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Introduction

The concepts of nation and state are of primary concern to the study of politics and international relations. The way we understand what a state is and how nations comprise themselves form basic assumptions in the field of political science regarding the way in which states behave toward one another and toward their citizens. Much debate has characterized the conceptualization of nations and states, and this topic is the first that students in political science must wrestle with as they are initiated into the discipline. Any student of political science learns that the nation-state is the basic unit of study in political science and that the two pieces of nation-state create an ideal type of one nation in one state. In this characterization, the state is defined legally, dating from the Treaty of Westphalia, 1648, in which sovereignty was established. The nation, however, is an emotive concept resting upon looser terminology: culture, language, ethnicity, religion, and all of the ties that bind people together. How do nations create commonality? And, how do these bindings remain, anchoring people to an understanding of shared identity?

This book argues that one of the key concepts to define Japanese national identity is Confucian nationalism, the consolidation of which was pivotal in structuring relationships between citizens and the Japanese state at its founding. Moreover, the maintenance of Confucian nationalism in Japan continues to influence social policy, political behavior, and the landscape of political interactions that occur in Japan. The concept of Confucian nationalism is useful for understanding specific policies and policymaking, Japan’s relationships with its neighboring states, and motivations in foreign diplomacy. Furthermore, Confucian nationalism while present in specific ways in Japan is not singular to Japan. Variations of Confucian nationalism are present in other Asian states including South Korea and Taiwan; currently there is a notable reframing of Chinese identity that is occurring along the lines of Confucian
nationalism as well. This study acknowledges that scholarship utilizing cultural categories requires the acknowledgment of difference while attempting to understand commonalities. Historical context is significant, and manifestations of the cultural heritage of Confucian philosophy are diverse.

The relationship between the state and civil society in Japan is related to particular characteristics reflective of society and the presence of Confucian nationalism. The presence of these characteristics plays a powerful role in structuring the relationship between citizens and the state. Moreover, the state’s presence and management of social institutions, including those related to gender issues, are illustrative of an overriding concern with those societal values pivotal in understanding the role of women and the family within Confucian nationalism. This book is not an argument that states in societies with powerful Confucian value orderings will play a stronger role in intervening or that such states will have a hands-off policy; rather, this book argues that these particular social values are instructive of the state’s interactions with its citizens and its management of specific issues. The presence of Confucian nationalism structures the state’s behavior and serves as an additional level of explanation adding to our understanding of these relationships and their implications.

**NATIONALISM AND CONFUCIAN NATIONALISM**

The literature on nationalism in political science represents the attempt to qualify a broad array of political activity. Authors such as Breuilly (1985) and Howe argue that nationalism represents the goal of establishing a nation-state; therefore a nationalist movement is a political movement that seeks to become sovereign. Howe delineates this further by adding a distinction between statist nationalism and cultural nationalism. Statist nationalism is a form of political activity that aims for political statehood, while cultural nationalism is based on the perception of shared history. Howe’s distinction is an attempt to recognize the importance of cultural ties while adding the role of government in shaping beliefs and the goals to which many nationalist movements aspire.

A common definition of nation itself is elusive, for example, Joseph Stalin (1913) defined nation as a “historically evolved, stable community of people formed on the basis of a common language,
territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common authority.” This definition emphasizes the territorial stability of a people and shared participation in everyday life, while also including the idea of sovereignty and the prescription of loyalty to a higher sovereign. Connor Walker (2004, 72) defines a nation as “a group of people characterized by a myth of common descent. Moreover, regardless of roots, a nation must remain an essentially endogamous group in order to maintain its myth.” Walker moves his definition in the direction of understanding authorship. A nation has a mythic component, but this definition does not consider authorship or purpose of the myth. The emphasis placed on endogamous groups masks the potential fluidity of nations.

Hobsbawn and Terence (1983) discuss nationalism in reference to the invention of traditions, which includes a “set of practices, governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition” (1). Nationalism, like invented traditions, involves the social construction of reality through ritualized practices. In fact, the modern construction of nationalism involves a set of symbols, devices, and practices that arose in relation to the modern state, these include national anthems, national flags, and national hymns, among others. Hobsbrawn focuses on the creation of a set of traditions and practices related to the creation of modern nation-states whose drive to preserve and maintain continuity with the past through “semi-fiction or forgery” legitimize the institutions themselves and bind members of a community.

