

China as a new source of Japan's national identity. Securitization and victimization as processes of Japan's security reconstruction.

Author: Michal Kolmas, Ph.D., Metropolitan University Prague & Charles University Prague

Abstract: In the recent years, much has been written about Japan's security 'normalization', i.e. the resurgence of Japan as a 'proactive contributor to world peace'. This article aims to add to this debate, but it will approach it from a different angle from the prevailing realist analysis. Basing its ontology in critical security studies, the author investigates into the role of national identity as a foundation (and product) of Japan's security realignment. The article introduces the concept of 'othering' as a means of identity production and argues that whereas for most parts of the post-war history was Japan's identity construction focused on differentiation vis-à-vis the United States, in the last two decades, China has become the main focal point for Japan's self-construction. This trend has reached its peak in the discourse surrounding the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands dispute since 2010. Japan's narrative on the dispute has worked to depict China as a 'coercive', 'immoral' and 'abnormal' state that bullies subsequently 'weak', 'coerced', but 'moral and lawful' Japan. By writing Japan as a 'coerced', yet 'lawful' state protecting the status quo, Tokyo succeeded in persuading the United States to subdue the disputed territory under its nuclear umbrella. Through the process of victimization of a 'weak' Japan then, the Prime Minister Abe Shinzo managed to propagate the new security legislature as a means of reconstruction of Japan from 'weak' to a 'normal' state.

Introduction

'Once an Asian friend and emerging economic partner, now a 'coercing' threat and bully.' In the last two decades, Japan's perception of China has significantly worsened. The ongoing territorial disputes between these two countries have significantly plagued the bilateral relations and strengthened the nationalism present in both countries. But how has this situation occurred? Can it be interpreted through the optic of national interest as a struggle for resources? Is it just a basic reaction towards Chinese revisionism? Or does it lie deeper, within the minds and hearts of the Japanese people?

Contrary to most realist claims about the inevitability of a conflict brought by Chinese rise (i.e. Mearsheimer, 2006, 2010), this article argues that the most significant change has been brought by the discursive reconstruction of Japan's national identity vis-à-vis China. While for most parts of the post-war history, the United States have served as the main focal point of Japan's self-construction, the last decades have oversaw the rise of not only China's economy, but also its status as an 'other' to Japan's self-perception

The Senkaku/Diaoyu island dispute and the subsequent appointment of the Abe Shinzo Cabinet were the prime examples, and an exacerbation, of the discursive changes in Japan. Since the outburst of the crisis in 2010, Japanese politicians and media have worked to depict China as an 'immoral', 'coercive' and 'unlawful' bully that strips Japan from its independence and national sovereignty. This strategy, as the paper argues, has worked to recreate Japan as a 'moral' and 'lawful' victim of Chinese aggression. Only through this securitization then did the Abe cabinet succeed in gaining support both from abroad (especially the United States) and from within (as Japanese society became increasingly nationalistic), in order to push for a 'resolute' changes in Japan's security posture.

Before investigating the 'victimization' strategy, the article introduces basic theoretical approaches to studying national identity in Japan, describes the role of 'other' in Japan's identity history and provides with the changes that Sino-Japanese relations have been through since the Second World War.

Japan's national identity between norms and differentiation

The role of identity in Japan's foreign policy is a frequent and reappearing theme in current international relations' Japan research. For most parts of the post-war history however, IR scholars tended to disregard cultural factors as basis of foreign policies. In 1984 R. B. J. Walker, for instance, wrote that the study of international relations has absorbed the premise of professionalism and scientific validity that was present in American social research since the mid-20th century (Bukh, 2010). Indeed, until 1980s, theoretical foundations of IR rested on universalist and positivist approaches stressing the importance of power, the primacy of states and anarchy in the international system. Kenneth Waltz's (1979) neorealist bible, the *Theory of international politics*, became the embodiment of this approach.

Although identity sometime intruded into the rationalist-dominated science (i.e. in the work of Karl Deutsch, Hedley Bull or Ernst Haas, see Doyle – Ikenberry, 1999; Lapid & Kratochwil, 1996), only after

the introduction of social constructivism in IR through the work of, for instance, Nicholas Onuf (1989) or Alexander Wendt (1999) did identity become understood as important factor influencing state's foreign policies or being reproduced by it. Constructivism, which later developed as one of the three 'great IR theories', provided two novel approaches to the role of identity in international relations.

These approaches were based in two competing epistemological foundations of the emergent strands of constructivist teaching. First, based in positivist epistemology of Wendt, Peter Katzenstein or Thomas U. Berger highlights national identity as a norm created from within the society and subsequently influencing foreign policy creation. These authors while building on the legacy of symbolic interactionism understand national identity as a product of inherent characteristics of the given societies. In Japan, they argued (i.e. Katzenstein & Okawara, 1993; Berger, 1998; Beuchamps, 2002; Ashizawa, 2007; Singh, 2008; Oros, 2008; 2015) that the post-war Japanese norm of antimilitarism was created by the shared perceptions within Japanese society, based in history, culture and religion. In this sense, identity is seen as inherently stable and likely to change only as a result of material factors.

Others base their approach to identity in critical constructivist approach and in the relational nature of national identity. These scholars (Clammer, 2001; Suzuki, 2007; Bukh, 2010; Hoshino & Satoh, 2012; Hagstrom & Gustafsson, 2015; Hagstrom & Hanssen, 2015; Tamaki, 2015) understand Japan's identity to be created discursively through differentiation vis-à-vis its 'Others'. The process of 'othering' can take on many shapes, as there might be various others (as well as various selves), yet neither material nor 'domestic' factors can exist outside of such identity construction (Hagstrom & Gustafsson, 2015: 1). Tamaki (2015) for instance pictures the image of reified Asia as a source of Japan's identity. Hagstrom & Hanssen (2015) discuss the construction of Japan's national identity vis-à-vis North Korea. Bukh (2010) investigates into Japan's images of Russia and Suzuki (2015) focuses on the Japanese political party discourse vis-à-vis growing China. In all of these approaches, identity is produced and reproduced discursively and is inextricably linked to foreign policy production¹ (methodologically see also Neumann, 1996; Waever & Hansen, 2002; Hansen 2006).

