; rights are regularly and summarily curtailed in Vietnam, Singapore, and Malaysia; and tyranny and oppression remains in Burma and North Korea amidst disaster and famine aggravated by unaccountable regimes. The growth of so-called economic tigers/dragons that promote economic liberalization while restricting popular participation, with the rapid rise of China in its most recent incarnation, has presented an undemocratic alternative to achieve development outcomes. Although the experience of Taiwan and South Korea suggest that (over time) citizens will demand greater political transparency, the contemporary realities in Singapore, China, Vietnam, and most of Central Asia suggest that certain

“developmentalist non-democratic regimes” have learned how best not to respond to these pressures in order to maintain their tight grip on power.

Thus, conditions across many parts of Asia constitute contemporary hurdles to the future of freedom. Some observers have noted that the momentum toward rights and democracy may have halted, or worse, has stagnated and the movement could possibly be at the risk of imploding. According to the Freedom House’s *Freedom in the World* index, the number of *free* countries in Asia has essentially remained unchanged since the year 2000. Other analysts have pointed out that even as there is some hope, there may also exist some dangerous trends as given below:

1. In South Asia, India steadfastly remains the largest democracy in the world despite continuing challenges from within its borders. It is to a large extent surrounded by an “arc of anti-democratic political instability” (with the possible exception of Bhutan where development appears to be far more encouraging).
2. In Southeast Asia, formerly democratic countries have experienced significant recession, while semi-authoritarian regimes, one-party states, and military juntas all seem to have manifested resistance to democratic reform. Nonetheless, Indonesia, the largest Muslim country in the world, continues on the road to freedom even as it faces tremendous challenges to development and tries to control corruption.
3. In North and East Asia, the presence of matured and maturing democracies such as Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan offer hope for the rest of the region notwithstanding the sober reality that immediate neighbors present alternative modalities for governance.

The tasks at hand are to prevent any further erosion of hard fought liberties and institutions, assist relevant stakeholders who are committed to defending and advancing the people’s interest, and develop workable policies and strategies for the effective promotion of human rights and democracy in a sustained manner. Toward this end, there is a clear need to evaluate the present situation—particularly the attitude of certain governments that can and should be at the forefront of this process, as well as the work of other international actors—so that we might begin prescribing solutions and interventions that might galvanize the required cooperation (both within the region itself and beyond) that would inform the pace and form of a future program of objectives that will guarantee the success of as many democratization efforts on the ground as possible.

### JAPAN’S SPECIAL ROLE

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Japan, whether or not it acknowledges the fact, will have to play a significant, if not critical, role in realizing these efforts. Because it has exhibited the capacity to transform its own society into one of the most robust democracies in the region, has made tremendous strides in guaranteeing all its citizens the benefits of freedom, and has consistently contributed to global efforts for international peace and the upholding of human dignity; it is well placed to assume a leadership role for rights and democracy in Asia. Many have observed that in view of both its economic power and accumulated prestige resulting from its international commitments and advocacies, Japan could—if it so chooses—ultimately assist in shaping the democracy-oriented leadership choices that must be made if we want freedom to flourish.

There are several reasons why Japan, in conjunction with global and regional partners, can lead in the democratization efforts in Asia. In particular, it has the ability to do so through a *positive non-interventionist* approach that engenders reciprocity and cooperation and its predisposition to use multilateral mechanisms to achieve shared goals. In developing its international leadership toward this aspiration, Japan is strategically positioned to perform two important roles: that of an equal economic and political partner of other developed countries in the world (particularly in the West) and that of a distinctively Asian nation cooperating with other Asian countries in promoting genuine human development with all that it entails. Thus, it can realistically play an important “bridging function” that would simultaneously reaffirm universal values even as it deals with geographically unique situations in a primarily nonconfrontational manner.

Specifically, it can provide leadership in those areas where it has special strengths and interests. It can build upon its leading roles in international forums such as the ADB, APEC, and OECD. It can chart new directions as a crucial dialogue partner with ASEAN and central Asian countries, even as it nurtures its special relations with the countries that are closely located to it in Northeast Asia. Japan also continues to provide, on a bilateral basis, a significant amount of official development assistance to many Asian countries, and these contributions have largely been considered to tremendously benefit large segments of the population.

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The positive role that Japan played and continues to play in assisting the UN and the Cambodian government to effectively transition from its horrific past marked by violent conflict to achieving a regime of peace and justice could provide a useful framework for expanding engagement on these same issues in applicable situations elsewhere.

### DEVELOPMENT WITH DEMOCRACY

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Still, it may now be time to revisit policies that place emphasis on primarily economic indicators as some regimes that have shown marked success in achieving development outcomes are wont to proceed to the parallel effort of political liberalization, arguing that this essentially detracts from the aspiration of achieving further growth and stability. With regard to the argument that further development is needed before greater democracy and human rights can be achieved, the developed democracies of Asia (Japan, now joined by South Korea and Taiwan) are positioned to present a viable counter argument that, in fact, more freedom and democracy guarantees long-term economic progress without jeopardizing stability and growth. Furthermore, it is worthwhile to note that both Nobel laureate Amartya Sen and the current discourse on international development place emphasis on the primary aspect that freedom and participation function toward achieving measured success with respect to equity considerations and people-centered programs.

In this context, perhaps it becomes important for countries that provide tremendous resources to other countries governed by authoritarian regimes (whether in the form of aid, trade, investments, or a combination of these) to now consider whether their international political obligations require them to inquire into the record of those recipient states with respect to the treatment of their own nationals. At present, the global community is witnessing several tragedies of natural disaster, economic collapse, and famine affecting countries ruled by despotic regimes that, by their own actions, have aggravated the plight of their people because there are no effective means of accountability and democratic control. This has prompted some voices to declare that there is a humanitarian justification for invoking the "responsibility to protect." In my opinion, the core of the problem lies in the absence of democracy.

### MECHANISMS FOR PROMOTING RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY IN ASIA

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It is heartening to note that at a global level, in the last few years, there has been an explosion of democracy-promotion programs coupled with the more traditional state-building activities, both at the intergovernmental and nongovernmental level. This trend can also be observed in the Asian context, where the number of funding and implementation organizations involved in this field have grown significantly over the last 15 years or so.

Some of the multilateral institutions promoting democracy in Asia include the UN (through various mechanisms such as electoral assistance, UNDP, and the recently created UN Democracy Fund) and the ADB. While the UN agencies usually support advocacy and networking activities, the ADB's approach involves providing technical assistance to strengthen institutions. The focus of most efforts seem to emphasize the norm of *democratic governance*, and multiple tools are being developed in order to quantify what this means and to provide measurable indicators that would assist stakeholders in determining whether significant progress is being achieved over time. The World Bank and the European Union are also among some of the interested parties developing strategies that can help with efforts being undertaken in the Asian region.

Besides these multilateral initiatives, there are also parallel bilateral and nongovernmental initiatives being carried out along with multiple programs in diverse countries. However, it should be noted that the impetus for many such initiatives largely seems to come from the Western countries and interests. It has thus become incumbent on human rights practitioners and democracy activists from Asia itself, perhaps with the support and encouragement from the established democracies here, to create local interventions that draw upon local expertise and experiences to address local challenges. Both Taiwan and South Korea have taken steps to establish foundations to assist in this process, even as debate and deliberation on the same matter continue in Japan and elsewhere.

The initial steps at building local capacity for human rights and democracy in the region have thus far achieved only modest gains and created marginal impact. The networks of individuals and organizations are still currently small, and they presently channel their energies mainly toward further building capacity in support

## Building Solidarity for Human Rights and Democracy in Asia

of civil society, either in a national or regional context. This is also mainly done with very little input into or outside formal policy circles and power centers.

It is also unfortunate to highlight that unlike other regions of the world, Asia does not have any regional mechanism for the promotion and protection of international human rights standards. There has been considerable progress with new mechanisms at the national level in some countries. Also, rather surprisingly, the recently adopted ASEAN Charter invokes human rights values and makes reference to establishing a human rights body in the future. These and other developments need to be carefully monitored.

There are, however, some efforts being pursued at the highest levels to establish partnerships that could build momentum to reverse the current democratic recession. The political leaderships as well as civil societies of certain countries in the region, for example, India, Australia, South Korea, and Japan, could be collectively harnessed for such an initiative. It should be noted that some of them have, in fact, already become some of the largest contributors to the UN Democracy Fund. Asia-wide partnerships, at multiple tracks, will create an impetus for sustaining the work ahead. The people of the region demand positive change, which is the need of the hour.

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# Deepening Democracy: Responsibility, Freedom of Expression, and Morality of Choice

## Three aspects of a consolidated democracy

GU YI AN

**N**o one will deny the fact that in contemporary Asia, including countries like India, Japan, Nepal, Thailand, the Philippines, Korea, and China, people still seem to *desire democracy*.

Although people in these countries understand and interpret democracy in different ways, they practice and have experienced democracy differently, and the reality and situations—and even the demerits and setbacks—vary in each country, it seems that none of them intends to give up or halt the democratization of the nation. They are all, in their own way, progressing toward a *consolidated democracy*.

After spending two months in Japan observing and discussing issues relevant to the theme of “unity and diversity,” I can safely say that *democracies in Asia and beyond are diverse, and this diversity reflects the unique cultural, political, and social life of each country. Democracies rest upon fundamental principles and not on uniform practices.*

Thus, the democratization of different countries need not involve the same agenda or maintain the same pace. Since the democratization process would differ from one country to another, we cannot expect a uniform timetable for the process, nor can it be carried out smoothly in one day.

I can clearly recall Chairman Mao’s aphorism in one of his famous poems. It went as “Ten thousand years is too long; just race against the time!” (萬年太久，只爭朝夕!). In the 1950s, this aphorism became our national slogan. Everyone believed that “*it should be done in one day!*” With this mindset, Chairman Mao led the Chinese people to start the Great Leap Forward (大躍進). I also think that ten thousand years is too long, but I never believed that anyone can achieve anything—even democracy—in one day. As a matter of fact, Chairman Mao’s impetuous and unpractical trial of the Great Leap Forward only resulted in a catastrophe and resulted in an economic and political setback. Since then, there has been no development in terms of social reformation and democracy building in China for a long time. The lesson learnt from this case can be summarized in the idiom “haste makes waste.”

As a theatre director, during rehearsals, I always urge my actors to just let it happen instead of trying to make it happen. Any attempts at making something happen may result in something unnatural and artificial because you are not being yourself but are just pretending. Forcing something to happen would only result in something unappealing and can even be dangerous, possibly resulting in distress or injuries. This could lead to a tragedy that would be far from what was originally intended. Therefore, it is important to be patient and obey the law of nature. Just like it is said that “love takes time,” I would like to say that “democracy would take more time.” Rome was not built in one day, and the same applies to democracy.

It has been about a hundred years since democracy was introduced to the Chinese, but for some historical reason, democracy in China today is still at its nascent stage; we are still learning about the concept. Some Chinese even doubt whether the country is mature and informed enough to adopt the Western concept of democracy.

Now, I would like to share an interesting discovery I made in the course of studying Chinese characters. The Chinese word for democracy—“民主” [mín zhǔ]—comprises two characters. “民” [mín] literally means “people.” The hieroglyph “民” looks like an eye being poked by a needle. The image clearly reflects the intent of the person who coined the word—*people are blind*. Maybe this partly explains why democracy did not develop in China for many years. To the people in ancient China, allowing blind people who followed elitism to make decisions regarding public affairs was tantamount to deceiving oneself. They could hardly believe that the blind could make the right decision or correct choice for the common people.

The second character “主” [zhǔ] means to have your own idea and make your own decisions. The hieroglyph “主” [zhǔ] looks like an oil lamp with a very tiny flame. This indicates that if you want to make the right decision or a clever choice, you must “light the oil lamp,” that is, illuminate or enlighten yourself.

## Deepening Democracy: Responsibility, Freedom of Expression, and Morality of Choice

Thus, the Chinese first need to illuminate themselves and gain a deeper understanding of the concept of democracy in their attempts toward a consolidated democracy.

To the Chinese, *freedom* and *equal rights* are two other important concepts. However, we must realize and understand that both freedom and equal rights are accompanied by *responsibility*; therefore, I think that, first, we need to *assume responsibility*. When people get their freedom and equal rights, they must assume responsibility for the *decisions* and *choices* they make—not only for themselves but also for others.

The Chinese need to understand that in a democracy, when a citizen receives equal rights, he/she also has the responsibility to participate in the political system, which in turn, protects his/her rights and freedom. We must also learn how to express ourselves openly when participating in public affairs.

I am neither a politician nor a social designer. I am an acting teacher and director who tries to introduce and implement the concept of democracy in my classroom and rehearsal studio. I have often found students to be too timid to express their ideas and actors too lazy to find solutions by themselves. They are used to the traditional approach of letting their parents/teachers/director/boss tell them what to do and how to do it. In other words, they do not wish or need to take the risk of sharing responsibility. This approach leads to the stagnation of a sphere—a stagnant theatre or a stagnant life, for example. I realized that the students and actors cannot be held responsible for this sad situation; they just unconsciously protect themselves from the insecurity. On reflecting on the situation, I realized that if I want them to muster courage and express their opinions freely, I must create a secure environment. I must consciously avoid giving them a prepared answer—not even a slight indication of approval and disapproval. In my capacity as a teacher and director, I should not adopt a dictatorial approach by telling them what I think is right and what I like or want. Confucius, the role model for all teachers, never revealed his answers to his students; he simply enlightened them by asking questions. He did not have answers prepared and instead explored with the students and tested the bounds of their imagination. His students had the courage to express their opinions freely before him. Some prefer a dictatorial approach in teaching because of the high level of efficiency that it can achieve, but quite often, all one gets is students sitting in silence or cheating noises.

Finally, as a citizen in a society with consolidated democracy, everyone needs to consider making choices within a moral framework. With every decision, one must take responsibility for oneself as well as for others. In other words, one needs to be ready to face the repercussions of one's actions. There are several relevant cases, from poisoned milk powder to Wall Street financial crimes.

**Responsibility, freedom of expression, and morality of choice** are three aspects that would help us build a better community in the future.

For me, an acting teacher and a director, the only learning technique either in the acting profession or in community building is through communication, which contains two aspects: *expressing* and *listening*. Although we need to discuss freedom of expression, I think that learning how to listen is more important.

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# Dreaming of an Asian Rainbow: A Wonderful Community of 7 Colors

KIM HAECHANG

I am the Vice President of the Hope Institute, which is a civic think tank in Seoul, Korea. I have been in charge of 3 different teams of institutes such as the Social Invention Center, Public Academy, and Korea's Local Information Center.

To be honest, I prefer to be called a “social designer” rather than any other conventional titles or names. A social designer is a social activist who tries his or her best to improve the present condition of society and the title was accordingly created.

First of all, I must say I was very happy to be chosen as a fellow of ALFP 2008, and stayed in Tokyo for more than 2 months. This opportunity allowed me to interact with important Asian leaders. I think I have enhanced my understanding of Asia and have made good friends with Asian leaders on the basis of “amenity” and “sustainability” during my stay in Japan. I hope that we can place our friendship before our obligation to serve as good leaders in our countries. Further, I am now convinced that I can make good friends in Asia.

## FROM AN ENVIRONMENTAL JOURNALIST TO A SOCIAL DESIGNER

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Let me introduce myself to you. For more than 30 years since attending high school in the 1970s, I have been living in Busan, the second largest city in Korea. I graduated from Pusan National University (PNU), where I majored in Business Management. I also graduated from the Graduate School of Education of PNU, majoring in Educational Administration in the 1980s. In 2008, I completed the doctoral course at PNU, majoring in Environmental Economics.

From Monday to Friday, I work in Seoul for the Hope Institute and stay with my family in Busan over the weekend.

I am grateful to God that I spent my teens in the countryside and not in a city. The beautiful scenery of the countryside landscape is still alive in my memory and I believe that it was what inspired me to become a journalist focusing on environmental issues and to work as a social designer.

I worked with *The Kookje Daily News* (The Kookjeshinmun) as a reporter for 17 years in Busan before joining the Hope Institute in 2007. As a reporter who exclusively covers environmental issues, I realized that local environmental issues are deeply connected with global ones. My main concerns and interests were as follows: individual awareness of global environmental issues, endeavors to shift personal awareness down to ecological daily life, building a sustainable community, and peaceful international interchange and solidarity, etc.

My interests have been widely reflected in articles I wrote for *The Kookje Daily News*. In 1994, I also wrote many campaign articles such as “Environmental Revolution by EM (Effective Microorganisms)” that helped the City of Busan to spread EM in order to decrease the amount of food waste from households.

When President Kim Young-sam placed emphasis on globalization in 1995, I wrote a series of articles under the title “Let's Deal with Globalization from the Viewpoint of Environmental Issues!” I also introduced the success story of the “Green City of Kitakyushu” in Japan, which won the “Global 500 award in 1990” from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

Thanks to the support of LG's Press Foundation, I had a chance to become a member of the Japanese Environmental Group Amenity Meeting Room (AMR), and I lived in Tokyo for one year from 1997 to 1998. I learned a lot on the “Amenity Movement” by pursuing the “Coexistence of Humanity and Nature and Quality of Life.” I visited the city of Kyoto, where COP3 was held and gathered information on climate change.

With the help of the program, I could specialize in environmental issues as a journalist. It was also around this time that I had an opportunity to contribute to *The Weekly Asahi Towns*, a sister newspaper of the *Asahishimbun* in Tokyo. I wrote 30 articles as part of a column titled “A Tokyo Diary of a Korean Journalist.” These experiences served as a stepping stone for me to become a professional environmental journalist as well as a social designer. They also gave me a precious opportunity to understand Japan better.

After returning to Korea, I wrote numerous reports and also published several books. I planned and wrote feature stories on environmental issues. These stories covered a whole page and were published once a week with titles such as “Let’s Make the City of Busan Greener” and “Let’s Make the Rivers of Busan Cleaner.” I also planned a feature article titled “Visiting Wetlands and Birds in Korea” and introduced two aspects of the beautiful but endangered wetlands of Korea in around 2000. I was presented with the Award for Journalist of the Month by the Journalists Association of Korea twice in 2002 for these articles. I managed to publish several compilations of the articles I have written. Some of my publications are “Amenity-Beyond Environment” (Sakai Kenichi, translated, 1998), “Amenity’s View of Japan-Japanese Environment, People, and Community-building” (1999), “Learning to Love the Earth through Play” (1999), “There Are Birds There” (2002), and “Learning from Environmental Capital Freiburg” (2003). I was awarded the 5th Kyobo Life’s Environmental Culture Award in 2003, which is Korea’s well-known environmental award.

In 2004, I served as the labor union leader of *The Kookje Daily News*. During this period, I tried to enhance the freedom of press and improve the labor conditions of the journalists. At that time, I realized that interchange and a sense of solidarity among journalists are important not only domestically but also internationally. I cannot forget my visit to Nagasaki. I had to speak in Japanese during a seminar on “Korea’s Task to Avoid Becoming the Next Iraq.” As for my Japanese language skills, I have learned the language by myself since I was in college. It is a very useful tool for me to express my thoughts to Japanese people.

In 2005, I wrote a book titled “Japanese Newspapers, Power that Moves Japan.” This book introduces 20 old and current Japanese newspapers and can serve as a useful benchmark for Korean journalists.

### THE HOPE INSTITUTE—A CIVIC THINK TANK IN KOREA

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In April 2007, I quit journalism and became a social designer. I am currently researching areas such as environmental sectors, building of local communities, local brand strategy, and sustainable development. I have also completed a doctoral course from the Graduate School of Pusan National University, majoring in Environmental Economics in July 2008. I wish to reconsider how environmentally unfriendly states can undertake measures such as wetlands reclamation, and tunnel building and theorize a concept of GNP that reflects the value of nature and ecology.

On June 30, 2007, I visited Tokyo. The Hope Institute opened the Hope Institute Japan as the first overseas branch office. On December 2, 2007, I was invited to speak at a forum in Osaka, Japan. I presented a lecture titled “Korean Civil Society’s Current Situation and Future Tasks.”

I began to speak about the Hope Institute to people I met in Tokyo. The Hope Institute is a think tank established to research policy alternatives for various social agendas and put these alternatives into practice. We are an independent civic research institute that has received no founding funds from the government or industry. We hope to become the matrix of a 21st century neo-practicalism by conducting research along with pragmatic application.

At the institute, we introduce innovative experiments and bold initiatives that are unhindered by convention. People’s ideas are gathered to change lifestyles and systems, and public values are sought along with new alternative models of society. The local region is made the center through grassroots self-governance and town building, while the values of public good and sharing are disseminated by recommending to corporations social contributions that are compatible with their business.