Benedict Anderson also offers a historical understanding of the nation as “imagined political community, imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (1991, 6). The nation is limited because it does not comprise all of mankind, nations are sovereign because the concept was born when divine rule was being destroyed, and the nation is a community because it is a deep, horizontal comradeship (1991, 7). The role of official nationalism, which attempts to merge dynasty and nation, is noted by Anderson as a development in response to European nationalist movements (modeled on American and French experiences). These definitions focus attention on created meaning and linking of nationalism with a specific moment in time and place (post-Enlightenment and postrevolutionary Europe). Nationalism, as a political force, has its own history of descent.
However, these definitions can be limiting because of the language that is used to define them. I argue that nationalism is more than merely imagined communities, that is, not just existing in the mind. It is a manifest, often violent political force, and since the rapid decolonization in the 1970s and the 1980s, through the dissolution of the Soviet Union, it is the most important political force in the world today. Nationalism is real to its holders and is tangible—not passive. It is forged in the expression of itself and can change; however, its character has fixed markers. Nationalist narratives hold elements of identities together paying homage to these fixed markers and bringing together believable cohesive moments and stories. The best ones instill a sense of group pride and belief in group identity and loyalty (i.e., adherence to a higher political authority). This authority may be sovereign, but it is not necessarily so and may or may not be fixed in time to any particular territoriality. Nationalism did not emerge out of thin air; a historical tradition already existed and so in a sense was a placeholder for a more substantive refashioning that takes over.

A nation is a created sense of belonging best defined with reference to the following set of fixed characteristics: a shared sense of common identity (which is not limited by its purpose or territoriality) that emerges from an established continuity with the past and develops a set of ritualized practices or expressions that instill the sense of belonging. This definition of nationalism pays attention to its emotive component while recognizing that the sense of continuity is established with intentionality and has authorship. Japan’s Confucian heritage is examined in greater detail in chapter 1; however, an initial definition of Confucian nationalism is presented here. For the purposes of this book, Confucian nationalism will be defined with reference to the following three specific elements:

1. A social system with the family and home as the model for teaching proper behavior, the emphasis of which is on maintaining harmony through role relationships and responsibilities that are mutually reinforcing.
2. The conscious codification of Confucian principles through state institutions and policies.
3. The historical identification of the ruler or state with the divine, the ruler possesses divine characteristics or descent linking state subjects with heaven, emphasizing cultural uniqueness.
Both Chinese and Japanese societies have associated their rules with the divine. In China, the conceptualization of the Chinese empire as the unique “heavenly middle kingdom” was damaged by the Opium War and humiliation suffered from the unequal treaties China was forced to sign with Britain along with the loss of Hong Kong. Japan’s experience with the United States after Commodore Perry landed in 1853 had been instructed by China’s experience, although the degree to which Japanese leaders internalized those experiences is questionable. The arrival of Perry’s black ships led to swift regime change and the consolidation of at least the perception of a centralized authority. The role of the emperor was nominally strengthened, and his Restoration brought about the unification of Japan and the pursuit of rapid economic development. The principles of the new state were enshrined in documents like the Meiji Rescript, which is discussed in chapter 1.

Japan’s social system emphasizes responsibility within role relationships and hierarchy. Although, according to Confucian philosophy, these relationships are not essentially gendered, practice in Japan precludes one from finding otherwise. The social system in Japan reinforces relationships of dual obligation within hierarchies. A belief in collectivism (strengthened by calls to nationalism at different moments in history) means that the collective interest of the Japanese people as a whole is valued over individual benefit. The notion of the free, autonomous individual defined by European and American philosophy does not exist in Confucian philosophy. Rather, Confucian thought rests upon role bearing, relationship-encumbered human beings whose identities are created through their relationships (the foremost of these are family relationships) with others.

In order to analyze the role of the government in creating Confucian nationalism, the codification of such principles must also be undertaken. Although a consistent, coherent codification may not be present in all issue areas or time periods, these principles are reflected in government activities, especially in areas of social concern for Confucian principles. This book focuses on the key areas of the home and family, women’s roles, as well as education as being primary concerns for the Japanese government in promoting Confucian nationalism.

