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JAPAN AS CHINA'S 'OTHER': CHINA'S IDENTITY AND POLICY
TOWARDS DIAOYU/SENKAKU ISLANDS

by
Filip VISKUPIC

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the Degree of
Master of Philosophy in Social Sciences
(Political Science)

Lingnan University

2013

ABSTRACT

Japan as China's 'Other':
China's identity and policy towards Diaoyu/Senkaku islands

by

Filip VISKUPIC

Master of Philosophy

This thesis examines contemporary Sino-Japanese relations, in particular the Chinese policy towards the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands following the end of the Cold War. It answers the puzzle of why the territorial dispute emerged as such a divisive issue in the bilateral relations between China and Japan.

This thesis embraces a constructivist perspective of international relations and puts forward the concept of identity. Identity is understood here as the image of individuality and distinctiveness held by a state in international relations and by having an identity is to live and act according to the defining features of identity. Drawing upon discourse analysis of high politics in China, the thesis maps the changes of China's self-understanding after 1989. Utilizing the Self/Other framework it emphasizes the role of Japan as the main Other against which the Chinese identity became defined.

The empirical part of the thesis maps the developments in the Chinese policy *vis-a-vis* Diaoyu/Senkaku islands, particularly the meanings attached to the disputed islands in China. Applying the Self/Other framework, it demonstrates a strong link between representations of China's identity and policy towards the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands. China's 'hard-line' policy *vis-a-vis* the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands could be understood as being driven by its 'victimized' identity. A strong response to the 2010 Incident including a continuous demand for apology, even though it damaged economic interests, was justified as in order to prevent further humiliations.

The findings of this research demonstrate that states are social actors, and that foreign policies cannot be reduced solely to the rational pursuit of material interests. By emphasizing the concept of identity, this thesis contributes to the constructivist scholarship in international relations as well as to literatures on territorial disputes and Sino-Japanese relations.

DECLARATION

I declare that this is an original work based primarily on my own research, and I warrant that all citations of previous research, published or unpublished, have been duly acknowledged.

Filip Viskupic

Date:

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL OF THESIS

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CHINA'S IDENTITY AND POLICY TOWARDS DIAOYU/SENKAKU ISLANDS

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List of Abbreviations

BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
KMT	Kuomintang (Chinese Nationalist Party)
IR	International Relations
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China
JMOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PRC	People's Republic of China
ROC	Republic of China
SCIO	State Council Information Office
UN	United Nations Organisation
USSR	<i>Union of Soviet Socialist Republics</i>

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I was born and raised in Bratislava, Slovakia. When I was growing up I knew very little about China and certainly didn't imagine I would come one day to Hong Kong and study Sino-Japanese relations.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Relations between China and Japan, the world's second and third largest economies, are important not only for the East Asian region, but also have global repercussions. China and Japan historically held very rich and complex relations, which often brought them on a collision course. Particularly, the 20th century Japanese imperialism and the atrocities committed by the Imperial army have left a profound legacy of both humiliation and resentment in China. During the Cold War, China and Japan had initially little contact, but after they normalised relations in 1972, their bilateral relations started to improve gradually. Yet, since the end of the Cold War Sino-Japanese relations have been deteriorating again and following the 2010 and 2012 diplomatic incidents reached the lowest point in decades.

At the centre of Sino-Japanese troubles has been the territorial dispute over the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands¹ located in the East China Sea. While the islands were of little importance to either country during the Cold War, the territorial dispute has emerged as the most divisive issue between China and Japan since the 1990s and especially during the 2000s (Downs and Saunders 1998, Suganuma 2000, Hagstrom 2005, Pan 2007, Wiegand 2009). Incidents, such as the 2010 boat collision incident and the 2012 landings on the disputed islands led to a deterioration of Sino-Japanese relations at both political and societal levels. The gravity of the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute was acknowledged by the Chinese President Hu who attributed the deterioration of Sino-Japanese relations to the developments surrounding the territorial dispute (*Xinhua*, 11/9/2012). The recent 2010 and 2012 incidents led to waves of popular interest and outrage in both China and Japan (BBC News, 17/9/2012). Demonstrations turned especially violent in China, where protesters looted Japanese shops and in their frenzy damaged anything related to Japan.