I also want to introduce Mr. Park Won-Soon, the executive director of the Hope Institute, who recommended me as a candidate for ALFP 2008. He was a member of ALFP 2000 and a winner of the Magsaysay Award in 2005. I cannot compare my work to his prestigious achievements. However, I was very happy to acquire the opportunity to join ALFP and learn about leadership.

We currently have about 80 researchers and coordinators at the Hope Institute. The research direction and guiding principles are independence, participation, region, practicality, alternatives, focus on specific fields, and integration. We wish to work solely for the benefit of the common people. Everyone is invited to participate. Free from formalities and frills, ideas are sought and can be proposed through many channels of communication,

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including the Internet. The Hope Institute tries to revive declining regions and turns them into springs of hope. We avoid abstract, wasteful arguments and exercise the use of a pragmatic methodology to reach the truth. The alternatives we press for are based on a paradigm of people, ecology, and culture. We do not confine ourselves to our office in search of alternatives or learn about the world through the media. We delve deep into the field to cultivate a land of truth. The diverse issues of our society are all interconnected. We will integrate them from an unbiased perspective on any specific field, for instance, politics and economics.

The Hope Institute has many centers. “Small ideas can change the world” is the catchphrase of the Social Invention Center. Innovative thoughts and various ideas are shared through the Internet and then revised, organized, and strengthened to form the basis of realistic and precise public policies.

“Seeds of hope for local communities” is the slogan of the Roots Center. Local communities need sustainable development. This center tries to explore ways of formulating a desirable local community model through in-depth studies of various local communities.

“Nourishing hope for the future of Korean Society” is the motto of the Center for Building Alternatives. This Center tries to propose clear future directions for the Korean society through in-depth studies of politics, economics, administration, unification, education, environment, culture, gender, and other areas.

The key themes of the Hope Institute are listed below. We call these the 11 “hopes” for the year 2020 or “Hopeful Korea.”

1. Invention, invention, invention! Only invention can change history
2. Hope from the roots up: gives seeds of hope to the regions of Korea
3. 100-year vision for the budget
4. Reestablishing the nation’s fundamentals
5. Building a society where everyone has equal opportunities for learning
6. Developing a sustainable society and economy
7. Improving the quality of life
8. Promoting Korean outreach
9. Beyond the government: widening citizen participation
10. Era of knowledge: collect and share knowledge worldwide!
11. Creating an environment favorable to the reunification of Korea

## MY PRESENTATION ON THE CANDLELIGHT DEMONSTRATIONS IN KOREA IN 2008\_\_\_\_\_

I presented my opinion on the “Candlelight vigils in Korea in 2008” at the “Country Reports” session held at the beginning of the program.

In 2008, Koreans staged candlelight vigils. In particular, teenagers gave vent to their frustrations and complaints through candlelight vigils against imports of American beef and a market-oriented education policy. More than 12,000 people participated in candlelight vigils every weekend from April to July—an estimated 60 percent of the initial participants were middle and high school students.

The youngsters expressed their ideas on leaflets, paper masks, and other protest tools. They led the rally calmly without resorting to physical or verbal violence. Under the law, any person aged above 19 is given the right to vote in elections.

Many observers said that this generation cared about problems such as getting jobs or having fun as opposed to more serious matters. However, at that time, the underage students were expressing their anger against US beef imports online. Their rationale was that they would be forced to eat American beef at school cafeterias. Their most recent target was President Lee Myung-bak. More than 1.2 million Internet users joined in a signature collection campaign to impeach the President—a high school student led the initiative.

Their criticism of President Lee reached a peak when the government gave full autonomy to schools to allow grouping of students according to their ability and level-differentiated classes. His ambitious English immersion program also infuriated many of those who were already under severe academic stress. The students were gearing up for political action of their own.

It seemed that adults set policies according to their own whims without taking into account opinions from students, who were the consumers of education. This made them angry and frustrated.

## Dreaming of an Asian Rainbow: A Wonderful Community of 7 Colors

Experts said beef was a very personal issue for them, and they thought they would be the first to be affected by the policy. Conservative politicians criticized liberals for goading students into joining the candlelight vigils against American beef.

According to the *Korea Times*, experts believed that teenagers perceived politics more as “fun” rather than as a “struggle.” However, this attitude was said to be changing. The students enjoyed participating in serious discussions and expressing their ideas; at the same time, they tried to have fun. This is the positive side of the candlelight vigils.

The candlelight vigils led to the coining of many new terms. What is an “Agorian”? How about 2MB? These were among the descriptive words and phrases being used by Internet bloggers and even journalists to discuss the ongoing anti-US beef protests and the public debate over the issue.

Here is a guide to these oft-used phrases that have made their way onto Internet blogs and discussion sites as well as various news reports. “Agora,” which refers to an open place of assembly in ancient Greece, is also the name of a popular online discussion forum on the Korean Internet portal Daum. Participants of this left-leaning discussion forum speak about a wide range of political issues and are referred to as Agorians; they even led a campaign against the conservative media and conglomerates like Samsung. Agora emerged as an online gathering place for citizens opposing President Lee Myung-bak and his policies. It produced numerous threads criticizing his policies, such as the cross-country canal project.

In April, the forum also started an online campaign for the impeachment of President Lee. Thus far, it has secured some 1.4 million signatures. Critics said that Agora users played a role in leading the anti-US beef candlelight vigils.

Some Korean academics have described the Internet-driven public protests and discussions as a new form of direct democracy that would complement Korea’s representative democracy. This direct democracy was practiced both on- and off-line via the Internet and text messages and candlelight vigils on the streets.

Critics on the Internet had been using the abbreviation 2MB to refer to President Lee. It could actually be a legitimate abbreviation since the surname “Lee” and the word for 2 sound the same in the Korean language, while MB stands for the President’s initials. However, MB could also stand for the computer term “megabytes.” Some critics and Internet users had been using the term “2MB” to insinuate that the President lacked sufficient processing capacity.

The term referred to real-time reporting and online video streaming by a new and growing group of citizen journalists. Equipped with laptop computers and digital video cameras, protesters were reporting and posting their own news on the Web in real time. This type of reporting gave a boost to Internet reporting and news sites. Further, online bloggers had also been participating in street journalism by streaming live video footage.

Some critics of the current protests had used the phrase “group think” to describe the anti-US beef protests. The phrase refers to a universal social tendency in group settings wherein members try to avoid conflict by agreeing to a consensus without fully evaluating ideas. In Korea, one of the most wired nations in the world, the Web may facilitate the building of a consensus among the country’s Internet users, also referred to as “netizens.”

However, I think these phenomena are considered to be one type of democracy advanced in Korea. The candlelight vigils led President Lee to apologize in public. In addition, some ministers were reshuffled and additional discussions were held between Korea and the USA, although they were not very satisfactory.

That said, we need more than candlelight vigils. Because we need alternatives. To improve the situation, I think President Lee should show his leadership and his honesty. I believe that honesty is indeed the best policy. It is essential that some balance be achieved between the ruling and opposition parties in the Parliament. Moreover, civic think tanks such as the Hope Institute should propose many alternatives for citizens, and the government should be receptive to the ideas of these civic think tanks and the other side of society.

## MY PERSONAL STUDY DURING MY STAY IN TOKYO \_\_\_\_\_

My group of fellows visited the city of Minamata, which faced an outbreak of the Minamata disease; Hiroshima, where the Atomic Bomb Peace Park is located; Osaka, where we visited the area around a Korean elementary school; and Kyoto, which is famous for its traditions and culture.

## Asia Leadership Fellow Program: 2008 Program Report

In Minamata, I felt pity for the patients suffering from the Minamata disease and was surprised to hear that most of them were not recognized as patients by the government and hence, they could not file lawsuits. On my visit to the Korean elementary school in Osaka, I could experience the tragic consequences of Japanese imperialism on *Chosun* or Korea and the division of the Korean Peninsula.

During my stay in Tokyo, I acquired a lot of information on global warming. I visited Tokyo Metropolitan City and Suginami Ku, Chiyoda Ku and Kyoto City, and Kuzumaki Cho in Iwate prefecture. I also visited Nippon Keidanren and learned a lot about corporate social responsibility (CSR) among Japanese companies. In addition, I visited the offices of SONY, TOSHIBA, NEC, etc., and learned about the environmental management of the firms; I also visited environmental NGOs such as Greenpeace Japan and Citizen's Nuclear Information Center.

Therefore, I think Japan is on its way to becoming a low carbon society, as suggested by the book "Japanese Scenario to the Low Carbon Society—It's Possible to Cut Back 70% of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 2050." In this case, backcasting is very important. Usually, we forecast our future, but in the case of global warming, it will take time to change people's mindsets and make them aware of climate change; therefore, backcasting from 2050 is very important to maintain the CO<sub>2</sub> levels below 70–80% as compared to the levels in 1990.

Through my experience in Japan, I realized that there are many points to be learnt from Japan in terms of dealing with climate change in Korea.

First, we should start to build a base for "Low Carbon Green Growth." President Lee Myung-bak announced the plan to build a "Low Carbon Green Growth Society," but there is a lack of precise goals. Therefore, I think his government should propose concrete goals on the basis of backcasting.

Second, in Korea, CSR is needed in the business circle. CSR is the basic principle for getting the business circle to communicate with consumers and facing climate change.

Third, I have to place emphasis on the role of the local government. In Japan, many local governments have launched initiatives to cope with climate change. The Coalition of Local Governments for Environmental Initiative, Japan (COLGEI,J) is a good example for improving the reaction of the local government toward climate change.

Fourth, it is very important to encourage sustainable farming. In particular, food mileage, organic farming, etc., are very important.

Here, I have to say that there are some points that we should not adopt from Japan. They are as follows.

First, government control over the business circle is so weak that it seems that they cannot achieve a global standard in Japan. They depend only on the voluntary participation of the business circle, unlike compulsory participation in the case of the EU.

Second, the reliance on atomic power is a bit excessive in Japan. Therefore, it seems that it will be very difficult to develop alternative energies such as renewable energy, photovoltaics, wind power, and biomass. I think that these alternative energies cannot be developed while people depend on atomic power. To build a low carbon society, we have to overcome mass production and mass consumption in our daily lives. Hence, we need to create a decentralized energy system.

Third, we have to break free from the myth of GNP. Nowadays, most of the countries emphasize GNP or GDP in public. However, these economic indexes do not reflect the satisfaction of the people of the country. What do you think of GNP or GDP? What do you think is the difference between developed and developing countries? What makes you happy? Do you have any secrets that make you happy?

In "Wouldn't We Be Happy without Economic Development?" (Japanese), Dr. Douglas Lummis states that "we can build an abundant society without economic development." When the economic disparity widens, our society focuses on outward economic development. Society does not try to divide the big pie; instead, it tries to make it bigger. According to Lummis, from the viewpoint of global economic policy, in order to make a pie bigger, it is necessary to take a portion of the smaller part of the pie. Losing our job in a capitalist society automatically evokes fear in us. Consequently, it creates a society where people sell food with harmful ingredients to sustain their lives.

Nowadays, there are many cases of environmental damage caused under the banner of national undertakings such as wetlands reclamation and tunnel building. However, from now on, these undertakings should be reconsidered.

## MY VISION

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Recently, I have become very interested in global warming. The Hope Institute made an MOU with many cities such as Ansan and Hwaseong (near Seoul) in order to establish a strategy to protect against climate change. I have also participated in these projects. I hope I can come across many successful cases of green cities in Asia, especially in Japan. I think that this program served as an opportunity to share knowledge and develop international networks.

I hope I can develop my 10-year vision based on my experiences gained through ALFP. I have been working hard as Vice President of the Hope Institute. This two-month program was a perfect time for me to develop Asia's vision as I collaborated with my fellow partners. I began developing my vision in Busan and then extended it to Japan in order to bridge friendships. I will first learn to think from the Asian perspective and then further widen my perspective and make it global.

The economist Brian Dumaine once wrote an article about three stonecutters. The three stonecutters worked differently—one of them merely carved a stone; the second carved a stone to build a house; and the third sang happily while carving a stone to build a church. A pastry chef thinking about a child's face while cooking explains the message of Takashi Tsuchida's "Living in Harmony." Tsuchida is the author of the book "Co-Existence, Co-Poverty" (Jushinsha 2003) in Japanese. Despite an abundant supply of food, poverty still exists because we focus on the quantitative value of economic growth. It is now time for inner growth.

During ALFP 2008, I could develop new plans and views. I could write the manuscript for a book titled "Japan Running to a Low Carbon Society," which will be published in July 2009. By attending the program, I realized the importance of the need for serious efforts to build a peaceful and strong relationship between Korea and Asia. By undertaking such efforts, I really wanted to understand my fellows and interaction between our countries. I also want to find solutions to climate change and environmental pollution. Furthermore, I hope to be trained as an "amenity leader." I believe in the power of thinking—an idea can change society.

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# Ethnicity, Community, and Nationality: Challenges Posed by the Multiplicity of Identities in Emergent States

CHANDRA KISHOR LAL

**O**n May 28, 2008, the very first sitting of the Constituent Assembly formalized the abolition of the kingdom and the establishment of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal. The decision brought the 240-year old reign of the Shah Dynasty to an end. The hallowed institution of kingship—responsible for the creation of the country in its present form—has been ousted from all positions of power and authority. In many ways, the resolution of the Constituent Assembly declared that the age of certainties of the past was over. Supremacy of the king as a symbol of national unity, the country as the fatherland, monopoly of the dominant language Nepali, Hindu religion and culture as distinctive marks of Nepali nationalism, reverence for patriarchal values, unquestioned acceptance of the hierarchical social structure, and prevalence of a unitary identity—all such venerated values of the past would henceforth be open to scrutiny and even denial by population groups that have never felt comfortable with the unitary character of the state.

The sanctity of the Nepalese monarchy had begun to appear rather hollow since the Narayanhiti massacre on June 1, 2001. A controversial Royal Commission later established that the then Crown Prince Dipendra had killed his entire family in a drug-and-drink induced frenzy and shot himself in the temple at the end of the carnage. The sacredness of the monarchy ended with that tragic episode—it appeared as if the Mandate of Heaven that legitimizes the divine right of monarchs had ended. However, the four pillars of Nepalese society—military, mandarins, mendicants, and merchants—that had traditionally supported the institution of monarchy rallied behind the new king. However, all these four columns proved to be too weak to sustain a tottering institution largely because the ruling elite too had lost touch with its roots in the overwhelming majority of peasants that has to shoulder the burden of the whole unitary edifice called the Kingdom of Nepal.

It took seven years of messy transition after the Narayanhiti massacre—violent Maoist insurgency, indirect military rule, direct royal-military autocracy, popular uprising, resurrection of the parliamentary system, ethnic resurgence, and Constituent Assembly elections—for Nepal to mature from a medieval kingdom into a nascent republic. However, what does it mean to be a Nepalese in the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal? In the coming days, national identity will probably emerge as the most perplexing question for a country that has at least 92 languages and 102 ethnic communities living together in one of the most challenging terrains of the world that rises from less than 300 meters to more than 8,848 meters above mean sea level within a span of less than 200 kilometers.

Multiplicity of identity is not unique to Nepal. It is an issue of widespread concern throughout South Asia. Despite six decades of liberal democracy—with an interruption in the form of authoritarianism in the mid-seventies—the Indian identity continues to be challenged not only in Kashmir but also in almost all the seven states of the northeast. Similarly, Pakistan lost its *raison d'être*—homeland for the majority, even if not all, of the Muslims of the Indian subcontinent—with the creation of Bangladesh, and is yet to find an identity that represents the aspirations of its entire population. Bangladesh had a national identity before being constituted as an independent state, but that has turned out to be its biggest bane—it has very little space for non-Bengalis and non-Muslims, or anyone who questions the dominant ideology. The election results of December 2008 have provided a fighting chance for secularism by giving a non-Islamic party—the Awami League—a two-third majority in the unicameral parliament of Bangladesh, but the repercussions of this remain to be seen. The conflict over identity in Sri Lanka is also too well known to require elaboration: the Tamil nationality already exists in the mind; the state of Elam it aspires for may become a reality if the geopolitics of the region changes in its favor.

The question of identity in Nepal is important at several levels. In over 4,000 groups of villages called Village Development Committees (VDCs), where nearly 85 percent of the Nepalese live, peaceful resolution of

the question of the definition of “self” is necessary to prevent possible ethnic conflicts. At the national level, a *Pahadi* (mountain dwellers) versus *Madheshi* (people of the plains) conflict has already flared up; were it to intensify, the very existence of the state of Nepal would stand challenged. Regionally, the vision of the United States of South Asian Region cannot be realized unless the states of the region are confident of their national identities.

Identities have traditionally been forged through violence—there is nothing like a war to intensify the passion of “us” versus “them.” In the late eighteenth century, King Prithvi described the country he had created by subjugating various small principalities as a growing tuber expanding along crevices between a rock and a hard place. He rallied warriors with promises of land in annexed territories as his conquest extended from the east to the west. The metaphor of “yam between two boulders” was used to suggest the possibility of extension between the gaps; the stones being alluded to were the Chinese Empire in the north and the East India Company in the south. That metaphor had served all his descendants rather well until quite recently. Maoist ideologues reframed the analogy as “a pack of dynamite between two rocks.” However, both these conceptualizations suffer from the same flaw—they assume the yam or dynamite between two boulders to be of the same material. Rocks on both sides have their own fissures, and the entity between the two is not uniform either. The creation of an inclusive identity that has enough space for diversities to coexist in peace is a hugely challenging task. This will require a formulation that involves taking pride in being a part of a plural “us” without necessarily going against the inimical “other” to the north or south of the international border.

## THE INFLUENCE OF THE PAST ON THE FUTURE

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Identities created out of war require the existence of a constant perception of threat. Perhaps that is the reason that the supposed challenges of Indian expansionism have been blown out of proportion in Nepal. It also entails identification of “friends in need” to withstand challenges from perceived enemies. Nepalese rulers have portrayed China as a possible savior since at least the regime of Chandra Shamsheer (1863–1929) in the early twentieth century. Events since then have shown that neither is India an evil expansionist nor China a rescuing angel in times of need. A frustrated Gyanendra quipped toward the end of his reign in 2006 that China was at best a fair-weather friend. A state-nation confident of its existence will require an identity that is not dependent upon the identification of an inimical other or a generous savior. This probably entails the creation of an inclusive identity based upon six decades of struggle for the establishment of democracy in the country.

The search will have to begin with the discovery of the ideology of statehood—the idea of Nepal. In contrast to the empires of the north and south, Nepal evolved not as a fatherland of some distinct race or tribe but as a sanctuary for persecuted minorities. Perhaps that partly explains its multiplicity. When Buddhist empires spread over two thousand years ago, Hindus retreated quietly into the Himalayas. During the Hindu resurgence, it was the Buddhists’ turn to seek shelter in the hidden valleys of the Mahabharat ranges. Islamic rule in the Indo-Gangetic plains forced militant Hindus—*kanphatta jogis* of the Gorakhnath sect for example—to traverse along the foothills of the Shivaliks. Fugitives from the British Empire found it convenient to escape to the thick forest of Charkoshe Jhadi. The myth of a Nepali identity that preceded the creation of the state of Nepal was manufactured to justify the supremacy of the ruling elite. Two-and-half centuries of monopoly over the resources of the state has definitely put the Nepali-speaking population in an advantageous position; however, this cannot conceal the fact that Nepal has more Muslims—over a million in strength and above 5 percent of the country’s population—than many sheikhdoms of West Asia or that Nepali is only second, and not the first, language to most Gurkha soldiers, Newar craftsmen, Maithil scholars, and Sherpa mountaineers. It is not the fatherland of some pure race, but the motherland of everyone that came into its welcoming arms—Nepal, the homeland of every Nepalese.

The identification of icons that give distinctiveness to an inclusive Nepalese identity is probably the second most challenging task. Since Nepalese identity was based exclusively upon the ethnicity of Nepali language speakers, all its idols were from the so-called mainstream. After the people’s movement of 1990, hesitant efforts were made to diversify the pantheon somewhat, but at best, they were half-hearted attempts that achieved very little. The Madhesh uprising of 2007–2008 that followed the April uprising of 2006 against King Gyanendra’s

absolute rule nationwide established the necessity of creating icons that all Nepalese can identify with. Nepal has a long history of sustained democratic struggle and it will not be too difficult to recognize personalities worthy of national honor. The challenge lies in establishing their presence in the common Nepalese imagination through the arts, music, literature, media, and myths.

The establishment of national institutions to sustain an inclusive identity is even more difficult. Homogeneity is more conducive to the evolution of fellow feeling. Conversely, community building is inherently difficult in heterogeneous societies. It is difficult to inspire people to lay their life on the line—for example, to climb up a building on fire, swim against the current in flooded rivers, or rush with medicine for an infected population during epidemics—in order to protect someone they cannot identify with easily. Common institutions of politics (legislature, executive, judiciary, and the media), governance (army, police, schools, hospitals, and research academies), and market (banks, telephones, roads, and industries) take a long time to evolve. Ethnic conflicts in former Yugoslavia and Rwanda exposed the fragility of state-nation solidarity like never before.

