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The evolution of Japan's pacifist identity vis-à-vis China and South Korea

Focus on the "Othering" theory in identity construction

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1. Introduction

From 1895 to 1947, Japan was a colonial empire with an authoritative militaristic regime that deeply impacted East Asia. Japanese occupation of Korea (1910) and the northern parts of China (1933), including Manchuria (1932), caused much suffering to their inhabitants (Wilson & Cribb, 2018). For instance, women were forced into sexual slavery (Glosserman & Snyder, 2015), and men were ordered to work for Japanese companies under terrible conditions (Lee & Cho, 2014). The end of the Second World War, marked by the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945, concluded Japan's rule. Then, the United States (U.S.) occupied Japan to start a demilitarization and democratization process (Akimoto, 2013). Stepping away from the imperial regime, Japan adopted values and legal frameworks to build a pacifist state identity (Singh, 2012), most notably embodied in Article 9 of its "Peace Constitution." Japan strengthened the state's pacifism by implementing security policies such as the non-dispatch policy of the Japanese Self-Defense Force (JSDF) or the limitation of the military budget to 1% of Growth National Product (Akimoto, 2013). However, after the Cold War, Japan started to reform the legal frameworks that institutionalized its pacifism and even allowed the right to collective self-defense in 2015. These reforms raised the debate on a shift in Japan's pacifist identity since the policies reproducing it were changing. Therefore, this thesis focuses on Japan's shifting pacifism and how it is evolving in relation to China (PRC) and South Korea (ROK).

This specific research topic was chosen because further investigations in the International Relations (IR) academic community are necessary to capture Japan's changing pacifism. Researching the construction of identities is constantly required because they are not fixed in time (Diez, 2004). Moreover, as the world's third-largest economy, Japan is a significant economic and political actor around the globe. Therefore, the shift in its pacifist identity will impact the balance of the Asia-Pacific region when it comes to its stability, security, and dynamics with countries such as China and South Korea.

This thesis rests on the theoretical approach developed by poststructural constructivists to understand the construction of Japan's pacifist identity in relation to

China and South Korea. Poststructuralism asserts that identities are discursively constructed in relation to difference (Rumelili, 2004). The "Othering" theory suggests that the identity of the Self is formed through "boundary-producing practices" that differentiate the Self from its Others (Campbell, 1994). For instance, Japan identifies as a democratic state in opposition to China, which is perceived as autocratic (Sakamoto, 2007). The "Othering" theory is relevant for studying Japan's pacifist identity vis-à-vis China and South Korea because they share much history, and their relationship has always impacted how they perceive themselves and each other.

Therefore, this research aims to answer the following research question: *How did Japan's pacifist identity evolve vis-à-vis China and South Korea from 2012 to 2020?* Since identities are discursively constructed (Diez, 2004), it is pertinent to conduct a discourse analysis to research their formation and evolution. Lene Hansen's (2006) research design, which studies Western discourse on the Bosnian War, was applied to the case presented in this thesis. The analysis is focused on official foreign policy discourse emanating from texts produced by Japanese political leaders in office during the time frame, such as Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida, and Taro Kono. Furthermore, the research concentrates on Japanese discourse vis-à-vis China and South Korea and is guided by critical events between them. Nevertheless, the discourse analysis faced some limitations due to language barriers, as the sources were translated from Japanese to English. Translations do not always accordingly convey the meanings behind the original language, which can impact the examination of discourse.

This thesis first describes the theoretical framework focused on poststructural constructivism, the concept of identity, and the "Othering" theory. Then, it elaborates on the methodology and continues with an academic review of the existing work on Japan's "Othering" of China and South Korea. This chapter ends with the added scientific value of the thesis. Afterward, the results of the discourse analysis vis-à-vis China and South Korea to determine the evolution of Japan's pacifist identity are presented. Finally, the thesis concludes by reflecting on the research topic and the answers to the research question.

2. Theoretical framework: Poststructuralists and the "Othering" theory

2.1. Constructivism and poststructuralism

The end of the Cold War raised many questions regarding the functioning of international relations. Traditional IR theories, such as realism and liberalism, were criticized for their "static material assumptions", which encouraged constructivists to understand the social dimensions of the international system (Fierke, 2016). Alexander Wendt (1999) and Nicholas Onuf (1989) are the principal authors behind the constructivist thought in the IR research field. Namely, Wendt (1999) developed his approach to constructivism more thoroughly with his book called *Social Theory of International Politics*.

According to Wendt (1994), constructivism makes the following claims: first, "states are the principal units of analysis for international political theory", second "the key structures in the states system are intersubjective, rather than material." This second claim means that states (i.e., the subjects of international relations) are influenced by historical, cultural, and political factors that come from "human interaction in a social world" (Fierke, 2016). Finally, the third claim describes how "state identities and interests are in important part constructed by these social structures, rather than given exogenously to the system by human nature or domestic politics" (Wendt, 1994). Therefore, the constructivist perspective emphasizes socially constructed norms and identities and helps understand how these norms constitute actors' behaviors and their environment. This relationship can be shifted since the international structure can also influence social beings like states.

Over decades, more research was conducted on the constructivist framework, allowing a broad set of ontological and epistemological paradigms to emerge about "the nature of international relations, the place of identities, ideas and culture in world politics" (Bukh, 2010). In this thesis, it is relevant to describe two paradigms of constructivism linked to states' identity construction because they were both used when studying the formation of Japan's pacifism. Rumelili (2004) labeled those frameworks liberal constructivism and poststructural constructivism. On the one hand, liberal constructivism is relatively close to the leading constructivist theory since it highlights that international or domestic affairs are socially structured and "constituted

by norms, institutions, ideas and collective meanings" (Rumelili, 2004). Identity is constituted by the "Self", i.e., the state, through the internalization of societal norms, meaning that norms form and define identities. Indeed, norms are shared expectations about appropriate behavior that arises through social interaction (Jepperson et al., 1996).

On the other hand, poststructural constructivists defend the idea that identity is discursively constructed in relation to difference (Rumelili, 2004). Identities are "performatively constituted by practices of differentiation that distinguish the identity in whose name they operate from counter-identities" (Rumelili, 2004). Therefore, liberal and critical constructivists disagree on the role of difference in the construction of identities (Bukh, 2010). Rumelili (2004) supports this claim by sharing the example of democracy as an identity: liberal constructivism argues that a country can identify as democratic because international norms define what a democratic state is; on the other hand, poststructural constructivism asserts that for a state to identify as democratic, it needs to associate itself to what it is not, namely autocratic. This differentiation process can also make a state identify as "morally superior" since it is democratic, in opposition to an autocracy that is considered "inferior" (Rumelili, 2004).

When studying Japanese identity formation, both liberal and poststructural constructivism were used as theoretical frameworks. It was first argued that Japan's security policy and its pacifist identity were constructed through the institutionalization of "peaceful cultural norms" (Katzenstein, 1996) and an "antimilitarist culture" (Berger, 1998)[1]. However, scholars like Gustafsson (2015), Hagström and Hanssen (2015), Suzuki (2015), and Tamaki (2010) recently started to focus more on the relational aspect of identity construction, which is the goal of this thesis: to understand how Japan's pacifism is evolving in relation to the difference it perceives with China and South Korea.

2.2. Conceptualization of an identity

Before further explaining the relational aspect of identity construction in the so-called "Othering" theory, it is first necessary to clarify the vague concept of identity.

[1] See section 5.1.1 for a detailed explanation of Japan's pacifist identity construction.

Campbell's (1994) fundamental assumption asserts that "identity is an inescapable dimension of being," which is a powerful quote to grasp how crucial identities are. Therefore, states are inevitably composed of identities. However, the emphasis is not on individual identity but more on a collective one, i.e.

> the image that a group builds up for itself and with which its members identify. Collective identity is a matter of identification on the part of the participating individuals. It does not exist 'in itself', but only ever to the extent that specific individuals subscribe to it. It is as strong – or as weak – as it is alive in the thoughts and actions of the group members, and able to motivate their thoughts and actions (Heer & Wodak, 2008).

Moreover, states build a national identity, defined by Dittmer and Kim (1993) as "the relationship between nation and state that obtains when the people of that nation identify with the state"; what matters is what the people identify with (Dittmer & Kim, 1993). Additionally, Japan's pacifist identity can be referred to as a security identity:

> A security identity is a set of collectively held principles that have attracted broad political support regarding the appropriate role of state action in the security arena and are institutionalized into the policy-making process [...] providing an overarching framework recognized both by top decision makers and by major societal actors under which a state shapes its security practices. (Oros, 2008)

Security identities influence security practices in three ways, according to Oros (2008): "(1) through its influence on policy rhetoric, (2) its structuring of public opinion and the coalition-building opportunities this enables, and (3) its institutionalization into the policy-making process".

Therefore, identities give information on who "you" are as well as who the "others" are (Hopf, 1998). Thus, identities strongly suggest specific interests or preferences regarding decisions within particular domains and vis-à-vis specific actors (Hopf, 1998). States understand other actors through the perceived identity it associates with them while reproducing their own identity via social practices (Hopf, 1998). A country will behave according to its identity and the perceived identity of Others in the international system. It should also be considered that collective identities are multifaceted (Neumann, 1996).

Concerning their formation, identities are not simply given but discursively constructed (Diez, 2004). According to Gustafsson (2015), identity construction is "the process through which individuals, collectives and states construct narrative accounts of who they are. The stories told about states determine "who they are as well as how they are supposed to act" (Gustafsson, 2015). Identities usually find a political expression and influence political debates; their construction is an active political act (Diez, 2004). According to the constructivist perspective, political actors are engaged in an ongoing process of creating, negotiating, and challenging identity (Macmillan, 2013). In international relations, foreign policy is where boundaries are produced and reproduced, hence constituting identities (Campbell, 1994). Nevertheless, this process will not occur rapidly, and identity should not be entirely separated from objective characteristics such as ethnicity, religion, history, or culture (Rumelili, 2008). Indeed, the identity of a state "should be understood as 'tenuously constituted in time […] through a stylized repetition of acts' and achieved 'not [through] a founding act, but rather a regulated process of repetition'" (Campbell, 1994).