Perhaps then, it is not a coincidence that the recent public opinion polls in both countries have consistently been reporting very negative views and perceptions of each other. A 2012 poll reported that 64.5 % of Chinese respondents had an unfavorable view of Japan, while 84.3% of Japanese had an unfavorable view of China.² Political tensions and an atmosphere of distrust from the 2000s have

¹ By mentioning the Chinese name first, I am not embracing the Chinese position. I am merely approaching the issue from the Chinese perspective.

² According to the 2012 joint Genron NPO and *China Daily* opinion poll, conducted in April and May 2012 and released on June 20, 2012. Other opinion polls reveal similar results, for a detailed discussion, see Wu (2012).

surfaced even despite deepening economic and cultural interconnectedness between the China and Japan (Chen 2011, *The Wall Street Journal*, 17/9/2012). The dictum ‘economics hot and politics cold’ (*zhengleng jingre*), which is often invoked to characterize Sino-Japanese relations has never been more true than now.

1.1 Preliminary literature review

Scholars have attributed the deterioration of Sino-Japanese relations to a variety of factors such as the structural changes of the international system after the Cold War, domestic politics in China and Japan and a legacy of unresolved historical controversies. Betts (1993), Friedberg (1993) and Christensen (1999) emphasized the shifting balance of power in East Asia and expressed worries about the negative impact on Sino-Japanese relations. They argued that the rise of China and the stagnation of Japan will bring the two countries on a collision course and likely drag in the United States as well. Other scholars highlighted the importance of ideational factors; Whiting’s pioneering study emphasized the importance of perceptions and misperceptions in Sino-Japanese relations and argued that Chinese images were based on bitter memories of the past humiliations (Whiting 1989). More recently, scholars have blamed rising nationalisms, disputed histories and conflictual identities for the downturns in Sino-Japanese relations (Gries 2004, Chan and Bridges 2006, Hughes 2008).

While scholars acknowledged the significance of China’s national identity in impacting Sino-Japanese relations, in particular the changing of China’s identity as oppositional to Japan,; nevertheless they mostly reduced it to regime propaganda (Zhao 2004, Shirk 2007). Denied agency and inconsequential for foreign policy analysis, identity was only mentioned in passing alongside nationalism in the studies of Sino-Japanese relations, without further elaborations.

Similar arguments have been invoked with respect to the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute (Downs and Saunders 1998, Deans 2000); the change of Chinese identities was considered merely a by-product of legitimating efforts by the governments in China and Japan or a strategic tool in political struggles in both countries. Shirk argued that Japan- related issues were abused by politicians in China to galvanize

support as well as to divert attention from sensitive domestic issues, such as the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute; nevertheless, when anti-Japan protests spun out of control, they were halted immediately (Shirk 2007). In line with the general dominance of realist thinking in International Relations (IR), identities and identity politics are presented as merely derivative of power politics and are denied analytical primacy. While the reasoning behind these arguments is not necessarily wrong, it presents only a simplistic picture of Sino-Japanese relations.

As identity is difficult to grasp analytically, there are only a few International relations studies which pay exclusive attention to identity in explaining Sino-Japanese relations or China's Japan-policy making (Shih 1995, Callahan 2004, Suzuki 2007). Nevertheless, there are no studies which analyse the developments from 2000 in the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute, or pay specific attention to the 2010 boat collision incident, through the identity perspective. Likewise, there are no studies explicitly linking the changes in China's identity since 1989 and their impact on China's policy *vis-a-vis* Diaoyu/Senkaku islands.

1.2 Theoretical conceptualisations

In this research, for the purposes of analytical clarity, I initially embrace a minimalist definition of identity as "the image of individuality and distinctiveness (selfhood) held and projected by an actor" (Jepperson et. al 1996: 56). To have an identity is therefore to live and act according to a set of rules and principles. In international relations, identity defines the borders of appropriate and legitimate state behaviour, which must be consistent with the particular articulations of identity. As identity is inherently a constructivist concept, I place my framework in the constructivist camp of International Relations. By constructivism is meant the constructivist ontology and epistemology, which emphasizes the socially constructed nature of international politics, rather than a (grand)theory of international relations (Guzzini 2000). This meta-theoretical step enables an analysis of developments in Sino-Japanese relations and the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute not as pre-given or pre-determined but constructed by actors and their own interpretations. As opposed to realism and its ontology, constructivism argues against the presumed uniformity of nation-states, which opens up the door for understanding of the rich dynamics of non-material

factors in Sino-Japanese relations, such as memory, history and identity, which shape domestic and international politics of China.