This approach is, in the author's opinion, more suitable for the explanation of changes within Japan's national identity. First, the idea of 'antimilitarist' Japanese society, as presented by traditional constructivist, does not fully capture empirical reality. Eiji Oguma (2002) showed that instead of becoming simply antimilitaristic, post-war Japanese people were rather reluctant to accept their military cooperating with the enemy (United States). The notion of normative antimilitarism also fails vis-à-vis nowadays security discourse, which stresses the positive role of the army and stronger stance towards China (Watanabe, 2015).

The 'othering' approach is better equipped to explain identity change, as well as it is better equipped to uncover the link between Japan's national identity and the current evolution of Tokyo's security policies with its securitization strategy of Sino-Japanese relations. Instead of investigating solely the official Liberal Party of Japan (LDP) and Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) discourse on China, as Suzuki does, this article will focus on the discursive practice of victimization as a means of Japan's identity recreation vis-à-vis growing China. Whether or not is the presented Chinese revisionism a current regional security issue (as realists would argue), the 'rise of assertive China' has undeniably affected Japan's self-construction as a 'victim', and thus recreated Japanese will for 'normalizing' its security

¹ In this manner, Campbell (1998) showed how identity can be created through the practice of foreign policy.

legislature. Before illustrating this securitization process, let us first investigate in the historical evolution of Japan's China narrative.

China in post-war Japan's identity construction

Although both Chinese and Japanese societies share roots in classical Chinese civilization, for most parts of the postwar history, Japanese identity construction neglected China as a distinguishing factor for self-construction. It is fair to say that post-war Japan built its identity distinctively different to pre-war Japan. Militaristic expansionism of a multi-nation empire was replaced by a defeated country seeking new uniqueness within its island borders. The constitutional Article 9, prohibiting Japan from possessing traditional military forces is a best example of this new posture. Constitution created the basis for Japan's pacifist security policy, but it also served as a focal point of revisionists seeking Japan's 'normalization' (Ozawa, 1993).

The debates about the constitutional restraint signal the fear about Japan's new world position. As Suzuki (2015: 100) writes, "what is often missed is the fact that the fundamental issue undergirding these discussions has frequently been about constructing an identity of Japan as an 'autonomous state'. Whatever one's political colours were, debates surrounding Article 9 were intimately linked to a persistent fear that Japan had a 'weak' or 'subservient' identity that allowed it to be dominated by foreign powers." The construction of a 'weak' self presupposes the construction of a dominant 'other'. Although, as said before, the varieties in Japanese 'self' evoke the variety of 'others', rather than China being the dominant 'other', Japan's post-war self-construction (and thus the security posture) focused on the United States.

There is a plethora of reasons for us why to interpret the United States as the most significant "other" to post-war Japan. Historically, the United States played a major influence on Japan's identity even before the war. It was commodore Perry, who forced the Tokugawa Japan to open its gates to foreign pressures in 1853. It were the Americans who ultimately forced Japan to accept its surrender in the Second World War and it were the Americans who played a major role in recreating Japan's sovereignty in the late 1940s by drafting a new, peace constitution (McCargo, 2013, p. 32-33). The security dependence on the United States was the forming factor of Japanese perception as a significantly 'weak' state. While unable to maintain self-security, Japan was narrated as an embarrassing, and hardly an independent country (Oguma, 2002), a servant to the United States.

According to Suzuki (2015), the narrative of a dependent country vis-à-vis the United States was shared by both idealist right and idealist left, yet for different reasons. While right wing politicians criticized the 'inexistent' sovereignty, left wing idealists called for independence mainly because their perceived LDP's politician's attitude towards Washington (along with the Yoshida doctrine) as 'servant' and possibly leading to militarization in the United States' Cold War strategy (Oguma, 1998). Japan's ambiguity towards the United States also resurfaced on many occasions. During the protests against the new security treaty between Tokyo and Washington in 1960, up to 100 thousand Japanese marched in the streets of Tokyo, symbolizing the politicization of US-Japanese relations (Reischauer & Craig, 1989). United States, furthermore, functioned as a reference point within Japan's *nihonjinron* discourse, trying to reproduce Japan's uniqueness through differentiation to Western societies (Kimura, 2009; Dale, 1986).

While Japanese narrative on the United States and subsequently on Japan's security policies formed the popular debate in the post-war years², China occupied a relatively minor spot in Japanese people's sentiments and security debates. Although Japanese self-image practically reversed after the Second World War, the relatively successful experience with Western modernity, post-war dynamic economic growth strongly weakened the significance of China as an 'other' and possible security threat. Although some highlighted the cultural heritage Japan and China shared, Japan, as Chalmers Johnson wrote in 1972 seemed to be befogged by a long-standing inability to take the Chinese seriously:

"It is perhaps not too far-fetched to describe Japanese attitudes toward their continental neighbors as somewhat comparable to the English or German industrialist's attitude toward an Italian or Spanish aristocrat recently gone into commerce. He admires, and is slightly intimidated by, the ancient cultural achievements to which his modern counterpart is heir, but he finds it almost impossible in the company board room to suggest seriously that the new boy might become a competitor or a threat" (Johnson, 1972).