The nation as an “imagined community,” conceptualized by Benedict Anderson has its merits; however, a network of institutions are necessary, though not sufficient, conditions to translate this vision into a sustainable entity. Could political parties that compete peacefully emerge as institutions of identity formation and work as a consolidated whole like the soldiery or civil service did in the days of the empire? This seems to have worked rather well in the democratic experiments of the Indian Union, but has failed to deliver in the case of either Pakistan or Bangladesh. The record of Sri Lanka seems to be somewhat mixed. In Nepal, political parties, including their sister organizations such as students’ associations and trade unions, hold the promise of emerging as institutions of inclusion offering a sense of identity and belongingness.

Education is an important institution for inculcating shared values. Nepal has changed a lot since the 1950s, when the literacy rate in the country was abysmal (less than 2 percent)—and schools now dot the landscape even in remote villages. It was assumed that a uniform “national” curriculum would produce a unified literate elite important for the unity of a diverse country attempting to be a nation. This was the justification used to introduce the National Education System Plan (NESP) in 1971, which aimed to “produce citizens, who, with full faith in the country and the crown, will conduct themselves in accordance with the Panchayat system; and to meet the manpower requirements of development through the spread of scientific and technical education.”

The NESP, however, suffered from a fundamental conceptual flaw. The designers of NESP assumed that a contested political ideology like the Panchayat could be sold through textbooks and teachers to young pupils. Since opposition to the autocratic Panchayat system was common among democratically inclined teachers, the project failed to take off. An unintended victim of this misguided scheme was the education system that aimed to build a consensus in favor of national unity among the literate elite. An exodus of educated youths to Western countries is one of the effects rather than causes of Nepal’s continued backwardness in education: when the best and brightest are bereft of values, they prefer to fly away to distant shores for personal reasons rather than give something back to the country that has given them so much.

Politics are inherently divisive processes. However, the divisions politics create are meant to be resolved through peaceful methods of give and take. Polarization along ideological conflicts stimulates passions, which are then moderated through voluntary associations—political parties. They are one of the most powerful innovations in politics that transform potential civil wars into rational disagreements, intellectual discourse, and pragmatic compromises by providing forums to antagonistic groups to vent their frustrations, cool passions, engage civilly, and then arrive at “least unacceptable” solutions that can be accepted by all without anyone losing face. Unfortunately, the ruling family of Nepal failed to “use” political parties to promote national unity or even to protect their own interests. Even after the overthrow of the 104-year-old oligarchy of the Rana family of military generals and hereditary prime ministers, the Shah Restoration failed to initiate a system of healthy competition between political parties. King Mahendra somehow thought that the activities of political leaders were inimical to his interests and the Cold War rivalry in South Asia helped him sideline parties and prevented them from participating in governance.

Ideology, icons, institutions, education, and politics—they all have to work in tandem in order to create a confident identity. This is where the quality of leadership assumes importance. Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru are not born everyday. Jinnah and Mujib cannot be created in political test tubes. However, if democracy is all about ordinary people doing extraordinary things by working together, possible leaders have to be identified at the grassroots—at the village and town level—and nurtured for national, regional, or global roles in the future. Perhaps this is where mythmakers—the media, writers, artistes, and opinion leaders—can play a constructive role.

The town crier—*Katuwals* of medieval Nepal—maintained the solidity of small principalities. The importance of itinerant priests in spreading the Gorkhali Empire is recognized by historians. Relay runners who deliver messages—*Hulaki* in Nepali—helped keep the far-flung empire together during extremely adverse conditions. Analogous to the imagined community, the advent of print media was used by the later Rana rulers to manufacture a Nepali identity. An inclusive Nepalese identity—the *Nepaliya Rastriyata*—will probably require the use of modern means of communication such as radio, television, and the Internet to connect all possible leaders into a virtual community that is constantly in touch. Unfortunately, the media lacks a coherent “national” message.

All winners of recent Constituent Assembly elections are mindlessly repeating the cliché of a “New Nepal”—signifying something radically different from the old one. Other than the ritual chant of autonomous provinces and inclusive polity—in popular discourse, they appear contradictory rather than complementary ideas—nobody seems sure about the identity that will signify a forward-looking Nepaliya community of all ethnicities. Only when the Nepaliya identity is formulated will a South Asian identity and Asian community be easier to imagine and less challenging to create. The celebration of diversities within unity and the formulation of conditions of coexistence are necessary for the formation of national as well as supranational identities.

## SOLIDARITY OF STRUGGLE

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Ekai Kawaguchi, a Buddhist monk from Osaka, was the first Japanese person to visit Nepal. He first traveled through the Himalayan Kingdom on his way to Tibet in 1899 and visited Nepal twice more by 1912. He took a deep interest in Nepalese affairs and motivated Prime Minister Chandra Shamsheer, the real ruler of the kingdom, to send eight Nepalese to study in Japan. The enterprising monk also wrote a long letter to Chandra advising him about ways of building a strong state and achieving economic development. Kawaguchi emphasized the importance of “national education” in forging national unity.

Over a century after Kawaguchi’s missives, Nobutaka Machimura, a Liberal Democratic Party parliamentarian and former foreign minister received a Nepali visitor in his crowded office in Tokyo in October 2008. Machimura too thought that national education in the national language was the most effective way of forging national unity in a diverse country like Nepal. The very fact that the role of education in strengthening national unity has remained paramount in the minds of reformers and leaders over a century apart indicates the importance of the concept.

Dating back to the Hindu sages of Gurukuls and Buddhist teacher-disciples in temples, the idea of solidarity built around shared learning has remained strong. Imperial powers in China, France, Russia, and elsewhere imparted nationalistic education to inculcate values of loyalty, thrift, hard work, and even fatalism in order to ensure the longevity of their reign and peace in the realm. Colonialists copied the same model to keep colonized countries in their grip when the supposed superiority of the ruling race was established as a fact through the manufacture and dissemination of education and knowledge. Macaulay’s Children—named so because they are the product of the colonial education system introduced by the British Governor-General on the advice of Thomas Babington Macaulay to produce loyal native servants for the British Empire—continue to dominate South Asian intelligentsia to this date.

After the success of anti-colonial movements in Asia and Africa, leaders of newly independent countries improvised upon the same model and offered the idea of national integration through uniform education. Thus, the role of national education—a unified curriculum, unitary medium of instruction, and uniform examination throughout the country—in forging national unity has a hoary pedigree. The very conceptualization of an imagined community rests on print and literacy.

In addition to national education, single currency and a central bank, effective postal services, armed forces, effective bureaucracy, and shared services such as canals, roads, schools, and hospitals have long been considered unifying elements that bind diverse communities within a country. Their role continues to be vital. However, almost all of them are increasingly being either privatized or becoming global. Free convertibility of currencies, privatization of postal services and spread of courier companies, growth of private militia and popularity of security agencies, entry of donor-funded nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in service delivery, and decline of public investment in the creation and maintenance of commons have severely damaged the government’s moral claim of being the impartial arbitrator of a nation’s fate. Governments have come to be perceived as partisan, especially by marginalized population groups within a national community.

Perhaps this is a lacuna that political parties can address. In a miniature state, political parties present the picture of a government that exists as well as that which can emerge by acting as the ruling and opposition groups respectively. Once the idea that political parties can function as alternative forums of unification is accepted, the question that arises is whether such solidarity would be strong enough to counter loyalties of ethnicity and community that often challenge national unity.

The most common definition of ethnicity is based on shared ancestry that provides members of the group with identifiable cultural traits such as distinctive food, dress, language, faith, and sometimes religion. According to this definition, everyone belongs to one or the other ethnicity. However, ethnicity acquires political overtones only when contrasted with the identity of the majority within a country. In this way, ethnicity is a social as well as political construct.

Political parties face the challenge of ethnic divides in three ways. Some parties acquire the character of a front for certain ethnicities. The Akali Dal in the Punjab province of India is a political party that openly espouses the cause of Sikhs and can be considered a political facade of a religious group. There are others that pointedly deny any role related to ethnic identity and believe in mobilizing along class lines. Sri Lanka's Marxist party Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) and Nepal's Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) can be considered as political groups of this nature. The third way is that of allowing ethnicity full play within the broad parameters of party loyalties. This is the method that moderates ethnic antagonism.

For a national community to emerge, Nepal perhaps needs to emphasize the building of political communities around mainstream parties rather than paying too much attention to NGOs and professional groups that are believed to be components of civil society. At this juncture, Nepal needs a vibrant political society to create and establish national unity.

The task of building a political society is not easy and no clear blueprint exists for direct implementation. It will have to be pursued by the traditional method of learning by implementing and improvising the process on the way. However, a beginning will have to be made by searching for the roots of unity in independence or democratic struggles of emergent states. In Nepal, there is a history of at least six decades of ceaseless struggle against autocratic and authoritarian regimes. India gained independence after a long movement against colonial rule. Pakistan was built by the aspiration for a separate homeland for the Muslims of British India. Bangladesh was born out of a fight for linguistic and cultural identity. Attempts need to be undertaken to identify personalities that made these struggles possible and to build a national agenda out of their politics.

In Nepal, attempts are being made to dig for material that can help build the foundations of a New Nepal. These attempts will be tested in the formulation of a new constitution and challenges faced in its implementation.

Ethnicity is considered natural identity. Communities are often built around compatible ethnicities. Forging national identity is a more complicated matter, with no clear answers. Further, when uncertainty is the only certainty, nothing other than politics can handle it. Political parties need to be trusted as being capable of dealing with a multiplicity of identities in emergent states.

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# The Oscillation between Multiculturalism and Homogeneity in Japan

LEE SOO IM

## INTRODUCTION

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Japanese society is now in the midst of a dramatic transformation. An extremely low birthrate has resulted in a rapidly declining labor force; starting in 2005, the labor force will need as many as 600,000 more workers a year to maintain its present size according to an estimate by the United Nations. Although various solutions have been proposed, the Japanese government has acknowledged that the only way to meet the demand for labor is to accept foreign workers from other countries. The ramifications of this influx of foreigners into a society that has based its identity on ethnic homogeneity are enormous. In June 2008, 80 lawmakers, headed by the ex-Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) Secretary General Hidenao Nakagawa, made an ambitious proposal to raise the ratio of immigrants in Japan to about 10 percent over the next 50 years. The proposal states that there is no effective remedy to save Japan from a population crisis, and in order for Japan to survive, it must open its doors to the world as an international state and shift toward establishing an “immigrant nation” by accepting immigrants and revitalizing Japan. In order to open its doors to new immigrants, Japan first has to solve the problems facing the foreign residents.

In this paper, I explore how Japan’s cultural and ethnocentric exclusiveness has been formed through the lens of foreign residents, particularly so-called old-timer foreigners, namely, resident Koreans. Japan is famous for implementing a strict policy toward foreign residents; the strict policy was aimed at controlling resident Koreans, who had comprised the majority of the foreigners for many years after World War II. Under the Japanese nationality law based on lineage, foreigners must remain foreigners regardless of the number of generations that have lived in Japan. Although many of them cannot speak Korean at all and do not know their homeland’s culture, their status is Korean. I would say that their presence is symbolic evidence of Japan’s adherence to ideas of racial and cultural homogeneity.

Second, I discuss the effects of globalization on the changing conceptions and practices regarding nationality and citizenship. I would like to pose a question to readers about what constitutes “Japaneseness.” To discuss this issue, I share my own experiences of why I acquired Japanese citizenship. My path to acquiring Japanese citizenship was not easy because Japan’s naturalization policy was meant to be an integration and assimilation policy. Further, being naturalized was more likely a trade-off for “submission to the authority to gain civil rights” for the applicants. However, my motive for becoming a Japanese citizen was somewhat different. I decided to become naturalized because I wanted to gain my civic rights; however, at the same time, I wanted to maintain my Korean roots reflected in my ethnic name, which indicates my distinct identity among the “Japanese people.” The hyphenated identity of the Korean-Japanese has posed a big challenge to the society, but I believe that this diversity can vitalize Japan and the presence of people like me is an effective tool to make society acknowledge the emerging multiculturalism in Japan.

Finally, I discuss the Korean ethnic schools in Japan, which have survived in the midst of severe discrimination and prejudice. As ALFP fellows, we had an opportunity to visit a Korean ethnic school in Osaka during our field trip. The Korean ethnic schools have been forced to change their educational goals owing to the impact of globalization. In this paper, I discuss their struggle to survive and explore their new goal of educating the Korean youth to become transnational citizens.

## THE LOSS OF JAPANESE CITIZENSHIP

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The Koreans in Japan are called old-timer foreigners because their presence goes back to the turn of the twentieth century. The colonial takeover of Korea by Japan induced many Koreans to seek work in Japan out of economic necessity—if not as captured laborers, as was the case before and during World War II. In addition, as per the Japanese policy, individuals from colonized areas could obtain or were forced to take up a type of limited Japanese citizenship that included voting rights. However, these suffrage rights were granted only to men who were rich enough to pay a steep tax. Therefore, Korean men who could pay the tax were granted voting rights, and some of them could participate in local politics as politicians.

The philosophy behind such a completely assimilationist policy was based on the political principle of *naisen ittai*, which means “Korea and Japan forming one body in order to transform to a stronger nation-state to fight against Western imperialism” (Lee, 2006, p. 107). However, this was just lip service and the Japanese government was tactfully discriminating against Koreans as secondary citizens. The government placed them in an inferior position in comparison to the Japanese under the family registry called *chōsen koseki*, which is significantly different from the Japanese family registry, *naichi koseki*. True Japaneseness was supposed to be inherited only from the father’s lineage, not that of mothers. Therefore, children who were born with Korean fathers and Japanese mothers were placed in the *chōsen koseki* and were regarded as inferior citizens.

Koreans in Japan were stripped off their citizenship in 1952, when the San Francisco Peace Accords were signed between Japan and, principally, the United States. No choice was given to Koreans, which is different from the German government’s treatment of its colonial subjects: Austrians residing in Germany were given a choice of either remaining German citizens or recovering their Austrian citizenship (see the details in Tanaka, 1995). The new Japanese constitution was drawn up under the Allied occupation that followed World War II and was intended to replace Japan’s previous militaristic system of absolute monarchy with a form of liberal democracy. The birth of the constitution guaranteed the civic rights of Japanese nationals and became the basis for Japan’s democracy. The preface to the constitution starts with the following paragraph:

*We, the Japanese people, acting through our duly elected representatives in the National Diet, determined that we shall secure for ourselves and our posterity the fruits of peaceful cooperation with all nations and the blessings of liberty throughout this land, and resolved that never again shall we be visited with the horrors of war through the action of government, do proclaim that sovereign power resides with the people and do firmly establish this Constitution.*

In the early draft of the constitution that was drawn up by the group under the order of Douglas MacArthur, the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP), the term “persons” was used in many of the articles on human rights, and an article providing for equal protection under the law for aliens was included. This means that it was decided not to place limitations upon individual human rights in principle in the GHQ draft. The main premise of the constitution was “All natural persons, Japanese or alien, are equal under the law and there shall be no discrimination.” However, in the final draft, the phrase describing the main premise was changed to “We, the Japanese” and “Since then, the path to Japan’s democracy was paved only for Japanese nationals” (details available at the National Diet Library, Birth of the Constitution of Japan). Under the Alien Registration Law of 1952, Koreans were categorized as foreigners. The Japanese word *gaijin* refers to foreigners and has a negative connotation that foreign elements should be excluded. Under the Japanese nationality law based on lineage, Koreans must remain *gaijin* regardless of the number of generations that have lived in Japan.

The cultural exclusiveness of ethnocentrism in Japan is deeply rooted in its society. The plight of resident Koreans has been described as “Japan’s hidden apartheid” by Hicks (1998). Indeed, numerous discriminatory measures against foreigners have been implemented under the Alien Registration Law. Most of these people, who live almost invisibly using Japanese-style names, were excluded from almost all social welfare programs that Japanese nationals enjoyed until recent decades. It is impractical for most Koreans to leave Japan because they only know one home—Japan—and their ancestral home has long suffered the chaos of division as a result of former Japanese colonization and subsequent division between the Cold War powers.

Japan’s ethnocentric and sociocultural exclusiveness has sharply penetrated postcolonial governmental policies against the non-Japanese, particularly old-timer Koreans, whose civic rights and direct participation in society is blocked by the “nationality clause” and their status as foreign residents. As long as the government leaves the problems of Koreans unsolved, it will not be able to undertake effective measures for “newcomer foreigners,” whose numbers are rapidly increasing today.

## THE NATURE OF HOMOGENEITY IN JAPAN

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Every country has its own form of diversity, and in order for a democracy to exist, the state needs to acknowledge the importance of diversity. One distinct cultural dimension of Japan is an extremely low percentage of female politicians and the nature of homogeneity in politics. These characteristics can be applied to the other aspects of Japanese life. Geert Hofstede's study on IBM workers around the world indicated that the Japanese workers of IBM Japan exhibited the highest level of "masculinity" among all the developed countries (Hofstede, 2008).

The substantial homogeneity among Japanese political leaders is enormous, and it appears that the quasi-feudalism of the Edo era—an era defined by a ruling social class that was determined by birth, lineage, or family wealth—has been revived. Even the former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, who waged the war on the "old LDP," followed this malicious path. Shortly after Junichiro Koizumi retired as a politician on September 25, 2008, his son Shinjiro Koizumi announced that he would run as a candidate for his father's seat by representing the Kanagawa 11th district. If he is elected, he will become a third-generation politician. Koizumi, who is famous for being liberal, chose the most traditional way of shifting responsibility to his successor.

Japan's current prime minister, Taro Aso, is the 92nd prime minister. He is another political leader who is part of this nepotistic system. Aso is related to seven former prime ministers, including his grandfather Shigeru Yoshida, and his cabinet has four ministers whose fathers or grandfathers were past prime ministers. The two former prime ministers before Aso, who resigned abruptly, were Shinzo Abe and Yasuo Fukuda. Shinzo Abe's father is Shintaro Abe, former secretary-general of the LDP, and his grandfather was former Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi. Yasuo Fukuda was the first son of former Japanese Prime Minister Takeo Fukuda.

According to the Japanese journalist Kosuke Takahashi, the well-entrenched system of nepotism is the cause of Japan's dysfunctional politics. Takahashi finds that second- or third-generation politicians inherit "three bans": *jiban* (an electoral power base), *kanban* (name recognition), and *kaban* (political donations). *Kane* (money) and *kone* (connections) are important factors for any politicians to be successful, and *iegara* or *chisuji* (lineage) is a significant factor needed to maintain power. After the abolition of the caste system during the Meiji Restoration, the job a person could secure came to depend primarily on ability as opposed to social class at birth, lineage, or parental wealth. Nonetheless, lineage obviously still plays an important role in Japanese politics.

Let me explore the role of lineage in Japanese society a little further. The importance of lineage is closely related to the belief in "blood." The Japanese believe that blood type determines a person's personality. There is a popular Japanese belief that a person's ABO blood type or *ketsueki-gata* is predictive of his or her personality, temperament, and compatibility with others—similar to Western astrology.

The belief about blood was used to form the Japanese national identity, which functioned as the ethnocentric outlook that was politically harnessed for the swift advancement of the nation before and during World War II. Concomitant with the nation's militaristic periods in the 1930s and 1940s, an ethnocentric fever swept over Japan, producing a large amount of literature that celebrated "Japanese racial purity." For example, the putative relationship between blood and culture was discussed explicitly in Tetsuji Kada's *Jinshu, Minzoku, Sensō* (Race, Ethnicity, and War), published in 1938 (Weiner, 1997, p. 2). Kada consistently affirmed the biological basis of *minzoku* (ethnicity) by distinguishing it from *jinshu* (race), and supported the belief in the purity of Japanese blood. Purity of blood, as expressed in ethnic homogeneity, reinforced Japanese collectivity, and it was used politically to change the family-state into a militarized nation. Ethnic homogeneity helped Japan to justify its segregation from the other Asian countries, even though they belong to the same race.

## MY LIFE

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I was raised as if I were Japanese, but my Korean ethnicity was such that the "as if" quality could never be permanently removed, often putting me in intercultural situations at a moment's notice. Continually having to switch between intra- and intercultural communication with the Japanese has given me much insight into the Japanese character from both an "insider" and "outsider" perspective. Koreans gain the insider perspective because many of them are physically indistinguishable from the Japanese and, if native born to Japan, can pass themselves off as being truly Japanese.

Here, I present my own personal history and that of my family. This may be more meaningful for the readers of this paper, for it is an account of my own experiences.