Identities are also "never entirely fixed" (Diez, 2004), although there is a generally accepted belief that national identities tend to remain consistent over time. The fact that they are discursively constructed means that: dominant identities always have to be defended against alternative constructions, allowing an opportunity for change (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). Even though Japan's pacifist identity has been deeply rooted in society ever since the end of World War II, it still needs to be defended against opposite identity formations, such as the "normal identity"[2] that advocates for the country's remilitarization. Since identities are discursively constructed and consequently never fixed, the potential for change is real, emphasizing the relevance of studying the development of an identity.

Finally, identities are always "constructed against the difference of an other" (Diez, 2004). This type of identity construction is of interest in this research, as the focus is on the evolution of Japan's pacifist identity in relation to the Chinese and the South Korean Others. The following section further explains the "Othering" theory in identity construction.

[2] See section 5.1.2. for further explanations on the normal identity

2.3. The "Othering" theory

The formation of the Self is inextricably intertwined with that of its Others (Neumann, 1996). In fact, the Self can "know what it is only through what it is not" (Bukh, 2010). Identities are therefore "always constructed against the difference of an other", i.e., it only makes sense to say "I am European" because it suggests a difference from being "Asian" or "American" (Diez, 2004). Campbell (1993) adds that political identities are radically interdependent, which means that our identity is "fundamentally linked to the other, or to many others". Moreover, those who belong to the Self share a "common fate" and "mutual attachment" that generates "national unity and loyalty" (He, 2014).

Neumann (1996) describes the "Othering" theory by differentiating an "in-group", representing the Self, from "out-groups", as the Others. According to him (1996), "Othering" suggests that the "lineation of an 'in-group' must necessarily entail delineation from a number of 'out-groups', and that delineation is an active and ongoing part of identity formation". Just like we categorize objects, we also categorize ourselves by accentuating the differences between the Self and "outgroupers" (Neumann, 1996). In this regard, self-categorization produces self-perception and self-definition (Neumann, 1996). Indeed, identity formation is an "ongoing boundary drawing process" where the boundaries of the Self are constantly defined and redefined in relation to the differences perceived in the multiplicity of Others (Bukh, 2010). Campbell (1994) also describes how identity construction is "achieved through the inscription of boundaries that serve to demarcate an *inside* from an *outside*, a *self* from an *other*, a *domestic* from a *foreign*".

Analyzing the Self/Other nexus allows a "better understanding of who 'the actors' are, how they were constituted, how they maintain themselves, and under which preconditions they may thrive" (Neumann, 1996). Therefore, discovering how the Other is described in discourse can reveal how the Self is formed (Hall, 2002). For instance, if the Other is "backward", "despotic", or "laggard", then the Self is "modern", "liberal" and "progressive" (Hall, 2002). "Othering" can be identified through "discursive representations" that accentuate the differences between the Self and an Other (Gustafsson, 2019). The distinctions usually oppose the Self's positive characteristics versus the Other's negative traits (Gustafsson, 2019). For example,

official discourse might convey that Japan respects international norms in opposition to China, which is confronting them. The discourse constructing a national Self in relation to Others can usually be found in foreign policy. According to Campbell (1994), foreign policy is "understood as referring to all relationships of otherness, practices of differentiation, or modes of exclusion that constitute their objects as foreign in the process of dealing with them". As a result, national identities are considered to be discursively constructed in foreign policy since it is where practices of "Othering" happen.

In the international community, the Self faces multiple Others that upset order "simply by being other" (Neumann, 1996). Campbell (1994) suggests that "Othering" takes place in an extreme form of opposition: "identity can be understood as the outcome of exclusionary practices in which resistant elements to a secure identity on the 'inside' are linked through a discourse of 'danger', with threats identified and located on the 'outside'. National identity can therefore be built through discourses of danger via differentiation practices (Campbell, 1992; 1994). Rumelili (2004) is also interested in the degree to which the Self perceives the Other as a threat to its identity since it can have security implications leading to the production of conflicts and the legitimization of violence.

However, the relationship between the Self and the Other can take multiple forms and modes (Bukh, 2010). The Self/Other difference is not always built on a pronounced opposition, and identity formation does not always involve the kind of extreme "Othering" Campbell (1992; 1994) portrays (Bukh, 2010). Various forms of difference exist between the Self and the Other. Diez (2005) namely created a typology of "Othering" practices:

> Representation of the other as an *existential threat* ('securitisation'). This practice has been highlighted and analysed by the Copenhagen School of security studies. In their work, issues are turned into a security threat through a speech act of securitisation; i.e., the representation of that issue as an existential threat, legitimising extraordinary measures (classically: war), but also constructing a particular subject as the threatened 'referent object' at the same time.

> Representation of the other as *inferior*. In this weaker version of 'othering', the self is simply constructed as superior to the other. In practices of Orientalism, for instance, the other becomes the exotic; as such the other is feted, but at the same time looked down upon. To the extent that the other is seen as undermining the standards of the self, this strategy approximates the first one.
>
> Representation of the other as *violating universal principles*. This is a stronger variation of the second strategy. Here, however, the standards of the self are not simply seen as superior, but of universal validity, with the consequence that the other should be convinced or otherwise brought to accept the principles of the self.
>
> Representation of the other as *different*. This fourth strategy of othering differs from the previous three in that it does not place an obvious value-judgement on the other: the other is represented neither as inferior nor as a threat, but merely as different. (Diez, 2005)

Additionally, national identities can also be constructed through a positive Self/Other relationship supporting cooperation between countries (He, 2014). Thus, the national Self and its Other can be cooperative or harmonious (He, 2014).

The Other can be understood as outside nations that maintain close historical and political relations with the Self (He, 2014). However, identities do not necessarily need to be constructed vis-à-vis spatial Others; they can also be formed in relation to a temporal Other, i.e., "a particular incarnation of one's own past" (Gustafsson, 2019). This type of "Othering" occurs when a state discursively represents how its present Self differs from what it used to be in the past (Gustafsson, 2019). Gustafsson (2019) describes how Japan's pacifist identity derives from opposition to its past militarist Self[3]. However, it is now forming its identity in relation to spatial Others, like China or South Korea (Gustafsson, 2019). The Self/Other relationship is susceptible to change with time (He, 2014), just like the degree of difference with the Others (Suzuki, 2007). In addition, interacting with multiple Others generates various and sometimes

[3] See section 5.1.1. for an explanation of Japan's pacifist identity construction.

overlapping "forms of self-identities", since identity construction is multifaceted (Suzuki, 2007).

Identity construction through Otherness is "performatively constituted by both self and other" (Rumelili, 2004). Therefore, the Other can respond to a state's identity and decide to recognize or resist it (Rumelili, 2004). Moreover, a state can act confidently once Others recognize its identity, turning it stable and secure (Gustafsson, 2015). According to Rumelili (2004), when an Other resists a Self's identity, it makes the Self more insecure. The Self will perceive it as necessary to reinscribe its identity – since it is not being recognized by the Other – in a process of increased differentiation with the denying state (Gustafsson, 2015). As the Self tries to secure the denied identity, it will represent the resisting Other as a threat and a danger (Rumelili, 2004). Therefore, the dichotomy between the Self and the Other could be overcome "through a process of mutual recognition by individuals and their collectivities" (Lebow, 2008). According to Taylor (1992), identity "is partly shaped by recognition or its absence"; that is why "the *mis*recognition of others" can cause damage to the Self because the Other is portraying a "confining or demeaning […] picture" of the Self.

The "Othering" theory is relevant when researching the evolution of Japan's pacifist identity in relation to China and South Korea because it describes explicitly how national identities are constructed vis-à-vis spatial Others through a differentiation process. Japan shares a long history with both countries, and their relations have always impacted how Japan perceived itself and its role in the Asia-Pacific region. The "Othering" theory provides a valuable framework to comprehend how identities can evolve through interactions with multiple Others. Therefore, analyzing Japan's perception of itself in relation to China and South Korea can provide a better understanding of the development of its pacifist identity.

3. Methodology

3.1. Purpose of the thesis

This thesis aims at discovering how Japan's pacifist identity has evolved vis-à-vis China and the Republic of Korea and aspires to determine to what extent Japan's pacifist identity has developed in relation to them. Researching Japan's pacifist identity is appropriate since it is currently being challenged by Japanese political elites. Indeed, they have been trying to pass bills and reinterpret the Constitution to increase Japan's

actions in security affairs for the past 20 years. However, this thesis solely focuses on the time frame from September 2012 to August 2020. These years refer to the period Shinzo Abe served as prime minister of Japan and president of the Liberal Democratic Party, i.e., the dominant party in Japan. This time is the most appropriate to study the evolution of Japan's pacifist identity because reforming the Peace Constitution and increasing Japan's position in the security of the Asia-Pacific was part of Prime Minister Abe's agenda for his terms of office (Mark, 2016). A series of reforms were undertaken on Japan's defense policies during these years, questioning the stability of Japan's pacifist identity.

An analysis of foreign policy discourse is conducted to answer the research question of this thesis: *How did Japan's pacifist identity evolve vis-à-vis China and South Korea from 2012 to 2020?* Moreover, no hypotheses were formulated because there is no causal relationship between identity and foreign policy. In order to formulate hypotheses, dependent and independent variables need to be identified and observed separately (Hansen, 2006). However, "poststructuralists conceptualize identity and policy as ontologically inseparable and this inseparability is enacted through discourse"; it is therefore problematic to research the causal effects of identity on foreign policy (Hansen, 2006). Rationalists wouldn't accept a non-causal relationship between variables (King et al., 1994), nevertheless poststructuralism asserts that identity and policy are "mutually constitutive and discursively linked" (Hansen, 2006). Therefore, the methodological principles in this thesis are focused on a discursive research about the joint construction of identity and policy within political discourses (Hansen, 2006).

3.2. Description of the method of analysis

As explained in the theoretical framework section, identities are discursively constructed (Diez, 2004). Consequently, it is pertinent to undertake a discourse analysis to understand their development. Fearon and Laitin (2000) state that "discourses define identities and shape or determine actions". Through language, states receive meaning and a specific identity (Hansen, 2006). Moreover, identities are constructed "in relational terms" through the "discursive juxtaposition between a privileged sign on the one hand and a devalued one on the other" (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). For example, Japan, as a pacifist country, was privileged in the nation's discourse after the Second World War, in opposition to its wartime militaristic Self

(Singh, 2012). Through language and hence discourses, identities are constructed "through processes of differentiation and linking" (Waever, 2002), namely with external Others. Therefore, Japanese discourse on China and the ROK can be used to determine how their relations impacted the course of Japan's pacifist identity.