This narrative led to Japan swiftly normalizing relations with its Eastern neighbor right after American envoy heralded a new era in US-China relations in 1970s. The friendship treaty signed between Japan and China in 1979 was facilitated by Beijing's skillful diplomacy contributing to Japan's good feelings towards China, such as Mao Zedong's generous expression of forgivingness for Japan's past aggression and Premier Zhou Enlai's skillful renunciation of reparation demands (Watanabe, 2015). The transformation of the China narrative from "responsible friend" toward "coercive status-quo changing bully" did not take roots until the mid-1980s, when the conservative newspapers (such as some politicians) strongly objected to China's criticism over Premier Nakasone Yasuhiro's visit to the Yasukuni shrine as meddling in Japan's internal affairs (Rose, 2007: 23).

Deterioration of Japan's narrative on China was exacerbated following the 1989 Tiananmen Square incident, in which the Chinese government violently cracked down on a pro-democracy protest movement. Still, for most of 1990s, the viability of United States as an 'other' to Japan's national identity and subsequently foreign policy was far more visible. By the late 1990s and in the beginning of 2000s did Japan for instance, signal a perceived new role in international relations by continuing with its leading engagement in Kyoto Protocol negotiations even though the United States' George W. Bush administrative withdrew from the ongoing ratification process. By some (Tiberghien & Schreurs, 2007), this was perceived as a sign of "normalization" of Japan's identity towards becoming a proactive world community member.

Although United States still occupied the role of Japan's primary 'other', China's rise had a significant impact on Japan's China narrative. The image of 'arrogant' China, that started to resurface in 1980s, coupled with China's rapid military growth of 1990s and 2000s. In 1992, China unilaterally claimed sovereignty over the Spratly Islands with the enactment of the Law of the Territorial Sea and Contiguous Zone. Given China's expansionary past, Japan became to feel suspicious over China's perceived revisionism. Furthermore, although throughout post-war years was China perceived as a

² Suzuki (2015: 101) shows that the major Japanese newspapers (Asahi, Mainichi, Yomiuri) produced a significantly higher amount of articles containing the words "Japan, America" (*beikoku*) and "resolute" (*kizen*) than the words "Japan, China" (*nicchuu*) and "resolute". According to Suzuki, this was visible throughout second part of 20th century, up to the year 2012.

culturally alike country to Japan, this positive narrative in Japanese society gradually deteriorated. China became pictured³ as an immoral and inferior state with fundamentally different values than Japan. For instance, when Chinese foreign minister Li Zhaoxing in his press speech in March 2006 criticized Japan's lack of repentance (symbolized by their visits to Yasukuni shrine), the then-Cabinet Secretary Abe Shinzo called his remarks 'stupid' and 'immoral' and demanded justification (Yomiuri, 2006). On other occasions, media as well as commentators have criticized China's rise as unethical, given the fact that Japan's significant development assistance (ODA) has been used to finance China's strategic interests without any signs of gratitude (i.e. Masuda, 2003). Moreover, China's actions against Japan connected to the recent reheating of the Senkaku/Diaoyu dispute were often described as 'running against shared values (between Japan and the West) such as democracy and the rule of law' (Yomiuri, 2015).

These examples exacerbate the declining role of the United States as Japan's 'other'. The qualities now prescribed to China within Japan's discourse were two decades ago similarly prescribed to the United States. The *nihonjinron* discourse recreated Japan's uniqueness vis-à-vis the West (see Dale, 1986; Bukh, 2009), differentiating Japan both ethnically (one race versus mixture of races), socially (collective, feminine society versus individualist, masculine West) and even geographically (country beset by forests and untamed landscape where nature dominates the man as opposed to lands dominated by people in the West). Similarly, comments by many Japanese politicians highlighted Japan's qualities vis-à-vis the United States. For instance, in 1986, two Japanese newspapers quoted Premier Nakasone saying the trade deficit between Japan and the United States can partly be attributed to American multiracial society implying the superiority of Japan's racially homogeneous society⁴ (New York Times, 1986).

Senkaku/Diaoyu dispute and Japan's victimization discourse

While the rise of China as Japan's 'other' has been emerging during the past three decades, it were the events from the last decade that influenced the massive rise of Japanese nationalism towards its Chinese neighbor. When Japan agreed to review the Guidelines for U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation in 1997, a pro-China liberal, LDP secretary and Diet member Koichi Kato visited China and assured its Chinese counterparts that the new security posture was targeted at North Korea instead of China. Although Chinese reaction to the guidelines (which only vaguely mentioned the possible instability of the 'areas surrounding Japan' and never once mentioned Beijing as a possible security threat) became eventually harsh and negative, Kato's attitude and the lack of public criticism over his remarks suggest that the Japanese public did not regard China as a serious security threat in the 1990s⁵. Yet the difference in Japan's nationalism vis-à-vis China was far more visible only ten years later. When Kato criticized Prime Minister Koizumi Jun'ichirō's visit to Yasukuni shrine as an attempt to anger China in 2006, the house of Kato's mother was set on fire by a right-wing activist (Watanabe, 2015).

³ Similarly to the earlier discourse on the United States (i.e. the *nihonjinron*)

⁴ Nakasone was quoted saying that 'the presence of the blacks, Puerto Ricans and Mexicans has impaired educational process compared to Japan' (New York Times, 1986)

⁵ What is also striking is the fact that at that time, China was becoming more assertive about the disputed Asian islands. Since 1990 Chinese 'research vessels' and warships began intruding Japan's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) in the East China Sea around the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands. Yet, neither this nor China's unilateral enactment of the Territorial Law was perceived by Japanese people as a major threat to Japan's security.

The recent dispute over Senkaku/Diaoyu islands marks the highpoint of Japan's nationalistic discourse towards China. The debate, although at times heated and emotional, contains some reappearing narratives of Japan's self-construction vis-à-vis Chinese growing threat. These narratives revolve around several major lines. First, the status quo is understood as a guarantee of stable security environment in the region. Second, Beijing's behavior is seen as upsetting the status quo. Third, Japan's is pictured as a victim to China's bullying strategy of status-quo reformulation and fourth, Japan's reaction (reformulation of Japan's security strategy) towards Beijing's aggression is calm, peaceful and strictly complacent to the norms of international law. Before the article examines these four claims, it will shortly discuss the background of the island conflict between the two Asian powers.

