

Comunicación

Nationalism in times of Globalization: a study of the dynamics of 'Globalism'

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ABSTRACT

Countries like China and Korea have expressed outrage towards Japanese government's controversial decisions regarding constitutional revision and some bills on Self-Defense Forces and the content of educational programs. These actions may respond to changes in global geopolitics. In times of globalization most countries assume 'globalism' in order to secure their own national identity. Using Japan as a case study, this paper offers an explanation of how 'globalism' can lead to nationalism. It also investigates whether the greatest threat to democracy is civil society's inaction and how sufficient action may thwart radicalization of nationalism.

Key words: globalization, nationalism, 'globalism'.

El nacionalismo en tiempos de la globalización: un estudio de la dinámica del "globalismo"

RESUMEN

Países como China y Corea han expresado indignación frente a las controversiales decisiones del gobierno japonés en cuanto a la revisión de su Constitución y a los proyectos de ley sobre las Fuerzas de Defensa y el contenido de los programas educativos. Acciones como éstas pueden responder a los cambios en la geopolítica global. En tiempos de globalización, la mayoría de los países adopta el "globalismo" para asegurar su propia identidad nacional. Tomando a Japón como caso de estudio, este artículo ofrece una explicación del modo en que el "globalismo" puede conducir al nacionalismo. También investiga en qué medida la mayor amenaza para la democracia es la inacción de la sociedad civil y cómo un grado suficiente de acción puede impedir la radicalización del nacionalismo.

Palabras clave: globalización, nacionalismo, "globalismo".

The present essay has three intentions and one purpose. First, to establish for the non-specialized reader a brief overview of what I consider some politico-historical circumstances that have contributed to the persistence of a particularly nationalistic discourse within Japanese politics, which influence both its national and international policies. Second, to explain how an underlying ideological schema—which we will provisionally and for the sake of clarity simply call globalism—mobilizes contemporary globalization dynamics. Third, to shed some light on why nationalism is a counteraction to globalism. Finally, the purpose of this article is to evaluate the amount of displays of nationalism that may be considered to be threatening to democracy and/or national and international stability. In our conclusions we will consider how these explanations may offer assistance in efforts towards Asian and Pacific nation's incorporation into a dynamically constructive geopolitical bloc.

1. Some details on Japan's postwar political history and the 'return' of nationalism

In World War II the Allied Forces that had opposed the expansion of fascist totalitarianism united in exalted hopes for the future. United Nations would prevent further bloodshed and lead humankind to prosperity and peace. The former Axis countries were occupied in order to demilitarize and democratize them, smother their potential for war, and punish their leaders for their many heinous and murderous crimes. There were no enemies but perhaps in some ruined Japanese and German cities. When the United States occupied Japan, the punitive character of the occupation did not contradict their demilitarization and democratization efforts. War criminals were to be tried and—if convicted—severely punished. Former ultranationalists and militarists were to be excluded from important political and social positions, patriotism was quelled, and political prisoners were liberated and returned to active sociopolitical life. Demilitarization was quickly accomplished with unexpected success. Democratization led to the firm establishment of labor unions, parliamentary elections and economic revisions such as antitrust policies, the initial disbandment of the zaibatsu and extensive land reforms.

However, in less than two years after the end of the war the British Embassy in Washington delivered two crucial official missives

to United States authorities¹. The British Empire had ceased to be able to carry out its traditional responsibilities in the Continent, as it was incapable to counteract the Soviet Union's influence in Greece and Turkey. The United States realized, suddenly, that the world had unexpectedly become a political bipolarity, and a new enemy lurked there where once had stood an ally². Hence, the United States decided to act on the situation in Europe, and outlined what we now know as the Truman Doctrine: United States help "should be primarily through economic and financial aid which is essential to economic stability and orderly political processes"³. The foreign policy the United States would adhere to in order to be able to confront the Soviet Union's expansionism was found in George F. Kennan's *containment* policy, a test to American democracy as to whether it could conduct an effective and responsible foreign policy, and contribute to curb Soviet Union's revolutionary intentions⁴. Walter LaFeber, an American historian, recounts that Kennan desired "a focused, systematic, economic and political buildup of Allies, (...) especially in what he called 'the two greatest industrial complexes of East and West,' Japan and West Germany, that would immunize them and their regions against communism"⁵. The United States would have to remain in and build up Japan, maintain full control to transform Occupation policy, and avoid Communist penetration to Japanese society⁶.

The American historian John Dower explains that Cold War policy in Asia minimized the overt threat of Soviet expansion yet emphasized the possibility that, instead, Japan would surrender to communism from within. As such, the vision of Japan as economically unstable and thereby ripe for communization motivated the abandonment of initial democratic and reformist policies of the Occupation and the adoption of policies conducive to capitalist stabilization and reconstruction⁷. The reversal of former policy was evident: "the old 'will to war' hypothesis concerning the structural roots of Japanese aggression", was discarded, and "while giving

1 J. Spanier: *American foreign policy since World War II*, New York, Holt, Rhinehart and Wilson, 1977, p. 27.

2 *Ibid.*, pp. 27-28.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 28.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 26.

