

Jiun Bang

“Buying into Nationalism: Commodification and Territorial Disputes in Northeast Asia”

This presentation analyzes the economics, specifically business, of East Asian nationalism. It discusses how citizens “consume” nationalism that is (re-)produced like a commodity by various actors who engage in the packaging and selling of nationalism through goods, services, and infrastructure. The central logic is that the more we see such activities of commodification of nationalism, the greater the bilateral tension, specifically, around territorial sovereignty.

Commodification sustains bilateral tensions around nationalism and hinders resolution between governments. By identifying a commercial channel that is horizontal and relational rather than top-down and passive (such as state-enforced education or textbooks), we can better understand the critical micro-foundations of how nationalism actually works and why people ‘buy into’ it.

Steven Denney

“Assessing Ethnic National Identity among North Korean Migrants in the ROK”

Recent scholarship posits a causal relationship between demographic changes in South Korea and the apparent decline of ethnic nationalism. The presentation discusses preliminary research findings from surveys that measure the national identity of resettled North Korean migrants in South Korea, focusing on the salience of ethnicity. Using the same questionnaire as the one used to measure the national identity of the South Korean population, the research considers competing hypotheses of national identity change and finds that neither exposure to South Korea nor time spent in North Korea prior to defection explains the variation in the data. Instead, variation in ethnicity’s salience is found to be a function of aging (i.e., life-cycle effects). The findings have implications for our understanding of contemporary South Korean national identity and the comparative study of nationalism and national identity.

Julie Yang

“South Korea’s Gendered Soft Power: Golf Diplomacy”

The presentation analyzes how global sporting events, such as the Olympics, and international professional sports leagues help stir nationalism and stimulate a country’s soft power. It places Korean women at the center of “golf diplomacy” as cultural ambassadors. Korea is well known for exporting K-pop and entertainment and can now be said to move from exporting pop stars to exporting professional athletes – in other words, from Hallyu (Korean Wave) to “sportainment.” Golf players from South Korea dominate the leaderboards of the Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA). Eight of the Top 20 highest earning players in the LPGA waive the Korean flag. The global footprint of women’s professional golf has created international exchanges between players, fans, businesses, and government that can have implications beyond sport.