By placing my approach in the constructivist camp, I am not interested in proving or disproving the superiority of a particular International Relations approach. Rather, the aim is to use constructivism to provide an alternative reading of Sino-Japanese and the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute and particularly the 2010 incident. This approach certainly neither has the ambition to explain all aspects of the Sino-Japanese relations or the territorial dispute, nor to join the animated debate on the merits of various IR theories. Rather, the identity perspective anchored in constructivism will be utilized as it is very well-suited to account for the evolution and the scope of the Chinese policy *vis-a-vis* the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands after 1989.

1.3 Research Questions and Study Scope

This thesis examines Sino-Japanese relations and particularly the China's policy towards the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands since 1989. This research revolves around the central research question: *'how can we account for China's policy towards the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands after 1989?'* Connected to the central question are the supplementary ones, which help to answer the central question. The supplementary research questions are: *'why did the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute become such a heated issue in the Sino-Japanese relations?'*; *'how did China's post-1989 identity crisis impact its relations with Japan?'*; *'how can we account for China's handling of the 2010 boat collision incident?'*; and finally, *'how can China and Japan improve their strained relations?'*. In the following chapters, all of these questions will be addressed and then briefly revisited in the conclusion.

Although, my research interest spatially lies in the Sino-Japanese relations, my analysis is limited to China and China's position to the relationship. I do not wish to discard Japan altogether from my analysis, as it has been an important referent, or the 'Other', against which the Chinese identity has been increasingly (re)defined. Nevertheless, I shall rather limit my attention to the processes of Chinese identity and foreign policy formation and so do not examine Japan's behaviour in detail. Regarding the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute, I am particularly interested in

evolution of the framing of Japan as well as the dispute within China, and how the dispute, and particularly the 2010 incident has been constructed in China in the official and semi-official political discourse. This thesis therefore focuses predominantly on state elites, as the principal agents who are in the end responsible for the foreign policy decision-making.

Temporally, I focus on the developments in the Diaoyu/Senkaku territorial dispute since the end of the Cold War, but particularly on the recent 2010 boat collision incident. Since 1989, despite a continuous growth of economic exchanges between China and Japan, overall Sino-Japanese relations and the tensions related to the dispute have continued to deteriorate. During this period, Chinese elites tried to renegotiate China's identity by presenting a different understanding of China and Japan. Japan was transformed into China's Other, which was achieved by making negative comparisons to Japan, against which Chinese identities were renegotiated. Moreover, Japanese actions only confirmed this negative characterisation of Japan within China. China has been very sensitive towards what it sees as repeated Japanese aggression. A Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs official during the 2010 incident stated that "the Japanese government has repeatedly stirred up troubles in recent years on the issue of the Diaoyu Island" (*Xinhua*, 10/9/2010).

The 2010 boat collision incident was the most serious development in Sino-Japanese relations since the Koizumi era and therefore warrants scholarly attention. At the same time the territorial dispute intensified and the Sino-Japanese relations have sunk to the lowest level since normalisation. In general it is important to examine China's policy towards Diaoyu/Senkaku islands as it takes place in the context of increasing media attention to the 'rise of China'.

The importance of this study of Sino-Japanese relations and the territorial dispute is two-fold. Firstly, I aim to demonstrate that identities matter particularly in China's relations with Japan and in the construction of China's foreign policy towards the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands. While constructivism and identity perspective has been applied to European and United States politics, there are relatively few constructivist accounts of Sino-Japanese relations and none of the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute available in English. Secondly, there is very little academic literature on the 2010 boat collision incident (Hagstrom 2010), so therefore this thesis wishes to contribute

to the scholarship on the subject.

Secondly, not only as an academic exercise, this thesis attempts to sketch possible avenues for Sino-Japanese reconciliation based on identity change. While there is a plethora of voices about the coming conflict between China and Japan, it is necessary from the ethical perspective to outline ways in which China and Japan could not only solve the territorial dispute but also mend their strained relations. Moreover, insights from this study on how to reach reconciliation might also be applied to other strained bilateral relations, such as Korean-Japanese, Sino-American relations or other territorial disputes or enduring rivalries.