Although the conflict resurfaced in the beginning of 1970s, when rich deposits of oil were discovered around the disputed islands, both Chinese and Japanese claims stretch further to history. In a nutshell, China claims that the islands were a part of China's territory since ancient times, serving as important fishing ground administered by the province of Taiwan. China supports this claim by a number of historical maps placing the islands within China's exclusive territory. Japan, on the other hand, claims that it surveyed the islands in the second half of 19th century and found no evidence that they belonged to China. Tokyo then seized them as *terra nullius*. In 1951, they were covered by the San Francisco peace treaty and in 1971, they were returned to Japan as a part of the Okinawa reverse treaty (see for instance Blanchard, 2000; Pan, 2007; Smith, 2014).

Although the disagreement about the ownership of these islands was reappearing from time to time since the 1970s, these never really heated into the shape of open hostility⁶. This hostility was, however, exacerbated in 2010, when Chinese trawler collided with Japanese coast guard patrol in the disputed area. Consequently to the collision, Japan detained the ship captain for a period of 17 days and then only to release him after massive Chinese protests. Japan's primary and secondary discourse on the incident remained very stern and focused, stressing the abnormality, aggressiveness and unlawful behavior of China. The newly appointed foreign minister Maehara Seiji called the collision a 'malicious act taking place in (Japan's) sovereign territory' (The Japan Times, 2010a). Japan's tabloid media, *Yukan Fuji* denounced Japanese handling of the affair as '*dogeza gaikō*' (bowing diplomacy), implying Japan bowed in a sign of extreme humility. Tokyo's right-wing governor Ishihara Shintaro compared China's stance to that of organized crime by stating 'what China's doing is no different from gangsters' (The Japan Times, 2010b).

Furthermore, while picturing China as an 'unlawful' revisionist, Japanese narrative of the incident stressed Tokyo's reaction as a 'just' one. *Yomiuri Shimbun* (2010) for instance, ran an editorial claiming that the arrest was a 'natural' and legitimate reaction to the incursion of sovereign territorial waters, and one that should be criminally prosecuted according to Japanese domestic law. This was novelty. Even before 2010, there were an occasions when Chinese vessels ventured into the disputed waters, yet there was a silent agreement that Japan would return the crew without arrest. In protest, Beijing called Japanese actions unjust 'incursions into Chinese waters' based on China's claim over the islands (Xinhua, 2010). Major newspapers reacted by emphasizing China's revisionist and aggressive attitudes. Apart from massive demonstrations attacking Japanese embassy and

⁶ Tokyo and Beijing, for instance, discussed and later (2008) agreed on a joint development program of undersea gas fields in the East China Sea.

Japanese companies, Beijing introduced a range of sanctions including a ban on the export of rare metals to Japan and a cancellation of the joint development project of a gas field in East China Sea. Conservative newspaper *Sankei Shimbun's* editorial, in turn, proclaimed Beijing's sanctions as 'abnormal' and irrational (Suzuki, 2015, p. 103).

Moreover, after the massive anti-Japanese demonstrations occurred in China, Japanese media criticized them as 'fake protests of controlled citizens carried out by Chinese authorities'. Suzuki and Murai (2014: 150-1) argued that 'once again the Japanese media framed China and its citizens as an irrational, arrogant nation in contrast to the rational and mature Japanese'. The contrast between 'abnormal, belligerent' China and 'normal, threatened' Japan was as well propagated within Japan's official primary discourse. In his interview with the *Wall Street Journal* (2010), foreign minister Maehara denounced China's claim over the islands by saying that 'there is no territorial issue there'. The ship skipper was arrested because 'he crashed into the Japan's coast guard,' in a crash that 'could have sunk the ship'. The incident was thus narrated as an irrational attack on Japanese ships lawfully protecting Japan's sovereign territorial waters.

The insistence on the unlawful character of Chinese behavior recreated Japan as a victim of China's belligerent revisionism. However, according to Japanese media, the political handling of the crisis only showed Japan's weakness vis-à-vis China. Although according to previous court decisions should have the captain been detained until September 29, he was unexpectedly released five days earlier, while Prime Minister Kan Naoto and foreign minister Maehara were attending the United Nations General Assembly meeting. Media cited Chief Cabinet Secretary Sengoku Yoshihito (DPJ) saying the detaining of the captain had 'significantly bad impact on Sino-Japanese relations' (BBC News, 2010). However, as Suzuki and Murai (2014: 151) mention, *Yomiuri Shimbun* later revealed that it was Sengoku's own decision that ordered the prosecutor's office to release the captain,' which portrayed the 'lack of a unified and coherent position inside DPJ that might give China the opportunity to escalate its coercive international politics'.

The diplomatic row escalated in 2012. During his April visit to the United States, the hawkish Tokyo governor Ishihara suddenly announced he intended to buy the disputed islands for Tokyo. Speaking to a conservative think-tank Heritage Foundation in Washington, Ishihara argued that 'it is unquestionable that the islands belong to Japan' and that he 'aims to protect these islands' from Chinese attempts at taking 'effective control' over them. 'It is natural for Japan to purchase its own territory. Why would anyone have a problem with that?' he asked (*Wall Street Journal*, 2012). Given Ishihara's hawkish figure, it should be of no surprise that he chose such stern words. Ishihara was a long-term critic of DPJ's (and before, LDP's) perceived 'soft' policies vis-à-vis China. He argued that Japan is a victim of China's aggression and should adopt tougher policies (for instance, acquire nuclear weapons) in order not to 'end up like Tibet' (*The Japan Times*, 2012).