5 W. LaFeber: *The clash: U.S.-Japan relations throughout history*, New York, W.W. Norton, 1997, 273.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 273.

7 J. Dower: *Japan in war and peace: Essays on history, culture, and race*, London, Harper Collins, 1993, p. 176.

concrete meaning to [the] more recent vision of the Japanese 'workshop' [...], every bit as much as the specter of a remilitarized Japan, it caused alarm and protest through most of the rest of Asia"⁸. LaFeber explains that Secretary of the Army Kenneth C. Royall feared that Japan's economic reactivation would depend mostly on an administration run by Japan's former war machine, who also happened to be its most successful business leader⁹. Royall was right in his observations. Kennan's recommendations lead to a sharp reduction of the political purges that occurred in the first years of the Occupation¹⁰. Dutch historian Marius Jansen points out that pressure from policy trends outside Japan shifted concerns from reform to recovery, but also shifted from preoccupation with the right-wing activities to concern for Communist subversion¹¹.

Regarding this reverse course in occupation policy, The American journalist Patrick Smith explains that, all of a sudden,

[e]verything was to be sacrificed to containment. Purges of right-wing nationalists stopped and purges of those judged inimical to American interests began. Efforts to disband the *zaibatsu* (...) that had stood behind Japan's expansion on the Asian mainland and later supplied the war effort were halted. Before 1948 was out the prewar industrialists were back in their offices and the old political elite was again running Japan¹².

Lamentably, economic reconstruction was not the only manner in which the Japanese interpreted their need to comply with Occupation policy. Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru decided to take an unexpected step and "took the Kennan-Draper policy to mean that he could allow some convicted war criminals out of jail"¹³. Smith poses Kishi Nobusuke, who was to become Prime Minister, as an example of how war criminals were returned to society without consequences¹⁴.

As an "A" list war criminal (...) Kishi was held in Sugamo prison after the defeat, but the occupation released him (along with a num-

8 *Ibid.*, p. 179.

9 W. LaFeber, *Op. cit.*, p. 272.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 274.

11 M. Jansen: *The making of modern Japan*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2000, p. 699.

12 P. Smith: *Japan: A reinterpretation*, New York, Vintage Books, 1998, p. 9.

13 W. LaFeber, *Op. cit.*, p. 277.

14 P. Smith, *Op. cit.*, p. 22.

ber of others) at the end of 1948. No public explanation for this move was ever offered, though its place in the reverse course can hardly be disputed. Kishi then began a steady march toward the premiership, backed by postwar Japan's least-savory collection of unreconstructed fascists, Sugamo alumni, and *yakuza* crime bosses. Kishi brought many of his cronies into national politics with him. His administration, indeed, marked the consolidation of the prewar nationalists' future in Japanese politics¹⁵.

Likewise, while the purge was extensive in the military institutions (80% of those eventually purged belonged to the military), within others it was barely pursued at all. Smith explains that in the political, economical and the powerful bureaucratic areas fewer than 2% of those screened were purged. General MacArthur decided to use the prewar bureaucracy to run the country; it was the bureaucrats themselves who ran the purge. Politicians accounted for one in six of those barred from public life. For these reasons, and perhaps for these reasons alone, individuals like Kishi were able to climb prominent positions of power in such short time. As early as 1950 the Japanese scholar Maruyama Masao had already declared Japanese democracy "a fiction not worth defending"¹⁶.

In the months and years that followed, the "soft" Cold War containment policy, which focused on economic bulwarks, became a "hard" and militaristic containment policy, focused on an ominous nuclear arms race, proxy-wars and subversive activities, political assassinations, and incited coup d'états. Japan, however, did not participate in any of these events; but the reverse course in Occupation policy proved a classic dilemma of United States' foreign policy. Smith's conclusion is harsh, but not without truth: "We (*sic*) subverted democracy to save it"¹⁷. Perhaps that is why Maruyama Masao stated boldly that "Japan's post-war democratization went no further than institutional and legal reforms in the State machinery"¹⁸. Smith contends that the reason why certain political practices and discourses were able to remain within a "democratized" and "demilitarized" Japan lies in the nature of the reinstated leaders from before the war.

Rechristened Liberal Democrats, they prolonged traditional political customs (...) long after these practices ought to have died natu-

15 *Ibid.*, p. 22.

16 *Ibid.*, p. 10.

17 *Ibid.*, p. 13.

18 M. Maruyama: *Thought and behaviour in modern Japanese politics* (Expanded edition). New York, Oxford University Press, 1969, p. 152.

ral deaths. In short, the conservative elite self-perpetuated by discouraging democratic habits. (...) The New York Times revealed that the Central Intelligence Agency had been secretly passing funds to the governing party until well in to the 1970s. With them America manipulated elections, backed favorite premiers, and debilitated the political opposition. These funds numbered at least in the tens of millions of dollars, perhaps in the hundreds of millions...¹⁹.

Due to Japan's importance in the Cold War, the United States and the international community easily oversaw its undemocratic policies. However, the return of ultranationalists to active sociopolitical life stained Japanese national politics in an undeniable way. The examples we will mention below, namely the sporadic nationalistic outbursts that tend to worsen Japan's already strained relations to the rest of Asia, will serve to clarify in which way this stain is evidenced.