1.4 Research design

This research primarily utilizes primarily qualitative methodology. I employ different research tools, but these should be seen as complementary and not as oppositional. To examine China's identity I predominantly utilize content analysis of academic literatures written by both Chinese and Western scholars. I also rely on discourse analysis of various official and semi-official texts, both oral speeches and written documents. Therefore, policy statements, defence and diplomatic white papers, newspaper articles, and speeches of political leaders will be analysed. While identity cannot be by itself readily observed, examinations of sources at the elite level are crucial for uncovering the discursive construction of identities in China. Due to my limited knowledge of Chinese language, I have to rely on English translations of the above-mentioned documents. Fortunately, there is an abundance of official Chinese documents available also in the English language. Unfortunately, not so many documents or materials at the popular level are available; hence I would have to limit my attention to the elite level. I am keenly aware that the quality of discourse analysis depends on the interpretive skills of the scholars, and therefore relying on English translations rather than on original texts in Chinese is a limitation of my research endeavour.

I also utilize large-scale surveys by various organisations to corroborate my arguments, which have the advantage of relatively precisely capturing public opinion on a particular topic. Surveys have the advantage of tapping directly into the content of identity, which makes them useful for identity research too. Moreover, surveys are

applied to the mass-level and complement the discourse analysis approach, which is aimed predominantly at the elite level.

1.5 Thesis structure

This thesis is divided into six chapters. Chapter 2 firstly reviews International Relations approaches to the study of Sino-Japanese relations and the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute. The chapter also introduces and discusses in depth the concept of identity and how it can help us understand international politics and China's policies towards the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands since 1989. The following chapters further develop theoretical themes introduced in chapter 2; the analytical efforts culminate in chapter 5 which would offer an alternative reading of China's Diaoyu/Senkaku islands policy. Therefore, chapter 3 discusses historical events that came to the forefront of China's understanding of Japan following 1989. The Opium Wars and, particularly, the Sino-Japanese Wars will be discussed as their symbolic power increased and became the raw material for China's post-Cold War identity. Chapter 4 discusses in detail changes in Chinese self-understanding after the Cold War, emergence of new security narrative that emphasizes China's victimisation and humiliation by and the negative role Japan played in this construction. With the weakening of China's socialist identity and the imminent identity crisis, China's identity became more exclusive and Japan was rendered the main 'Other' in China's identity construction. Chapter 5 applies the identity perspective to contemporary Sino-Japanese relations and China's Diaoyu/Senkaku islands policy. Building upon the previous chapters, this analytical chapter firstly appraises the symbolic importance of the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands and its role in China's identity discourse. Utilizing an analytical framework developed in chapter 2, this chapter demonstrates the impact of China's 'victimized' identity on its response and handling of the 2010 boat collision incident. Finally, chapter 6 summarizes the main findings of the thesis, and suggests ways for possible Sino-Japanese reconciliation based on identity change.

Chapter 2: Sino-Japanese relations and the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute in the International Relations scholarship

2.1 Competing theoretical perspectives

Given the importance of the Sino-Japanese relations, there is abundant International Relations scholarship covering its various political, economic and socio-cultural aspects. This chapter has two goals; firstly to discuss how different international relations theories approach and analyse Sino-Japanese relations and the Diaoyu/Senkaku dispute. Secondly, to introduce and discuss in depth the concept of identity and its importance for the study of international relations and foreign policy. I emphasize the central questions relating to identity: its formation, stability and change, methodological challenges and its impact on foreign policy. The comprehensive theoretical discussion is essential in order to prepare ground for an alternative empirical reading of Sino- Japanese relations and China's policy towards the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands.

2.1.1 Neorealism and Sino-Japanese relations

Neorealism offers a top-down perspective of international relations that emphasizes the impact of the structure of the international system on state identities, interests and behaviour (Waltz 1979). Realists argue that in the anarchical international system, devoid of central authority (also known as anarchy), states need to primarily guarantee their survival, which makes them very sensitive to global distribution of power. Therefore, the nature of the international system leads states to fear each other, makes state survival a priority and forces states to maximize their power at the expense of other states.³ International politics is thus a 'zero sum game' in which conflict is an endemic part; cooperation is challenging due to relative gains concerns as well as a fear of cheating (Mearsheimer 1994).