Therefore, the set of questions that guides these chapters is: Who does the creating? What role or purpose does nationalism
serve? What role has Confucian heritages played in the construction of the nation in Japan? How did the Japanese nation-state create itself? The third question is the one I am concerned with in the following sections, describing its history, origin and stories, performance, language, everyday implements, and ways of organizing life.

**Human Rights and the Social Contract**

This book argues that understanding political activity in the field of political science relies upon assumptions of human rights and politics that emanate from contractual understandings of the relationship between the citizen and the state. When reading the relationship between citizens and the state in a manner framed by liberal, contractual notions of the individual, one may arrive at conclusions that are miscast, incorrect, or merely presumptive. Such explanations of state and society relationships do not fully capture the character of politics in countries that are based on alternative understandings of civil society, citizenship, and governance. These may include readings that are not grounded in a dichotomous, conflict-based perspective and that view the state positively, as an extension of family relationships. Moreover, citizens in political systems where an identity of Confucian nationalism is widely shared may engage in forms of political behavior that are less antagonistic but still hold the state accountable. This book sets out to explain the relationship between citizens and the government in Japan on its own terms, with the recognition that Confucian nationalism plays an important role in structuring values, expectations, and political behavior.

The debate over human rights also illuminates the boundaries between state and society and the problems with using dichotomous language in writing about East Asian politics. Ronald Keith (1997) illustrates the way in which rights are understood in China, underscoring the focus on second-generation (group) rights. Chinese law endorses an updated conception of the state and society relationship whereby the state provides protection of rights to create social protection. The legislative agenda has reflected a prioritization of rights and interests but policy is no longer the soul of the law, conceptual boundaries between these categories have been episodic and particularistic amid jurisprudential controversy.
China has viewed the state as legally responsible for social inequalities in economic reform, which is a pressing future issue; the dilemma is to address international and domestic responsibilities while maintaining social order and political continuity. Keith’s article shows the heavy burden placed upon a state, which must fill the gaps when families are unable to provide a foundation for social protection themselves—the state must bear responsibility in these cases, and its burden is more pressing because the state is built upon the family as a model of all relationships. State responsibility is directly tied to legitimacy.

Public versus Private/Formal versus Informal

Political participation occurs along a spectrum of activity that ranges from formal to informal methods. In the field of political science, early studies of political participation focused primarily on formal methods (chiefly voting and electoral behavior) because of a concern with the public sphere. However, authors writing as early as the 1970s acknowledged that this narrow focus did not allow for a broad enough consideration of political participation. For example, in their cross-national comparison of political participation, Verba, Nye, and Kim note that “the idea that citizen participation in political life is or should be limited to the periodic selection of leaders at election time is empirically inadequate” (1971, 10). Furthermore, these authors recognized a dimension of political participation that they label “cooperative activity,” consisting of cooperation among citizens in groups working formally or informally to attempt to influence government officials (Verba, Nye, and Kim 1971). This type of “cooperative” dynamic is relevant because it exists between the government and citizens in Japan. Garon’s (1997) study of social management in Japan analyzes relationships between citizens and the state, which, while from his perspective may not be labeled cooperative in the sense that both groups do not benefit equally, are cooperative in their attempt to negotiate for a desired outcome. The women’s groups that Garon studied formed ties with government officials that were mutually beneficial. Similarly, women’s involvement in consumerism grew out of cooperative activities with the state, as an outgrowth of consumer protection policies, which fostered consumer organization and other programs. In fact, early environmental
groups developed from women’s education groups sponsored by the Agriculture and Forestry Ministry, and many were federations of consumer education groups sponsored by the Office of the Prime Minister called *seikatsu gakko* (Garon 1997). Examples of cooperative activity between citizens and government agencies to shape policy can also be found in the efforts of the Ministry of Health and Welfare to solicit the views of consumer organizations and cooperatives in order to formulate its product-labeling policies (Vogel 1992).