Policy discourses are often analyzed when it comes to states' identity construction. This thesis focuses on foreign policy discourse since we are interested in Japan's security identity evolution vis-à-vis China and the ROK, both international neighbors. Hansen (2006) argues that: "identities are produced, and reproduced, through foreign policy discourse, and there is thus no identity existing prior to and independently of foreign policy". Identity and foreign policy form a reinforcing circle, where identity shapes foreign policy, and foreign policy, in turn, plays a role in further consolidating and implementing that identity in society.

Foreign policy decision-making aims to construct "a link between policy and identity that makes the two appear consistent with each other" (Hansen, 2006). The link between policy and identity must always be adjusted to remain stable. On top of being a product of identity, foreign policy discourses design policies that correspond to said identity (Shapiro, 1988). Japan's policies corresponded to its pacifist identity until several reforms were made, which destabilized the link between foreign policy and identity. Foreign policies increasing Japan's defense capabilities clashed with the identity of a pacifist nation.

Overall, it can be said that identities are not entirely fixed because they are discursively constructed (Diez, 2004). When it comes to discourses, "neither absolute fixity nor absolute non-fixity is possible" (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). Even though discourses try to be produced as stable, instabilities remain (Hansen, 2006), leading to a potential for identity change (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985).

3.3. Research design

This thesis follows Lene Hansen's research design, explained in detail in her book: *Security as Practice – Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*, published in 2006. The first step in her discourse analysis is the identification of *basic discourses*. These basic discourses exist because foreign policy texts "converge around common themes, around certain constructions of identity and sets of policies considered viable, desirable or necessary" (Hansen, 2006). Furthermore, basic discourses construct

“different Others with different degrees of radical difference”(Hansen, 2006). These discourses “articulate radically diverging forms of spatial, temporal, and ethical identity; and construct competing links between identity and policy” (Hansen, 2006). According to Hansen (2006), identifying basic discourses aims at determining discourses that construct completely different aspects of identity and foreign policy. Moreover, their identification is about recognizing one discourse that challenges the hegemony of another.

In this context, two basic discourses are established: the “pacifist state discourse” and the “normal state discourse”. The description of both discourses are sourced from academic texts as these researches have entirely studied and investigated the debate. The discourse of Japan as a pacifist nation has been constructed in policy texts ever since the end of the Second World War and the establishment of the Peace Constitution. This discourse was dominant until an opposing one emerged in Japanese foreign policy. Indeed, the “normal state discourse” spreads the normalization of Japan’s military and defense capabilities. Ever since Japan started to pass reforms that progressively altered the pacifist character of the state, the academic community wondered if Japan was not becoming like any other country regarding defense and security policies. These two discourses perfectly match the goal of identifying basic discourses, which is observing two entirely different constructions of identity. Focusing on these two discourses allows the study of the shift in Japan’s pacifist identity in the country’s relations with China and South Korea.

After identifying the basic discourses, Hansen’s research design (2006) was applied to conduct the discourse analysis. Her design is based on four characteristics: (1) an intertextual model that determines the type of discourse to be studied; (2) the number of Selves analyzed and in relation to what Others; (3) a temporal perspective; and (4) several events to orient the discourse analysis.

The model chosen to conduct the discourse analysis is based on official foreign policy discourse and is referred as “Model 1” in Hansen’s design (2006). More specifically, it is focused on analyzing texts produced by political leaders “with official authority to sanction the foreign policies pursued” as well as texts that have “an intertextual influence on their discourse” (Hansen, 2006). This model was favored because its goal is to “carefully investigate the constructions of identity within official

discourse" and determine the stability of the discourse (Hansen, 2006). State action is legitimized through official foreign policy discourse, which is essential to understand political and social relations inside and outside the state (Hansen, 2006). As previously mentioned, foreign policy and identities are tightly linked.

To determine the evolution of Japan's pacifist identity, the discourse analysis focuses on speeches and statements by former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, and former Ministers for Foreign Affairs in office during the time frame. Moreover, Diplomatic Bluebooks, i.e., annual reports of Japan's foreign policy published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, were studied. White Papers released by the Ministry of Defense describing Japan's defense policies were also analyzed. The Diplomatic Bluebooks and White Papers are official foreign policy documents often quoted by the political leaders mentioned above. These texts were selected because they respect Hansen's (2006) selection criteria: "they are characterized by the clear articulation of identities and policies; they are widely read and attended to; and they have the formal authority to define a political position". Every sources were selected on the websites of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, the Ministry of Defense, and the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet. A precise list of the 64 analyzed sources can be found in Appendix 1. Moreover, key phrases representing Japan's perception of its relations with China and the ROK were identified when conducting the discourse analysis. Tables including the phrases, in what sources they appear, and how many times they were mentioned can be found in Appendix 2.

Secondly, the next characteristic of this research design is about determining the Self and its Others. As explained in the theoretical framework, the identity of the Self is constructed through a differentiation process vis-à-vis Others. In this case, Japan is the Self, whereas its Others are the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Korea. It is pertinent to analyze Japan's pacifist identity in relation to these specific Others because they are close neighbors that share much history. In this thesis, the analysis of official foreign policy texts is focused on Japan's discourse relating to China and South Korea and influencing the pacifist identity of Japan.

After identifying the Self and the Others, the temporal perspective has to be established. Hansen (2006) states that "foreign policy can be studied as it addresses events either at one particular moment or through a longer historical analysis". This

research focuses more on an extended historical period to capture the "practices of reproduction and transformation" of identity (Hansen, 2006). It is crucial to analyze multiple events through time instead of focusing on a single one, to determine the evolution of Japan's pacifist identity. Therefore, studying discourse through time allows the research of identity formation and change. As previously mentioned in the chapter, the analyzed time frame is between September 2012 and August 2020, namely the start of Prime Minister Abe's second premiership until his resignation.

The fourth feature of the research design settles the number of events chosen to analyze Japan's official foreign policy discourse. Since Japanese discourse is analyzed in relation to China and the ROK, it is appropriate to determine separate events that respectively relate to them. Furthermore, the events chosen are connected by issue throughout the time frame. For the PRC, the analysis is focused on:

- Japan-China summit meetings, as well as foreign ministers' meetings;
- Chinese assertive actions around the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands; and
- Events related to historical issues, such as visits to Yasukuni Shrine and the revision of history textbooks.

When it comes to the ROK, the focus is on:

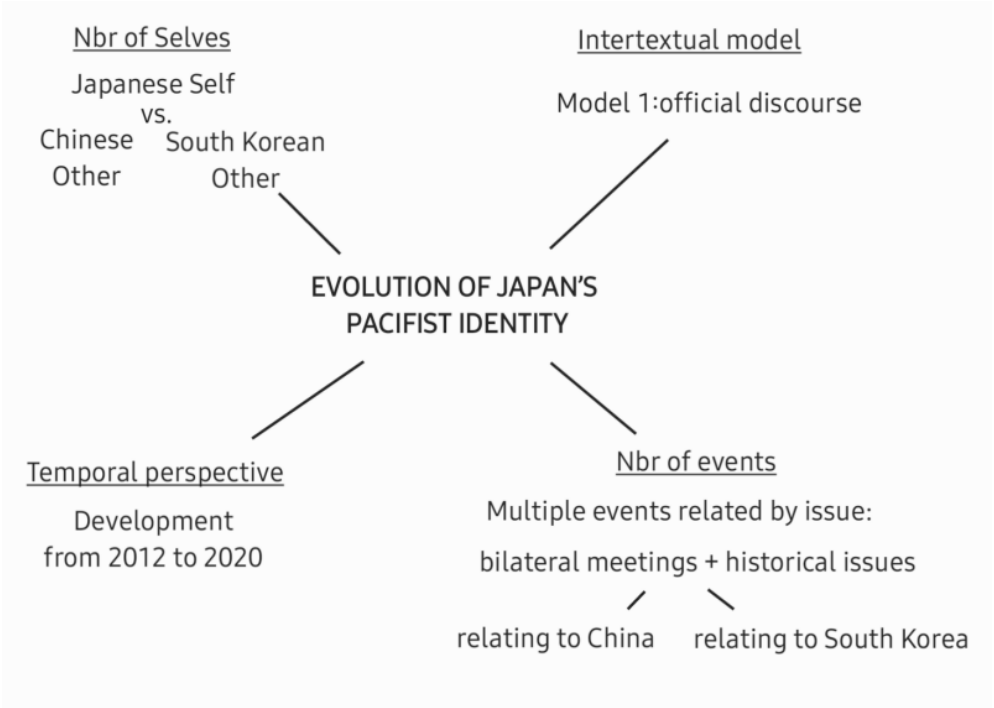
- Japan-ROK summit and foreign ministers' meetings; and
- Events related to historical issues, such as the incursions on Takeshima/Dokdo, comfort women, victims of forced labor, visits to Yasukuni Shrine, and the revision of history textbooks.

A more detailed list of these events can be found in Appendix 3. The key events relating to historical issues were specifically designated because they represent the central debates structuring Japan's relations with China and the ROK. Those debates influence Japan's foreign policy discourse and, therefore, the course of its national identity. Japan's historical issues with China and the ROK are linked to its wartime authoritarian Self, which influenced the construction of Japan's pacifist identity through a dissociation process (Gustafsson, 2019). Consequently, Japan's discourse on these historical issues can help determine the development of its pacifism. On the other hand, summit and foreign ministers' meetings are where every aspect of Japan's relationship with its two Others is discussed, either based on cooperation or

disagreement. They also reflect Japan's foreign policy regarding these countries. The figure below outlines the described research design.

Figure 1

The research design for studying the evolution of Japan's pacifist identity



Note: Summary of the research design and its four characteristics

Lastly, this research method has some limitations. The first limit is the language barrier as the sources were translated from Japanese into English. Even though the Japanese government tries to translate as many official documents as possible to increase transparency with the world, languages have proper meanings attached to them that translations may not accordingly convey. The loss of some elements in translated discourses applies even more to Japanese since it is constructed very differently from English. Therefore, the discourse analysis is limited to what the translations are revealing. Then, the construction of the research design implied the necessity to make choices. For instance, the research is focused on Hansen's (2006) first model, only analyzing official foreign policy discourse. Consequently, the other models researching the discourses of the media or the opposition parties are left out. Furthermore, China and South Korea were chosen to study the evolution of Japan's pacifist identity. However, Japan is influenced by multiple Others when constructing

its identity. Therefore, the discourse analysis is limited to the choices made in the four aforementioned categories.

