

1. Introduction

„This is not someone else’s problem, but a real threat to Japan. Our lives and peaceful daily lives are in clear danger. There is no other appropriate means available to repel the danger.” (Abe 2015)

After years of aggressive and expansionary warfare, the post-war constitution imposed on defeated Japan comes into effect in 1947, which leads ‘pacifism’ and the pursuit of ‘peace’ to become central pillars of Japanese identity and take up a fundamental role in securing this identity. With article 9 of this Constitution, also referred to as the ‘peace clause’, Japan renounces war and the use of force as a sovereign right of the nation (Constitution of Japan 1946: Article 9). This has earned Japan the title of an ‘abnormal’ state and the ascription of being an economic giant and military dwarf (Funabashi 1991). Processes of remilitarization in the decades following the end of World War II, such as the establishment of the Japanese Self Defense Force in 1954, are consequently told in the context of Japan’s ‘normalization’ with the concept of ‘normality’ being tied to having military capabilities and the ability to go to war as a sovereign right.

With a central pillar of prime minister Shinzo Abe’s¹ approach to foreign and security policy being characterized by the aim of increasing Japan’s military and defense capabilities and the pursuit of establishing Japan’s status in the international community as a ‘proactive contributor to peace’, the latest piece of foreign policy in this array of ‘normalizing’ policies is the Legislation for Peace and Security². With the opposition frequently referring to it as a war-bill, and consequent worries about Japan’s orientation under the new legislation, there is pressing need for this policy to be brought into accordance with Japan’s identity for its passing to become a possible action.

Identity has grown to become a prominent concept in the field of International Relations with a wide array of conceptions for how it can be used to explain political decisions and practices. In this thesis, identity is considered from a poststructuralist angle which yields to an approach that regards it not

¹ In this paper all names will be written according to the western norm, being Name Surname.

² Due to its frequent titling in this thesis, the Legislation for Peace and Security will be shortened to the legislation in the context of this paper.

as a stable force but to be always in a state of being articulated through difference. Involving a number of constituting factors, these processes are defined by discord and rupture. With the concept of identity being used as a backup argument to explain policies, a careful consideration of the role of identity and identity change in the context of IR is crucial to prevent it from losing its meaning. This thesis aims to shed light on the ruptures in identity construction and how the arrangement and re-arrangement of signs reads the policy and accords with state identity. For this, particular emphasis is laid on the theoretical framework providing a solid foundation for analyzing identity change. As it will be laid out in more detail in the third chapter, in proceeding from an understanding of foreign policy that is inherently linked to identity, identity is not an unproblematic *a priori* but considered as in a mutually constituting relation with foreign policy. This relational approach to identity regards the representation of boundaries and the narration of defined *others* as central in the constitution of identity. Identity is always in a process of being articulated and re-articulated which points to the importance of constantly maintaining these demarcations.

A focus on discursive practices and a process-oriented view on identity yields to the need of deciding on the relation of continuity and change. Linus Hagström and Karl Gustafsson provide a model in which continuity and change of identity are regarded in their interlinkages by employing a layered model. Here identity is regarded through its articulations on different layers that are characterized by their varying degrees of sedimentation (Hagström/Gustafsson 2015). In this thesis, the perspective is shifted towards an approach that considers change as fundamental and as the basis for contingency to happen in reproductive political practices (Nabers 2015: 45). The discursive production of Japan's identity will be traced through employing a research design which considers official texts (such as speeches and statements) under the Abe administration. The focus is on the timespan from late 2012 until September 2015. However, acknowledging that these texts are highly interlinked, and their meaning shaped by referring to earlier texts as well as being referred to by later texts, places them in a larger setting. This is how the selection of material has not been systematically constrained by this focus but is instead considered in its relations to texts outside this period.

1.1 Aim and purpose of the thesis

The research interest of this thesis is placed on the processes in and through which state identity and foreign policy are being aligned and ruptures in their accordance are being concealed. For this, the focus is on the relations between the *self* and multiple defined *others* and the respective complex positioning of a *self* by highlighting inconsistencies or shaky linkages in the articulation. As a piece of foreign policy, the Legislation for Peace and Security plays an important role in constructing Japan's identity in relation and demarcation to *others*. The question that this thesis aims to tackle is: How is Japan's identity discursively produced in the context of the Legislation for Peace and Security? This is achieved by an analysis of foreign policy texts and the concern with how state identity and foreign policy are being aligned and how ruptures are being bridged.