Sino-Japanese relations

Realist scholars have been characteristically pessimistic about the future of Sino-Japanese relations. They consider systemic conditions conducive to instability

³ Classical realists emphasized the importance of domestic and ideational factors; nevertheless, after the behavioral and systemic turn in International Relations, realists have been largely ignoring domestic factors.

between China and Japan: according to the Power Transition Theory, the probability of war increases as the rising and the incumbent power are near the point of power transition between them. On the one hand, China's relative economic and military power has been increasing and in 2010 surpassed Japan as the world's second largest economy. On the other hand, Japan's relative power after two decades of economic and political stagnation has decreased. *The Economist* estimated that China would be able to maintain the 2000s decade increases of about 12% in military spending a year in the coming years as well (*The Economist*, 7/4/2012). The recent inauguration of an aircraft carrier and an active stealth fighter jet programme testify to the technology advancements of Chinese military.

Secondly, Sino-Japanese relations take place in the context of the volatile East Asian region, which has since the end of Cold War suffered from a balance of power shift, a lack of security institutions and a host of unresolved territorial disputes. Realists therefore concluded that East Asia was "ripe for rivalry" (Friedberg 1993) and would "replace Europe as a major source of instability in the 21st century" (Christensen 1999). As a consequence of these developments, Sino Japanese relations will enter an era of 'simmering rivalry' (Calder 2006) due to the Chinese revisionism *vis-a-vis* the international system and so the probability of conflict with Japan will increase.⁴

Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute

From the realist perspective, China and Japan have competing national interests and therefore both show an interest in the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands. The isles are not only strategically located between the Chinese mainland and the Japanese Okinawan island chain, but also their adjacent waters are tipped to contain abundant hydrocarbon resources and rich fisheries.⁵ As a consequence of its economic growth, China has become more dependent on oil and gas, which it strives to secure even at the expense of tensions in foreign relations (Dannreuther 2003, Liao 2008). Therefore, China and Japan will inevitably clash over the disputed islands, which would further aggravate the security dilemma. In the atmosphere of mutual suspicion, both countries try to improve their material security at the expense of each other. In

⁴ Nevertheless, there are historical anomalies to states expanding their foreign policies once power increases. Qing China did not change its isolationist foreign policies even following the Western imperialist pressure. Likewise, China was most revisionist when China was weakest, right after the establishment of the PRC. (Legro 2007:519).

⁵ Oil was originally discovered in 1968 by a UN mission.

the realist analysis, identities or nationalisms are a function of the distribution of power and merely an instrument of elites in both countries where rational leaders manipulate citizens through government propaganda (Deans 2000). History is a toolkit which can be exploited by political leaders in China in order to gain concessions from Japan and as well to strengthen domestic legitimacy. Downs and Saunders argued that Chinese leaders since 1989 have been trying to hold the delicate balance in the relationship with Japan on the one hand by paying lip service to nationalistic rhetoric, but in the end always championing restraint and economic cooperation with Japan (Downs and Saunders 1998, Shirk 2007). In Downs and Saunders' account Chinese political leaders are merely self-interested rational actors who "make tactical shifts between the two sources of legitimacy to maintain their rule, waiting until the country becomes powerful enough to achieve their nationalist objectives" (Downs and Saunders 1998: 122).

2.1.2 Neoliberalism and Sino-Japanese relations

As opposed to realism, liberalism provided a more optimistic vision of international politics and argued that peaceful relations among states are possible. While sharing many of the realists' worries, liberals, nevertheless, argue that even under the conditions of anarchy states prefer to pursue economic cooperation instead of competition. International trade mitigates inter-state conflict, as economic interdependence discourages states from waging war against each other. Secondly, international institutions can influence the behaviour of states and motivate cooperation by reducing the costs of transactions (Walt 1998:31). Therefore, China's material improvement will empower those domestic forces in support of integration into the international system and peaceful relations with neighbouring countries. The growth of the middle class in China therefore plays a dual role of domestically pushing for further liberalisation and eventually perhaps even democratisation while internationally China would gradually adjust its foreign policy options and interests to be consistent with other powers in the international system.