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To begin with, as a second-generation Korean from my father's side and third-generation from my mother's side, who was born and bred in Japan, I went to Japanese schools from the elementary through university level, so that my environment was quite different from that of Koreans who were formally educated in *Chongryon* (General Federation of Korean Residents in Japan) associated schools. Because *Chongryon* is viewed by the Japanese as a "formidable Pyongyang lobby in Japan" or as a "highly disciplined Korean Communist organization in Japan" (Ryang, 1997, p. 11), *Chongryon* Koreans are isolated from mainstream Japanese society and have created their own ethnic culture. I, however, was brought up in an assimilated environment. I speak no Korean and believed that I was the same as any other Japanese until I began to experience discrimination and prejudice later in my childhood. Being discriminated against caused me to question my own identity, leading me, and others like me, to develop an in-between consciousness—one neither Japanese nor Korean.

Korean youths typically become conscious of being non-Japanese and non-Korean under a fully assimilated system in their first phase of identity formation. The experience of discrimination awakens them and forces them to face the social reality and associated problems. Compared to the first-generation Koreans who had strong ties to their own country, the second-generation Koreans who were raised in a Japanese environment, like me, have been culturally and socially assimilated into the dominant society. However, most of us have had traumatizing experiences of direct or indirect discriminatory treatment and prejudice in Japanese society, even though the degree of discrimination and prejudice differs. I was born in 1953, the eldest daughter in my family. Because the Alien Registration Law was implemented in 1952, I was born as a Korean despite the fact that my father had Japanese citizenship up to that point.

My father's family background represents a typical case of the plight of Korean migrants during the period of colonial rule from 1910 to 1945. There was a large influx of Koreans into Japan in search of jobs as a direct result of land confiscation by imperial Japan from 1910 to 1918 (Fukuoka, 1996; Kan & Kim, 1994; Lee & De Vos, 1981). Many married men left their families behind in Korea and migrated to Japan alone. My grandfather was one of these men. After he left for Japan, my grandmother soon followed him without his knowledge. She took my father along with her, who was then only four years of age. Hers was a brave act because Korean women were not easily permitted to migrate to Japan. My grandmother hid herself and my father in the bottom of a fishing boat during the whole trip.

Somehow they caught up with my grandfather and began to live in a small village in Wakayama, south of Osaka, Japan. My father tells us that the most difficult time for them was when no one in the village wanted to rent a house to this newly arrived Korean family. Nevertheless, they managed to survive, and in time, my father learned the language and educated himself, becoming a guide for his parents in this foreign land. My father calls Wakayama his hometown despite the hard life they had. My maternal great grandfather also migrated to Japan under similar circumstances. He, however, was to lose his life during the hysteria in Tokyo during the Great Kanto Earthquake in 1923. He was one of the 6,000 Korean victims of the massacre by Japanese rioters, who believed a rumor that Koreans were plotting to stage a takeover of Tokyo. In order to identify Koreans, Japanese vigilantes forced them to utter certain sounds (Kuboi, 1996), and then went on to kill those whom they believed to be Korean. This case is a tragic reminder of how language can become a powerful weapon by which the mainstream or majority exercises control over a minority. During the six-day massacre, those with speech impediments and even those with different Japanese regional accents, even if they were Japanese, were victimized.

### THORNY PATH TO CITIZENSHIP

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A high-ranking immigration official once made the following comment: "We have total freedom to either fry or boil foreigners and even cook them with our hands" (Tanaka, 1995, p. 26). In line with the nation's ethnocentrism, despite the importance of Japan's naturalization policy, relatively little is known about how it actually functions. The final decision of whether or not to accept a naturalization application is left largely to the Ministry of Justice, and the procedures and criteria for making a decision remain ambiguous and shrouded in a veil of bureaucratic secrecy.

My path to acquiring Japanese citizenship was an extremely long one. I made a total of four attempts to acquire citizenship. My first attempt was in 1974, when I was a senior student at a Japanese university. I could not find a job as long as I kept my Korean nationality, so I decided to naturalize. I was just 21 years old. My application was turned down at the consultation counter of *kokusekika* (the section dealing with the application for naturalization), and I was told that I would never be eligible to apply for citizenship because I was

not financially independent. In addition, applications are processed on the basis of the family registry and the householders. In my case, my father was eligible to apply for himself and the rest of his family members. He refused to naturalize and apologized to me, saying “not over my dead body.” He regarded becoming a Japanese citizen as a submission to Japan and I fully respected his feelings.

I left for the U.S. and decided not to return to Japan, a country which did not need me. During my stay in the U.S., I had to return to Japan every year to maintain my permanent resident’s status with a reentry permit. Otherwise I would lose the residency. I made a second attempt to apply for Japanese citizenship in 1978, but again my application was turned down with a different reason: I was not eligible to apply because I was out of the country. Their excuse was that they could not determine my address. Later, I found that I could have been eligible to apply because my reentry permit is evidence of my residency in Japan.

In 1979, I married an Iranian who was a foreign student in the U.S., and then in 1980, our daughter was born in Boston. I was very surprised to find out that our daughter would become an American citizen instantly, even though both her parents were foreigners. This experience enabled me to learn more about the “diversity and multiculturalism” that was about to emerge as a source of energy in American society.

In the United States, the two principles that are used to determine one’s citizenship or nationality are *jus soli*, which means citizenship by birth, and *jus sanguinis*, which refers to the principle of citizenship by descent. America adheres to both these systems. Benefiting from the nationality law, the population in the U.S. is expected to continuously rise, accompanied by an increasing number of immigrants. In contrast, Japan has sustained an exclusion policy since the postwar period, and as a result of this policy, foreign residents account for only 2 percent of the total population. The most symbolic strategy for maintaining their strict exclusion policy is the nationality law based on the principle of *jus sanguinis*. Under the policy, regardless of how many generations of foreigners live continuously in Japan, they remain foreigners in terms of status. Korean minority groups are the best example, and today we find even fourth-generation Koreans who have been categorized as foreigners.

I made my third attempt to acquire Japanese citizenship in the beginning of the 1980s, when I went back to Japan with my own family. My application was again turned down at the consultation counter because the Ministry of Justice refused to take my individual application (without including my husband and our daughter).

In the late 1990s, I was ready to take legal action against the Ministry of Justice for the violation of human rights, and my uncompromising attitude finally compelled the ministry to grant me an application form. My last attempt brought me close to realizing my long-cherished dream of acquiring Japanese citizenship. My application process started in 1999, and the Ministry of Justice must have found it difficult to decide on my case because I had violated the paternal principle and challenged the homogeneity of the country by maintaining my Korean ethnic name. When all the documents were being submitted to the authorities, I had to remove my name from my father’s family registry; therefore, technically, I was a stateless person until the time my application was officially approved and I became Japanese. If my application had been turned down yet again, I wonder how I would have recovered my name in my father’s Korean family registry.

Unlike most Koreans who naturalize, however, I decided to retain my Korean name. My decision was questioned by an official in the process. I was asked, “Why don’t you become pure Japanese? That way, you can avoid discrimination, and your life will be better off.” I said, “No,” and then questioned him in turn, “Who is a pure Japanese? If so, please name them. Diversity is the key that brings dynamism to society. Don’t you agree?”

Finally, in 2001, I acquired Japanese citizenship, something that I had wanted since I was 21 years old. However, my motive for applying for citizenship was different. In the beginning, I just wanted to escape from the hardship of discrimination, but this time, I wanted to contribute to Japan in my own way. I began to claim that I was Korean-Japanese. There is no hyphenated identities such as Korean-Japanese or Chinese-Japanese in Japan because Japanese citizens must only be Japanese.

I have encountered various types of discrimination due to my foreign name, and so I admit that using a Japanese pass name would have made my life easier than it is today, as the official had predicted. However, I am destined to continuously challenge the “myth” of the homogeneity of Japanese society. I can now fulfill this responsibility more actively because I am no longer outside the circle.

Relaxed requirements for permanent residency and nationality are currently being implemented, and the government is discussing the possibility of granting suffrage to foreign residents. The Japanese government is also considering the elimination of the naturalization requirement for those who have special permanent residency—that is, those who were formerly Japanese nationals and remained in Japan after the war—and their Japan-born and resident descendants. Among Koreans, there are movements both for naturalization and also

for the recovery of ethnic names and greater assertion of identity. My presence is important not only for the Japanese but also for the Koreans who still conceal their ethnicity.

### TRANSNATIONAL IDENTITY TO GLOBAL DEMOCRACY

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Yun (1992) argues that the native Korean identity served as a bulwark against the social injustices encountered by first-generation Koreans. For the sake of their children, these Koreans struggled within the gap between assimilation and separation and survived, despite being outside the mainstream. They knew that they could never return to their home country and were likely to lose their Korean culture and identity. Few Japanese know that Koreans held limited Japanese citizenship until 1952. Even though they were considered Japanese nationals, colonial subjects were not to be accorded the same respected status as Japanese citizens.

Second-generation Koreans—like me—had to go through more difficult times than members of our parents' generations. More than 80 percent of the second or third generations were educated in Japanese schools. They had to endure the contradiction between what they learned about democracy and their marginalized status, which allowed for almost no access to civil participation.

The discourse of resident Koreans is complex, and their social and cultural identities are becoming more diverse today as they are affected by the changing society of Japan. Resident Korean discourse today and Koreans belonging to the younger generation rely on various agencies to form their own identities. According to statistics, there are about 1 million Koreans in Japan, which includes naturalized Japanese, long-time visitors, and foreign students from Korea. There are 6 million Koreans in the worldwide diaspora. Koreans in Japan are now searching for new identities that transcend the national borders of Japan, South Korea, and North Korea.

Transnationalism emerged not only in response to the increasing number of applicants for naturalization, but also in response to the declining Korean community. Owing to their indistinguishable physical features and native-level cultural and linguistic capabilities, many resident Koreans in Japan choose to conceal their identities. Transnationalism is not a new concept, but it is becoming a reality for all minority groups who reside outside of their homelands in the globalizing age.

Transnationalism offers an alternative solution to social discrimination and allows minority individuals to actively participate in the host society by acquiring voting rights in the local elections. However, transnationalism is a global phenomenon. It takes into account the context of globalization and economic uncertainty that facilitates the construction of worldwide networks. For Islam, the rhetoric of *Umma*—that is, a worldwide unified Muslim community—has been reinterpreted in a way that reframes all national diversity as one imagined political community, away from its religious definition. The 6-million member Korean diaspora might establish a community like the Muslims' *Umma*, and this may be a new start for developing a global democracy.

### HOW KOREAN ETHNIC SCHOOLS HAVE SURVIVED

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The 2008 ALFP fellows had an opportunity to visit a Korean ethnic school in Osaka during a field trip. Although I had visited the school many times in the past, being accompanied by the 2008 ALFP fellows made this a special visit for me. It is amazing that the Korean ethnic schools have survived in the midst of severe discrimination, prejudice, and the strict Japanese exclusion policy against ethnic education—especially against the Korean ethnic schools for the past 60 years after World War II. However, the current status of the ethnic schools has gradually changed since 2002, when the North Korean or DPRK (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) government confessed to the abduction of Japanese citizens. The blame was then shifted to the young children of the Korean ethnic schools. As public sentiment toward North Korea became negative, these children were verbally harassed in trains and on the streets, and at times, their lives were in danger. The female students were harassed on trains and their "*chima* and *chogori*" ethnic school uniforms were slit with knives while they commuted to school.

In addition, many Koreans in Japan faced serious financial difficulties because the DPRK government stopped supporting them. Those who were dissatisfied with the ethnic education offered by the pro-Pyongyang schools and the pro-South Korean schools are trying to open a new Korean ethnic school that goes beyond the two Koreas, and the pedagogical aim is to nurture students so that they become global citizens rather than emphasizing the narrow sense of Korean ethnicity. There are two types of Koreans: pro-South Koreans and pro-North

Koreans. The pro-North Koreans do not possess North Korean citizenship, and their status is similar to statelessness. Ideological differences have divided the Korean community into two groups, even though majority was actually from south part of Korea, not north.

The history of Korean ethnic schools dates back to Japanese imperialism. In 1910, Korea became substantially colonized and officially annexed by Japan, and the Korean language and culture were mercilessly eradicated and replaced by the Japanese language and culture. Under a series of assimilationist policies implemented during this colonization, Koreans were deprived of educational opportunities to study in their own language.

In 1945, Japan was defeated in World War II, and Korea was liberated. The zest for the revival of ethnic identity and pride appeared in the form of the founding of Korean language schools in Japan. However, the Ministry of Education did not recognize the Korean ethnic schools and embarked on a policy of either shutting down the schools or incorporating them into Japanese schools (Tanaka, 2006, p. 153).

When their home country was divided into two Koreas, the Koreans in Japan were forced to take sides according to their ideological beliefs. Owing to various reasons, which included financial difficulties and the shrinking Korean community, pro-South Korean schools adopted a more assimilationist policy, and they became the so-called Article 1 schools that teach a curriculum similar to that of Japanese schools. This means that their classroom language is Japanese, while Korean language, culture, and history are taught in extracurricular classes.

On the other hand, pro-North Korean schools maintained their own curriculum and refused to follow the Japanese school curriculum. They were initially financially supported by North Korea and worshipped the two leaders Kim Il-Sung, the founder of North Korea, and Kim Jong Il, the present leader of the country. These ethnic schools emphasized loyalty and allegiance to the two leaders, and photos of the two men were hung in classrooms until recently.

The pro-North Korean schools discourage students from applying for Japanese citizenship through naturalization and from marrying Japanese. They use their own history textbooks, which are published by the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan or *Chongryon*. They teach Korean history and Korea's relationship with Japan in a way that Japanese schools never do. The language used in the classroom is Korean, and the use of Japanese is prohibited in schools.

These schools are classified as “miscellaneous schools”—alongside driving schools—as per Article 83. They receive no financial aid from the Ministry of Education, and students do not receive discounts on monthly train and subway passes. Moreover, since these schools are not recognized as Article 1 schools, students are not eligible to take entrance examinations to Japanese national universities. They are asked to take a preliminary examination to determine eligibility for entrance examinations to national universities.

In a broad sense, international schools are educational institutions for learners of various nationalities and races. However, in Japan, international is equated with Western, and international schools are designed to be Western schools. The image of Western international schools in Japan is very positive, and even though the tuition is very expensive, many Japanese parents want to send their children to these schools. On the other hand, the Korean ethnic schools are suffering from serious financial difficulties, and financial aid has stopped coming in from North Korea owing to economic difficulties. Ethnicity education emphasizing the loyalty of the two leaders has caused strong doubts among young parents who are concerned about their own children's future.

### BEYOND THE NATION-STATE CONCEPT

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In the Korean community in Japan, the presence of newcomers and Chinese-Koreans has become noticeable, and their roles have transcended national boundaries. In addition, in the new global information era, technology, culture, and various other societal aspects are merging together. This increases the importance of the need for the youth to think about the relationship between themselves and the greater world. Thus, globalization is impacting the presence of Korean ethnic schools in a way that is not bounded by the ideology of the nation-state, but rather open to all. Nevertheless, the youth should have their roots in local culture.

There are more than 1 million people of Korean descent living in Japan. Ethnic Koreans living in Japan now have a diversity of nationalities, such as *Kankoku seki* (South Korean nationality), *Chosen Seki* (stateless people who did not choose South Korea), *Nihon Seki* (Japanese nationality), Koreans with dual citizenship, and, in recent times, Chinese-Koreans or ethnic Koreans with Chinese nationality. The result is that it is no longer necessary to have a single relationship with either Korean state. Rather, the necessity of a northern and eastern perspective is now a reality for Koreans living in Japan.

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The melting pot of culture and bloodlines of Koreans living in Japan, as well as those of the Koreans living scattered throughout the world, have created a situation that transcends a north/south dichotomy—and has made Japan an anchor point. Ethnic Koreans are now a living connection to Japan, and it is important that we build a living bridge that stretches between North and East Asia. The time has come to teach the youth the true meaning of the Northern and East Asian perspective historically, culturally, and politically. The new age is breaking out of the framework that became a single entity in modern education: that is, the development of assets, manufacturing of material objects, and building of a strong state reflect a tendency to create a new spirit in North and East Asia.

In the new global era, the need for the youth to think about the relationship between themselves and the greater world has grown in importance. The present generation of youth should have the opportunity to judge different values from different perspectives. This is the basis of real intelligence. Learning and business opportunities need to be expanded to the global level, and young people need to develop a sense of being transnational citizens. The younger generation should be educated so that they can transcend boundaries and become active at a global level. At the same time, transnational citizens need to have a keen understanding of their own living environment. There is a need to view the global situation from the perspective of regional areas.

## CONCLUSION

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The composition of foreign residents in Japan is changing. Old-comer Koreans used to be the largest group of foreign residents. For example, in 1988, Koreans accounted for 78 percent of the total foreign population. Thus, Japan's immigration policy was synonymous with the treatment of Korean residents. In 2007, for the first time, the Chinese constituted Japan's largest foreign community. According to 2007 statistics of the Ministry of Justice, Chinese residents in Japan with legal status totaled 606,899 and accounted for 28.2 percent of the foreign population. The Chinese community is expected to continue increasing in size. On the other hand, the Korean community is shrinking; the 2007 statistics report that there are 593,489 Korean residents, which accounts for 27.6% of the total foreign population. Some people estimate that the number of old-comer Koreans will decline by 2050. The representative group of newcomer foreigners—for example, Brazilians—numbered 316,967 and accounted for 15 percent of the total foreign population; these communities are also expected to grow in the future.

Japan is lagging behind in terms of its immigration policy because of the closed nature of its society. Immigrants choose the country to which they want to immigrate, and the U.S. and European countries are popular host countries—especially for those with strong technology skills. Moreover, many of the immigrants currently in Japan are seeking opportunities to immigrate to these countries (Kajita, 1999). In the globalizing economy, the types of the immigrants vary from menial labor migrants to high-technology expatriates. Japan is urged to change in order to attract such high-technology engineers. Security, ethnocentric values, and beliefs have already been overridden by the economic engines in Japanese society, and the rapid increase in naturalized citizens over the past five years is a sign that proves such a theory of globalization.

While the Japanese perception of Koreans has improved in recent years, thanks largely to Korean pop culture, there is a backlash from nationalists, in addition to a move to reinstate patriotic education—a trend I am particularly concerned about. The Japanese attitude toward immigrants will not change unless the situation “really hits the bottom.” Nonetheless, I believe Japan can no longer expect foreigners to choose between assimilation and exclusion and the value of the nation-state concept will definitely change with the forces of globalization. As an individual and a new Japanese citizen, challenging the country's homogeneity is my way of participating in my society as an active citizen. It is my way of showing patriotism toward Japan and caring about the world. Finally, I would like to mention that my father has decided to apply for Japanese citizenship at the age of 84. In his words, his motive for doing is as follows: “I contributed to the Japanese society enough by paying taxes. Before I die, I want to vote!”

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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Some parts of this paper are taken from my publications that are listed under the references.

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# The Other View: Coomaraswamy, Tagore, and Gandhi on Hindu Identity

JYOTIRMAYA SHARMA

From the nineteenth century onward, the question of nationalism and identity has given rise to multiplicity of voices and arguments in India and, indeed, much of Asia. In India, one set of philosophers and thinkers argue that the definitions of nationalism and identity in India are inextricably linked with the recognition of Hinduism as the defining and deciding factor; the nation is nothing but the physical and emotional manifestation of Hindu aspirations. The question of identity for them, therefore, is an issue that is naturally settled in favor of a clearly delineated Hindu identity.

The following features characterize all attempts at fabricating a Hindu utopia:

1. Religion, more specifically, Hinduism, as the core of national life, superseding economics, politics, and civil society
2. Nationalism to be defined strictly in cultural terms
3. Qualified or enthusiastic support for Western technology, science, and rationalism (The Swadeshi Jagaran Manch does not reject these values. It merely argues in favor of them being employed in the service of farmers, small artisans, and cottage industries, along with stricter regulation and protection of markets)
4. Support for an aggressive, violent, and militant idea of Hinduism
5. Belief in Hinduism as a perfect religion that does not admit doctrinal debates or theological skepticism
6. Inalienable link between doctrinal and historical Hinduism; in other words, the historical role of Hinduism is to play out its doctrinal essence

Ananda Coomaraswamy, Rabindranath Tagore, and Mohandas K. Gandhi also grappled with the problems of nationalism and identity. In their thought, they sought to provide answers that were characteristically different from the votaries of the idea of India as a “Hindu Rashtra.” The following features mark their intervention in the nationalism/identity debate:

1. Spirituality in the most universal sense was the core of the Indian nation.
2. Nationalism was a limiting doctrine as long as it did not admit the notion of a universally shared culture.
3. They rejected the idea of Western science, technology, and rationalism as a boon.
4. Violence was the degradation of the human spirit and was something that made humans closer to beasts.
5. There was a need to distinguish between doctrinal Hinduism, societal practices, and Hinduism as a learning and absorbing entity.
6. To identify Hinduism with its historical role was to rob it of its timeless essence.