The new-DPJ government of Noda Yoshihiko reacted to his action by striking a deal with the owners, the Kurihara family, on the purchase of these islands for JPY 2.05 billion. The purchase angered China. Anti-Japanese protests spread to more than 100 cities across China and the government accused Japan of 'stealing' China's sovereign territory. In response, Japan's official reaction was that even though 'there is no doubt that the Senkaku Islands are clearly an inherent territory of Japan,' the Government of Japan decided to purchase the islands 'in an effort to minimize any negative impact on the bilateral relations' (MOFA, 2012). Yet the damage had already been done. By the end

of 2012, nationalism on both sides soared. For instance, even relatively moderate and pro-China newspaper *Asahi Shimbun* (2012a) criticized China for 'raising Japan's militaristic past in hopes for winning support for its territorial claims' and scorned Beijing for the lack of effort in curbing the Anti-Japanese demonstrations (Asahi Shimbun, 2012b).

Abe and the securitization of the island dispute

The narrative on China as a strong 'bully' using 'coercive' tactics on Japan thus transcended into more moderate media. The 'bully' image of China was bolstered by Japan's inclination to present itself as a legitimate 'lawful state', acting accordingly to domestic and international law. China, on the other hand, was depicted as immorally ignoring the law, which placed Japan in the position of a 'victim, coerced' by the 'strong bully' but also to being moral vis-à-vis immoral, unlawful China. The construction of a 'weak' Japan opposed to a 'strong' China significantly helped Japan to tighten the alliance with the United States, who agreed to cover the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands under its nuclear umbrella. Washington went even as far as to adopt the Japanese narrative of a 'coerced' state by warning China against any 'coercive action' over the island issue (Asahi Shimbun, 2013).

In the wake of 2012, this narrative became almost a consensus within political circles and significantly altered the upcoming elections. In November 2012, Osaka's Mayor Hashimoto Tōru merged his newly founded conservative political party with Tokyo's Ishihara's Sunrise party to create a new 'third force' for the upcoming elections. The so called Japan's restoration party (*Nippon Ishin no Kai*), had the disputed islands on their official logo and won 11.64% of constituency votes and 54 seats in the Diet⁷. The elections furthermore brought a landslide victory for Abe Shinzo's LDP, winning a majority of 294 seats in the House of Representatives, while Noda's DPJ fell to 57 (closely followed by Ishihara & Hashimoto's Restoration party).

Abe - a right wing conservative politician's - election result signaled the retreat from the atmosphere that gave DPJ its landmark political victory three years earlier. The return of power to LDP however, was hardly expected to soothe Sino-Japanese relations. Abe, being skilled at political marketing⁸, did little to soften Japan's approach towards its significant 'other'⁹. Instead the Prime Minister continued in the narrative of Japan as a 'weak' country with depressed society, which as he hoped, would rise again. 'Japan shrank too much in the last 15 years,' explained Abe in his 2013 interview with the *Wall Street Journal*, stressing that people have become 'inward-looking' and public critical towards Tokyo's politics. Elsewhere (Kantei, 2015a), Abe sighed about Japanese people being 'robbed of their

⁷ The party eventually split in 2014, because of unsurmountable frictions between Hashimoto and Ishihara. Hashimoto then merged with the Unity party (*Yui no Tou*) to form Japan innovation party (*Ishin no Tou*) and Ishihara created a new conservative party called 'Party for future generations' (*Jisedai no Tou*).

⁸ For instance, Abe very skillfully used the theme '*Nihon wo torimodosu*' (I will take Japan back), reminding Japanese people of the glorious post-war Showa era and insinuating his rule will bring back the economic prosperity as well as national pride.

⁹ It is interesting, though, that media tried hard to soften the image of the new Cabinet as 'conservative'. Suzuki and Murai (2014: 160) for instance cite various Japanese media in order to show how they worked to depict the idea of 'conservative' Cabinet as a creation of foreign grassroots organizations. Furthermore, Yomiuri Shimbun argued that it is necessary to clear up the misconception of conservative swing in order to 'maintain Japan's superiority over China: 'LDP should work to demonstrate its political goals and strategies as clearly as possible to maintain transparency both domestically and internationally. This will (...) help to deepen people's understanding toward national security reformation and (...) differentiate Japan from China and its infamous opacity in military power.'

confidence' and advised the society to be confident (Kantei 2015a; Kantei 2015b). Only through confidence, as Abe believed, it could lead to 'deepening public discussion regarding constitutional revision'.

When talking about the past, Abe never failed to mention the victims on Japanese side. When proposing the new 'Legislation for Peace and Security' in May 2015, Abe started his speech by stressing that 'in the past two years, Japanese nationals have fallen victim to terrorism in Algeria, Syria and Tunisia. Most of Japan is within range of hundreds of North Korea's ballistic missiles (..) and the number of scrambles by Self Defense Forces (SDF) (..) has increased a staggering seven-fold in a decade' (Kantei, 2015b). Talking about the World War II, Abe repeatedly questions its costs for Japan. 'No less than 3.1 million of our compatriots lost their lives in World War II. In the devastation after the war, the Japanese who survived the war renewed their determination to foster peace and achieve post-war recovery' (Kantei, 2015c).

Yet although highlighting the war casualties Japan had suffered in the war, Abe was reluctant to accept Japanese guilt for the war. While acknowledging the 'great suffering and damage' that Japan had caused, he questioned the claim that Japan had actually committed aggression against anyone in the war. 'The definition of aggression has yet to be established in academia or in the international community,' stated Abe in 2013 question and answer session in the Diet (Time, 2013). Although Abe's words were met with disdain from both China and South Korea, he did little to change his attitude afterwards. Sticking to his opinion about the uncertainty of the aggressor, Abe disagreed with a former Prime Minister Maruyama Tomiichi's 1995 formal apology for the wartime crimes. As Tessa Morris-Suzuki (2015) explains, Abe's choice of the word '*hansei*' (reflection) not followed by the word '*owabi*' (apology) indicates the superficial nature of Abe's apology.