4. Literature review: How scholars have studied Japan's identity construction vis-à-vis China and South Korea

Scholars' efforts to define Japan's identity often resulted in identifying its differences with its neighboring countries (Hagström & Hanssen, 2015). This thesis also follows this perspective to research how Japan's pacifist identity is evolving vis-à-vis China and South Korea. Before conducting the analysis, it is necessary to review the existing academic work to understand the critical debates about Japan's "Othering" of China and South Korea. This section establishes a literature review of how scholars have studied the construction of Japan's identity and pacifism vis-à-vis these two Others.

4.1. Academic review of Japan's identity construction vis-à-vis China

Japan's "Othering" of Asia and particularly China can be taken back to the Meiji Restoration[4] in 1868 when it perceived itself as "superior" and China "inferior" (Hagström, 2014). After the Meiji Restoration, Japan, seeking development and recognition from the U.S. and Europe, turned to the "civilized West" as its Other and left China and Asia aside (Guillaume, 2011). In the early 20th century, China was perceived as Japan's past when it had not developed yet (Tanaka, 1993). China was considered a "strange, different and inferior" country by a part of the Japanese population (Sato, 1997). Japan's war and its invasion of Asia were, according to Ashizawa (2008), enabled by the image of Asia as illegitimately different, hence in need of guidance. Japan perceived itself as the guide that would allow Asia to develop as it did. However, the Japanese occupation was a traumatic experience that left deep scars in the mind of the Chinese people, which remain to this day (Suzuki, 2007). This experience explains why the Chinese population is susceptible to any form of "historical revisionism" in Japan (Suzuki, 2007), which is represented by: Japanese prime ministers' visits to Yasukuni Shrine commemorating Japan's war dead as well

[4] In Japan, the Meiji Restoration (1868) corresponds to the end of the decentralized rule of the feudal lords (shogunate) and the establishment of a powerful centralized government headed by the Emperor (Horie, 1952).

as “Class A” war criminals, or the revision of history textbooks that omit terrible actions committed by the Japanese military.

In the 21st century, Japan can no longer consider China as inferior regarding the country’s economy or military sector. Indeed, China surpassed Japan and became the second-biggest economy in the world in 2010. China’s military has also modernized rapidly. Japan’s differentiation process vis-à-vis China changed, “and so Japanese discourses instead began to emphasize Japan’s pre-eminence in terms of ideas and values” (Hagström, 2014). For instance, Sakamoto (2007) found an opposition between Japan’s “mature democracy” and “healthy nationalism” versus China’s “lack of democracy” and “childish nationalism”.

In addition, the dominant Japanese discourse on China previously described Beijing as a “victim” due to the oppression during the war (Hagström & Gustafsson, 2015). A feeling of war guilt or war responsibility on the Japanese side prevented the development of normal relations with the PRC (Hoppens, 2015). Hidenori (1996) described their relationship as asymmetrical: Japan always adopted a “low posture” due to its guilt when dealing with Chinese criticism of historical revisionism. However, Suzuki (2015) observed that Japanese politicians were now getting annoyed at China’s use of the “history card” to pressure Japan into accepting unreasonable demands. This sentiment led to the construction of China as a “bully” and an “aggressor” towards Japan, now portrayed as the “victim” (Suzuki, 2015).

Japanese political discourse describes China as “opaque, unstable and potentially threatening” (Hagström, 2014). The PRC is pictured as “arrogant”, “bullying”, and “overbearing” in bilateral disputes, as well as “undemocratic”, “irrational”, “unreasonable”, “immoral”, and “lacking respect of international law” (Hagström & Gustafsson, 2015). This perception implies that Japan is, in opposition to that, “democratic”, “reasonable”, “moral” and “law abiding” (Hagström & Gustafsson, 2015).

Moreover, China has been described as anti-Japanese since the beginning of the 2000s (Gustafsson, 2015). For Japan, these sentiments come from China’s patriotic education, which describes Japan’s wartime cruelty in detail but discards its post-war development as a peaceful state (Gustafsson, 2015). Furthermore, China denies recognition of a crucial part of the Japanese Self: its pacifist identity (Gustafsson,

2015). Gustafsson (2015) even advances that "Japanese movement in the direction of an identity shift seeking to make Japan a 'normal' state is strengthened by Chinese denial of Japan's peaceful identity".

The theoretical framework section explains that a country can act confidently once its identity has been recognized. However, when the identity of a state is rejected, it will feel threatened, therefore deepening the differentiation process towards the denying state. Japan's pacifist identity construction vis-à-vis China is likely be impacted by whether the PRC recognizes or denies said identity (Gustafsson, 2015). Japanese conservatives pushing for the state's remilitarization on the political agenda can use the Chinese refusal to recognize Japan's pacifist identity as a chance to encourage identity change (Gustafsson, 2015; Suzuki, 2015).

Furthermore, Hagström and Hanssen (2015) researched the construction of Japan's "pacifist" identity and its relation to the notion of peace. They compared Diet[5] debates focused on China in 1972 with debates in 2009 and 2012. Their article demonstrates that in 1972, Japan differentiated itself from its past wartime Self and traditional great powers. The country also matched the "peaceful trends of the time" (Hagström & Hanssen, 2015). However, in 2009-12, Japan's responsibility for peace was constructed in opposition to the "aggressive" and "threatening" China (Hagström & Hanssen, 2015). An increasing number of statements in 2009-12 attempted to "disarticulate 'peace' from the national identity discourse altogether by emphasizing the dangers of sticking to it at all costs" (Hagström & Hanssen, 2015). In those Diet debates about China, Hagström and Hanssen (2015) discovered arguments about Japan "not contributing actively enough to peace" and "contradicting international norms" if it did not change its constitution and participate in collective self-defense. This analysis shows a Japanese "militarization of the peace state discourse" regarding China.

Finally, it is meaningful to mention that there are diverging opinions among Japanese politicians that promote different discourses about the stance of Japan's pacifist identity vis-à-vis China. Suzuki (2015) explains this distinction by contrasting the views of the Japanese Idealist Right with the Left on the political spectrum. On the one hand, the Idealist Right has been pushing for remilitarization because of China's

[5] The national legislature of Japan.

"unreasonable demands" and "assertiveness" in territorial disputes, which emphasizes Japan's "weakness" (Suzuki, 2015). Moreover, the multiple Chinese remarks reminding Japan not to forget about its imperialist past are not well received by the Idealist Right as they are interpreted as a way to maintain Japan's self-loathing (Suzuki, 2011). On the other hand, the Left contrasts China's bullying behavior with Japan's "moral" and "peaceful" nature, highlighting the necessity for Japan to remain pacifist and keep the post-war status quo (Suzuki, 2015).

4.2. Academic review of Japan's identity construction vis-à-vis South Korea

As previously mentioned, Japan underwent rapid modernization after the Meiji Restoration (1868-1889), which raised Japan's place as a great power (Tamaki, 2010). This status allowed Tokyo to feel more confident internationally and to develop a sense of "exceptionalism" (Tamaki, 2010). After discussing in the previous section how China was "Othered" by Japan during that period, the following paragraph focuses on the "Othering" of Korea.

Korea was seen as "weak", just like China, and as a state unable to defend itself. For Japan, Korea represented an "exposure to outside influences" (Tamaki, 2010), which is why "superior" Japan had to use Korea to defend the Far East, but primarily Japanese territory (Tamaki, 2010). Then, the security of Asia was used to legitimize Japan's expansion and the erosion of Korean sovereignty (Tamaki, 2010). Moreover, the Japanese self-proclaimed role of a guide that aimed to help "underdeveloped" Korea modernize was also a discourse legitimizing the expansion. Japan's occupation of Korea left a permanent mark on the nationals' memories. Koreans identify as victims of Japanese aggression and therefore have a sense of "distrust, hostility, and resentment" towards Tokyo (Kim, 2015). Negative memories of that time are still fixed in the older generation's minds and are being transmitted to the younger ones through postcolonial education (Kim, 2015).

National identity derives from the interpretation of one's own history (Deacon, 2022). Therefore, a clash between Japanese and South Korean identities can be observed due to historical problems regarding Japan's occupation of South Korea (Deacon, 2022). Such problems include: (1) the compensation of the so-called "comfort women" forced into sexual slavery by the Japanese army; (2) the issue

regarding Korean victims of forced labor; (3) the revision of Japanese history textbooks omitting certain actions by the imperial army; (4) the visits by Japanese prime ministers to Yasukuni Shrine; and (5) the territorial dispute relating to the Takeshima/Dokdo Islands (Hasegawa & Togo, 2008). History issues fostered the development of anti-Japanese nationalism in South Korea (Glosserman & Snyder, 2015), which is an intense element of Korean national identity (Swenson-Wright, 2012). These sentiments result from Japan's denial of the Koreans' sufferings and inability to apologize sincerely (Deacon, 2022). Anti-Japanese sentiments drastically increase whenever Japanese politicians make nationalistic remarks about the historical issues mentioned above (Kim, 2015).

However, Japan and the ROK share cultural traits and similar values as they both are democracies supporting legal and institutional norms that protect human rights, for instance (Glosserman & Snyder, 2015). They have similar interests in protecting the stability of Northeast Asia, and both form an alliance with the U.S. (Glosserman & Snyder, 2015). Moreover, they are active economic partners seeking the preservation of a liberal trading order (Glosserman & Snyder, 2015). These shared features should establish a common ground for cooperation and alliance building. Nevertheless, historical issues disturb Japan-ROK relations and induce a negative "Othering" process.

Therefore, Japan thinks it is time to move on from the past and apply a "future-oriented diplomacy", implying the "forgetting" of Koreans' sufferings during the occupation (Tamaki, 2010). This discourse constructs a space where the past "is recognized while it is silenced", allowing Japan to focus on current challenges (Tamaki, 2010). The discourse implies that history between Japan and the ROK becomes irrelevant, and the relationship between the two nations turns forward-looking (Tamaki, 2010). Therefore, the "forgetting" of the past can improve bilateral relations and allow cooperation to deal with the shared threat of North Korea for instance (Tamaki, 2010). This discourse also constructs South Korea's role as Tokyo's "junior partner", helping it achieve its leadership ambitions (Tamaki, 2010).