2. Controversial displays of 'nationalism', 'nationalist' policies and 'internationalist' policies

In their compilation of articles *Perilous memories: The Asia-Pacific war(s)*, historians Takashi Fujitani, Geoffrey White and Lisa Yoneyama state:

Critical memories are also constantly imperiled by the reactionary responses of conservative political forces (...) for example, despite the Japanese government's pro forma apologies for its past aggression and invasions, there is seemingly no end to the pronouncements of prominent, old guard politicians within the Liberal Democratic Party who would deny the truthfulness of war atrocities²⁰.

Undoubtedly, it is Japan's wartime legacy of suffering, colonization, brutality and violence what other Asian and Pacific nations fear, and state they fear, when they react to Japanese politicians' denial of historical facts and responsibilities in what concerns World War II, in the throes of nationalistic behaviors, speeches or policies. However, the concrete issues that these other nations criticize and protest against cannot be considered to stem from the same political discourse, even if they do equally resound with nationalist sentiment. To illustrate this point, let us very briefly consider and compare the revision of history textbooks and the denial of the existence of comfort women, to the reforms on the contents of education and revisions on the nature of the Japanese Self-De-

19 P. Smith, *Op. cit.*, p. 13.

20 T. Fujitani, G. M. White & L. Yoneyama: *Perilous memories: The Asia-Pacific war(s)*, London, Duke University Press, 2001, p. 22.

fense Forces (SDF). The first two incidents may be considered the sole result of the historical irresponsibility, but while the history textbook controversy is a domestic concern—to be solved solely by national policies—former Prime Minister Abe's comment was a matter of international policy, as a direct (but oblique) response to the US Congress' renewed interest in an admission of guilt from behalf of the Japanese state to the civilian victims of sexual crimes carried out by the military in World War II. The reason why this distinction is made is not to justify the insult caused by the initial refusal at contrition (which did occur in the weeks to follow), but to point out how easily issues of a different kind are conflated. The most recent reforms on the content of education strive to instill in Japanese citizens a sense of patriotism and respect for their nation and culture, attitudes that in themselves are usually considered civic virtues, but (once more) conflation leads them to be interpreted as an immediate disposition to return to a fascist and imperialistic past. Surely, the reforms were carried out in a nationalistic spirit, but what is criticized (i.e. patriotism and respect for one's nation) is not what is feared. Similar to the history textbooks controversy, we can say that these reforms are matters of national policy. On the contrary, the revision of the SDF' role within and without Japanese borders is a matter of foreign policy. After the international community's severe criticism of Japan's reluctance to commit to the Gulf War with anything else than funds and logistic and humanitarian support, and the most recent international efforts at the (questionable) eradication of terrorism and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the question of what the SDF can and can not do is an issue that Japan must decide upon in order to decide how it will carry out its role within the concerted efforts of the international community. Once more, what is criticized is not what is feared.

Regarding these international rows, Chinese historian Yang Daqing explains that:

The debate over the Nanjing Massacre is not about the difference between China and Japan. In fact, the mechanisms of remembering (...) in both societies share some similarities. Neither country is prepared to leave such an important matter solely to historians to work out, and patriotism has been evoked in both China and Japan when the issue (...) is discussed. The media, in different ways, contributed to the heightened awareness (...) in both countries.²¹

21 D. Yang: "The malleable and the contested: The Nanjing Massacre in postwar China and Japan", in T. Fujitani, G. M. White & L. Yoneyama: *Perilous memories: The Asia-Pacific war(s)*, London, Duke University, 2001, 77.

German philosopher Rüdiger Safranski states that nowadays mass media consumers experience the global world as an agitation that causes hysteria and panic. Instant communication and ceaseless streams of information lead to long-distance political moralism, a "tele-ethics" of some sort. Globalization may not touch upon some matters, but it surely does not leave them untouched²². Fujitani, White and Yoneyama also explain that "national memories of war are neither static nor bounded but are connected in complex ways with transnational and global forces of all kinds"²³.

The reactions that other nations have had to Japan's denunciations (i.e. violent outrage and public protests that are state-sponsored or surreptitiously fostered; counter-representations of historical events that are equally nationalistic, or worse even, markedly anti-Japanese) leave much to be desired. What we often fail to perceive (or admit) is that international politics and foreign policies play upon national expectations and the attitudes that nation-states foster in their population by educational and institutional means. However understandable some reactions may be to the falsification and denial of conclusive historical evidence, the refusal to engage in dialogue, the reticence to establish (for example) multiparty research to present a consensual reconstruction of these historical conundrums (or those events that are falsely presented as conundrums), is an equally nationalistic response to the problem. The appearance of a common enemy sometimes serves to bind in common loyalty. And, hence, passivity is the most favorable attitude to foster if a nation's interests depend on the construction of a nominal adversary. Globalization continues relentless, and nationalistic schemes are forwarded by when other states' nationalistic rhetoric and attitudes are bolstered, even if these acts are outwardly repudiated and discouraged.