The narrative of a 'victim' state (exacerbated by Abe's unwillingness to accept guilt) was complemented by the narrative of a 'coerced' state vis-à-vis China. The coercion strategy was mentioned constantly in primary government discourse and worked well to legitimize the changes to Japan's security policy that Abe's administration carried out. The Position paper: Japan-China relations surrounding the situation of the Senkaku Islands: In response to China's Airspace Incursion (MOFA, 2012b), for instance, stated that China committed 'a further dangerous act' by its aircraft 'intruding into Japan's airspace by flying over the Senkaku Islands'. In his interview with the United States' Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel, Abe said 'countries should not use force of coercion' that 'consolidates changes to the status quo by aggregating one fait accompli after another' (Financial Times, 2014). The narrative of China as 'coercive' state went hand in hand with Japan's narrative of its 'just' policy. China's moves were narrated as contrary to international law, while Japan's position was predominantly legitimate, that is countering to these status-quo changing incursions. This legitimacy of Japan's behavior is very well needed by Japan in order to gain support for its position from the international community, and especially from the United States.

Through this optic then, one can interpret Japan's first ever National Security Strategy (NSS) as Abe's 'just' and 'lawful' reaction to the unlawful rise of a bullying giant. The strategy, adopted in December 2013, outlines three basic goals for Japan's national security — ensuring the nation's territorial sovereignty, improving the security environment in the Asia Pacific region by cooperating with the United States and other regional partners, and active participation in global efforts to maintain international order (Tatsumi, 2014). These goals are hidden under the slogan of 'proactive

contribution to peace', which has been used as many as 10 times within the text, with more than 30 uses of the word 'proactive' itself. Although the NSS mentions a variety of threats to Japan's security, the narrative of a reaction to China's revisionism is central to the strategy. The document clearly states that 'China has taken actions that can be regarded as attempts to change the status quo by coercion based on their own assertions, which are incompatible with the existing order of international law, in the maritime domains, including the East China Sea and the South China Sea. In particular, China has rapidly expanded and intensified its activities in the seas and airspace around Japan, including intrusion into Japan's territorial waters and airspace around the Senkaku islands' (MOFA, 2013: 12-3).

The strategy of 'proactive contribution to peace' is recognizably similar to the argument of Ozawa Ichiro's widely cited book *Nihon Kaizo Keikaku* (Blueprint for a new Japan, 1993). In this book, Ozawa coined the term 'normal' Japan, by attributing it qualities such as 'proactive contribution to world peace' through active cooperation with international institutions (mostly the United Nations). The 'normalization' discourse occupied a significant amount of last two decade's literature and was shared by many Cabinet leaders, including Abe Shinzo. The NSS is continuation to this discourse that best be interpreted through the above mentioned victimization narrative. Abe's administration succeeded in differentiating Japan from China as not only a 'weak' and 'victim' (coerced) state, but also a 'moral' state. Whereas China disregards international law and intrudes into Japan's legal territory, Japan acts as a 'guardian' of the legally defined status quo. This perception gives Japan the morally upper hand and international legitimacy. Japan's reaction towards China's incursion into the waters around Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands proves this moral discourse. In Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA, 2012a; 2012b) position papers on security, Tokyo stresses the need to 'calmly deal with the matter under any circumstances' and to respond only 'under domestic laws and regulations'. The idea of a 'calm' reaction is supplemented by its 'democratic' nature of a country that 'upholds universal values such as freedom, democracy and respect to human rights' (MOFA, 2013: 2).

The 'proactive contribution to peace' is then narrated as a moral quality designed to spread democratic values and the rule of law vis-à-vis undemocratic and unlawful China (also The Japan Times, 2013).

Conclusion

For most parts of twentieth century however, the field of IR remained reluctant to deal, research or even acknowledge the existence of national identity and its influence over foreign policies of states. Realist, neorealist and institutionalists scholars stressed the international anarchy that prohibited cultural factors to significantly influence states behavior. Instead, states were regarded as 'victims' to the anarchy, battling for survival and national interest in order not to become devoured by the anarchy. It was not until the 1980 for the international relations to start accepting cultural differences and possible immaterial factors. The study of identity became center point of the newly emerged constructivist, postmodern and poststructuralist schools and remained so until today.

It is to no surprise that East Asian countries were major focal points for IR identity scholars. Most significant East Asian states such as Japan, China or South Korea, underwent radical changes in their respective security situation, statehood and self-perception. Japan can be seen as a ground stone of these changes. Once a confident, expanding and militaristic nation, the outcome of the Second World War saw Japan building its national uniqueness all over again. Scholars from both the

positivist/liberal and reflectivist/critical constructivist schools have aided in interpreting these changes. Liberal constructivists based their explanation in shared norms, culture, history, arguing that Japanese pacifism was created from within the society. Reflectivists argued that Japan's post war posture was created vis-à-vis various 'others'.

Indeed, according to the author, the second approach is more suitable in explaining the changes within Japanese society. For most parts of post-war history, the United States have occupied the focal point of Japanese self-construction. Countered with independent, masculine, military-heavy America, Japan recreated itself as a weak, dependent and subservient country searching for a new role in the world. Although valid for most parts of the post-war history, nowadays the situation is changing. Japan's self-perception no longer relies on the focal point of the United States, but comes closer to distinguishing itself from the growing and revisionist China.

Sino-Japanese relations have been through better and worse. Post-war years have brought a period of a silent, suspicious neglect. Japan was focusing on its economic development and tightly bound to the Yoshida doctrine. During the last three decades, however, China grew strong, while Japanese economy as well as confidence stagnated. Chinese revisionist demands, such as its confident policies towards the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands helped to focus Japan's identity construction. Once constructed as a culturally similar country with shared historical heritage, gradually became China narrated as a coercive, arrogant, immoral and revisionist bully.