Sino-Japanese relations and the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute

From the liberal perspective, economic cooperation has played a decisively stabilizing role in Sino-Japanese relations. The trade between China and Japan has

been growing steadily and in 2011 reached a bilateral total of \$345 billion, which represents 9% of China's overall trade (*The Wall Street Journal* 17/9/2012). Even if the common membership in various international organisations has not had yet the desired effect, bilateral trade and economic interdependence can be credited for smoothing the sometimes rocky political relations. As recently China replaced the United States as Japan's leading trade partner and likewise Japanese investments in China have been growing, this increasing economic interdependence will play also a decisive role in the future and will help China and Japan manage their relations. According to Berger, China's growing reliance on world markets has increased the costs of any military conflict considerably, and secondly it strengthens the domestic position of groups that favour deepening economic cooperation between China and Japan (Berger 2000:417). Likewise, Koo has argued that the growing economic interdependence between China and Japan has helped many times to mitigate the escalations over the disputed Diaoyu/Senkaku islands. China and Japan chose to contain domestic nationalisms and have according to Koo refrained from resolving the dispute aggressively but rather focused on lucrative economic cooperation and overreaching common economic interests (Koo 2009).

2.2 Studying Sino-Japanese relations: Beyond rationalism

Despite significant differences over the extent to which institutions can lessen the effects of international anarchy, or whether states pursue absolute or relative gains, realism and liberalism fundamentally "share the same view of the world (ontology) and, crucially, the same view of what counts as reliable knowledge about that world (epistemology)" Smith (2002: 380). For realists and liberals, international politics is a game of utility maximization, which manifests itself in interstate conflict or cooperation; as interests determine actor behavior, the point of contention is merely whether these interests are internally or structurally determined (Bukovansky 1997). Moreover, both paradigms share a fundamental ontological assumption that social reality exists independently detached from actors' subjectivity, as well as a neo-positivist epistemic stance that reality could be in turn studied scientifically and reproduced as neutral truth in scholarship.

Neither neorealists nor neoliberals consider identities seriously; identity is reduced to dependent variable status devoid of analytical primacy in an analysis of state

behavior. Their joint commitment to rationalism effectively closes the door to a richer understanding of international politics, and effectively limits the area of scholarly engagement. As Hall put it “theories of rational choice tend attempt to avoid the problem of self-understanding of national agents with the assumption that they are rational actors impelled to action by instrumental rationality and systemic forces” (Hall 1999:27). As a consequence, considerable sets of social and economic questions other than interstate war or economic cooperation are ignored in IR scholarship.

Security policies among states as well as in Sino-Japanese relations do not derive merely from material conditions and are often far more complex than suggested by the rationalist model of international politics (Suzuki 2007). As Jager argued “the main sources of regional instability and potential conflict in East Asia are thus those which, ironically, international relations theorists paid the least attention to ... namely, issues of memory, identity, and nationalism”(Jager 2007: 6). Self-understandings based on shared ethnicity, language, history and belief produce state behaviours that cannot be explained solely by the prescription of rational action. International relations scholars need to pay attention to the impact of historical representations on how states define their relationships with friends and enemies. Likewise, they need to be sensitive to how historical memory deeply embedded in national identities shapes the definition of state interests, which has been largely absent in international relations analyses. Therefore, an identity perspective to international relations can illuminate an understanding of China’s unique policy problems with Japan and could transcend ‘irrational’ behaviour towards the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute framework.⁶

2.2.1 Constructivism

Whereas neorealism and neoliberalism focus predominantly on material forces, such as military power or trade, constructivism emphasizes the impact of ideas on international politics, particularly how actors, via their actions, construct the world they live in (Onuf 1989, Wendt 1999). Three elements make constructivism a distinct

⁶ China managed to resolve its territorial disputes with Russia, and still has an unresolved dispute with India, yet these have neither harmed the bilateral relationship nor have they provoked a heated response from the public.

form of theorizing: firstly, world politics is guided by intersubjective ideas; secondly, state interests and identities are not constant but amenable to change; and finally, structures and agents constitute and determine each other (Copeland 2000).⁷ In the 1990s constructivism gained prominence mainly through the critique of International Relations orthodoxies, such as the realist notions of interests and security. Perhaps the best known example is Alexander Wendt and his thesis ‘anarchy is what states make of it’ (Wendt 1992). Constructivists advanced an original research programme, which spawned significant advances on the nature and meanings of anarchy, identities and interests of states, as well as change in world politics (Hopf 1998). Constructivist scholars embraced ‘cultural’ variables previously marginalized in the discipline, such as ideas, epistemic communities, strategic culture, and norms (Klotz and Lynch 2007).