1.2 Structure of the thesis

This thesis begins by providing an overview of the academic debate around Japan's identity and foreign policy. Research on the topic of Japanese post-war foreign policy is highly interlinked, as a majority of the papers takes a diachronic perspective on policy concerns and focusses on the processes of 'remilitarization' or 'normalization' as part of a long ongoing process. The chapter on the state of the art provides 1) an introductory input on Japanese post-war security politics, and 2) the specific literature on the Legislation for Peace and Security with the emphasis on state identity. Chapter 3 examines the theoretical framework with which the research question will be pursued. For this, the conceptualizations of discourse and security will be examined, highlighting the core assumption of the discursive articulation for things to take shape and become meaningful. Further, David Campbell's (1998) work *Writing Security* on foreign policy and state identity will be the foundation for how these are to be seen in their discursive representation and interpretation and how to fathom their complexities. This framework will then be applied to the Japanese case and the analytical categories pursued in the analysis will be introduced. Chapter 4 provides the methodological approach. With a wide range of discourse-theoretical and discourse-analytical approaches to objects of study, the foundation for a careful methodological approach to the complexities of the discursive productions of foreign policy and state identity will

be introduced as well as the research design for this study with a focus on the selection of texts. Chapter 5 presents the analysis and its findings. Here, the discursive production of Japan's identity is analyzed in relation to *others*, which are defined as threats. On that basis, the sign 'pacifism' is subject to scrutinization of its relation to other signs and these implications are being tied together. Finally, in Chapter 6 the procedure and findings are being concluded and their implications for further research highlighted.

2. State of research

The Legislation for Peace and Security has not been passed in a secluded space. Its historical context is crucial in order to integrate it into the array of post-war Japanese foreign policy practices in their potential for bringing or embodying change. In this regard, the literature on Japanese foreign and security politics is not limited to the analysis of just the legislation but also concerns itself with previous attempts and efforts to change foreign policy in the post-war era. For this reason, this chapter is structured by beginning with a consideration of Japan's post-war security politics and its recognition and reading within scholarly research. In the main section, the debate of the Legislation for Peace and Security and foreign policy change will be traced.

2.1 Japan's post-war security politics: a simple foundation

This section is not meant as an exhaustive summary or discussion of Japanese post-war security politics but as a means to introduce the foundation of Japanese discourses on security and pacifism. The post-war constitution poses a turning point in history.³ Appealed for by the United States, the post-war constitution imposed on Japan poses demilitarized legislature aiming at fostering pacifism and preventing renewed aggressions from Japan. Article 9 is at the heart of most research on security politics in terms of military capabilities as well as constructivist approaches to Japanese post-war identity (Berger 1998; Katzenstein 1996, 2008). The article reads:

“Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as a means of settling international disputes. In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained.

³ A nuanced and in-depth consideration of Japan's pre- and post-war identity articulations which stresses the continuity of hierarchical demarcations can be found in Kolmaš 2018.

The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.” (Constitution of Japan 1946: Article 9)

This clause has been subject to a far-reaching controversy that couples the option for military capabilities with national sovereignty and the fear of a ‘weak’ Japan. This poses an important factor in Japanese national identity, as it does not go in line with the idea of Japan as an ‘independent’ or ‘autonomous’ state (Suzuki 2014: 100). Article 9 is regarded – especially in political debates surrounding a reconstitution of the military – as a hinderance of sovereign and independent policies (Kolmaš, 2019: 41). The focal point of this article is the effective deterrent of a ‘normal’ army however coupled with the openness towards options of self-defense which is employed for the reconstitution of military capabilities. This divide extends from the immediate post-war period up to this day. Suzuki notes that the question surrounding a judgement on Article 9 falls in line with the left-right-divide in Japanese politics, making it a highly polarizing issue.⁴

2.2 The Legislation for Peace and Security: inevitable act or extraordinary breach?

In the literature on the Legislation for Peace and Security, the positions on its nature and implications can be clustered around two camps. One side stresses the continuity of post-war foreign policy and views the legislation as a further part in Japan’s ‘normalization’. Opposing this perspective forms the groups of scholars that emphasizes Japan to be prone to change. Here, the new foreign policy legislation is regarded as an extraordinary breach to be taken seriously in its implications for the path Japan is taking. Whereas the former rate their identified flow of Japanese policy shift as something positive, the latter takes a more skeptical and negative position towards the change. This normative dash in a large portion of the papers makes the strife between both camps rather prominent in the discussions of other works as well as the presentation of their findings.

⁴ For a discussion on practices of framing China as an *other* for Japan see Suzuki 2014.