Japan, on the other hand, saw itself as an opposition to these qualities. The official as well media discourse, managed to picture Japan as a victim of China's coercive policies. Politicians from both sides stressed the 'bullying' policies Japan has to 'react to' and argued that Japan's calm and lawful reactions prove the superiority of the Japanese society and its political model. This legitimization worked not only to gain international support (that of United States in particular), but also to gain popular support for the reformulation of Japanese security policies. Prime Minister Abe's push towards 'resolute' and 'strong' policies towards China and adopting more assertive defense policies are practical outcome of this identity change.

What the future holds for the Sino-Japanese relations is unclear. We can, however, guess that as long as China remains the primary 'other' for Japan's policy makers and media, depicted as a 'coercive, unlawful and immoral' bull, the tensions between these two countries are likely to remain high, or even escalate (similarly to the Ishihara engagement). Integrating China's into world economy, as well as international political institutions (such as the United Nations) could work to ease these tensions, but only through rationalizing and 'desecuritization' of the discourse between these two countries can bring a true 'normalization' of the relationship.

Used literature and internet sources

Asahi Shimbun (2012a) 'China brings up Japan's past militarism over Senkaku dispute', 14 September, accessed at http://ajw.asahi.com/article/special/isles_dispute/AJ201209140069

Asahi Shimbun (2012b) 'EDITORIAL: The ball is now on China's court', 19 September, accessed at <http://ajw.asahi.com/article/views/editorial/AJ201209190026>

Asahi Shimbun (2013) 'U.S. warns against 'coercive action' over Senkaku issue, 30 April, accessed at http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ2013043001293

Ashizawa, K. (2008): 'When identity matters: State identity, regional institution-building, and Japanese foreign policy,' *International Studies Review* , 10 (3): 571-598

BBC News (2010) 'Japan frees Chinese boat captain amid diplomatic row', 24 September, accessed at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-11403241>

Berger, T. U. (1998) *Cultures of Antimilitarism*, Baltimore: John Hopkins Press

Beuchamp, E. (2002) *Rethinking Japan's Identity and International Role: An Intercultural Perspective*, New York: Routledge.

Blanchard, J.-M. F. (2000) 'The U.S. role in the Sino-Japanese dispute over the Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands, 1945-1971', *The China Quarterly*, 161: 95-123

Bukh A. (2010) *Japan's National Identity and Foreign Policy*, London: Routledge

Campbell, D. (1998) *Writing Security*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press

Clammer, J. (2001) *Japan and its Others*, Melbourne: Trans Pacific Press

Dale, P. (1986) *The Myth of Japanese Uniqueness*, Sydney: Crom, Helm and Nissan Institute for Japanese Studies

Doyle, M. W. & J. Ikenberry (1997) *New Thinking in International Relations Theory*, Oxford: Westview Press

Financial Times (2014) 'Hagel attacks China's use of coercion to assert maritime claims', 31 May

Hagstrom L. & K. Gustafsson (2015) 'Japan and identity change: why it matters in International Relations,' *The Pacific Review*, 28(1): 1-22

Hagstrom L. & U. Hanssen (2015) 'The North Korean abduction issue: emotions, securitization and the reconstruction of Japanese identity from 'aggressor' to 'victim' and from 'pacifist' to 'normal'', *The Pacific Review*, 28(1): 71-93

Hansen, L. (2006) *Security as Practice. Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*, London: Routledge

Hoshino T. & H. Satoh (2012) 'Through the looking glass? China's rise as seen from Japan,' *Journal of Asian Public Policy*, 5(2): 181-198

- Johnson, C. (1972) 'How China and Japan see each other', *Foreign Affairs*, 50(4)
- Kantei (2015a) 'Dai hyakukyūhachi kyūkai kokkai ni okeru Abenaikaku sōridaijin shisei hōshin enzetsu', 12 February, accessed at http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/97_abe/statement2/20150212siseihousin.html
- Kantei (2015b) 'Press conference by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe following the cabinet decision on the "Legislation for Peace and Security"', 14 May, accessed at http://japan.kantei.go.jp/97_abe/statement/201505/0514kaiken.html
- Kantei (2015c) 'Opening remarks by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe at the first meeting of the advisory panel on the history of the 20th century and on Japan's role and the world order in the 21st century', 25 February, accessed at http://japan.kantei.go.jp/97_abe/statement/201502/25.html
- Katzenstein, P. J. & N. Okawara (1993) 'Japan's national security. Structures, norms and policies', *International security*, 17(4): 84-118
- Kimura, A. (1999) 'Nihonjin no kokusaika ni okeru nihon tokushusei no shinnen', *Ritsumeikan kokusai kenkyū*, 22(1): 141-62
- Lapid, Y. & F. Kratochwil (1996) *The Return to Culture and Identity in IR Theory*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishing
- Masuda, Masayuki (2003) 'Japan's changing ODA policy towards China', *China Perspectives*, 47: 2-13
- McCargo, D. (2013) *Contemporary Japan*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan
- Mearsheimer, J. J. (2006) 'China's unpeaceful rise', *Current History*, 105(690): 160-162
- Mearsheimer, J. J. (2010) 'The gathering storm: China's challenge to US power in Asia', *Chinese Journal of International Politics*, 3(4): 381-396
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (MOFA) (1997) 'The guidelines for U.S. – Japan defense cooperation', accessed at <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/security/guideline2.html>
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (MOFA) (2012a) 'Position paper: Japan-China relations surrounding the situation of the Senkaku Islands', 9 November
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (MOFA) (2012b) 'Position paper: Japan-China relations surrounding the situation of the Senkaku Islands – In response to China's airspace incursion', 8 December
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (MOFA) (2013) 'National Security Strategy', Tokyo: MOFA
- Morris-Suzuki, T. (2015) 'Japanese war apologies lost in translation', East Asia Forum, accessed at <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2015/04/26/japanese-war-apologies-lost-in-translation/>
- Neumann, I. B. (1996) 'Self and other in international relations', *European Journal of International Relations* 2(2): 139-74