Thus the understanding of political participation has become more complex with the consideration of increasingly less formal ways in which citizens can influence their governments. Formal politics, which has often been applied as state-centric politics, “has been steadily eroded by the progressive intrusion of state power into society until the two spheres have been virtually fused” (Dittmer, Fukui, and Lee 2000, 7). This fusion means that it is more difficult to concentrate solely upon state institutions in order to gain a complete understanding of what are oftentimes complex interactions running the gamut between voting activity and social movements. Pippa Norris (Githens, Norris, and Lovenduski 1994) notes that the trend in literature on women in political participation has shifted from an emphasis on traditional participation to recognition of the fact that women participate in ways that these traditional studies do not take into account. While positions among authors vary in explaining the reasons for a difference in the way men and women participate, all authors acknowledge the importance of political institutions. For example, Clark and Lee (2000) study the importance of democratization in East Asia and the impact of democratic political institutions on women’s participation.

Studies on women’s participation have also recognized the important role that government bureaucracies can play in addressing gender-based inequities. Stetson and Mazur (1995) study the extent to which women’s policy machineries (government agencies devoted to women’s policy issues) provide opportunities for women’s movement activists to influence the formation of feminist policy and promote feminist political agendas. Political parties and interest groups are part of a broad category of traditional democratic political institutions that women have used with limited success in order to become involved in politics. Ware (1996)
offers several explanations for this: first, women’s votes historically were viewed as an extension of male family members’ votes; second, party leaders did not want to increase internal competition by giving women more power; and third, women did not participate in party politics because there was little incentive given their exclusion from the power structure. Worldwide, women today are still underrepresented in political parties and rarely assume leadership positions, despite some notable exceptions. For example, the International Parliamentary Union that organizes statistics on women in politics worldwide notes that the average representation of women in parliaments is about 20 percent (with Arab countries at 78.2 percent and Nordic countries at 39 percent). This means that women are unable to have their interests represented by political parties and aggregated with the interests of other political actors; as women do not have the same access to those powerful and important political tools, they are politically disenfranchised.

Social movements are civil society organizations or groups that seek to influence government but do not want to become government. In the political science literature since the 1960s, the analytical category of new social movements has been developed to explain the unique characteristics of the environmental, feminist, peace, and student movements. These types of activity were different from labor unions, for example, which typified conventional movements up to that time. The actors in new social movements are the “peripheral citizens of modern industrial societies. They are the women, youth and ethnic minorities who have been excluded in one way or another from the modern ideals of ‘freedom and equality,’ and who have been stripped of self-definable identity” (Hasegawa 2004, 129). Along with the social movements, a variety of other civil society organizations including consumer groups, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and activist networks have arisen to express the interests of those who do not feel that their interests are already communicated in formal politics. These forms of political organizing are relevant because women have been prominent members and leaders of many such movements both worldwide and in Japan.

Scholars of Asian politics have also noted the importance of informal political participation. For example, Dittmer, Fukui, and Lee (2000) define informal politics as the use of nonlegitimate means (albeit not necessarily illegal) to pursue public ends. This is a very
broad view of political participation that relies upon judging what is or is not legitimate, a political move that may have more to do with social norms and mores than it does with the institutions that are actually in place. While this definition provides a starting point, it is problematic in terms of practical application and analytical clarity.

The relationship between political participation and the use of informal politics by women is also well documented. For example, scholars of women in movements have noted the importance of informal networking on movement growth and success (Kaplan 1990; Buechler 1993; Neuhouser 1995; Kuumba 2001). Payne (1990) notes:

Movement participation tends to be structured along the locations in which people find themselves: the workplace, the community, and/or the family. These networks and structures that impact movement mobilization are embedded in the gendered nature of the social order. The centrality of women in household and community spheres affords them greater access to and need for kinship-based and community-centered social networks.

Payne’s position recalls the important distinction made during the past several decades between the “public” and the “private” spheres. One premise of this thinking is that women’s traditional position as caretakers of the home and family confines them to the private space, which excludes women from the so-called public sphere where politics takes place. In order for women to become political actors, there must be a political space open to them that necessarily entails either women leaving their private space and entering the public sphere or an extension of the public sphere (Elshtain 1981, 1983; Pateman 1989; Jones 1993). Dietz argues that this view essentializes women into gender roles that presume inequality, and it is this inequality that determines political capability; therefore, the presumption is one that is not helpful in restructuring gender roles (1985). On the other hand, Patricia Boling suggests that women’s inclusion in politics has often been linked to maternal and family issues that might lead one (such as Dietz) to reject the everyday, particular sorts of political action done by women as possibilities for women to contribute meaningfully to public life (1991).

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