3. Some considerations on globalization, ideology and 'globalism' —the ideology underlying globalization

Safranski emphasizes that what is called globalization is in fact *a series of processes*²⁴ characterized, so it would be better to speak of 'globalizations'²⁵. These encompass a series of narrow economic

22 R. Safranski: *How much globalization can we bear?*, Cambridge, Polity, 2005, p. 45.

23 Fujitani, White & Yoneyama, *Op. cit.*, p. 8.

24 R. Safranski, *Op. cit.*, p. 5.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 9.

and technological processes that increase the density of economic, cultural, touristy, scientific, technological and communicative networking. These processes unfold by means of precise technologies and calculated strategies of profit maximization (rational in the particular, but irrational overall), and are structured by the triumph of capitalism over its alternatives —even counter-tendencies that attempt to control and reshape globalization, find a new scope of action and develop other forms of global ethos are dependent upon capital and technology²⁶.

Safranski boldly states that the scale of global tasks favors the emergence of ideological theories of the global, either critical or affirmative. 'Globalism' qua ideology projects a representation of the world society more unified than it is in reality, omitting the fact that while some places become more homogenous other places de-link from the rest of the world²⁷. In this sense, characteristically of ideology, globalism is more a demand of reality than a description of it: out of the global is it makes a global *ought*²⁸.

The Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek explains that ideology has nothing to do with illusion as such, i.e., with a distorted representation of its social content²⁹. According to him today's society must appear post-ideological, because ideological propositions are no longer taken seriously³⁰. Cynicism prevails. However, an ideology is really "holding on" only when we do not feel any opposition between it and reality —that is, when the ideology succeeds in determining the mode of our everyday experience of reality itself, when even the facts that initially seem to contradict it start to function as arguments in its favor. That is why Žižek says that the ideological procedure *par excellence* is that of '*false*' *eternalization and/or universalization*: a state that depends on a concrete historical condition or transformation —a historically conditioned social, political or cultural form that appears as an eternal, universal feature of the universal human condition³¹. This hyper-universalization of history makes us blind to the concrete socio-historical

26 *Ibid.*, pp. 7-9.

27 *Ibid.*, p. 9.

28 *Ibid.*, p. 10.

29 S. Žižek: *Tarrying with the negative: Kant, Hegel, and the critique of ideology*, Durham, Duke University Press, 1993, p. 230.

30 S. Žižek: *The sublime object of ideology*, Verso, London, 1989, p. 33.

31 *Ibid.*, pp. 49-50.

determinations of the present as well as to the real issues that repeatedly return in several historical moments³².

In simpler and more concrete terms, globalism qua ideology strives to pose our contemporary post-industrial capitalist society—with all that it entails—as a necessary historical conclusion to our past. In this measure, the complex context of globality is portrayed as unavoidable, and its unintended consequences, which can make us feel powerless before the burden of more and more problems to be dealt with, and described as humankind's failure to adapt and embrace our global era³³. But the truth of the matter is that it is politicization and economism, those two reductions in the perception of the whole, which have converged until now in contemporary globalism. It is no wonder that people nowadays think of globality only with a sense of unease and constriction³⁴. And yet, because of modern globalization, global thinking has become more democratic, and has started to arouse public's awareness³⁵. The irony that precisely this thwarts the emergence of ideological globalism would seem to constitute the contradiction of arguments mentioned above by Žizek.

Contextualized within the discourse of globalism Safranski explains that we speak of the tasks and failings of *humanity*, but *Humanity* is also intended when we say *We*, especially in what concerns Eurocentric nation-states and their intention toward the dissemination of "universalistic" socio-political structures and theories. Only from a panoramic viewpoint is there *humanity*, capable of concerted action; from any other perspective, there are only *human beings*—*in plural*. No matter how well intentioned politics that deem themselves to be of humanitarian interest usually are, behind any power that establishes itself as the voice of humanity there is a particular power that uses the maneuver to outdo other powers with which it vies for supremacy³⁶. To use Žizek's words, what we must attempt to demonstrate is "how this very One, this common field within which multiple identities thrive, already relies on certain exclusions, is already sustained by an invisible antagonistic split"³⁷.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 50.

33 R. Safranski, *Op. cit.*, p. 33.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 38.

35 *Ibid.*, p. 36.

36 *Ibid.*, p. 25.

37 S. Žizek: *Did somebody say totalitarianism? Five interventions in the (mis)use of a notion*, London, Verso, 2001, p. 241.

4. Some explanations on nationalism and the dynamics of globalism

Safranski recounts that globalism also shares humankind's dream about a *humanity* that can act in unison, even despite its cruel and violent history. Nonetheless, enemy-making and boundary-drawing have always constituted a step towards the conceptualization of reality and the creation of unity³⁸. Plato posed that the individual's consciousness also needs contradiction in order to establish its identity. This passionate desire for difference he called *thymos*, meaning the means by which the individual differentiates herself from other individuals³⁹. For Hegel, the struggle for recognition is the driving force of history. When bounded thymotic energy gives society its dynamics; when unbounded it dissolves society into the anarchy of violence⁴⁰. In his *Perpetual peace: A philosophical sketch* Kant outlined a rich conception of world peace framed in the context of multiplicity. Even if this text is considered to be based on the need to tolerate the other and the fact that peace can be achieved among nations, it still states that conflict is unavoidable between nations⁴¹. Without a doubt, the whole may also be conceived as the true and the good, but it takes shape only through the struggle of particularity⁴².