This forward-looking position agrees with Prime Minister Abe's refusal to pursue an "apology diplomacy", hence the emergence of a feeling of "apology fatigue" (Sohn, 2019). This shift in behavior revised the historical narrative and changed Japan's

identity from an "aggressor" of the South Korean Other to a "victim" (Sohn, 2019). Japan is portraying South Korea as irrational and emotional for dwelling in the past and demanding apologies, and compensation (Deacon, 2022). In the Japanese discourse, legal claims regarding the colonial period were settled in the 1965 Basic Treaty normalizing diplomatic relations between Japan and South Korea (Deacon, 2022). Forgetting the past is perceived as "logical" and "rational" for Tokyo since it was resolved in international law (Deacon, 2022). In contrast, Seoul is seen as "emotional" and "irrational" for being obsessed with history. Korean Backwardness is even constructed as a narrative in Japan, since past events are always involved in bilateral relations (Tamaki, 2010).

Overall, Japan's identity construction in relation to the South Korean Other can be summarized by Tamaki's "narrative tripod" (2010): (1) the Past, as a "signifier of the difficult relationship" and characterized by what Japan decides to remember and forget in the official narrative; (2) the Future, described as the "future-oriented diplomacy"; and (3) the Backwardness representing the Korean Other lingering on the Past.

Lastly, South Korea is denying Japan's pacifist identity, similarly to China. Koreans are still mentally impacted by Japan's past militarist-Self (Deacon, 2022), and they remain concerned about its possible return (Cha, 2000). This perception defines South Korean interactions with Tokyo and explains their unenthusiastic behavior regarding Japan rejoining the world stage. From the Japanese perspective, relations with South Korea represent a constant struggle to legitimize its pacifist Self since the ROK harms that self-identity (Tamaki, 2010). Japan's strategy to legitimize its pacifism is therefore interpreted as a trivialization of the South Korean claims of suffering (Tamaki, 2010).

4.3. Added scientific value of the thesis

The literature review details the key debates about Japan's "Othering" of China and South Korea. It explains what scholars have discovered when studying Japan's national identity construction vis-à-vis these two external Others. Therefore, it describes how Japan's relations with China and South Korea impacted the construction of its pacifist identity. The description of these findings is relevant to this thesis which aims at discovering how Japan constructed its pacifist identity vis-à-vis China and South Korea from September 2012 to August 2020.

The debate on Japan's identity construction vis-à-vis China and South Korea mainly focuses on depicting them as negative Others. Japan is portraying itself as a "victim" of Chinese unreasonable demands and assertive behavior, as well as a "victim" of South Korean obsession with the past and demands for compensation and apologies. Moreover, the anti-Japanese sentiments in both countries and their denial of Japan's pacifist identity is also characterizing them as negative Others. Building on these arguments, this thesis tries to analyze the evolution of Japan's pacifist identity in relation to China and South Korea by adopting a more neutral perspective. As explained in the theoretical framework, different forms of "Othering" exist that don't necessarily entail a negative differentiation process with the external Others. Therefore, this thesis aims at studying China and South Korea not only as either negative or positive Others vis-à-vis Japan but as Others that can represent both in a more nuanced way.

Furthermore, this thesis aspires to gather further information on the course of Japan's pacifist identity, to help the academic community better understand Tokyo's security role in the world. Identities are never fixed and can evolve through time. A shift in Japan's pacifist identity will definitely impact the balance of the Asia-Pacific and the dynamics between its main actors, including China and South Korea. In order to better analyze security policies in that region, it is therefore crucial to comprehend the shape Japan's pacifist identity is taking.

5. Analysis of Japan's discourse vis-à-vis China and South Korea

5.1. Basic discourses on Japan's security identity

5.1.1. The "pacifist state" discourse

Japan's tragic experience during World War II, namely due to the nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945, and the subsequent U.S. occupation gave rise to the country's pacifist identity (Singh, 2012). After the end of the Second World War and the defeat of Japan, a demilitarization and democratization process were instigated under U.S. supervision (Singh, 2012). Japan supported this procedure to restore its image in the international community after displaying its militaristic rule (Singh, 2012). As a result, the Japanese state and society adopted and ingrained values and legal frameworks that jointly shaped Japan's pacifist security identity (Singh, 2012).

This identity was first institutionalized with the so-called "Peace Constitution" (Singh, 2012), which gathered much support among the Japanese population due to wartime devastation (Akimoto, 2013). Therefore, the Japanese people welcomed the internalization of the pacifist identity, allowing its deeper integration in society. Article 9 of the 1947 Constitution represents the "symbol of anti-war pacifism" in Japan (Akimoto, 2013). It states:

> 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 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. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized. (Constitution of Japan, 1947)

Overall, Oros (2014) claims the existence of three central tenets characterizing Japan's pacifist identity: "(1) Japan will possess no traditional forces; (2) there will be no use of force by Japan except in self-defense; and (3) there will be no Japanese participation in foreign wars". Despite Oros' first central tenet deriving from the second paragraph of Article 9, Japan still established a Self-Defense Force in 1954. The Peace Constitution was interpreted to allow the defense of Japan in case the state was under attack. Japan's pacifism is therefore qualified as "relative" since the state possesses armed forces, as opposed to "absolute" pacifism, where no military forces would exist in the country (Gustafsson et al., 2018).

Still, other restrictions strengthened and reproduced the pacifist identity of Japan. The Japanese government banned arms exports in 1976 and adopted three non-nuclear principles in 1968 (Akimoto, 2013). Under these principles, "Japan would refrain from possessing and producing nuclear weapons, and from introducing them onto Japanese soil" (Gustafsson et al., 2018). Furthermore, in 1976, the government limited the defense budget to 1% of GNP and, in 1954, banned the overseas dispatch of the Japanese Self-Defense Force (JSDF) (Akimoto, 2013). Moreover, the right to collective self-defense was ruled out because it exceeded the requirements of Article 9 of the Peace Constitution (Lee, 2007). A "peace education" was also implemented in Japanese schools, where students would learn about pacifist ideals (Gustafsson et al.,

2019). Therefore the Constitution, security policies, and the education system have helped reproduce the pacifist narrative in Japanese society (Gustafsson et al., 2019).

The pacifist state identity was at its prime during the Cold War. After the Second World War, Prime Minister Yoshida focused Japan's efforts on economic recovery and development, thus maintaining a low political-security profile (Singh, 2012). Therefore, pacifism was the foundation of Japan's security policy and represented the nation in the international community (Singh, 2012). Furthermore, Japan's pacifist identity, institutionalized in security policymaking, guided the nation's role in international affairs (Singh, 2012). Japan was a promoter of peace and refused to get actively involved in international conflicts despite U.S. pressure.

Moreover, scholars like Katzenstein (1996) claim that Japan developed peaceful cultural norms that were institutionalized and constructed the country's pacifist identity. These norms were also used to predict the extension of Japan's peace-oriented security policy, despite changes in the environment after the end of the Cold War (Lee, 2007).

It is also argued that Japan's pacifist identity was formed in relation to "spatial Others" and "temporal Other" (Gustaffson et al., 2018). As explained in the theoretical framework, identities are constructed through a differentiation process vis-à-vis Others. On the one hand, Japan developed its pacifist identity while differentiating itself from other countries during the post-war period (Gustafsson et al., 2018). The security policy restrictions allowed the Japanese "to identify themselves as uniquely peaceful and different from […] great powers" (Gustafsson et al., 2019). Additionally, pride in military restrictions and restraint in security affairs were considered natural (Gustafsson et al., 2019).

On the other hand, Japan formed its pacifist identity in opposition to "its wartime authoritarian, militarist self" (Gustafsson, 2019). Indeed, relational identity construction can also happen with regard to the "incarnation of one's own past" (Gustafsson, 2019). This type of "Othering" can be identified by looking for "discursive representations that stress how the self differs from its own past" (Gustafsson, 2019). Japan's militaristic past was perceived as a threat that could never be reiterated (Gustafsson, 2019). For instance, Japanese officials claimed throughout the 1970s that Japan would never become a "military great power" despite its

economic strength (Gustafsson et al., 2018). Japanese rejection of its wartime militarist Self and the construction of a pacifist identity confirm how different Japan is portraying itself from the past.

However, after the end of the Cold War, a couple of reforms were introduced in Japan, letting us suspect a specific shift in Japan's "pacifist state identity", starting to resemble the identity of a "normal state".

5.1.2. The "normal state" discourse

During the Cold War, U.S. officials started to pressure Japan to rearm, especially after the communist victory in China (1949) and the beginning of the Korean War (1950). The U.S. perceived Japan as "a bulwark against communism in Asia" and its Peace Constitution as a liability (Gustafsson et al., 2019). The pacifist identity was nevertheless well anchored in Japanese society and did not seem to be challenged despite foreign pressure to rearm. However, the situation changed after the end of the Cold War, which is explained in greater details in this section.

Japan's financial contribution to solving the Gulf crisis (1990-1991) was heavily criticized by the U.S. (Basu, 2016). The criticism of its so-called "chequebook diplomacy" shocked Tokyo, which lead to an expansion of the JSDF's role, allowing overseas deployment (Basu, 2016). The 1954 restriction on the overseas dispatch of the JSDF was officially lifted when the 1992 International Peace Cooperation Law was passed (Basu, 2016). Then, the JSDF participated in the United Nations peacekeeping operations in Cambodia and contributed afterwards to similar operations (Basu, 2016). The role of the JSDF was again expanded after the terrorist attacks on the U.S. in 2001 and the following War on Terror (Akimoto, 2013). Japan also revised its ban on arms exports in 2009 and 2014, allowing it under certain circumstances (Gustafsson et al., 2018). Moreover, the Japan Defense Agency (JDA) was turned into the Ministry of Defense Japan (MOD) in 2007 (Akimoto, 2013). Japan also adopted a formal national security strategy in December 2013 and established a National Security Council in January 2014 (Oros, 2014).