For Coomaraswamy, Tagore, and Gandhi, religion was a means of liberation. In sharp contrast, Hinduism had become a vehicle of enslavement. Tagore makes a crucial distinction between “dharma” and “dharma-tantra,” with the latter spelling doom and enslavement. Gandhi sought to rid Hinduism of all historical accretions by arguing that the profoundly metaphysical last thirteen verses of the second chapter of the Gita were to be taken as the core of Hinduism. Coomaraswamy went a step ahead to argue that all morality ought to be circumscribed by beauty. He asserted that the true national weakness in India was not the loss of manliness but the loss of fine taste. What is unique about these three thinkers is their attempt to first define the notion of civilization before attempting to tackle the issue of nationalism or identity.

A quote by Coomaraswamy from an essay titled “Poems of Rabindranath Tagore” effectively summarizes the common ground between all three thinkers. It would not be incorrect to argue that the sentiments expressed

## The Other View: Coomaraswamy, Tagore, and Gandhi on Hindu Identity

in this quote constitute the methodology Coomaraswamy, Tagore, and Gandhi employed to grapple with the question of Hindu identity.

*The painters of our visions—the makers of our songs—the builders of our houses—the weavers of our garments, these all are touchstone that can turn to gold for us both past and present, if we will it so... They can show to us the significance of little things, the wonder of what is always going on. They tell us that we are what we are not because of knowledge or wealth or power, but because of the dolls in our childhood's games, because of the rivers that we worship as divinities, because of the beauty of women, and the splendid indifference of men to danger and to death.*

There is, therefore, a need to first descriptively delineate the analysis of these thinkers with regard to the extant questions of nationalism, identity, and Hinduism, while following this analytical thrust with a detailed account of their “solution” to these issues. It would be suggested that the model for present-day India and, indeed, Asia, is a creative blend of three solutions: Aesthetics, universalism, and ethics (as opposed to imitation, crudity, nationalism, and moralism). It is this sense of recovering the idea of community, plurality, and multiplicity that would pave the way for Asian countries to be able to live as multiethnic, multicultural, multi-religious, pluralistic, free, and democratic societies.



# **ALFP ACTIVITIES 2008**

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## ***Country Reports by the Fellows***

*Yuki Ooi, Rapporteur, ALFP 2008*



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# Politically Divided, Socially Torn

ATIYA ACHAKULWIST

**A**tiya Achakulwist talked about the current political situation and climate in Thailand. The country is presently facing political upheavals and Prime Minister Thaksin is responsible for them. The Thaksin regime began with the rise of Thaksin. He established a political party called the Thai Rak Thai (TRT) Party, which implemented policies centered on the rural population. In particular, low-cost healthcare, village funds called “one district one product,” are quite popular among voters in North and Northeast Thailand. More specifically, poor people can consult doctors at the rate of thirty baht. Because Thaksin implemented such policies for the poor, people began to deify him even though the policies were criticized as being populist.

Criticism of the Thaksin government mounted owing to his attempts to subvert independent organizations, mechanisms of checks-and-balances, and media critiques of his populist policies. Some even began to question his style of democracy. In November 2005, weekly anti-Thaksin rallies started, drawing thousands of people who accused the government of corruption, abuses of power, censorship, and mishandling of the Muslim insurgency. Those involved wore yellow, the color associated with the king. In January 2006, Thaksin’s family sold their controlling stakes of Shin Corp., a telecoms empire he founded, to a Singapore state investment company, which instigated criticism against him. On September 19, 2006, Thaksin was ousted by a coup, a move that was approved by 70% of the Thai population.

Then, the Supreme Court disbanded the TRT for election fraud; Thaksin and one hundred party executives were barred from politics for five years on the grounds of their election law violations. In the meantime, Thaksin stayed abroad in exile. The interim government led by Surayud was viewed as failing to solve economic and political problems.

In July 2007, Thaksin supporters joined the little-known People’s Power Party (PPP), which became a proxy for his disbanded party. Later in the same year, the PPP won the largest amount of votes in the December 23 general election. In February 2008, the coalition led by the PPP formed a new government, with Samak Sundaravej as prime minister. Samak, once a governor of Bangkok, was a right-wing conservative politician. On February 28, Thaksin returned to Thailand. On July 30 of the same year, Thaksin’s wife Khunying Potjaman was sentenced to three years in jail for tax evasion.

The insurgencies and reactions against Thaksin drew the dividing lines in Thai society: between the rich and the poor and between the urban and the rural. During the political upheavals, disparities worsened further. Thus, a national reconciliation is very much desired. However, how does one define such reconciliation in the first place? Does it mean that everyone votes for the same party and that everyone agrees with a single idea? In a country like Thailand, how can reconciliation be made possible? There might be some possible ways. One idea is to amend the Thai Constitution to revoke harsh punishment against vote buying in order to prevent corrupt elections. Another idea is to implement welfare state policies aimed at the poor. However, as these policies are costly and take a long time to yield a result, they are not popular with politicians and have never been fully adopted as a policy platform. Therefore, the question of reconciliation is still open to debate.

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# Democratic Recession and Political Violence in the Philippines: What's Going On?

CHITO GASCON

Chito Gascon explained the current political situation in the Philippines after introducing some basic facts about the country. He started the report with a quick overview of the history of the nation. He stated that the Philippines was the first country that the United States colonized and that it is also well-known for “People’s Power,” which ended the Marcos administration. Then, using various indexes and statistics, he provided an international perspective on the country’s political condition.

The first thing shown was a world map of freedom, which had been issued by Freedom House, an American nongovernmental organization. All the nations were colored in green, yellow, or blue: green signifies that the country is a free state; yellow, a “partly free state;” and blue, “not a free state.” The Philippines was colored green several years ago, which means that it was a free state. However, in 2005, the color turned yellow and it has remained so until 2008. The other indexes he used for the presentations include the Global Integrity Index and the Global Peace Index, both of which were issued in 2006. In the latter, the Philippines ranked between peace and violence.

As these indexes indicate, the political situation has been fluctuating against the backdrop of political and economic changes. In the past ten years, the country has been affected by the Asian financial crisis of 1997, attempts at amending the constitution (so called Cha-Cha), emergence of populist candidates, counterreactions by the elites, erosion of trust in key institutions such as courts and elections, and breakdown of consensual politics, which resulted in public alienation and so on. This worsened and weakened laws and led to poor economic performance, ethnic and religious divisions, ineffective political institutions, and constraints on authoritarian leaders. As a result, the political situation reached a stalemate and endangered democracy.

Such concerns for democracy have been growing for several reasons. First, extra-judicial killing and human rights violations have increased in the last five years. The victims were killed because they were perceived as opponents of the government. Thus far, however, neither senior civilians nor military officials have been held accountable for these serious crimes. Second, there have been armed conflicts caused by religious differences, such as the one in Mindanao. During these conflicts, civilian authority has been militarized, which means that the military is not under democratic control. Hence, peace is a critical issue in the Philippines today.

What is worse is the declining public attitude toward democracy. For example, in 2001, 64% of the Filipino people thought that democracy was preferable, but this figure was down to 51% in 2005. In addition, the percentage of those who think democracy is suitable for the country decreased from 80% to 57% from 2001 to 2005. Therefore, people have become less satisfied with democracy. As these political situations suggest, central questions are yet to be answered: How can we ensure the survival of democratic politics? How can people further good governance and mobilize society at the local level while attaining development at the national level?

Diversity in unity is relevant to China. It can be found in the glorious opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympic Games held in 2008. Thus, as an introduction to his presentation, Gu Yi An, an art director, showed a video of the opening ceremony, describing what each performance staged by the Chinese people was meant to convey to the audience, along with some explanation of the traditional Chinese ideas, such as those of Lao-tzu and Confucius. He also gave us the unfortunate news that several performances were canceled a few days before the Olympics. This was because a high-ranking official who witnessed the final rehearsal expressed concerns about the possibility of too many things being crammed within a single ceremony, which might upset the overall beauty and harmony.

Instead of harmony (*he*, 和), however, greater emphasis is placed on *li* (利), or profits today.

Globalization is led by a handful of elites in financial industries, who wish to earn more money and benefits. In such a world, wealth accumulates among only a limited number of people, while many are deprived of basic needs such as food. Such a situation makes people dread the future. Deploring this horrible situation, Gu insists that we cannot be concerned with our own profit alone because all of us live in a small global village. We must open our hearts to the world. Moreover, continuing to talk about *he* or harmony, he also raised a question about modernization. He thinks modernization has destroyed the sense of harmony between the body and mind of human beings, which are supposed to be united.

Communication is an important part of efforts to build a sense of harmony. Communication, Gu believes, is rooted and nurtured in a community and the process of uniting people. In order to communicate, which is also a basic acting skill, one needs to stop and listen in order to learn about how the world functions and what is going on. He added that acting techniques are not something complicated; they merely consist of listening sincerely and carefully.

As per Gu's analysis, China is now seeking a more harmonious society. Society itself is built by people. Thus, people are critical elements for building a more harmonious society. He believes that the first step toward creating such a society is to ensure the unity of the body and mind at the personal level. Unfortunately, the current trend seems to be accelerating in the opposite direction, which is reflected in the number of suicides in China. This has become a serious problem as suicide is the fifth leading cause of death. Many students are reported to have thought of killing themselves. Therefore, it is critical to develop a sense of unity at the individual level.

In order to deepen our understanding of *he*, he introduced another Chinese character *shie/she*, which consists of two parts, signifying "voice" and "everyone" respectively. Gu thinks that once people cultivate *he*, they begin to express themselves. What one of his colleagues told him is insightful: *he* and *shie/she* are contemporary interpretations and understandings of democracy. Thus, harmony can exist even when everyone has a different voice. In other words, harmony can embrace different voices. Gu concludes that art, including theater, the biggest form of which is the Olympic Games, has the power to end violence and bring about harmony. When there is harmony, everyone has equal chances of winning.

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# A New Trend of Participatory Democracy in Korea

KIM HAECHANG

**K**im Haechang explained Korea's current political climate after introducing some basic facts about the Korean peninsula, such as its history, population, and religion. Kim, a social designer and vice president of an NGO think tank, first talked about the anti-beef import social movement that took place in Seoul in 2008 as an example of a new trend in Korean democracy. More than 10,000 protesters joined the movement by holding candlelight vigils. The demonstrations took place in the wake of President Lee Myung-bak's lifting of a five-year-old import ban on American beef. Many parties were involved in the protests, ranging from numerous school uniform-clad youngsters and office workers to community members, who rallied together using the Internet. The vigils turned out to be the largest anti-government protest in the last twenty years. Frustrated with the president and his administration, people who were discontent organized a series of mass demonstrations in April.

At the time of the last presidential election in December 2007, however, the political interest among people was not as high as it was expected to be following the abovementioned demonstration. Under the current law, anyone aged above 19 is given the right to vote. Only 54.2% of the constituents actually cast a ballot. Many observers speculated that problems such as unemployment or a carefree attitude were responsible for this situation.

However, criticism of President Lee mounted and reached a peak owing to his educational policies. One reason for the criticism is that the government gave full autonomy to schools to group students according to their abilities and levels. Another is Lee's ambitious English immersion program, which infuriated many Korean youngsters, who were already under severe academic stress. The students began to gear up for their own political action. The teenagers, according to progressive Professor Jin Jung-kwon of Chung-Ang University, tend to perceive politics as "fun" rather than as a "struggle."

There is another platform for those interested in politics, namely, "Agora." Agora originally referred to open places of assembly in ancient Greece; in contemporary Korea, however, it is used to refer to a popular online discussion forum at a Korean Internet portal. This forum is claimed to be a seed of so-called digital populism.

In this manner, there are several dimensions that have led to a growth of political interest and through which a new type of democracy is emerging. Some Korean academics have been describing the Internet-driven public protests and discussions as a new form of direct democracy that could supplement Korea's representative democracy. Even former President Kim Dae-jung stated that "We are witnessing the practice of direct democracy in Korea."

The fundamental problem for the incumbent president is his refusal to recognize the changes that have been taking place in Korea in the last ten years. Among them are, for example, continued economic growth, democratic development, improved inter-Korean relations, and Korea's increased role in the international community. In order to address and face the questions and the unprecedented social, local, and cultural changes, the Hope Institute, which Kim works for, was established. The key to solving the current problems lies in social innovation, which requires citizen participation.

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# Nepal: Journey to Republicanism

CHANDRA KISHOR LAL

**C**K Lal first provided important facts about Nepal and then explained how the country has developed politically and its current political climate. He began the report by providing basic knowledge that is critical to grasping the nation's situation. Nepal currently has a population of twenty-three million and 60% of the population lives in 20% of the land because the country is mountainous. In terms of religion, Nepal is known as a Hindu nation. However, few actual differences exist between Hinduism and Buddhism in Nepal. It is interesting to note that 4 to 5% of the people are Muslim. This means that the country has more than 1.5 million Muslims; in other words, Nepal has a larger Muslim population than some Islamic countries.

He also adds that life expectancy is about 60 years and there is little difference between the expectancies of men and women. However, the literacy rate among men (53.7%) is much higher than that among women (42.5%). As for the economy, the nation still largely depends on agriculture. Although Mt. Everest attracts many tourists to Nepal, its contribution to the GDP is very low. Thus, an increasing number of people are migrating to other countries in search of jobs.

The history of Nepal as a unified country began in 1796, when the country was first unified by a Gurkha king. It marked the beginning of monarchy, which lasted until very recently. In 1816, Nepal lost the war with the United Kingdom and had to cede some of its territory. As a result, Nepal's border was redrawn. The national border with India was finally demarcated in 1856, while the northern border had been decided as early as 1792.

Despite the monarchy, it was not the king who held actual power; the nation was actually controlled by the Rana dynasty. In 1951, the then king deposed and removed the Ranas from politics with the help of the people. After eight years, the first election was held. It led to the establishment of a new constitution, shift to constitutional monarchy, and the beginning of parliamentary democracy. However, the elected parliament did not last for more than eighteen months: King Mahendra opposed the constitutional monarchy and sought to impose direct rule on the people by himself. He arrested the prime minister, dissolved the parliament, suspended the constitution, and implemented his own style of democracy. This regime lasted until 1990, when the first people's movement took place and real democracy was restored. Finally, in 2008, the Republic of Nepal was established, officially ending the monarchy.

In this manner, the political climate has been unstable and conflicts among the kings, the parliament, and Maoists have continued. In 2001, Maoists caused a clash in which they took a hundred policemen hostage. The cabinet decided to send the army to rescue the hostages; however, the military refused to obey the orders. In other words, the government failed to function. The parliament was dissolved in May 2002 after a state of emergency was declared. However, the election, which had been planned in November, was not held. It was in the wake of these conflicts and political crises that followed that Nepal was declared a republic. In the meanwhile, people began to organize themselves in order to establish a democracy; an organization called the Citizens' Movement for Peace and Democracy is a good example. In 1990, there were people's movements already being led by the middle class, who gradually became comfortable with the regime. Hence, they do not participate in today's social movements. Instead, the lower middle and lower classes, who are dissatisfied with the elites, have become active.

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# Challenges Posed by the Changing Identity in Japan

LEE SOO IM

Lee Soo im suggests some recent changes in the value systems of the Japanese people through the eyes of a minority group member. First, she introduced some basic facts and traditional perceptions of Japan—namely, that Japan is known for its state-of-the-art technology and as the world's second largest economy after the United States in terms of nominal GDP. In addition, Japanese society has been a male-dominated one.

The male-dominated society, Lee argues, has led to an unexpected result in recent times—an increase in suicides. In fact, compared to other developed countries, the suicide rate of Japanese men is unusually high. The largest number of suicides occurs among Japanese men over 40, and the three major causes of suicide are depression, ailments, and debts. The background to this situation is the male chauvinism and masculinity that has been a driving force to the Japanese society, which places too much pressure on men. The group-oriented work attitude was believed the reason of the economic success in the past. However, “petite” individualism, which refers to a strong sense of individualism secretly harbored under the mask of the identity of collectivism, is becoming strong among young-generation Japanese men. Japanese companies are losing the competitiveness in the international business and the group-oriented value system of Japanese companies will be forced to be changed in the near future and the success will depend on how successfully the diversity dynamism will be integrated in their work force.

Another indicator of change can be found in popular culture. The popular culture affects Japanese people's value toward the neighboring country, Korea. Korean soap operas have been increasing popular in Japan, such as the *Winter Sonata* and *Chang-guem*. These programs attract both men and women because the Japanese believe that the Koreans have maintained a traditional value system that has been lost in Japan. For example, many men are drawn to *Chang-guem* as they like to watch female characters who behave like traditional Japanese women; such women act gracefully and are humble, a type of woman that is no longer found in Japan. While the Japanese feel nostalgic for something lost, they began to adore the Korean values that the Japanese have lost already.

Further, some people are also challenging Japanese traditions. Son Masayoshi, founder of Softbank Capital, is a good example. He was born and raised by parents of Korean descent and later acquired Japanese nationality. His management strategy is quite different from the other Japanese corporate leaders. Having closely worked with Bill Gates and Apple, his views are very cosmopolitan. Moreover, he ventured into the Japanese cell phone market and stimulated it by introducing phones at much lower rates than other carriers, which has led to more severe competition. The TV commercials of Softbank are also unique and appealing to young generation Japanese, in particular, the series showing a family (A dog portraits the father, indicating the lost power of Japanese fathers. A black man portraits the son of the family even though the family are Japanese, indicating the importance of diversity). Lee indicates that diversity and variety among Japanese families are increasing.

In addition, the recent anti-Americanism can be considered as one of the changes in the Japanese value system. Citing some authors, Lee defines it as a deeper rejection of American society, values, and culture and a belief that is threatening to not only Japan but also the rest of the world. Such an attitude has its roots in Japan's poor diplomacy: The country is driven by external pressure; it is not independent and instead follows the dictates of the United States. The rise of anti-Americanism can be grasped from the popularity of Kobayashi Yoshinori's comic books on politics. Lee thinks that his popularity represents the prevalent petite nationalism, namely, nationalism at an individual level that is neither shown nor demonstrated to others.

In this manner, changes in the value systems of the Japanese are found in various dimensions, that is, culture, economy, family structure, and attitudes toward other countries.

Jyotirmaya Sharma began his report with an interesting article published in *Spiegel* in 2005, which projects India as the next global superpower after China. Such a discourse of India as a rising superpower is actually abundant. For example, United States Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice regards India as an important strategic partner for the United States in building global peace. Moreover, some proclaim that the twenty-first century will be “India’s century” because of its rising economic power. The Indian government also added to the fanfare: When the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was in power, the government used the slogan “India Shining” in its political campaign. For the party, “shining” merely meant booming stock markets, sufficient foreign exchange reserves, and a flourishing IT sector. Such trumpeting of India’s economic growth is the backdrop for *Spiegel*’s description of the country: “New Delhi is regarded as the next globalization powerhouse. The symbol of this revolution is no longer the spinning wheel, but the PC: Gates over Gandhi.” Therefore, the general discourse focused on economic success.

However, there is another reality. India has 17% of the world’s population and contributes to less than 2% of the global GDP and 1% of the quantum of world trade. Agriculture is still critical to the national GDP. The rising service sector, including IT, accounts for more than half of the country’s GDP, which makes some people believe that irrespective of how badly the agricultural sector fares, India can grow and become a superpower and its growth will continue to receive a boost. Although the service sector has tried to create millions of jobs, the number of poor people in the country is estimated to be three hundred million. Besides, 65% of the Indian working population is engaged in the agricultural sector. These realities suggest that no actual avenues for employment or growth were opened in the manufacturing sector, while the Indian economy was growing stronger. Neither poverty nor unemployment has been substantially reduced.

The discourse of economic growth tends to overshadow other important facts. According to an index of economic freedom, which was carried out by the *Wall Street Journal* and the Heritage Foundation, India’s economy is mostly restricted. Its ranking was 121 in 2006 and 132 in 2007, despite the fact that economic reforms are conceived as economic liberalization in the form of privatization. Human development indexes in the fields of education, health, nutrition, and housing in particular are poor. The resultant economic disparity has thus produced two polarized “Indias.” Its effect should not be underestimated because it could provoke people into expressing their anger through means that are unrelated to the economy, such as violence, religious bigotry, and regional or linguistic chauvinism, which might in turn lead to an insurgency.

The economic success is often used as an excuse for the underdevelopment of democracy. Few middle-class people are concerned about corruption, political transparency, and the inability to nurture liberal institutions. The delay in democracy exacerbates the disparity among people to the extent that some of the rich even began to physically segregate themselves in gated communities from their less fortunate brethren. Therefore, the understanding of India in terms of a shift from the spinning wheel to the PC, as in *Spiegel*, is misleading: The reality is that there are two Indias.