Nowadays, the most important sociopolitical particularity is the nation-state, derived from a British 16th century reconceptualization of the notion of nation. Liah Greenfield, American sociologist, explains that the specificity of nationalism "derives from the fact that nationalism [*understands its*] (...) 'people' (...) as the bearer of sovereignty, the central object of loyalty, and the basis of collective solidarity"⁴³. National identity, in its distinctive modern sense, can be described as an identity which where "every member of the 'people' thus interpreted partakes in its superior, elite quality, and it is in consequence that a stratified national population is perceived as essentially homogeneous, and the lines of status and class as superficial"⁴⁴. Thus, in this sense, the only foundation of natio-

38 R. Safranski: *Op. cit.*, pp. 14-15.

39 *Ibid.*, p. 18.

40 *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19.

41 *Ibid.*, p. 26.

42 *Ibid.*, p. 22.

43 L. Greenfield: *Nationalism: Five roads to modernity*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1992, p. 3.

44 *Ibid.*, p. 7.

nationalism as such, the only condition, that is, without which no nationalism is possible, is an idea, perspective or style of thought⁴⁵. That is why Greenfield claims that "nationalism is not necessarily a form of particularism. It is a political ideology (or a class of political ideologies deriving from the same basic principle), and as such it does not have to be identified with any particular community. A nation coextensive with humanity is in no way a contradiction in terms"⁴⁶.

Safranski explains that globalism is a symptom of excessive demands: the whole (usually invoked with that familiar euphemism, 'humanity') has become the object of economic, technological and political processes that stifles reconsideration and forms of resistance⁴⁷. Zizek expands: "What is 'national heritage' if not a kind of ideological fossil created retroactively by the ruling ideology in order to blur its *present* antagonism?"⁴⁸ Safranski in turn explains that secular impetus has turned the "ultimate questions" of the sublime and transcendent into social and political issues. Thus, patriotism slowly leads to nationalism, and the economization of the whole leads to a narrowing of socio-political issues⁴⁹. Zizek discusses that "today's resistance to capitalism (...) calls for the defense of particular (cultural, ethnic) identities being threatened by the global dynamics"⁵⁰. As he postulates elsewhere: "the more the logic of Capital becomes universal, the more its opposite will assume features of 'irrational fundamentalism'"⁵¹.

Naturally, we feel the need to ask ourselves the questions: "So why this unexpected disappointment? Why does the authoritarian nationalism overshadow the democratic pluralism? Why the chauvinist obsession (...) instead of openness toward ethnic diversity?"⁵² Zizek responds:

The elementary feature of capitalism consists of its inherent structural imbalance, its innermost antagonist character: the constant crisis, the constant revolutionizing of its conditions of existence.

45 *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

46 *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

47 R. Safranski: *Op. cit.*, pp. 40-41.

48 S. Zizek: *Tarrying with the negative...*, p. 232.

49 R. Safranski: *Op. cit.*, p. 37.

50 S. Zizek: *The ideology of the Empire and its traps*, 2007b. Electronic text: <http://www.lacan.com/ziztrap.htm>

51 S. Zizek: *Tarrying with the negative...*, p. 220.

52 *Ibid.*, p. 209.

Capitalism has no 'normal,' balanced state: its 'normal' state is the permanent production of an excess the only way for capitalism to survive is to expand. Capitalism is thus caught in a kind of loop, a vicious circle (...): producing more than any other socioeconomic formation to satisfy human needs, capitalism nonetheless also produces even more needs to be satisfied⁵³.

The Japanese scholar Ohsawa Masachi has also addressed these issues. His considerations are mostly on the nature of multiculturalism, but multiculturalism understood as post-capitalist society's enunciation of the most recent changes that liberal democracy must confront in order to ensure its validity⁵⁴. Since we can consider this matter a key question in what concerns the developments of a global community, we will extrapolate his conclusions on multiculturalism to the closely related subject that globalization constitutes. Ohsawa explains that problem lurking behind multiculturalism, the conundrum that globalism faces as well, is that the universal space where diverse cultures, nations and ethnic groups coexist is, in reality, the projected image of a particular culture or national community, provided that its particular contents are reduced. In other words, multiculturalism (as well as ideological globalization) cannot but presuppose the homogeneity of each culture or community, although simultaneously emphasizing the existing diversity among our many cultures and communities. Hence, the hope for integrity of a universal social space is actually an extrapolation that derives from the assumed homogeneity of each culture or community. Multiculturalism is an exercise in nationalism where particular nationalistic characteristics are void⁵⁵. Globalism, in its attempt to reach a global community, follows suit, and eliminates in parallel any references to its limits.