All these reforms suggest that Japan's security policy has been expanding and has become more assertive since the 1990s (Lee, 2007). Nevertheless, the most controversial change in Japan's security policy happened in 2015 when the ban on

collective self-defense was lifted (Gustafsson et al., 2018). Still, three conditions need to be met if Japan wants to participate in collective self-defense:

> 1) that an attack 'threatens Japan's survival and poses a clear danger to fundamentally overturn people's right to life, liberty and pursuit of happiness'; 2) that there are 'no other appropriate means available to repel the attack'; and 3) that Japan's use of force is limited to 'the minimum extent necessary'. (Cabinet Secretariat, 2014)

To summarize, Japan is allowed to help any foreign country under attack if they have a close relationship (Gustafsson et al., 2018). These reforms have sparked debates about whether Japan is abandoning pacifism (Gustafsson et al., 2018) since it is progressively targeting all the security restrictions that reproduced its pacifist identity. Indeed, the interpretation of Article 9 has changed repeatedly depending on political leaders and their "perceived strategic imperatives" (Liff, 2017). Since revising the Constitution is difficult, a strategy of "constitutional revision by interpretation" is in vigor in Japanese politics (Liff, 2017).

Indeed, the pacifist norms constraining Japan's security policy have been weakened (Akimoto, 2013). Japan's "relative" pacifism has been declining rapidly in recent years, to the point where the difference between the JSDF and the military forces of other countries is getting less clear due to increased military technology and role extension (Oros, 2014). Gustafsson et al. (2018) claim that for these policy changes to occur, Japan's national identity as a pacifist state had to be altered.

Scholars, such as Hagström (2014), Akimoto (2013) and Gustafsson & Hagström (2019), started to argue that Japan was becoming a "normal country" with a "normal" foreign and security policy. A normal country is defined as "one that is constitutionally able and prepared to deploy military force for national and international security ends, in particular, for the purpose of collective self-defense" (Hagström, 2014). The normal country narrative also describes pacifist Japan as "abnormal" (Hagström, 2014), and as a source of shame rather than pride (Gustafsson et al., 2019). Political leaders, like Prime Minister Abe or other bureaucrats from the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, perceive Japan's pacifist culture as "an unwelcome barrier" that prevents deeper security cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region and the Japan-U.S. alliance (Oros, 2014). These politicians regard Japan's identity differently compared

to those in office during the Cold War, when pacifism was referred to with a sense of pride and exceptionalism (Gustafsson et al., 2018). In comparison, Prime Minister Abe wanted Japan to "break out of the postwar regime" for a strong future in contrast with the country's weak past (Gustafsson et al., 2018). That is why he was promoting a "proactive pacifism" embedded in the "*lack* of restrictions that could inhibit the country's defense of peace at home and abroad" (Gustafsson et al., 2018).

Gustafsson (2019) claims that security reforms and the shift in Japan's pacifist identity are due to the de-securitization of Japan's temporal Other, i.e., its past wartime self. With a re-articulation of the narrative through apologies, Japan does not regard its past Other as a threat anymore since it is describing itself as fundamentally different from it (Gustafsson, 2019). It can therefore change its pacifist identity and remilitarize since its past will not reiterate.

Akimoto (2013) further explains that Japan's identity has shifted from a "one nation pacifist state" to a "global pacifist state" described as a more internationalist and actively engaged Japanese pacifism. Therefore, security policy reforms were taken to preserve peace internationally. Finally, Singh (2012) more or less draws out the same conclusion as Akimoto (2013): he asserts that Japan's identity changed from a "peace state" to an "international state". The discourse around Japan's security identity now includes a more active role internationally in maintaining peace (Singh, 2012). These findings suggest that Japan's pacifism is still present but simply takes a different form.

Furthermore, the constant reinterpretation of the Peace Constitution and the subsequent weakening of the security constraints are deteriorating Japan's relationship with China and the Republic of Korea (Oros, 2014). These developments are perceived as a return to Japanese militarism for the two neighboring countries that are not convinced by Japan's efforts to prove it has changed. Indeed, visits by prime ministers to Yasukuni Shrine commemorating the Japanese war dead, including "Class A" war criminals, and the revision of Japanese history textbooks that do not cover the country's severe actions during the war, are criticized by the Chinese and South Korean people. These events demonstrate Japan's denial of Chinese and Korean sufferings and strengthen the idea that Japan has not appropriately atoned for its actions during the war. Therefore, they represent consequent points of contention between the three neighbors.

Despite policy changes, the pacifist identity is still embedded in Japanese society, among the population and political parties, especially from the left. The reforms in Japanese security policies also contain conditions to allow their practice in reality, like the three conditions to exercise the right to collective self-defense. Therefore, we cannot assume that Japan's pacifism is completely gone, but we can assert that it is taking a new shape. Thus, this thesis attempts to discover how this shift occurs in Japan's relations with China and South Korea, since external Others influence the construction of the Self. Building on this objective, the next section will analyze Japan's discourse vis-à-vis China and the ROK.

5.2. Japan's discourse regarding China

"Reinforcement of military activities without transparency"

Japan refers to East Asia as an "increasingly severe security environment" (MOFA, 2015), and China is addressed as one of the challenges in the region. Indeed, in each analyzed Diplomatic Bluebook from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, China is the second country described in the section relating to the "very severe security environment in East Asia" (after North Korea), except for the 2017 Diplomatic Bluebook where it is mentioned first. China's rank in this section demonstrates Japan's perception regarding Chinese role in the instability of the region.

China is described as one of the security challenges in the region due to the "reinforcement of its military capabilities without transparency". This phrase was mentioned in every analyzed White Paper and Diplomatic Bluebook and was repeated 37 times in total. The Japanese government observed a "trend among neighboring countries to modernize and reinforce their military capabilities and to intensify their military activities" (MOD, 2015). This discourse clearly refers to China's plan to strengthen its military and activity in the region, and shows that the Japanese government does not see Beijing stopping its military modernization without transparency any time soon.

In addition, Japan regards China as a challenger of the existing international order due to its "rapid economic growth" and increased "presence in the international community" (MOFA, 2015). This "change in the balance of power" is making the international scene "more complex" and uncertain (MOFA, 2019). Therefore, China's economic and military expansion without transparency and amplified involvement in

international affairs is described in Japanese discourse as a concern for the region and the international community.

China's attempts to "change the status quo by coercion"

Moreover, China's military build-up is not the only reason Japan perceives its neighborhood as concerning, as it also condemns China's attempts to "change the status quo by coercion" in the East and South China Sea (MOFA, 2014). This phrase has a consequent place in Japan's discourse relating to China as it was mentioned 64 times in total in every Diplomatic Bluebook and White Paper, as well as in a statement by Foreign Minister Kishida and a speech by Foreign Minister Kono. In the East China Sea and the area near the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, "Chinese naval vessels conduct operations continuously and actively" (MOD, 2017). According to the 2019 Diplomatic Bluebook, these "unilateral actions" are based on China's own assertions "which are incompatible with the existing order of international law of the sea". The Government of Japan's discourse on the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands is evident: they are "indisputably an inherent part of the territory of Japan in light of historical facts and based upon international law" (MOFA, 2019). Therefore, there is "no issue of territorial sovereignty" for the Japanese government (MOFA, 2020).

These incursions of Chinese vessels in Japanese territorial waters are described as "escalatory actions by China" and are "completely unacceptable" (MOFA, 2016a). Foreign Minister Kishida even referred to them as "a violation of Japan's territory" to the Ambassador of China to Japan (MOFA, 2016b). In response to China's assertive behavior in the East China Sea, Japan reports that it is "firmly resolved to defend its territorial land, sea and air space" and that it will deal with the incursions "firmly but in a calm manner" (MOFA, 2014). Even though "calm" is used to soften the discourse, the word "firmly" conveys a significant meaning because it represents Japan's unyielding position to handle Chinese actions.

Japan as a "Proactive Contributor to Peace"

The strengthening of China's military and its unilateral attempts to "change the status quo by coercion" in the East and South China Sea are perceived as concerning for the security of East Asia and the international community by Japanese officials. Chinese actions are said to be contributing to the "increasingly severe security environment" (MOFA, 2014). They are described as one of the reasons why the

Japanese government perceives it as “necessary to strengthen and expand Japan’s capabilities and roles” (MOFA, 2014).

Therefore, Japan developed in its discourse the strategy of a “Proactive Contribution to Peace” based on “the principle of international cooperation” (MOFA, 2015). This phrase was mentioned 42 times in total when addressing China. On top of being mentioned in every analyzed Diplomatic Bluebook and White Paper, it was also cited by Prime Minister Abe in a statement during the November 2014 Japan-China Summit Meeting and by Foreign Minister Kono in a January 2018 foreign policy speech. For Japan to protect its national interests and those of the world, it is perceived as necessary to participate “even more proactively to peace and stability of the region and international community” (MOFA, 2015). Moreover, Japanese foreign policy discourse explains the significance of strengthening defense capabilities and the alliance with the U.S. “on its own accord” (MOD, 2019). These last words in the 2019 Defense White Paper can demonstrate Japan’s determination to reduce its dependence on other countries concerning the security of the Asia-Pacific region.

China is therefore constructed as an actor challenging the stability of the international community. To maintain peace and stability in the region, Japan is describing the need to be more proactive in security affairs. In accordance with this discourse, we can observe in the White Papers from 2012 to 2020 Japan’s measures to increase its defense capabilities. In 2013, Japan created a Dynamic Joint Defense Force to strengthen the JSDF and increase its deterrence and response capabilities (MOD, 2014). In September 2015, the Japanese Diet approved the Legislation for Peace and Security, which allows: an increased role for the JSDF in support activities as well as in international peace cooperation activities, and the expansion of Japan’s “use of force” for collective self-defense under three conditions (MOFA, 2016c). New Guidelines for the Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation were also released in 2015, strengthening the alliance even more. In 2018, the National Defense Program Guidelines were updated with the development of a “Multi-domain Force” (MOD, 2020).

These policies, strengthening Japan’s role in security affairs, are produced via the “Proactive Contribution to Peace” discourse advocating for more participation to secure the stability of the international community. Additionally, they reproduce a

Japanese security identity that is evolving since these policies do not correspond with Japan's Cold War pacifist identity, which was strictly focused on its immediate defense. Through discourse, Japanese officials are forming an identity that supports Japan's increased role in international security affairs. Then, this discourse produces corresponding foreign policies that are further changing Japan's security identity and consolidating this proactive form of pacifism.