# ***Seminars by Resource Persons***

***Yuki Ooi, Rapporteur, ALFP 2008***



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# Sinking Japan: How do we survive in Asia?

**YUJI SUZUKI**

*Professor, Hosei University*

Using various statistical data, Professor Yuji Suzuki revealed the real issues and problems that Japan is facing today. Japan has been a peculiar country in that for centuries after World War II it has adopted and identified itself with how other countries, such as Korea, China, and Western nations, thought about it. However, Japan now seems to be sinking because of its own mistakes. Professor Suzuki then posed the following question: If Japanese people understand their failure, can the country revive itself as the United Kingdom once did? In order to examine the nature of the problem, numerous statistics were shown.

The series of data he explained first suggests that the Japanese economy is sinking. In the global ranking of GDP per capita, Japan strikingly plunged from the second place in 1993 to the eighteenth in 2006. Singapore has now taken over the position that used to be held by Japan. In terms of competitive ranking, Japan fell from the fourth place in 1996 to the twenty-fourth in 2007. Other kinds of data such as debt accumulation by the Japanese government, productivity comparison with the United States, and gross amount of stocks held by companies indicate that Japan is sinking very quickly, while other Asian countries like China, Taiwan, Korea, and Singapore have been on the rise.

The decline of the Japanese economy can be detected in the figures of the largest countries involved in trade (in terms of the number of containers) and those of the most heavily used ports. However, air cargo transportation statistics and a list of the most often used airports provide a different picture: Japan is not really sinking. Instead, it is shifting from trade by sea to trade by air because the type of goods shipped abroad by Japan has changed. Since the country now exports hi-tech products, air transportation is used. In fact, Japan now exports technology far more than it imports it. This is intriguing in that for a long time Japan, which was one of the largest importers of technology from the West, exports three to five times more than it imports.

The downswing is not confined to the economy; it can also be found in data on learning. According to the statistics of the OECD, Japanese students' knowledge of subjects such as science, math, and reading is not as high as it is expected to be. In addition, the number of students majoring in science and technology is continuously decreasing. The Japanese government has begun to take this problem seriously. Professor Suzuki speculates that this decline in learning is not only a failure of the government's educational policies, but also triggered by the decreasing younger population. The low birthrate has had a huge impact on Japanese society and caused the country to sink. First, it affects the social security program and the pension system. Second, labor force is declining. In areas that require more workers, in particular rural areas, migrant workers have been used to fill the gap.

Professor Suzuki argued that Japan suffered a downturn because it failed to adjust to the structural changes brought about by globalization. Such a failure has its roots in the government's legislation, regulation, and policies and the lingering negative effects of the bubble economy. As a result, Japan has to solve new problems: widening economic disparity, rise of class differentiation, and an increase in the number of working poor and NEET (those aged between fourteen and thirty-four who are not in education, employment, or training). These problems have led to the breakdown of the family system and diminishing communities.

The problems discussed above constitute the background of the sinking of the Japanese economy. The question of whether Japan can revive itself if the Japanese people fully understand what has caused the nation to sink is still open to discussion.

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# Dealing with Social Issues in Japanese Theater

**YOJI SAKATE**

*Founder, Theatre Co. Rinkogun/President, Japan Playwright's Association*

**M**r. Yoji Sakate, a playwright, started his seminar by screening a video of a theatrical play he had written. The story “Nanyo Kujira Butai” (Whalers in the South Seas) is about Indonesian men who earn their livelihood through whaling and their encounters and exchanges with the Japanese navy. He chose such a topic for several reasons, one of those being that through the play, he had wished to share ideas with people from different backgrounds and had believed that the subject of whaling would enable him to do so.

As Mr. Sakate spoke about his political activities and engagement with social problems, the fellows' interests were drawn to his views on the relation between theater and politics. For example, he has supported the anti-Iraq war movement and prisoners who were wrongfully convicted for political reasons. Responding to a question on how he felt about the fact that only a small number of people in the theatrical circle deal with social problems, he mentioned his artistic motivation and Zeami (1363?–1443?), one of his predecessors who lived in the Muromachi era. To him, a desire for expression is tantamount to a desire to be free. Thus, Zeami was Sakate's inspiration: Faced with numerous personal and political struggles, he never ceased to pursue freedom of expression. For Sakate, freedom of expression makes people freer and more informed, which could empower them to confront harsh realities. However, he deplores the fact that only a limited number of people are trying to express themselves freely today; in capitalist societies that are propped up by networks of information, many are just using certain signs to sell products and earn profits. This means that they succeed not in terms of freedom but in terms of the information they can provide.

During the course of political activities, Sakate has tried to avoid being stigmatized. Otherwise, it would be difficult for him to obtain funding; in addition, only specific groups of people would be interested in his plays, which is something he wants to avoid. What he desires is to express himself as a human being and thus avoid affiliating himself with any political party or sect. In addition, he wants to produce works that can represent a certain group of people by expressing their aspirations. He believes that the unusual topics and issues he deals with in his theatrical plays are actually what Japanese people really want to see. As for funding, the awards and subsidies that are granted to him and his group make their survival possible. Besides, the Japan Playwrights Association, which Sakate represents, has a partnership with the Sugunami Ward Government. Backed by the mayor, the association established a public theater and a nonprofit organization (NPO). This NPO has been assigned to management of the theater and got a commission from Sugunami.

Talking about the relation between freedom and politics, Sakate emphasized how being free was important to confront the complex problems that exist in the world. For him, freedom is the one Zeami found. Actors always have the potential to feel something on stage, and this experience can somehow be passed on to the audience. Sakate admires Zeami's ability to facilitate such communication between actors and the audience; according to Sakate, Zeami was very imaginative and could overcome the differences between the living and the dead, in other words, reality and non-reality. In fact, most of the stories Zeami wrote are ghost stories. Thus, actors who play the roles of dead characters are alive on stage. Such a paradox of living as a ghost, Sakate believes, can give people opportunities to revisit reality and the inspiration to view things from different perspectives. For him, this is what freedom means. His fascinating talk about freedom and politics stimulated the fellows and gave them new viewpoints with which to approach politics.

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# Policy for the Elderly in Japan

**JOHN CAMPBELL**

*Emeritus Professor, University of Michigan*

Professor John Campbell explained Japanese policies and politics for the elderly people, focusing on three policies: pension, healthcare, and long-term care. Low birthrate lies at the core of these policies. Although Japan was an extremely young society in the 1950s, it has now become an aging society with much fewer children. This has a macroeconomic impact on society, ranging from less workers to less vitality in society. How has Japan confronted this trend? The reasons for the expansion in the three abovementioned policy areas were different. Although such expansion was not carried out by politicians who were seeking electoral advantages, all three policies underwent reforms through which people tried to trim them back and moderate costs. This time, the reforms were brought about mostly by bureaucrats and the ministry in charge, that is, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare.

As for the public pension policy which started in 1959, Japan has developed the system under the slogan “pension for all.” Since then, the problem of insufficient fiscal base has remained. In the 1970s, contradictions produced by economic growth became clearer and the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) began to lose in the local elections. In order to answer the criticism and win votes, the party did not fix the problem; instead, it expanded the scope of the program: it invested more money in public works and increased pension enormously. However, as in other countries, excess government expenditure on pension became a problem. The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare successfully rationalized this by raising the retirement age to sixty-five, despite opposition from politicians. The system was again reformed during the Koizumi administration and contributions and future benefits were rationalized. Nonpayment of premium has now become a big issue.

Healthcare for the elderly became an issue in the 1960s: Their usage of medical care turned out to be half that of younger people despite the general fact that the aged tend to fall sick more often. This suggested that the aged were not going to see doctors when they were sick. As a result, social movements for free medical care for older people were launched, an issue that was taken up by Ryokichi Minobe, the Governor of Tokyo. As the burden became too heavy for the local government, a lot of pressure was exerted on the national government. In a bid to gain votes, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) implemented its program of free medical care for the aged, which led to too much expenditure. Thus, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare again tried to rationalize the program; however, its efforts were in vain owing to opposition from the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). In 1990, an important change took place; instead of using tax revenue, the party arranged for cross-subsidies.

As increasingly fewer parents over sixty-five years of age are living with their children today and an increasing number of women are working outside home, the family care system is breaking down. In 1989, when the LDP lost to the Social Democratic Party in the upper-house election, it decided to carry out a dramatic plan that expanded the government’s responsibility for taking care of older people. Its main feature was many home-care programs, which turned out to be successful.

Generally speaking, programs for the elderly have been popular and politicians support them because they think the programs are good for their image, although such policies do not seem to be attracting as many votes from older people as expected. However, the recently implemented program called Koki-Koreisha (old-old) program drew much opposition and people began to speak out against it. Such opposition is very important for democratic politics—in particular, Japan—where there are not many policy cleavages. It will be interesting to see what politicians and people do with this program.

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# Seminar on the Minamata Disease Incident

**YUTA JITSUKAWA**

*Secretary General, Minamata Forum*

The lecture began with the screening of the documentary “Minamata’s Message to the World,” which was filmed thirty years ago. Since then, there have been numerous changes not only in Japan but also in other countries. However, many of those involved in the struggle against the Minamata disease, such as the sick themselves, journalists, and doctors believe that the problem has not been solved. As a result, the Minamata disease and other sicknesses like it are, unfortunately, still found in many places in the world. The Japanese government officially recognizes that the Minamata disease took place in two places: the Shiranui Bay in Kumamoto and the areas surrounding the Agano River in Niigata. However, according to many researchers, two more regions have suffered from mercury poisoning: the Tokuyama Bay area in Yamaguchi and the Ariake Sea in Kumamoto. While it was spreading in Japan, organic poisoning became a grave issue worldwide and hence the World Health Organization (WHO) treats the issue with seriousness.

The Japanese government has failed not only to recognize the contaminated regions but also to support the patients. The officials acknowledged only a limited number as official patients. Children born to mothers who had suffered mercury poisoning were often diagnosed as having problems similar to autism, which means they were intellectually and physically underdeveloped. Such symptoms are typical of the Minamata disease. In addition, the government tends to neglect those who are lightly affected.

It was in 1968 that the government finally admitted for the first time that the disease had been caused by contamination of the sea by industrial waste and that a company called Chisso was responsible for the pollution. By then, the company had been polluting the Shiranui Bay for more than half a century ever since its factories were established in 1908. As early as back then, some medical records had already pointed out that there were patients who would be diagnosed with the Minamata disease later. It was as late as 1959 that people began to realize that the disease had been spreading on an unprecedented scale. Meanwhile, Chisso continued to pollute the sea, which led to an increase in the number of patients. When the Minamata disease was discovered in Niigata, it again began to attract attention. This was followed by recognition from the government.

The official acknowledgement galvanized the patients into fighting for compensation and their rights. As a result, a compensation program was launched and it is still functioning today. However, the program created another problem: The number of patients applying for the program continued to increase and some were worried that Chisso would go bankrupt. In addition, the applications of some victims have been rejected despite the fact that they were diagnosed by doctors. How to define who should be officially recognized as a Minamata patient has been an unresolved issue and the government policy remains undefined.

The Minamata disease produced an unexpected result: It triggered a new type of social movement led by the victims. Before the patients initiated action, social movements were dominated by university professors or labor unions. Besides, the victims are never monolithic and there were several types of groups that had their own ways of achieving their goals.

In this manner, the Minamata disease is still a serious issue. However, Mr. Jitsukawa has found a silver lining to this cloud: people have continued to live in Minamata. Thus, they did not flee the place; instead, the experience enabled them to cultivate a deep sense of compassion and learn how to speak up for themselves.

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# On Japanese Politics and Economics

**MASAHIKO ISHIZUKA**

*Board of Trustees, Foreign Press Center*

**W**ith a primary focus on the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), Mr. Ishizuka illustrated how Japanese politics and the government have worked in the postwar era. He first mentioned the newly elected Prime Minister Taro Aso, explaining why Aso had won by gaining nearly 70% of the votes. The only reason is that he is the most popular candidate among the general public. This fact is of cardinal importance to the LDP, which is racing toward the next general election expected in the near future. Thus, Aso's victory has nothing to do with his political philosophy or policy agenda and his apparent popularity is superficial. It is even doubtful that he can do better than his predecessors. As such a political climate indicates, the LDP appears to be heading for a terminal decline: It seems to be living off its past resources of political capital.

The party was established in 1955 as a force that presided over Japan's high economic growth in the 1960s, 1970s, and perhaps in the 1980s. Its main role was to redistribute the newly created wealth throughout Japan in the form of public investments and subsidies. With such policies, it tried to build an egalitarian society that became a support base for the LDP. While the party grew, bureaucracy also grew. The bureaucratic control was quite strong. In this sense, it is fair to say that the seemingly highly successful Japanese capitalism was ironically developed by socialists.

The abovementioned system worked as long as the economy achieved high growth and the government could earn ample money through tax revenues. However, when the bubble economy burst ended the growth, the egalitarian policy via redistribution met with difficulties simply because the government could no longer afford the same. As a result, the economy entered a phase of prolonged slump, which lasted more than ten years. Despite such a downturn, the government still attempted to shore up the Japanese economy in the false belief that investment in public works would better the situation; their hopes were in vain. Such a policy left a huge amount of public debts because public works were financed by the bonds issued by the government. Surprisingly enough, the debt amounts to 800 trillion yen, equal to 1.5 times Japan's GDP. This not only constrains the Japanese economy but will also be a heavy burden on future generations.

Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's administration, which is known as the reform government, tried to end such a spending policy. Koizumi's attempts produced two results. For one thing, the LDP's redistribution policy ceased to work. This means that the party lost its *raison d'être*. Second, the dual structure of the economy was exposed. The dual structure here means strong vs. weak sectors and high productivity vs. low productivity sectors. Even though such duality is inherent in the Japanese economic structure, the high economic growth had overshadowed and hidden it together with the LDP's redistribution policies. However, Koizumi's attempts and the economic slowdown led to the reemergence of the dual structure.

As a result, people are currently witnessing widening economic and social disparity. As a result, the contrast between urban prosperity and rural depopulation has become sharper, which is a major problem of Japanese society. In spite of these changes, the LDP has been slow or negligent in providing an appropriate solution and still tries to cling to power with the same old method, that is, relying on special interest groups. The reasons are that the party is used to being in power and the opposition forces are weak, which is a lasting drawback of Japanese democracy. Consequently, the LDP can stay in power although its heyday passed with the end of strong economic growth. Therefore, it is fair to state that change of power in the true sense of the word has not yet taken place.

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# Democracy as Part of Japan's Intellectual History

**KIICHI FUJIWARA**  
*Professor, University of Tokyo*

Professor Kiichi Fujiwara started his talk by explaining the political climate in Japan in the 1930s. At that time, the relation between liberal democracy and communism was interesting: Liberals were close to leftists or communists, which is quite surprising. For one thing, communism is now regarded as a way of denying individual freedom. Second, in European nations, democracy and communism were opposed to each other. In Japan, however, social democracy, political liberalism, and communism were intermingled together and liberals, socialists, social democrats, and communists have been bunched together in one political camp, with the conservatives forming the other camp. Unlike the conservatives in European nations who are closely associated with liberals, in Japan, being a conservative is synonymous with being a traditionalist whose interest is to maintain the status quo—opposing Western ideas and continuing to adhere to traditional virtues.

How did such a political climate develop in postwar Japan? In order to deal with this question, Professor Fujiwara suggested an interesting angle: the viewpoint of established intellectuals such as University of Tokyo professors. For them, World War II was a challenge from the masses. Such a view is quite different from the common discourse that argues that Japanese elites drew the country into the war and that the Japanese masses were the victims. During this period, the professors had prerogatives, one of which was to be allowed to read anything they wanted. This means that they could read the same pieces that are available to intellectuals of other countries and share ideas with them. Thus, reading enabled them to live in a cross-national elite community. Being highly Westernized, the professors considered Japanese society from a liberal perspective—namely, that of American, French, German, or British society. Borrowing ideas from Friedrich Meinecke and Alexis de Tocqueville, who had written about the Nazi surge and the French Revolution respectively, they began to see Japanese militarism as a rise of the masses. The reason is that the military was more egalitarian than the government: if you were a competent soldier, the door to promotion was open regardless of your family background. On the other hand, you could not rise in the hierarchy of the government if you were not blue-blooded and highly educated. Therefore, the elite professors considered the rise of militarism as the rise of the masses.

Masao Maruyama, one of the most well-known postwar public intellectuals, added a critical point to such a view. In one of the papers he wrote in 1946, he put forward an important argument about the difference between the dictatorships of Germany and Japan. He identified modernization and liberal tradition as the main cause. Despotism in Japan was caused by a lack of political liberty, while excesses led to dictatorship in other European nations. The problems of modernity and the liberal tradition allowed Japanese fascists to take over. For Maruyama, Japan was lagging behind in terms of liberal institutions. Thus, Maruyama believed that the political project to develop liberalism was assigned to public intellectuals who were already familiar with Western traditions. Interestingly, however, intellectuals like Maruyama, who belonged to a privileged family, felt isolated from the ordinary people. This isolation in turn caused them to fear the masses. Therefore, a sense of isolation from and fear of the masses went along with liberalism in Japan. In this manner, the political ideas of Japanese intellectuals are different from those of their counterparts in other countries.

## ***Retreat and Day Trip***

***Yuki Ooi, Rapporteur, ALFP 2008***



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## Weekend Retreat

The retreat was held at Lawson Guest House in Gotenba from September 13 to 15 in the week of the Fellows' arrival. It gave them the opportunity to get acquainted with each other as well as with the Asia Leadership Fellows Program (ALFP) itself.

Before the sessions commenced, Professor Chiharu Takenaka from Rikkyo University briefed the Fellows on the organization and mission of the program and what they should expect. She also drew our attention to the fact that differences in values, ideas, and identities are becoming increasingly obvious and this may lead to conflicts and divisions among people even when globalization is bringing the world together. She raised the question of how we can overcome differences, build solidarity, and bridge existing gaps. After Professor Takenaka, Mr. Tadashi Ogawa from the Japan Foundation gave an account of the program's history.

The first session, which focused on "Ethnicity and Nationality," began under the moderation of Mr. Michiya Kumaoka from the Japan International Volunteer Center. The first presenter, Chandra Kishor (CK) Lal, explored Nepali identity in the face of Nepal's changing political situation and the dilemma it currently faces. In 2008, the nation became a democratic republic, ending the over-200-year-old monarchy. It also marked a change in the country's identity from a Hindu state to a secular one. As a result, people's perception of the Nepali society has been changing; they now identify the country's diversity in aspects like religion, language, and culture. Against the backdrop of these political and conceptual changes, the old icons and images that were associated with the monarchy and were synonymous with the identity of the Nepali people no longer serve this function. Thus, the identity of the Nepali people has become unstable and they are seeking new icons and images. Lal suggested that when people do not have a concrete sense of their identity, it becomes difficult to achieve regional cooperation and global peace.

The next presenter, Lee Soo im, reflected on Japan's naturalization policy at the macro and microlevels by looking into her own past. She is a third-generation Korean resident of Japan and a naturalized Japanese citizen. She revealed her ethnicity for the first time when she graduated from high school. Until then, she had hidden her ethnic background for fear of being stigmatized and marginalized as a Korean in Japan. With her ethnic background, she has always been haunted by the issue of identity. She sought naturalization a couple of times, but her application was rejected without any substantial reasons by the officials from the Ministry of Justice. These experiences made her aware of the arbitrary nature in which one is given a nationality and how Japan has tried to maintain its ethnic identity by manipulating the naturalization policy. She also found that the officials' decisions are influenced by the larger political context.

Mr. Megumi Nishikawa of the *Mainichi Newspapers* then provided his comments. After narrating his own story, he raised the issue of changing identity in the era of globalization. He hails from Tsushima, a small island, which he used to think as a dead end. But now, it welcomes a large number of visitors from Korea; even the road signs are written in Japanese, Korean, and Chinese. Besides, for a large number of people from Kyusyu, the island is a stop-over on their journey to Korea. The island now serves as a meeting place of different cultures. Such a change made him realize that even a small island located on the fringes of Japan could become an intermediate point for different cultures, from which a new identity and culture could emerge. After Mr. Nishikawa's comments were addressed, the Q&A session began; in this session, the participants discussed topics like the meaning of secularism, conflicts between those who support naturalization and those who oppose it, and the importance of recognizing and embracing diversity in society.

The second session, which had the theme "Civil Society in Democratizing Societies," was moderated by Professor Lee Jong Won of Rikkyo University. First, Kim Haechang gave a talk. He began by relating "the candlelight vigils," a recent huge demonstration against American beef imports in Korea, and then drew our

attention to the fact that Korea's political situation is changing to facilitate the participation of ordinary people, including a large number of students. After this, he presented the Hope Institute, where he worked as a vice-president, to illustrate citizens' participation in politics. The institution is a nongovernmental think-tank that seeks policy alternatives and supports social innovation for a better society. As a social designer, he has been interested in environmental issues; he recently completed his PhD program in Environmental Economics. The institute believes that people's ideas are valuable and are the result of freedom. Thus, he suggests that if we want to benefit from valuable suggestions, we should be receptive to other people as well as to the world.