Zizek explains that ideology obfuscates the true horror of a situation: "instead of a full rendering of the antagonisms which traverse our society, we indulge in the notion of society as an organic Whole, kept together by forces of solidarity and co-operation"⁵⁶. Safranski explains that beyond the struggle over difference there is certainly a longing for unity; however, the world is not a universe

53 *Ibid.*, p. 209.

54 M. Ohsawa: "The conversion of multiculturalism" (Unpublished). Presentation delivered at Ritsumeikan University's Conference on Social Justice and Multiculturalism, 2007, pp. 3-4.

55 *Ibid.*, p. 7.

56 S. Zizek: *The plague of fantasies*, London, Verso, 1997, p. 6.

but a *multiverse*—the dialectic of actuality is a bloody matter, where antagonistic sides attempt to be the center that encompasses the whole of humanity⁵⁷. The dilemma, explains Zizek, lies upon:

The view sustained by the hope that a 'true' liberal-democratic society will arise once we get rid of the protofascist national constraints (...) falls short, since it fails to take into account that the way the supposedly 'neutral' liberal-democratic framework produces nationalist 'closure' as its opposite⁵⁸.

5. Civil society's inaction as a threat to democracy, and whether action is sufficient to thwart radicalization of nationalism or globalism

We consider fundamental not to overlook the fact that the nationalistic excesses, described above, which run their course parallel to contemporary globalization processes are closely linked to capitalism's and globalizations' political system of choice: that is, liberal democracy. Zizek sustains that there is a crucial flaw within liberal democracy that opens up a space for "fundamentalism"—he questions tentatively: does not "nationalism," for example, epitomize fanaticism in politics? He sustains that political philosophy today must ultimately respond to only one basic query: "Is liberal democracy the ultimate horizon of our political practice, or is it possible effectively to comprise its inherent limitation?"⁵⁹. Zizek explains, by means of the worn-out phrase attributed to celebrated statesman Sir Winston Churchill, that democracy is surely the worst of all possible systems, both in theory and in practice: "that is to say, democracy always entails the possibility of corruption, of the rule of dull mediocrity; the only problem is that every attempt to elude this inherent risk to restore 'real' democracy necessarily brings about its opposite—it ends in the abolition of democracy itself"⁶⁰.

Zizek, thus, advocates that "the only way to prevent the emergence of nationalist hegemony is to call into question the very standard of 'normality,' the universal framework of liberal democratic capitalism"⁶¹. There seems to be no way to bypass the various diffi-

57 R. Safranski: *Op. cit.*, p. 21.

58 S. Zizek: *Tarrying with the negative...*, p. 220.

59 *Ibid.*, p. 221.

60 S. Zizek: *The sublime object of ideology*, Verso, London, 1989, p. 5.

61 S. Zizek: *Tarrying with the negative...*, p. 220.

culties that we have described above while the universal dimension of our social formation remains defined merely in terms of capital. "The way to break out of this vicious circle", suggests Žižek, "is not to fight the 'irrational' nationalist particularism but to invent forms of political practice that contain a dimension of universality beyond Capital"⁶². He advances that some intellectuals, which contemplate contemporary politics "through the lenses of the opposition between the hedonistic rational pursuit of happiness and ideological fanaticism (...) failed to take note of another couple of opposites: apathy and obscenity"⁶³. The reason that explains this omission is the very notion that certain countries "cannot actually function like modern democracies but, left to their own devices, necessarily regress to a proto-Fascist 'closed' community"⁶⁴.

In their inquiry on memory, remembrance, and the active constitution of memories as a means to resemantize the past for purposes reserved for the present and to be developed in the future, Fujitani, White and Yoneyama emphasize that "the possibility of critical re-remembering is intimately related to changes in the global and national conditions within which knowledge about the past is currently being reconstituted"⁶⁵. The Turkish historian Arif Dirlik lends credence to this position when he clarifies that "the utopia of globalization is just that, a utopia. The dissonances of present, on the other hand, are not just remnants of a bygone day, but the very products of Global Capitalism that endow with new meaning even that which may be a leftover from the past"⁶⁶. Žižek tells us that "what people think, their opinion, is always reflexive; it is an *opinion about the opinion*: people are against an option because they do not believe that this option is possible/feasible. An act, however, changes the very parameters of the possible"⁶⁷. Action, be it the attempt to conceive and put into practice alternative political stances or policies that exceed the narrow constraints of economism, be it the consensual reconstruction of the past by means of a community effort in order to create novel foundations for relations and concerted endeavors, is realized by awareness of our opinions and the emancipatory potential that lies within socialization of these

62 *Ibid.*, p. 220.

63 S. Žižek: *Did somebody say totalitarianism?...*, p. 230.

64 *Ibid.*, p. 231.

65 Fujitani, White & Yoneyama, *Op. cit.*, p. 7.

66 A. Dirlik: "Trapped in history" on the way to utopia: East Asia's «Great War» fifty years later", in T. Fujitani, G. M. White & L. Yoneyama: *Perilous memories: The Asia-Pacific war(s)*, London, Duke University, 2001, p. 307.