"Mutual Beneficial Relationship based on Common Strategic Interests"

On the other hand, Japan views its relations with China as one of the "most important bilateral relationships" (MOFA, 2017). According to the Government of Japan, both countries have an "inseparable relationship characterized by close economic relations and people-to-people and cultural exchanges" (MOFA, 2015). For the Japanese government, securing the stability of its environment is also based on strengthening the relationships with neighboring countries (MOFA, 2015). In 2014, efforts were made to improve the Japan-China relationship, namely with a Foreign Ministers' meeting and a Summit Meeting in November. In several Japan-China summit and foreign ministers' meetings, as well as in the Diplomatic Bluebooks and other sources analyzed, Japan refers to its relations with China as a "Mutually Beneficial Relationship based on Common Strategic Interests". This discourse helped Japan and China improve their relations and resume dialogues and cooperation. Moreover, it is still being used to improve and increase bilateral talks by showing that both countries share similar interests. The more meetings they hold, the more they will communicate and build mutual trust, supporting Japan's perception of their beneficial relations.

Hence, 2016 showed more rapprochement between Japan and China and improved their relations with multiple high-level dialogues (MOFA, 2017). Ever since then, their bilateral relationship has kept growing towards more cooperation. Japan demonstrated its will to "promote relationships of trust with China", since a stable relationship is "an essential element for the peace and stability of the region" (MOFA, 2015).

Indeed, during the Japan-China Summit Meeting in June 2019, both leaders confirmed that Japan-China relations "have returned to a normal track" thanks to the respective visits by the leaders in 2018 (MOFA, 2020). At the Japan-China Summit Meeting in September 2018, Prime Minister Abe stated that that it was necessary for

both countries “to maintain close communication”, since they “share a major responsibility for the peace and prosperity of the region and the world”.

“No genuine improvement in Japan-China relations without stability in the East China Sea”

As mentioned earlier, despite improving relations between Japan and China, political and social differences still exist, as mentioned earlier. Japan considers these disagreements as “inevitable that frictions and confrontations occasionally occur” between neighbors (MOFA, 2015). In six summit meetings from 2018 and 2019, Prime Minister Abe affirmed that “there will be no genuine improvement in the Japan-China relationship without stability in the East China Sea”. China’s attempts “to change the status quo” remain unacceptable to Japan. However, Tokyo’s discourse on the response to these actions slightly changed. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2018 Diplomatic Bluebook explains that Japan will respond to Chinese incursions in the East China Sea “calmly and resolutely”, whereas before 2018, the response was described as “firmly, but in a calm manner”. The discourse changed from a previous *firm* response to a now *resolute* one. When looking at the meaning of those words, “firmly” has a stronger connotation implying a certain rigidity, whereas “resolute” indicates the determination to reach a goal, suggesting more flexibility. This change in discourse can be explained by the improved Japan-China relations, encouraging Japan’s openness to dialogue.

A ”Sea of Peace, Cooperation, and Friendship”

Bilateral talks between Japan and China strengthened the discourse on their “Mutually Beneficial Relationship” and vice-versa. According to Foreign Minister Kishida during its visit to China in April 2016, Japan and China are “partners for cooperation and should not pose a threat to each other”. In July 2016, during a Japan-China Foreign Ministers’ Meeting, he even referred to both states as “true friends [that] must be able to discuss difficult issues”. Despite improving their bilateral relationship since 2014, Chinese activities around the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands have not stopped. However, high-level dialogues allowed Japan to address this issue “through diplomatic routes” (MOFA, 2019). Indeed, increased communication between both countries allowed Japan to construct a discourse more inclined to diplomacy to resolve issues with China. Furthermore, the discourse prioritizing “diplomatic routes” also fosters the advancement of bilateral talks.

Moreover, 2018 marked the 40th anniversary of the conclusion of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship between Japan and China. This event was the opportunity to hold high-level dialogues between the leaders of both countries. During meetings with their Chinese counterparts, Prime Minister Abe and Foreign Minister Kono said they would make the East China Sea a "Sea of Peace, Cooperation, and Friendship". This phrase was mentioned in 17 analyzed sources and 21 times in total. Working towards that goal, officials from both countries concluded the Maritime and Aerial Communication Mechanism and confirmed their adherence to the "2008 Agreement" on the development of resources in the East China Sea during the Japan-China Summit Meeting in May 2018. As Prime Minister Abe stated during a meeting with Premier Li Keqiang in October 2018, it is "important to make concrete progress in the area of maritime security" and eliminate distrust to build a "constructive relationship" with China. These bilateral agreements are the products of enhanced communication to reach a "Sea of Peace, Cooperation, and Friendship". They are also reproducing the perception that China is a close partner that Japan can cooperate on issues with. Furthermore, the bilateral relationship was taken to a new level in June 2019 with the affirmation from Prime Minister Abe and President Xi Jinping that they were determined to start "a new era of Japan-China relations" at the Japan-China Summit Meeting.

We can therefore conclude that, from September 2012 to August 2020 Japan's discourse has softened vis-à-vis China's unilateral actions in the East China Sea to the extent that it emphasizes the settlement of disputes diplomatically. Japan aims "to promote mutual relations of trust through high-level dialogues" with China (MOFA, 2020). Therefore, concerns regarding China's military build-up and actions in the East and South China Sea are addressed "through diplomatic routes". With the emphasis on cooperation with China, we can see Japan sticking to its values of "peacefully resolving disputes based on the rule of law", as Prime Minister Abe stated at the Japan-China Summit in July 2016.

5.3. Japan's discourse regarding South Korea

"Most important neighbor that shares strategic interests"

In almost every analyzed Diplomatic Bluebook, the Government of Japan describes the ROK as its "most important neighbor that shares strategic interests with Japan".

This phrase is mentioned 21 times in total and in 15 analyzed sources relating to South Korea. Indeed, both Japan and the ROK "share common interests in maintaining regional peace and security" but also "share fundamental values such as freedom, democracy and respect for basic human rights" (MOFA, 2014).

Moreover, positive Japan-ROK relations are "essential for peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region" (MOFA, 2016). Prime Minister Abe even declared in his speech for the Celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the Normalization of Japan-ROK relations in June 2015 that stronger cooperation is "indispensable for the peace and security of both our countries, as well as the entire Asia-Pacific region". During the Japan-ROK Summit Meeting in November 2015, Prime Minister Abe and President Park Geun-hye "shared views to strengthen cooperation between Japan and the ROK in various fields including security, people-to-people exchanges, and the economy".

Therefore, it is imperative to promote the proactive cooperation of Japan and the ROK to maintain peace in the Asia-Pacific region, as stated by Foreign Minister Kishida at the Japan-ROK Foreign Ministers' Meeting in July 2016. Additionally, trilateral cooperation between Japan, the ROK, and the U.S. is also essential for Tokyo, namely to tackle the North Korea issue. According to MOFA's Diplomatic Bluebook 2017, Japan-U.S.-ROK cooperation "regarding the North Korea issue has become more important than ever before". During the Japan-U.S.-ROK Trilateral Foreign Ministers' Meeting in July 2013, they all agreed on the importance of strengthening their cooperation on regional and global issues "based on [their] common values and interests" and "in order to contribute to peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region and the world".

In its discourse, Japan demonstrates the significance to cooperate with the ROK on security issues and build mutual trust. Furthermore, Japan is calling for South Korea to accept and support its increased involvement in Asian security matters. As mentioned in the discourse analysis vis-à-vis China, the Government of Japan considers it necessary to be more proactively involved in maintaining peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region, due to the increasingly severe security environment. Therefore, Japan is looking for the ROK to be a partner in its "Proactive Contribution to Peace".

Issues preventing positive Japan-ROK relations

However, relations between Japan and the ROK started to "face an extremely severe situation" from 2018 due to "a series of negative moves by the ROK" (MOFA, 2019). These phrases were first mentioned in the 2019 Diplomatic Bluebook and kept being used to refer to Japan's relations with the ROK in the following Bluebooks. On top of that, the 2019 Diplomatic Bluebook did not refer to South Korea as the "most important neighbor that shares strategic interests with Japan", as was previously always the case. This omission demonstrates how severed their ties were during that year. The building of cooperation and mutual trust between them was harmed by unresolved historical issues regarding comfort women, Korean civilians forced into working for Japanese firms, and the disputed Takeshima/Dokdo islands.

Regarding the comfort women issue, both countries had reached an agreement in 2015. Indeed, it was confirmed that the issue was "resolved finally and irreversibly based on the agreement reached at [the] Japan-ROK Foreign Ministers' Meeting in December 28, 2015" (MOFA, 2016). The irreversible resolution of the issue was mentioned by Prime Minister Abe, Foreign Minister Kishida and Kono, and in all Diplomatic Bluebooks analyzed since the announcement of the 2015 Agreement, amounting to 23 times in total. Foreign Minister Kishida announced at the Joint Press Occasion in December 28, 2015, that the issue of comfort women "was a grave affront to the honor and dignity of large numbers of women" and that the Government of Japan "is painfully aware of responsibilities from this perspective". The Japanese government committed to establishing a foundation to support former comfort women and provide a one-time contribution through its budget. This decision reflected Japan's discourse to take responsibility for its actions, and gave some legitimacy to Japan's apologetic behavior. The 2015 Agreement allowed Japan to resolve an issue connecting it to its wartime authoritative identity, which it wished never to resemble again. Moreover, at the Japan-ROK summit telephone call in December 28, 2015, Prime Minister Abe and President Park Geun-hye welcomed the resolution of the issue and confirmed that "they would take responsibility as leaders to implement this agreement".

Nevertheless, a comfort women statue was installed in front of the Consulate-General of Japan in Busan at the end of 2016. This event was described as "extremely regrettable" by the Government of Japan (MOFA, 2017). Furthermore, the Government of the ROK announced in 2018 that the 2015 Agreement failed "to properly reflect the wishes of the victims" and did not "constitute a true resolution of the issue" (MOFA, 2019). In addition, the ROK announced the dissolution of "the Reconciliation and Healing Foundation", established as the outcome of the 2015 Agreement and to which Japan contributed 1 billion yen (MOFA, 2019). This decision by the South Korean government invalidated the discourse that the issue was "resolved finally and irreversibly", as well as Japan's efforts to take responsibility for it. Then, it reproduced the South Korean perception that Japan has not moved on from its past.

Afterward, Japanese discourse focused on demonstrating that it had taken responsibility for its actions during the occupation of the Korean peninsula. The discourse was supported by stating Japanese actions that showed remorse and differentiated itself from its past wartime Self. The Government of Japan claims that it "has sincerely dealt with the issues of reparations, property, and claims pertaining to the Second World War […] under the San Francisco Peace Treaty" (MOFA, 2020). Japan considers it "has actively taken measures to recover the honor of former comfort women and to provide remedies for them" (MOFA, 2020). It has namely created the Asian Women's Fund to provide medical and welfare support as well as "atonement money" to former comfort women (MOFA, 2017). In addition, Japanese prime ministers have sent letters to express their "apology and remorse" for the suffering of former comfort women (MOFA, 2019).