The next presentation, titled "Building Solidarity for Human Rights and Democracy in Asia," was given by Chito Gascon. He, as a political activist, has been involved in building a platform for democracy and human rights. As commonly perceived, the Philippines discarded dictatorship about twenty-five years ago and embraced democracy. By democracy, he refers to popular consent acquired through regular, free, and fair elections, decisions made in an open and transparent manner, due consideration given to the views of minorities, and finally, fundamental rights guaranteed to everyone. However, he pointed out that this form of democracy has not yet taken root in the Philippines. He asked Asian countries to be aware of the fact that they needed to take certain measures after the transition from an authoritarian rule in order for democracy to be meaningful. Gascon also calls for the Japanese civil society as well as the Japanese government to actively deal with political issues and problems found across Asia.

The last presenter was Atiya Achakulwisut. In her capacity as a journalist, she talked about the decline in newspaper readership in Thailand. It is said that an increasing number of people are using the Internet for information, thereby affecting the employment structure in the newspaper industry. However, the real problem is that newspaper executives are now practicing less ambitious journalism. It means that they do not give space to, for example, investigative stories, serious reports, or journalism that could provoke people. Achakulwisut suspects that they are trying to imitate the Internet by providing stories that are more accessible and more entertaining. In addition, she questioned the functionality of the Internet and its worth as a news source. In reality, many youth do not receive information from any source. Thus, the prevalent view that the Internet is replacing newspapers needs to be reconsidered. Second, given some appalling crimes committed by those addicted to the Internet, she doubts whether technology that combines knowledge and information is of any worth to people. She suggested that the decline of newspapers should be accounted for in line with the decline of certain societal values, which formed the underlying support system of the newspaper industry.

The second session was opened by Professor Reiko Ogawa from Kyusyu University. She began by presenting Kim Haechang's Hope Institute as a good example of how civil society works and contributes to social policies, by comparing it with Japanese cases in which bureaucrats usually play a major role. In Gascon's presentation, she raised the issue of representation in relation to democracy. The Philippines has marginalized groups such as Muslims. When democracy and participation are considered, we need to take into account discrepancies between those who are represented and those who are not. She endorsed Achakulwisut's argument and added that changes in the employment structure and the loss of affiliation may lead to an identity crisis. In Japan, those who have lost their affiliation are looking for a platform where they can openly express themselves. At a time when traditional institutions such as family and company are falling apart, the cyberspace is playing the role of bringing people together. There were numerous questions raised by Professor Ogawa in the Q&A session, including on issues ranging from media literacy to who profits from democratization in developing countries, what "independence" means to independent NGOs, and how the Internet impacts nationalism.

The last session, titled "Community Building in Asia and Beyond," was presided over by Professor Lee Jong Won. First, Jyotirmaya Sharma discussed the topic by focusing on Gandhi, who shed light on how human beings can coexist, an aspect underlying the specific issue of human rights and identity. People may take for granted the fact that democratization was a form of protest against dictatorship. Gandhi, however, warned that anger gives birth to delusion, which in turn, occludes memory, thereby leading to loss of intellect. Anger is an outward manifestation of violence in any form. Violence stems from attachment, which is a by-product of memory. Memory is actually history, beyond which, Gandhi believed, lay a locus of value. When we cannot access past memory, we end up settling scores by arguing on whose memory is more authentic. Inspired by Gandhi, Sharma also pointed out that empathizing with others obliterates differences among people. He suggested that the achievement of utopia does not necessarily require the golden era/past. This has an implication for Asia where the old utopias are collapsing and new ones are taking shape without any intervention.

The last presenter was Gu Yi An. As an art director, he believes in individualism and emphasizes personality because society consists of individuals. Such an implication becomes significant when you consider

China's recent challenges in achieving a more harmonic society. This intention was evidenced in the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympic Games. The Chinese character for "harmony," "he (和)," has two parts: one means "grain" and the other means "mouth." It implies that harmony should be achieved by ensuring the right to food. Otherwise, people begin to fight in their attempts to seek "li (利)," whose character stand for "grain" and "knife." He deplored the fact that the current manifestation of capitalism strove toward the attainment of "li," thus resulting in the lack of harmony in society. The issue of developing the Chinese economy in harmony with the nation will continue to pose a major problem. History is evidence that when China flourished after it opened its gates to the rest of the world, while its economy had been stagnant before that. Now it is in the direction of opening, to which he is trying to contribute through his work by nourishing and encouraging communication.

After this session, Professor Mitsuhiro Kondo from the Japan Women's University gave his comments on two presentations. Sharma's lecture was acclaimed for its findings on a novel aspect of Gandhi, something that even Gandhi's admirers may not be aware of. As for the second presentation, Professor Kondo remarked that Gu's discussions on how working people of different nationalities, ethnicities, and even localities, without bar, with some common vibration of body and mind, could be a good example of community building in our times. It reminded him of the objective of art, for example, to elicit feelings and associated reactions such as laughter. Political scientists are likely to neglect these aspects, but Professor Kondo suggested that they should be reconsidered in order to build a better society and shape human beings. The Q&A and discussion session gained momentum with many questions and comments being raised by Professor Kondo as well as the floor, on issues such as how we should deal with those who do not wish to communicate with people from different backgrounds; Gandhi as an actor who worked for the integrity of society, nature, and the universe by bringing people closer; integration of art and social movements in Asia; how one can participate in social transformation from the sidelines, which will allow him or her to view society from a larger perspective; and the importance of spirituality in community building. In this way, all the presentations gave the participants insights into the true meaning of unity in diversity and how it can be achieved.



## ***Field Trip***

***Johanna O. Zulueta, Rapporteur, ALFP 2008***



From October 5 to 9, the Fellows went on a five-day field trip to Minamata City, located in Kumamoto Prefecture on Kyushu Island, as well as to the cities of Hiroshima, Osaka, and Kyoto on the island of Honshu. The field trip supplemented the seminars and lectures that the Fellows attended and gave them first-hand information on Japan's social and environmental problems, as well as on its marginalized communities.

### DAY 1: MINAMATA CITY

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The Fellows arrived at the Kagoshima airport and were welcomed by Mr. Yoichi Tani of the Solidarity Network Asia and Minamata, who was their guide during their two-day stay in the city.

Minamata City gained recognition with the emergence of Minamata disease, caused by organic mercury absorbed in the body. Official records state that the disease was first discovered in 1956, although symptoms related to what would later be known as Minamata disease were said to have been documented as early as the 1940s. Symptoms included violent convulsions, speech impediment, constriction of the visual field, and sensory problems, all attributed to neurological disorders caused by mercury poisoning from the intake of fish caught in Minamata Bay. Most of those afflicted were fisherfolk who depended on the sea for their livelihood and staple food. Chisso, a company dating back to the early 1900s and a leader in Japan's chemical industry, was responsible for dumping organic mercury-laden wastewater into the sea. From 1932 to 1968, methyl mercury was produced as a by-product in the manufacturing of acetaldehyde in Chisso's factory. For more than 50 years after the first discovery of Minamata disease, the victims and their families sought compensation and recognition from both Chisso and the central government, and their fight continues to this day.

On the way to the Minamata Disease Municipal Museum, the Fellows stopped by the Hyakken Drainage Outlet, which is said to be the place where Minamata disease originated. Mercury-laden wastewater produced by Chisso's factory flowed through this drainage system and into the bay. Next to the drainage outlet was a monument with several *jizō* statues in memory of the Minamata disease victims. The Fellows then arrived at the Minamata Disease Municipal Museum, a place devoted to the preservation of resources related to Minamata disease and a monument bearing testament to the detrimental effects of environmental pollution. The museum also contains the victims' accounts and the pain and discrimination they experienced as people suffering from the disease.

The Fellows then made their way to the Yudo area, home to one of the victims of Minamata disease, Mrs. Fujie Sakamoto. Mrs. Sakamoto's children, Mayumi (born in 1953), Shinobu (born in 1956), and Tamotsu (born in 1961), were all afflicted with the disease. Mrs. Sakamoto was pregnant with Shinobu when her eldest daughter, Mayumi, began showing startling symptoms of the disease. She was not able to walk properly, could not see well, and had difficulty eating and hence needed to be fed. She had to be brought to the local hospital. Eighteen days after the delivery of her second daughter, Mrs. Sakamoto transferred Mayumi to the Kumamoto University Hospital where Mayumi was the first patient with Minamata disease to be confined at the hospital. However, since there were no improvements in Mayumi's symptoms, she was brought back home. Mayumi passed away in 1958.

Shinobu was thought to be much healthier than Mayumi and free of the disease since she did not consume fish from the bay. However, she also manifested symptoms of the disease and was found to be suffering from congenital Minamata disease. Congenital Minamata disease occurs when the mercury absorbed by a pregnant woman through the consumption of infected fish affects the fetus. Hence, these children are born

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with the disease, and in most cases, they are born handicapped, while their mothers seem to be free of any known symptom of the disease. It took the Sakamotos seven years to have congenital Minamata disease recognized in December 1972. Their son, Tamotsu, while not very healthy at birth, was not considered to be suffering from Minamata disease, and hence, the Sakamotos were not able to apply for compensation. Mrs. Sakamoto added that even though the victims received compensation, their health continues to deteriorate.

The first day of the trip was concluded with a dinner hosted by the *Hotaru no Ie* (House of the Fireflies) members, a group lobbying for the compensation and recognition of the Minamata disease victims. The association was named after the fireflies that used to light up the river in the area in earlier times. The Fellows had an engaging conversation with Mr. Hideo Ikoma, a 65-year-old Minamata disease patient. Mr. Ikoma has been afflicted with the disease since he was 15 years old and was discriminated against by the local population. He also talked about the difficulty patients faced when seeking employment. Shinobu Sakamoto, now 51, was also present during the dinner. She is known for composing poems that reflect her personal thoughts and feelings. Despite her speech impediment, she was able to express herself before the audience that night. She held the national, prefectural, and municipal governments responsible for what happened to Minamata and said that she could not forgive them.

### DAY 2: MINAMATA CITY

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The Fellows visited the Minamata Municipal Hall where they were welcomed by Ms. Miwako Kukita from the Environmental Planning Section. Ms. Kukita gave a brief talk on how Minamata City was trying to be an “environmental city” by utilizing the experience of and lessons learnt from the Minamata disease incident. Once a small town, Minamata City developed along the Minamata River and is now home to 29,418 people (as of August 2006) and 12,462 households (as of August 2006). Besides being an eco-city, Minamata promotes its hot springs, such as those in Yunoko and Yunotsuru, in its drive to boost tourism.

According to Ms. Kukita, Minamata City used to be seen as “dismal, cold, gray, and terrifying,” as the city was stigmatized because of the growing number of Minamata disease cases. Regardless of the fact that the majority of the residents were not victims of the disease, the city’s image was affected when the victims sought compensation and called for various movements devoted to this cause, thus bringing the incident in public light. Hence, the disease had an impact on the tourism industry and the local economy of the city, as well as on its citizens who, being natives of Minamata, found it difficult to find jobs and marriage partners.

In order to change this image of Minamata, restoration efforts were undertaken, starting with the building of an eco-park for which 58 hectares of land were reclaimed. The restoration of the city also gave way to the restoration of the community, which went underway with the Environmental Creative Minamata Project from 1990 to 1998. Other environmental projects included waste sorting and collection; the creation of “environmental businesses”; the agreement to abolish the use of plastic food trays for 76 food items; and the sale of old newspapers, whose profits would be divided among the 26 community groups in the city.

The Fellows’ next stop was the Tanaka Shōten Company, where they were greeted by company president, Mr. Toshikazu Tanaka. The Tanaka Shōten Company, one of the eight companies in Minamata’s Eco-Town, specializes in recycling and reusing bottles. Mr. Tanaka gave a brief account of the company’s history and spoke about its current projects. The company aims to increase the use of recycled bottles and contribute to the local economy through the recycling and reuse of these products. The Fellows were also given a tour of the factory, with Mr. Tanaka explaining the recycling process.

The Fellows then visited Mr. Masato Ogata in Ashikita area of the Minamata City. Mr. Ogata was born in 1953 and was witness to his father’s plight as a victim of Minamata disease. He mentioned that his father had passed away only three months after manifesting the symptoms of the disease. Despite losing his father to the disease at the tender age of six, Mr. Ogata never thought about seeking compensation. He, along with other family members, also suffers from the disease, with 180 ppm of mercury found in his hair. While he initially sought official recognition as a victim of the disease, he experienced a paradigm shift in 1985 and decided to withdraw his application. The whole incident led Mr. Ogata to adopt a philosophical view of the situation surrounding the disease; he wondered why the solutions to problems were always calculated in terms of the amount of compensation. He added that as victims, their lives had become commodities, and this is why he had decided to withdraw his application. Mr. Ogata, however, insists that he has not forgiven Chisso, the company

responsible for the disease. Rather, he is demanding that Chisso compensate the victims in some other way besides money.

Mr. Ogata's eldest sister also shared her thoughts with the Fellows by talking about how she took care of her son, who, like her, is a victim of Minamata disease. When she was younger, she cared for her son on her own, but at the moment, she admits that both of them are in need of care and that she has to pay someone to care for both.

### DAY 3: HIROSHIMA CITY

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The Fellows left Minamata City for a half-day tour of Hiroshima and for a session with Mr. Steven Leeper, chairperson of the Hiroshima Peace Culture Foundation.

Hiroshima went down in history as the first city in the world where the atomic bomb was dropped by US forces to end the Pacific War. The intensity of the attack and the effects of the atomic radiation emanating from the blast victimized around 200,000 people on that fateful day in August 1945. Some of the survivors of this incident still bear the physical, emotional, and psychological scars of the attack. They are known as *hibakusha* or atomic bomb victims, and their stories and lives are memorialized in the A-bomb cenotaph, one of the monuments found in the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park. The story of Sadako, a young girl who was a victim of the atomic bomb radiation, and her wish for world peace are immortalized in the numerous paper cranes made by children dedicated to this cause from all over the world. The park also houses a monument honoring 20,000 Zainichi Korean (Korean residents in Japan) victims. One of the more famous testaments to the bombing is the Genbaku Dome or A-bomb Dome—built over what was once the Hiroshima Industrial Promotion Hall—which singularly speaks of the horrors of war and urges for a nuclear-free world.

The Fellows also visited the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum where the story of Hiroshima has been retold several times. The first floor of the museum reflects the Pacific War and the rationale behind the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The story of the victims and the effects that the bombing had on their lives is the theme of the exhibition on the second floor. Almost every aspect of these people's lives is on exhibit, and they bear witness to the grave effects of nuclear bombing.

Next on the agenda was a session with Mr. Steven Leeper. Mr. Leeper was a US representative for Mayors for Peace in April 2002. He was appointed as special adviser of the Hiroshima Peace Culture Foundation the following year, before serving as its chairperson from April 2007. As chairperson, Mr. Leeper works closely with the mayor of Hiroshima and the Mayors for Peace. The Hiroshima Peace Culture Foundation currently has 2,482 members (as of 2008).

Mr. Leeper believes that people should graduate from a "war culture" to a "peace culture" by abolishing nuclear weapons. He considers abolishing the use of nuclear weapons as a step toward addressing other issues such as climate change and poverty; he thinks that it is much easier for society to get rid of nuclear weapons. The mayor of Hiroshima, Tadatashi Akiba, shares these views.

However, Mr. Leeper thinks that there's a 50 percent chance of ridding the world of nuclear weapons. To realize this, he adds, a political climate that would avoid the use of nuclear weapons has to be created. Such a situation would then lead to the dissolution of a "war culture." He, however, pointed out that the Mayors for Peace stand against nuclear weapons but not against nuclear power, which is being used as an energy source in many parts of the world. He added that it is a fallacy that a country with a nuclear reactor also has a bomb plant. Nevertheless, these nuclear power plants are sitting bombs; bombing a plant would cause much more damage than dropping a hydrogen bomb. Mr. Leeper insists that "we should be able to learn how to live within our energy means" rather than turn to nuclear power to solve the carbon dioxide and power problems in smaller countries.

As part of the campaign for abolishing nuclear weapons, Mr. Leeper and his team have organized A-bomb exhibitions in the US since mid-2007. They toured around 35 cities, giving over 100 presentations to an audience of around 300–500, and have even been accompanied by an A-bomb survivor. Mr. Leeper said that the aim of the project was to make Americans think of the danger of nuclear weapons, as the so-called peace people in the US are more focused on the war in Iraq rather than the dangers of nuclear weapons. Mayors for Peace, in its efforts to raise consciousness about this problem that has not been resolved since the Cold War, is aiming for the further growth of its membership in 2010.

## DAY 4: OSAKA CITY

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The Fellows spent a day in Tsuruhashi, known as Osaka's "Korea Town" owing to its large number of Zainichi Koreans (Korean residents in Japan). Zainichi Koreans have a history dating back to the colonial period when Koreans were forced to migrate as laborers to Japan. It was said that the population of ethnic Koreans totaled to around 2,000,000; however, half of them had returned to Korea. The remaining population adopted Japan as their homeland and embraced the Japanese language and culture. The succeeding generations of Koreans consider Japan as their home, with some even considering Japanese as their native tongue. Osaka is also known to have the largest population of ethnic Koreans in the country. Upon arriving at Tsuruhashi, the Fellows met up with the secretary-general of the Korea NGO Center, Mr. Kim Kwan Min .

The Fellows first visited the 4th Osaka Korean Primary School (*Osaka Chōsen Dai-yon Shokyū Gakkō*) and had a discussion with Mr. Ryang Hak Chul, a second-generation Zainichi Korean and the school principal for the past two years. As he gave the Fellows a tour of the school premises, he informed them that there are 11 Korean schools in Osaka, 8 of which are elementary schools, 2 are junior high schools, and 1 high school. There is only one Korean university in Japan, and graduates of Korean high schools may opt to go to this or to a Japanese university. There are 74 Korean schools in the country, 70 of which are North Korean (affiliated with the Chongryon organization, which has close ties with North Korea) and 4 South Korean (affiliated with the Mindan organization). Mr. Ryang went on to say that among ethnic groups in Japan, only the ethnic Korean has a kindergarten to university educational system.

Korean schools, despite having a curriculum similar to that of Japanese schools (including the teaching of the Japanese language), are considered to lie outside the framework of the Japanese school system and are not given subsidies. This is especially the case if the school is affiliated with North Korea. Mr. Ryang added that the Japanese government even refuses to improve the school lunches because of its uneasy relationship with North Korea. Moreover, graduates of these schools are not recognized by the Japanese government, and the bullying, assault, and harassment of Korean students are common. Mr. Ryang also thinks that the non-recognition of the Japanese government of these schools can be attributed to the fact that they do not use government-approved textbooks and do not hire Japanese teachers.

These Korean schools receive subsidy from the North Korean government; however, owing to limited funds, they have to resort to fund-raising. Some families of the children studying in these schools make donations. Mr. Ryang acknowledged the contribution of Japanese supporters; he is hopeful of the coexistence of ethnic Koreans and Japanese spreading to the grassroots level through such support. The problem, however, is at the central government level where politics is prioritized over all other things.

The Fellows then spoke with Mr. Kim Kwan Min over lunch at a Korean restaurant in Tsuruhashi. A third-generation Zainichi Korean, Mr. Kim graduated from a Japanese public high school and went to Korea to study in a university. He is currently working with an NGO for better human rights protection for foreigners living in Japan.

Mr. Kim spoke about the Zainichi Koreans and how they were considered as Japan's first minority group—a product of Japan's colonial era. In the 1980s, the vast majority of foreigners in Japan comprised Koreans. However, the 2007 statistics indicate that the Chinese population has surpassed the Koreans. The Korea NGO Center, where Mr. Kim is also an education coordinator, aims to advocate for change in the government's policy toward foreign residents in the country. He said that the Japanese government should consider initiatives at the grassroots level to address this issue as well as to formulate policies concerning foreigners. Mr. Kim thinks that ethnic Koreans have a significant role to play in "closing" and "opening" the country to foreigners. While it is not possible to avert friction among Japanese and foreigners, he added that the Zainichi Koreans should think of ways to facilitate coexistence. He kept reiterating that since their native tongue is Japanese, they are in the best position to achieve this, as newcomers are not yet that integrated into Japanese society.

The NGO was founded in 2004 as an organization dedicated to providing alternatives, rather than pursuing the radical posturing of ideologies as seen in opposition movements of some ethnic organizations. As an independent entity, the NGO does not receive sponsorship and instead relies on fund-raising activities through the sale of goods, the provision of educational services, and the organization of conferences and seminars. The NGO also distances itself from politics and takes a neutral stance on North and South Korea.