67 S. Žižek: *Did somebody say totalitarianism?...*, p. 169.

opinions. Safranski declares that the greater than ever saturated networks of globality have impaired our capacity to discern amid those events that are close and those that are distant to us inasmuch as individuals⁶⁸. An autonomous individuality would be one that has the ability to decide for herself, what her points of contact with reality are: she must decide to know with certainty what concerns her and what the actual scope of her actions is⁶⁹.

Safranski refers us to Kant, who postulated that since thymotic passion can lead to hostile antagonism, a reason that can absorb it must be found: a reason, thymotic in nature, which demands even the sacrifice of one's person if human duty makes that necessary. This courageous reason allows the individual to respect and discover the humanity within her and others, and overcome the naked interest of self-preservation to allow her to be capable of solidarity with others⁷⁰. Cosmopolitanism has always been associated with openness, but at the same time it sobers people up-it can intoxicate them: for individuals to be able to act, they must act within their particular reality, not only escape into the notion of the whole⁷¹.

We will find it beneficial, in what concerns solutions aimed at the triumph over the hostility and tensions that arise in Asia and the Pacific due to the manners in which World War II are recalled, to consider what Dirlik writes:

There is (...) a different way to remember the war: not as war among nations, but as a war in which many fought against structures of oppression. (...) At a time when there is a tendency to erase awareness of oppression by a utopianism of capital (...) a utopia that sweeps that problem under the rug is not much of a utopia⁷².

Action is needed in order to attend to the problems of historical memory and nationalistic insecurity and resemantize them, by way of compromise and efforts at consensus, into the underpinnings of a dynamic politico-economic bloc, or at least a more stable and constructive Asian-Pacific community of nations. However, to this end, Lisa Yoneyama points out: "The fact that questions of historical amnesia are not some other country's problem but very much our own and that they need to be addressed as questions [is a mat-

68 R. Safranski: *Op. cit.*, p. 67.

69 *Ibid.*, p. 65.

70 *Ibid.*, p. 31.

71 *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40.

72 A. Dirlik, *Op. cit.*, p. 312.

ter] common to many modern nation-states and the formation of capitalism"⁷³. Yang refers to the controversial debate over the Nanjing Massacre as "a microcosm of the clashes between larger ideological undercurrents in postwar Japan in terms of evaluating the past and making choices for the future. Just as important is the fact that such issues are fiercely contested within Japan, which shows that the nation-state need not be the only boundary where collective memory is demarcated"⁷⁴. Action, henceforth, is not only required from the international community inasmuch as nation-states. To stifle the threats that ideology poses to the potentials of democracy, simultaneously the doorway to the worst and best of worlds, action is required from communities within nations, and individuals within communities. Action, as will actualize, always starts within the individual; in this measure, it is constitutively subjective, even if its aspiration is to modify state of affairs viewed objectively in the world without.

Venezuelan philosopher José Luis Da Silva points out:

We must not understand "the way out" as the overcoming of a problem or difficulty. And yet, it is not the realization of a much yearned for desire either. Rather, we must understand the way out as that which indicates what cannot be answered in the traditional manner. That the way out, which Kant as well as Foucault allude to, attempts to irreversibly cast the agent of action into the purest actuality possible. Things are no longer what they were, nor will they have to be the ones they are when their time has past"⁷⁵.

Conclusions and some proposals for Asia and the Pacific

Dirlik explains it is a not trivial word game to set apart the war as a worldwide war from a world war. Spatially speaking, there is no difference between the world war and the worldwide war. However, the distinction makes an enormous difference temporally. For a while, local wars may have been incorporated into a world war, to reappear as local wars after its conclusion. But for the people involved, it was the world war that was to become for a while part

73 L. Yoneyama: "For transformative knowledge and postnationalist public spheres: The Smithsonian *Enola Gay* controversy", in T. Fujitani, G. M. White & L. Yoneyama: *Perilous memories: The Asia-Pacific war(s)*, London, Duke University, 2001, p. 335.

74 D. Yang, *Op. cit.*, p. 77.

75 J. L. Da Silva: "La globalización. Tema ineludible para la reflexión filosófica de nuestro presente", J. F. Juárez: *Globalización: Visiones y desafíos*, Caracas, FUNTRAPET-UCAB, 2007, p. 60. Translation is ours.

of the local war that carried for them the utmost significance"⁷⁶. Perhaps the importance of this statement lies upon the fact that the hostilities, enmities and conflicts that characterize the Asia and the Pacific, as well as the beneficial and productive economic, cultural and political relations that coexist with the former, do not derive solely from the events that unfolded in times of World War II, but result from a continuous historical interaction that spans centuries, or even millennia in some cases. Dirlik also quotes Dower to clarify why it is important to recall that many in China and Korea, as well as in the Southeast and South Asia, collaborated with Japanese rule in order to liberate themselves from colonial rule and establish themselves as properly independent nation-states. "Unless we seek to understand Pan-Asianism as part of nationalist ideologies in Asia, there is much about the national histories that we are likely to miss"⁷⁷.