The countries' bilateral relations also deteriorated due to the landing of ROK National Assembly members on the Takeshima/Dokdo islands, and the conduct of multiple military exercises and marine searches in their surroundings (MOFA, 2019). The Japanese position on this dispute is addressed in the analyzed Diplomatic Bluebooks: "Takeshima is indisputably an inherent part of the territory of Japan in light of historical facts and based on international law". Its occupation by the ROK is considered "illegal and has no international legal basis" (MOFA, 2019). Consequently, the Government of Japan has "lodged strong protests" against the ROK's actions and is "keeping the world informed" about its position (MOFA, 2020). However, Japan is

determined to engage in "diplomatic efforts to settle the Takeshima dispute in a peaceful manner in accordance with international law" (MOFA, 2019).

Finally, in October 30 and November 29, 2018, The ROK Supreme Court ordered Japanese companies to compensate ROK nationals who allegedly worked for these firms during World War II. This court decision further degraded the relationship between Japan and the ROK. This ruling is considered a "breach of international law" since all "problems concerning property and claims between Japan and the ROK […] have been settled completely and finally by the Agreement on the Settlement of Problems concerning Property and Claims and on Economic Co-operation between Japan and the ROK of 1965" (MOFA, 2019). This claim was expressed in every Diplomatic Bluebook analyzed, and in three press conferences by Foreign Press Secretary Ohtaka, Foreign Minister Kishida and Motegi. Article II of that Agreement confirms that issues regarding property, rights, and interests between the two parties and their nationals are "settled completely and finally" and "no contention shall be made" (MOFA, 2019). According to the Japanese government, all issues relating to World War II have already been settled in bilateral and international treaties. The ROK Supreme Court's ruling on Former Civilian Workers from the Korean Peninsula violates Article II of the Agreement, which is "totally unacceptable" for Japan (MOFA, 2019). Even though Japanese officials requested a diplomatic consultation with the ROK and then referred to an arbitration board to resolve the issue, the ROK has not been responsive (MOFA, 2020).

Importance of building a "future-oriented relationship"

Instead of focusing on past issues, Japan wants to promote forward-looking relations with the ROK, as mentioned in the literature review on Japan's "Othering" of the ROK. On the 50th anniversary of the normalization of the Japan-ROK relations, both countries promoted exchanges with the slogan, "Together, let us open, a new future" (MOFA, 2016). Indeed, both leaders – Prime Minister Abe and President Park Geun-hye – celebrated "a new beginning for Japan and the ROK" during their speeches on June 22, 2015. During a Japan-ROK Summit Meeting in November 2015, they also shared how important it is for both countries to build a "future-oriented relationship" to prevent future generations from being impacted by historical issues. The building of a "future-oriented relationship" represents the main direction of Japan's discourse

when it comes to its relations with South Korea. Indeed, this phrase was cited 55 times altogether in 22 sources. The 2015 Agreement on comfort women was a promising product of this vision that could also strengthen the discourse on building future-oriented relations. However, Japan-ROK relations deteriorated afterward, as explained in the preceding paragraphs. The phrase "future-oriented relations" was not even mentioned in the 2019 and 2020 Diplomatic Bluebooks. When asked about the removal of the phrase, Foreign Minister Kono expressed at a press conference in April 23, 2019, that "a succession of negative moves by the ROK" happened that year and the relation therefore "faced a severe situation".

Even so, at a Japan-ROK Foreign Ministers' Meeting in August 2018 and a Japan-ROK Summit Meeting in September 2018, foreign ministers from both countries, as well as Prime Minister Abe and President Moon Jae-in, confirmed that: "they will move forward with the cooperation to build future-oriented relations while appropriately managing difficult issues between Japan and the ROK". Therefore, the Government of Japan's discourse vis-à-vis the ROK is concentrated on building "future-oriented relations" by not letting past issues degrade necessary cooperation to maintain peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region and the international community.

Overall, in the Japanese official discourse regarding the ROK, we observe that Japan perceives the ROK as a partner in maintaining peace in the Asia-Pacific. Japan is promoting a shared security identity by emphasizing how they share similar interests and values, and that building future-oriented relations is necessary for the region's stability. However, the ROK is not fond of Japan's increased involvement in the region because it is still not over the historical issues between them. Moreover, cooperation is hard to maintain because both countries cannot find an agreement to resolve those issues. By continuing to hold Japan responsible for its wartime behavior and refusing to settle their issues, the ROK is confining Japan in its past militaristic Self. Even though Japan has demonstrated to the international community that it is a pacifist nation that will never wage war again and made efforts to show its remorse, Seoul does not seem to be convinced. This mistrust is severing the relationship between Japan and the ROK and preventing the development of their shared security identity.

5.4. Japan's discourse on Chinese and South Korean criticism: visits to Yasukuni Shrine and revision of history textbooks

Visits to Yasukuni Shrine were only referred to once in the sources analyzed. Indeed, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Diplomatic Bluebook of 2014 contains Prime Minister Abe's statement after he visited the Shrine on December 26, 2013. Prime Minister Abe affirmed that visits to the Shrine were not about "paying homage to war criminals" but to "renew the pledge that Japan must never wage a war again". He expressed the goal "to build an age which is free from the sufferings by the devastation of the war", demonstrating the wish for future-oriented cooperation with Asian countries. He added that Japan "consistently walked the path of peace" and "will continue to pursue this path". Finally, he ended his statement by addressing Chinese and South Korean concerns:

> "It is not my intention at all to hurt the feelings of the Chinese and Korean people. It is my wish to respect each other's character, protect freedom and democracy, and build friendship with China and Korea with respect, as did all the previous Prime Ministers who visited Yasukuni Shrine" (Abe, 2013).

After this event, visits to Yasukuni Shrine were not mentioned in the examined sources to research Japanese discourse relating to China and South Korea. It might be because Prime Minister Abe stopped visiting the Shrine after that one time in 2013. Still, several Japanese Cabinet members kept going to Yasukuni Shrine throughout the studied time, which sparked criticism in China and South Korea. Prime Minister Abe even sent a ritual offering to the Shrine in 2016. However, Japan did not address these issues in the examined official discourse.

Moreover, the issue of the Japanese history textbooks is also not addressed in the researched Japanese discourse. The decision to disregard these controversial issues in Japan's official foreign policy documents shows significance. Their omission can be interpreted as Japan's desire to put its past behind and move on. This choice also demonstrate how Japan does not identify with its wartime authoritative Self and differentiates itself from it by avoiding to mention these issues.

6. Conclusion

This thesis aims at answering the following research question: *How did Japan's pacifist identity evolve vis-à-vis China and South Korea from 2012 to 2020?* Japan's pacifist identity was constructed after the Second World War and institutionalized through restrictive security policies. However, after the Cold War, the security measures reproducing Japan's pacifist identity started to get targeted by reforms. Japan started to promote more involvement in international security affairs, which contrasted with its previous position to only focus on immediate defense. For such changes in security policy to happen, Japan's pacifist identity had to experience changes (Gustafsson et al., 2018). Therefore, this shift in identity represents the core research of this thesis. Furthermore, Japan's pacifist identity was studied in relation to China and South Korea since they are neighbors sharing considerable history. Indeed, Japan's actions during World War II heavily impacted the PRC and the ROK, as their people greatly suffered during the Japanese occupation.

On the one hand, the discourse analysis showed that Japan perceives China as a challenge to the security of the Asia-Pacific region. This construction of Japan's surroundings as insecure fostered the discourse of a "Proactive Contribution to Peace" which is described as necessary to ensure stability in the region. Japan's discourse on proactive participation in security affairs entails the creation of security policies enhancing the state's capabilities, hence strengthening the construction of Japan's changing pacifism. Foreign policy produces and reproduces identity (Campbell, 1994); Japanese security reforms correspond to Japan's novel proactive pacifist identity, since foreign policy decision-making establishes "a link between policy and identity that makes the two appear consistent with each other" (Hansen, 2006).

On the other hand, Japan views its relations with China and South Korea as very important. Japan promotes in its discourse that peace and stability in its environment are also based on strengthened cooperation with its neighbors. From 2016, Japan managed to build closer relations with China based on a discourse of "Mutually Beneficial Relations based on Common Strategic Interests" and made progress in building a "Sea of Peace, Cooperation, and Friendship" in the area of the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. Moreover, Japan refers to South Korea as the "most important neighbor that shares strategic interests". Indeed, Japan can easily identify with South Korea since they have many similarities regarding their values, their

alliance with the U.S., or the threat North Korea poses. However, historical issues, including the compensation for comfort women forced into sexual slavery, Korean civilian forced into labor, and the disputed Takeshima/Dokdo Islands, prevented the positive development of their relations. Moreover, Japan-China and Japan-ROK relations face problems due to visits by Japanese Cabinet officials to Yasukuni Shrine and revision of the state's history textbooks. Despite these problems, Japan still promotes "forward-looking relations" with the ROK and the PRC to allow cooperation for the peace and stability of the Asia-Pacific region.

To conclude, Japan's pacifist identity is indeed shifting because Japan is constructing, in its foreign policy discourse, the identity of a more proactive actor maintaining peace in the international community instead of focusing solely on its own defense like it used to during the Cold War. However, its increased involvement is based on building cooperation, namely with neighboring countries like China and South Korea, as the discourse analysis showed. Japan is still attached to its pacifist values of resolving issues peacefully through dialogue. However, this research from September 2012 to August 2020 shows that Japan is constructing a security identity that strengthens its cooperative role in maintaining peace and stability worldwide and implementing policies that correspond to that proactive security identity.

Finally, the discourse analysis in this thesis is limited to Japanese official foreign policy discourse to study the shift of Japan's pacifist identity vis-à-vis China and South Korea. To grasp more precisely how China and South Korea influence the evolution of Japan's security identity, the discourse analysis could be taken even further. Deeper conclusions could be drawn on how Japan's pacifist identity is evolving by analyzing discourses provided by opposition parties, the media, or the civil society. An examination of such discourses could help the academic community determine the significance of Japan's shifting pacifism.

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