- New York Times* (1986) 'Nakasone apologizes for comments that offended U.S. minorities', 27 September, accessed at <http://www.nytimes.com/1986/09/27/world/nakasone-apologizes-for-comments-that-offended-us-minorities.html>
- Oguma E. (2002) *Genealogy of 'Japanese' self-images*, Melbourne: Trans Pacific Press
- Oguma, E. (1998) '*Nihonjin no kyokai: Okinawa, Ainu, Taiwan, chosen shokuminchi shihai kara fukki undo made,*' Tokyo: Shinyosha
- Onuf, N. (1989) *World of Our Making*, Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press
- Oros, A. L. (2008) *Normalizing Japan: Politics, Identity and the Evolution of Security Practice*, Stanford: Stanford University Press
- Oros, A. L. (2015) 'International and domestic challenges to Japan's postwar security identity: 'norm constructivism' and Japan's new 'proactive pacifism'', *The Pacific Review*, 28(1): 139-160
- Ozawa, I. (1993) *Nihon kaizo keikaku*, Tokyo: Kodansha
- Pan, Z. (2007) 'Sino-Japanese dispute over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands: the pending controversy from the Chinese perspective', *Journal of Chinese Political Science*, 12(1): 71-92
- Reischauer, E. O. & E. Craig (1989) *Japan: Tradition and Transformation*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company
- Rose, C. (2007) Stalemate: 'The Yasukuni shrine problem in Sino-Japanese relations', in J. Breen (ed.) *Yasukuni: The war dead and the struggle for Japan's past*, London: Hurst & Company, pp. 23-47
- Singh, B. (2008) '*Japan's security policy: from a peace state to an international state,*' *The Pacific Review*, 21(3): 303-325
- Smith, S. A. (2014) *Intimate Rivals. Japanese Domestic Politics and a Rising China*, New York: Columbia University Press
- Suzuki, S. (2007) 'The importance of "othering" in China's national identity: Sino-Japanese relations as a stage of identity conflicts', *The Pacific Review* 20(1): 23-47
- Suzuki, S. (2015) 'The rise of the Chinese 'Other' in Japan's construction of identity: Is China a focal point of Japanese nationalism?', *The Pacific Review*, 28(1): 95-116
- Suzuki, T. & S. Murai (2014) 'Japanese legacy media and Senkaku controversy', in. Hollihan, T. A. (ed.) *The dispute over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 141-169
- Tamaki, T. (2015) 'The persistence of reified Asia as reality in Japanese foreign policy narratives,' *The Pacific Review*, 28(1): 23-45
- Tatsumi, Y. (2014) '*Can Japan's National Security Strategy outlive Abe?*', Washington: East Asia Forum
- The Japan Times* (2010a) 'Maehara hangs tough on Senkaku dispute', 30 September, accessed at <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2010/09/30/national/maehara-hangs-tough-on-senkaku-dispute/#.VX7Sdvntmko>

The Japan Times (2010b) 'Weeklies, tabloids hawkish about China,' 10 October, accessed at <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2010/10/10/national/media-national/weeklies-tabloids-hawkish-over-china/#.VX7VJfntmko>

The Japan Times (2012) 'Ishihara rattles saber against China', 21 November, accessed at <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2012/11/21/national/ishihara-rattles-saber-against-china/#.VYFs7fntmko>

The Japan Times (2013) 'Japan adopts new security strategy to counter assertive China', 17 December, accessed at http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/12/17/national/japan-adopts-new-security-strategy-to-counter-assertive-china/#.VYQFs_ntmko

Tiberghien, Y. & Schreurs, M. A. (2007) 'High noon in Japan: Embedded symbolism and post-2001 Kyoto protocol politics,' *Global Environmental Politics*, 7(4): 70-91

Time (2013) 'Abe's statement on war angers China, South Korea', 20 May, accessed at <http://nation.time.com/2013/05/20/sorry-but-japan-still-cant-get-the-war-right/>

Waeber, O. & L. Hansene (eds., 2002) *European Integration and National Identity: The Challenge of the Nordic States*, London: Routledge

Walker, R. B. J. (1984) *Culture, Ideology and World Order*, Boulder: Westview Press

Wall Street Journal (2010) 'Q&A: Japanese foreign minister Seiji Maehara on China, the Yen', September 25, accessed at <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052748703793804575512543702131502>

Wall Street Journal (2012) 'Tokyo chief plots to buy disputed islands', 17 April, accessed at <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052702304818404577348610456930238>

Wall Street Journal (2013) 'Abe says Japan ready to counter China's power', 26 October

Waltz, K. N. (1979) *Theory of International Politics*, New York: McGraw-Hill

Watanabe, T. (2015) *Japan's security strategy toward the rise of China*. Tokyo Foundation

Wendt, A. (1999) *Social Theory of International Politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Xinhua (2010) 'Japan arrests Chinese captain near Diaoyu Islands despite China's protests', September 8, accessed at http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2010-09/08/c_13484318_3.htm

Yomiuri Shimbun (2006) 'Chūgoku gaishō hatsugen, kōgi no yobidashi wo chūnichī daishi ga kyohi', March 9. On-line source <http://blog.livedoor.jp/dandu/archives/50622880.html>

Yomiuri Shimbun (2010) 'Senkakuoki shōto jiken Chūgokujin senchō no taiho ha touzen da', September 9, p. 3

Yomiuri Shimbun (2015) 'Japan led G-7 discussion about sea disputes', 10 June