Dirlik assesses the aftermath of post-capitalism dynamics in the Asian-Pacific area and reaches conclusions that further support our claim to a reciprocal relationship, if not interdependence, between the buildup of globalization (concretely, what we posit as its underlying structural and ideological schema, globalism) and nationalism. Hence, he elucidates:

Although a globalized capitalism has indeed created common bonds among people economically and culturally, it also, ironically, has exacerbated all divisions. The newfound economic power of Asian societies has also empowered the reassertion of national ideologies, long suppressed by diffidence to Euro-America. The idea of "Asianess" itself has revived, as Asian societies have become conscious of themselves as "dynamoes" (sic) of the new Global Capitalism"⁷⁸.

Perhaps all nation-states nowadays are perilously poised upon that adhesive spider web that globalism spins with its various globalizations. A movement too soon may lead to nationalistic outbreaks; a movement too late may cause us to be devoured by the spider that is our vast globality. Not only must Asia and the Pacific be careful to counter unbridled globalizations and a nervous return to isolation and nationalism, or worse yet, cultural imperialism, it must also beware the seductive (but deceptive) call of the yet another ideology. If, by reference to Greenfield, we explained above that a nation coextensive with humanity is in no way a con-

76 A. Dirlik, *Op. cit.*, p. 302.

77 *Ibid.*, p. 304.

78 *Ibid.*, p. 308.

tradition in terms, and in the strict sense of the word nation remains in the framework of nationalism⁷⁹. Surely then, a continental bloc can act with the same zeal (and sightlessness) as a nation consumed by itself. Dirlik explains that in the most economically potent Asian-Pacific nations, a 'cultural nationalism' that essentializes national traditions as the source of developmental success has ironically accompanied economic internationalization, "as if essentialized national culture were the only defense against the erosion of native values by incorporation into Global Capitalism;" he explains, furthermore, "that if Pan-Asianism appears today as a means to challenge Euro-American values, it barely conceals conflicts among Asian nations over whose values are to be representative of Asia"⁸⁰.

The return of the nation upon itself by means of tradition and history, in what concerns the Japanese nation, leads ever anew to a notion that it has a role to play in the leadership of Asian and the Pacific. There is no question that Japan's economy is tantamount to the development of the area's development, and that its culture and lifestyle is quickly imported, consumed and viewed as a desirable. And yet, even despite the potential to provide for the rest of the continental and island nations while it provides for itself in mutual benefit, other nations remember the terrible cost that its benefaction entailed in the times of the Asian-Pacific war(s). Whether in the future that role will be carried out is an answer that the only other nations can offer forth; likewise, due to the vicissitudes of our times, already other nations, no matter their current political tendencies, step forward to make happen their intended roles as leaders. In some measure, the Asian-Pacific nations as a whole must strive to develop and further elaborate their 'traditional' ties and relations, but caution, always lead by the certainty that tradition is what is construed from memory. In order to prevail in a constructive dynamic as a continental bloc or at least as a prosperous community, the need of a consensual historical memory has to be constructed by means of a community effort, mostly to avoid the repetition of errors that can easily be considered, in the same manner, as 'traditional'.

Safranski believes that because history is neither a phenomena which can be missed, nor is it that result of a sole intention (history is, in any case, a host of histories, he writes), contemporary

79 L. Greenfield, *Op. cit.*, pp. 7-8.

80 A. Dirlik, *Op. cit.*, p. 309.

society's confusion can be overcome. Our history is always "the unintended result of countless individual intentions, which deflect one another as they intersect and intertwine"⁸¹. We must become individuals that convert the world into the 'humanity' that we are: we must mold our lives, we must develop networks for ourselves, and we must find manners in which to become what we believe ourselves to be⁸². We must face these chores as individuals, as community, as nations, in order to attempt to later on face them as the humanity that is so often mentioned, but so seldom taken into consideration when we finally decide to act. Safranski makes us recall the words of so many other thinkers when he insists that the world is only meaningful or empty inasmuch as its individuals commit to or abandon its worth. That is the reason why he claims that globalization, like the rest we call the world, must be harnessed, shaped, and directed; we can only do this, however, only when our own individuality is also harnessed, shaped, and directed, simultaneously⁸³.

It is our wish that this foray into the dynamics of globalism may offer a sketch to our queries. Da Silva has stated that a critical study of globalization can be considered a

(...) concerted effort to offer the way out that globalization represents a counterbalance that bolsters hope in a freer world, by making it more aware of its own limits. To say it differently, that this present tinted by globalization will become in time an entry, like so many others, that makes its way into the enormous archives of the past⁸⁴.

Safranski echoes this hopefulness and sentiment when he concludes that we must learn to live as we conserve globalization at a distance, while we treat it as the 'in the meanwhile' parallel history that it merely is⁸⁵.

More than a fly caught in that sticky web we spoke about before, let us try to become like the sparrow that soars above it and feeds its fledglings with the spider.

81 R. Safranski, *Op. cit.*, p. 64.

82 *Ibid.*, pp. 65-66.

83 *Ibid.*, p. 41.

84 J. L. Da Silva, *Op. cit.*, pp. 66-67. Translation is ours.

85 R. Safranski, *Op. cit.*, pp. 68-69.