The NGO has three main objectives: to guarantee the right to education, promote coexistence and collaboration with the Japanese, and facilitate the exchange of activities with Korea and other Asian countries. Mr. Kim is also involved in and gives lectures on juvenile delinquency cases. While talking about supporting the

education of children of foreign nationals, he highlighted the center's goal of improving the level of Brazilian schools to that of Korean schools. The presence of over a hundred Brazilian schools, which are actually run by Japanese corporations and are used as sources of labor, is a pressing concern. The NGO is also involved in joint activities with other minorities in Japan as well as in other countries. Mr. Kim stressed the need to exchange ideas regarding minority education and welfare with other Asian countries.

## DAY 5: OSAKA AND KYOTO

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The Fellows spent their last morning in Osaka visiting FM Cocolo, a radio station devoted to multilingual broadcasting, and had a discussion with Mr. Koichi Shiomi, the president of Kansai Intermedia Corporation. The company was established in July 1995 and was officially opened in October the same year. FM Cocolo, the first foreign-language radio station (broadcasting in 13 languages) in Japan, aims to contribute to the globalization of the Kansai region. The need for multilingual emergency broadcasts was felt after the Hanshin-Awaji earthquake of 1995. The station broadcasts news, important information on living in Japan, emergency broadcasts, and music in various languages to reach out to foreign residents in the Kansai region, as its name Cocolo—**co**munication, **co**operation, and **lo**ve—suggests.

FM Cocolo makes profit from its commercial activities and also accepts donations. Its profits, however, are not much as compared to other stations that broadcast only in Japanese or English. In its early stages, the station's operations were funded by donations, and therefore, the programs were in foreign languages. At the moment, most of the programs are in Japanese since they are considered to be more profitable. FM Cocolo has around 20 regular employees and are in contract with some producers and DJs (disk jockeys), bringing the total number of employees to 130.

The Japanese currently form the majority of the station's listeners. This can be attributed to the Japanese programs being aired as well as the foreign language and cultural programs that cater to those who like to travel and are interested in foreign languages. Most of the listeners are in their 20s, with a significant number in the 60s to 70s. Meanwhile, according to a December 2007 survey, among the 424,000 foreign residents in the Kansai region, 80 percent have listened to the radio station.

After the session at FM Cocolo, the Fellows proceeded to the final leg of the field trip—sightseeing in Kyoto. After a traditional lunch, they set out to visit the Kiyomizu and Shōrenin temples before setting out on their own individual tour of the old capital.



# ***Public Symposium***

***Yuki Ooi, Rapporteur, ALFP 2008***



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# Thailand: Struggles of a Young Democracy

ATIYA ACHAKULWISUT

**A**tiya Achakulwisut explored the current political confrontation between the government of Thailand and a group of protesters under the banner of the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) and why it has become a serious problem that is dividing the country. The answer lies beyond the surface.

She pointed out three dimensions to the conflict. The first one is personal. The political conflict revolves around former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra—the person, his personality, and ideas. The mere mention of his name divides Thai people into two clear opposing camps. The leader of the opposition is media tycoon Sondhi Limthongkul, a leader of the PAD. Mr. Sondhi may claim that he wishes to protect the monarchy or to make democracy a more appropriate system for the Thai people, but there is no denying that he first took to the street out of a desire for personal vengeance after the then Prime Minister Thaksin banned his TV program. Mentioning these two names together further divides Thai people into four main groups and probably a dozen or so subgroups.

The second dimension is economic. It has become clear that the rise of Thaksin and his pro-globalization agenda went against the old elites. The 1997 financial crisis hit them hard; many had to surrender control of their business to foreign investors in a bid to stay afloat. The economic bust deepened their paranoia about the volatility of the globalized economy. Thaksin, meanwhile, is a successful international businessman. He is all for the opening up of the Thai economy to global trade. Thus, the ongoing struggle partly reflected the conflicting economic agendas and interests of the old and new elites of Thai society.

The third is the corporatization of politics in Thailand, which Achakulwisut considers to be the most important dimension.

Thailand's democracy is a young one. The country witnessed a revolution that replaced absolute monarchy with a constitutional monarchy in 1932. During the last seven decades, it has experienced some 15 military coup d'états. Under the circumstances, the "spirit" of democracy has not been allowed to take root. We are thus left with the "form" of democracy (the electoral and parliamentary process). The rise of Thaksin Shinawatra and his Thai Rak Thai (TRT) Party changed the entire electoral landscape. The marriage between big businesses and electoral politics signified the end of democracy in the electoral process. The "business of politics" has set into place a vicious cycle of money politics, abuse of power, and corruption. The end result is an authoritarian government that is accountable to no one. The disruption of electoral democracy in Thailand is made possible mainly because of the social and income gap, one of the worst in the world.

Is there any way out of this situation? In a short-term scenario, there is a possibility of the tension easing off by itself. In the long term, however, Thailand must find a way of moving past the personal dimension of the conflict and focusing on the relevant issues and setting a new agenda that can involve, engage, and form a new majority, that is, a middle group that is neither supportive of the government nor the PAD. Economically speaking, while globalization is inevitable, there is always a backlash from those who are left out of it. One roadmap for the future is to implement a welfare state policy so that the poor may have a true choice when it comes to electing their representatives. Achakulwisut concludes that there is little hope for the young democracy to stabilize unless the Thai people tackle the inequality issue.

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# Challenges to Continuity and Change in a Time of Crisis: Democratic Dilemmas in the Philippine Context

CHITO GASCON

**D**emocracy faces challenges in the Philippines. In explaining why and how such a situation has arisen, Chito Gascon emphasized his position and viewpoint as a political activist working for democracy. He elaborated on how democracy had become weaker in the country, although the nation is known for the “People’s Power” revolution that took place two decades ago, a social movement in which ordinary people stood up against and put an end to the authoritarian Marcos administration. He describes the current political phase as a “democratic recession.” Since coming to power in 2001, President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo has presided over a regime that has over time systematically undermined many of the democratic institutions and processes established after the overthrow of the dictatorship in the 1980s. As a vivid though not isolated example, different human rights groups have reported a dramatic increase in human rights violations over the six years of her administration. The worsening of the human rights situation along with widespread corruption, fraudulent elections, deteriorating peace and order, and the weakening of constraining mechanisms has led to the decline of democracy.

“Maps of Freedom” and graphs of “Political Stability” clearly show that the Philippines has regressed from a free state to a partly free state, while its political climate has become less stable. In addition, graphs of “Control of Corruption” indicate that the Philippine government cannot control corruption as much as other Southeast Asian countries such as Singapore and Thailand. As the critical background, Gascon pointed out six factors: the Asian financial crisis in 1997, emergence of populist politics and candidates, counterreaction by the entrenched elite, erosion of trust in key institutions such as elections and courts, breakdown of consensual politics, and public alienation. Besides, the number of extra-judicial killings has increased along with other human rights violations. Although the incidence has thus far not been as high as it was during martial law, no senior civilian or military official has been accused. The occurrence of these events over the last ten years has contributed to the democratic downturn. Gascon also introduced a theory about when democracy is endangered. There are five triggers: weak rule of law, poor economic performance, ethnic and religious divisions, weak and ineffective political institutions, and weak constraints on authoritarian leaders. Gascon then expressed regret over the fact that all these five triggers were found in the Philippines.

Faced with such a crisis, however, the Filipino people have not abandoned hope. For example, there has been a movement to amend the constitution called Charter Change or Cha-Cha. In order to make Cha-Cha viable, it is necessary that the actions and changes be implemented at the right time and for the right reason, besides addressing the institutional weaknesses of the political system, such as allocation of power and accountability mechanisms. Finally, Gascon suggested that Japan should play a positive role in this process. As a stable democracy that has not reverted to authoritarianism after World War II, Japan should encourage other Asian nations struggling with development and democracy so that they have a better chance of sustaining democracy. The challenge is how Japan takes up this role.

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# Being Responsible: Free Expression and the Morality of Choice

GU YI AN

From the viewpoint of a teacher and director of theater, Gu Yi An gave a talk on the plurality of democracy. In today's world, it seems that no country denies the desirability of democracy. Democracy is understood and interpreted in various ways. Even though there is no uniform understanding about it and countries have faced different realities and political situations, they are not going to give up or stop practicing democracy: They are on their way toward deepening democracy. A two-month stay in Japan as an ALFP Fellow allowed Gu to accept the view that democracy consists of diverse aspects; hence, he uses the term "plural democracies," which reflects each country's unique cultural, political, and social life. It follows that the democratization of different countries does not have to advance at the same speed or have the same agenda. Therefore, how and how fast democracy advances depends on each country.

As for how and at what speed, Gu has gained some ideas from his classes in China. During rehearsals, he always advises his actors not to try to make things happen but let them happen instead. His philosophy as an art director underlies this instruction: As long as you make something happen, what you get is likely to be unnatural and artificial. It means that you are not acting any longer but just pretending. Moreover, if you try to force something into happening, it is even worse; you will only get something ugly. In this manner, in the end, you get something different from what you wanted at first. Thus, he argues that patience is necessary for democracy to grow.

It has been almost a hundred years since democracy was introduced in China. However, for some historical reasons, democracy is still in its infancy and the Chinese people are still learning what democracy is. Some even have doubts about whether the Chinese are mature and educated enough to practice democracy. Gu emphasizes the need for patience against such criticism.

At the same time, Gu thinks that the Chinese people need to enlighten themselves and deepen their understanding about what democracy means. They are usually attracted to democracy because of two concepts—freedom and equal rights. When you have freedom and equal rights, you have to be responsible for your decisions and choices. Thus, he argues that responsibility should be added to these two concepts and this is what he believes the Chinese need to learn first. Being responsible also requires you to participate in a political system that protects your freedom and rights and allows you to express your ideas with freedom.

Gu actually ensures and tries to advance democratization in his classroom. In class, while he often finds that his students are too timid to assert themselves and express themselves freely, actors are also too lazy to find their own answers. Despite this status quo, he hopes that they will be brave enough to express themselves. In order to inspire them to think independently, he avoids providing them with answers. Just like Confucius, who enlightened his students by constantly asking questions without giving answers, Gu has tried to democratize his students. He concluded that morality should be taken into account when citizens need to think about how to make choices. Once people make their decisions, they have to be responsible for whatever results follow.

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# Beyond Candlelight Vigils in Korea

KIM HAECHANG

Introducing a social movement called candlelight vigils (CVs) that took place in Korea in 2008, Kim Haechang analyzed democracy from the perspective of the relationship between civil society and the government. The CVs were huge demonstrations in which more than one million people participated. What motivated people to join was the Korean government's decision to permit the import of American beef. In order to protest against this move, young students, concerned about their school meals, initiated CVs. As a result, President Lee-Myung Bak apologized to the people in public. Moreover, some ministers who were criticized by the protesters were forced to resign from office.

What made such a large number of people stand up against their own government? The direct reason was that they were angered by and dissatisfied with its attitude toward the United States. Despite the possibility of a future outbreak of mad cow disease, the government permitted the import of American beef. Such a negotiation ignited people's feelings because it seemed to them that Korea was losing its independence to the US.

Besides the beef issue, there was a growing sense of anger among the general public for other reasons. First, people were disappointed with the recent Lee administration because it had announced policies that favored the rich. In addition, his policies reflected nepotism and regionalism. Second, some of Lee's policies provoked controversies, such as the plan for constructing grand canals in the Korean peninsula, which neglected environmental problems. Third, the abundant information provided through the Internet familiarized people with social problems. These people also learned how to express their dissatisfaction online. All these factors formed the backdrop of the CVs.

How did the government react to these protests? First, it tried to identify the leaders who had supported the CVs. Some of them were even arrested. Second, it became hostile toward progressive nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). For example, the officials not only investigated their ideologies but also reduced some of the funding they received. Faced with such hostility, NGOs organized a large alliance and criticized the government for its wrong policies. The anti-government movement was joined by religious circles such as Buddhist groups who were not satisfied with the President's inclination toward Christianity.

Kim thinks that there are many lessons about democracy to be learned from the CVs. For instance, the government should make more efforts to listen to people's voices, in particular, those of the poor and the weak. As for NGOs, their management should be made transparent and they should present alternatives to the general public, something more than anti-government sentiments. Above all, what is most necessary is the resumption of the partnership between the government and civil society. Therefore, in order to go beyond the CVs, people on both sides need to conquer the barriers they have built.

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# The Culture of Democracy

CHANDRA KISHOR LAL

**C**K Lal raised a question about the social culture of democracy and how it could be boosted. It is important to think about such an issue, especially in today's world, where phenomena called "democratization," "re-democratization," and "de-democratization" are taking place. For example, Nepal recently went through the process of re-democratization, whereas Bangladesh is still undergoing de-democratization. Pakistan keeps swinging from re-democratization to de-democratization according to the geopolitics of the region. In this manner, each country is in a specific phase of democracy.

Democracy can have various names: guided democracy, basic democracy, paternalistic democracy, and procedural democracy. These adjectives are added to suit the priorities and prejudices of the powerful. Non-democratic governance also has many forms. For instance, military-industrial complexes make a mockery of democracy. In addition, there are some countries where democracy is reduced to an arena of contestations between different interest groups and lobbies rather than political parties with competing ideologies.

Since the wars on Afghanistan and Iraq, the word "democratization" has been stigmatized owing to the occupation forces that have attempted to impose a "democratic regime" on the countries despite the fact that their peoples were not willing to accept it. Instead of such an imposition from above, Lal argues that it is more understandable and productive to invest in the creation of social, political, and civic culture—a culture that respects diversity, upholds the rule of law, and practices participatory politics. Such culture is what he calls a culture of democracy.

Cultivating a culture of democracy is more complex than defining it in broad terms. People hold views about democracy. First, democracy is a Euro-centric concept. Second, it requires educated electorates. Third, it cannot be nurtured in any country with less than a certain level of income. Fourth, it is not suitable for societies that are not used to debate. Fifth, it is an inseparable twin of free-market fundamentalism. Sixth, it requires a "greenhouse" of soft-authoritarianism in order to be nurtured.

The "Asian Values" debate of the 1990s was a distraction that diverted attention from the fact that no country is ever ready to be democratic. The challenges for deepening democracy have to begin and continue.

Lal then moved on to another question: what is necessary for democracy to function continuously? Among the literature on democracy, political and civic cultures have received considerable attention. In terms of institutions, democracy is supported by the parliament, executive, judiciary, and the media. The civic culture of democracy concerns itself with the freedom of choice and autonomy of individuals, who need to face the consequences of their own decisions. However, these conditions are not necessarily sufficient for democracy to continue working. Something more is needed, and Lal urged us to pay more attention to it. The factor that Lal was referring to is the social roots of democracy.

This is because Lal believes that like all aspects of culture, democracy begins at home, and he finds that democracy has its roots in the institution of the family. Thus, the family plays a critical role in nurturing democracy regardless of how long the process takes. While Western thinkers such as John Locke emphasize the importance of individuals being free, equal, and independent, proponents of the Asian values insist that the community is no less important than the individual. In this manner, Lal urged the audience to reconsider the crucial relation between the family and democracy.

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# Living as a Korean-Japanese in a Self-Content Society

LEE SOO IM

**W**hat does “nationality” mean? What does “*minzoku*” or “ethnicity” mean? And what does “race” mean? Lee tackled such issues in her talk, beginning with her own life story as a Korean-Japanese. She was born in 1953 to Korean parents and given both a Japanese and a Korean name. Up until the time when she graduated from high school, she did not tell any of her Japanese friends that she was Korean and tried to hide her ethnicity. Even when she was a child, she somehow knew that the word, “Chōsen” (meaning Korea and Korean in Japanese) used by Japanese has a derogatory meaning. It was only after she graduated from high school that she revealed her ethnicity. She chose to do so because she wanted to challenge not Japanese society but herself. She asked herself the following question: how strong-minded can I become? In the process of establishing her own identity, she got used to and learned to deal with individual discrimination. However, when she went about job hunting, she faced discrimination at an institutional level, which she found she could not get over. She then decided to immigrate to the United States. Later, she got married to an international student from Iran and gave birth to a girl, who was given birthright American citizenship. In her life in the States, she often found it difficult to explain her identity as even though she had been born and raised in Japan, she was not officially Japanese in terms of nationality. Many American people did not understand this problem and considered her to be Japanese. Her life in the US made her dwell on the meaning of nationality and citizenship, and she realized the Japanese government’s policy of dealing with foreign residents is so problematic. It was in 2001 that she finally acquired Japanese citizenship through naturalization. She now identifies herself as Korean-Japanese.

Through her life, she became aware of how unstable the concept of nationality is. She first applied for Japanese citizenship when she was about to graduate from her university and started looking for a job in Japan; her application was rejected by an official in charge at the Ministry of Justice on the grounds of the family register system. She was told that it was not she herself but her father who had to apply if she wanted to obtain Japanese citizenship. She again applied for naturalization when she was working in the United States. However, her request was declined. This time, it was not accepted because her residence had not been fixed for a fair amount of time. These experiences revealed the opaqueness of the Japanese naturalization system to her. In fact, the law allowed officials in charge to arbitrarily decide whether an applicant should be naturalized or not. In addition, Lee discovered that the international as well as political climate influenced the officials’ decisions of who should be granted Japanese nationality. For example, during the period of the time from 1960s and 1970s, approximately 100,000 Koreans repatriated to North Korea and if we looked at the eligibility of naturalization during the same period it seemed to have been strictly controlled. On the other hand, during a period when international human rights pacts such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights were enforced, the acceptance rate turned out to have been relatively higher. However, these changes were already made by the discretion of the bureaucrats without any sort of national consensus.

In this manner, nationality is never a stable concept as decisions on naturalization are arbitrary. Like nationality, she feels that the concepts of ethnicity and race are also unstable. Lee finds that the Japanese government’s policies for foreign residents have not functioned well. Faced with the issue of low birthrate and consequently, a shrinking labor market, it has become essential for Japan to reframe foreign residents as “immigrants” and alter the requirements for naturalization. Lee believes that such reconsideration is inevitable in order to nurture democracy in the future.

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# Freedom and its Enemies

**JYOTIRMAYA SHARMA**

Jyotirmaya Sharma began his speech by reminding the audience of the appalling violence that had taken place in a city called Godhra in the Indian state of Gujarat in 2002: Hindus who were returning from a pilgrimage were burned alive on a train. What followed were fierce riots on an unprecedented scale; the riots continued unabated for a couple of months, during which many Muslims were murdered in retaliation. The conflict between Hindus and Muslims has a long history, but what was distinct about this episode is that the mobs were aided by the democratically elected government of the state. Thus, it was a government-sponsored genocide. Even though not much has been done until today in terms of bringing the perpetrators to justice, the chief minister and his party continued to win the elections that have been held since then by a vast majority.

The Gujarat violence led Sharma to reconsider democracy. He noticed that people take too many things for granted as far as democracy is concerned. Thus, he suggests that we need to reconsider the theory, practice, and idea of democracy as well as closely-related ideas such as self-determination and representation. Democracy in some Asian countries, including India, is reduced to mere external forms, for example, the ritualized holding of elections and a functioning parliamentary system. This produces a smug complacency regarding certain values that are also part of the democratic spirit. In addition, some democratic values, self-determination for instance, are likely to slide into populism.

Among these values, Sharma directed the attention of the audience to freedom. In recent years, there is a tendency to either take freedom for granted or dismiss it as a hangover of Western influences. This often leads to ethical and cultural relativism of one sort or the other and the idea of freedom gets diluted and compromised. Such relativism is manifested in the yearning for some glorious past and tradition and nativism or localism, which are forms of communitarianism. The extreme form of nativism rooted in relativism can be found in propaganda claiming that the idea of freedom as it exists today is only a Western import that had developed within the specific context of the Industrial Revolution or capitalism.

Such relativism has allowed what he calls “sovereign freedom” to become prevalent. It refers to a situation in which people believe that they can be truly free when they are part of a community, sect, or state. In this case, the idea of freedom is localized even though it is originally universal and should be so; people do not try to extend this sense of freedom to those outside their group. As opposed to such a conception of freedom, Sharma advocates that it is crucial to restate the evolution of the idea of freedom in terms of the assertion of certain values as part of the democratic process, which should be considered independently of its cultural context. This requires, in the first instance, a certain degree of determinism regarding the definition of freedom.

Although this might sound like a contradiction in terms, a clear delineation of the ideas of personal, individual, and civic freedom is necessary and a consensus on the content of these concepts is needed. Sharma advocates such determinism and the building of a common ground because he believes that this will be an antidote to the rise in ideas of sovereign freedom that seem to be becoming popular. As the basic minimum of what freedom implies, he suggests a classical understanding: freedom of conscience, of thought and action, and of ideas in art and literature. In conclusion, he encourages the implementation of such determinism, which will enhance secular democracy.