As opposed to rationalists who understand behavior as driven by situation or conditions, constructivists on the other hand view foreign policy as a creative and novel action which stems from the actor’s interpretations of the world (Bukh 2010). Methodologically, constructivism does not follow the rationalist order of research, such as starting with a theory, inferring generalizable causal claims from it, and testing them against empirical cases. Instead constructivists work ‘upwards’ from details of specific cases to theoretical claims that capture the patterns and relations between them (Dessler and Owen 2005). Nevertheless, constructivism is not a coherent school but an umbrella of different research strategies utilizing divergent methodologies, working on both the domestic (Berger 1993, Hopf 2002) and the systemic level (Wendt 1994).⁸

One of the key contributions of constructivism lies in its elaboration of security interests and behaviour. Traditionally in security studies, states were conceptualized as securing their interest against objective and external threats. Particularly during the Cold War security literature took state interests for granted, where interests are merely ‘out there’ waiting to be ‘discovered’ by rational and self-interested actors. However, constructivism examines not only the state behavior but also emphasizes the meanings attached to power and state interests, especially how states came to define their interests in the first place. Constructivists pay close attention to the

⁷ Wendt’s definition is slightly different. See Wendt (1995).

⁸ For a review, see Price and Reus-Smit (1998), or Rumelili (2004).

discursive and social practices that define the identities of actors and the normative order within which they behave. Focusing on material interests exclusively is insufficient to determine state behaviour; rather, “security interests depend on a particular construction of self-identity in relation to the conceived identity of others” (Katzenstein 1996: 60). Therefore, with its emphasis the ‘constitutiveness’ of the actors and structures, constructivism is well equipped to develop a theory of international politics that would utilize analytically the concept of identity and apply it to foreign policy analysis (Epstein 2011: 3-4).

2.3 Identity in International Relations

If the ‘constructivist turn’ in International Relations spawned a new research agenda, then identity is undoubtedly its most successful child. Identity, in the words of Lapid, made “a dramatic comeback in social theory and practice at the end of the twentieth century” (Lapid 1996: 3). While the concept of identity was originally developed in psychology and sociology, it was picked up by International Relations scholars looking for alternatives to the realist-rationalist vocabulary (Berenskoetter 2010). While many of the phenomena now associated with identity were discussed by the first generation of International Relations scholars, such as Carr, Deutsch, and Morgenthau, identity faded into obscurity during the Cold War and was marginalized in the discipline dominated by Waltz’s *Theory of International Politics*. Nevertheless, the ideational explanations of international politics rose to prominence again following the end of Cold War, after the emergence of new conflicts, such as in Yugoslavia, made it clear that state action could not always be reduced to rational action or power maximization. The identity perspective was applied to account for Sweden’s intervention in the Thirty Years War (Ringmar 1996), American construction of the Cuban missile crises (Weldes 1996), or Japan’s choice to send troops to Iraq after the American invasion in 2003 (Catalinac 2007).

Identity carries a particular promise for the understanding of Sino-Japanese relations and the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute. Hate, shame, revenge, humiliation and negative mutual perceptions are often invoked to account for the level of mistrust and hostilities between China and Japan. Nevertheless, as these variables are

under-theorized in the discipline of International Relations,⁹ they are mentioned only in passing and anecdotally in an analysis of Sino-Japanese relations. Nevertheless, constructivism with its emphasis on the mutual constitution of the agents has promise to account for the complex relationship between national identity deeply embedded in the historical memory, and the definition of state interests and state action. Moreover, by engaging with the concept of identity we can overcome the difficulties of applying theories based exclusively on the Western experience to the study of Asia (Kang 2003). By emphasizing contingency, constructivist as opposed to rationalist approaches show sensitivity towards China's future, which is very difficult to envision, much less predict as the linear realist and liberal models do (Legro 2007). Therefore, identity has the promise to account for how historical representations and perceptions in Sino-Japanese relations influence how China defines and executes its policies towards Japan and the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands.¹⁰

Once the concept of identity came into prominence in International Relations, it was utilized in an eclectic way by scholars operating on different levels of analysis. Despite a steady growth of identity scholarship in the 1990s and 2000s, there was no consensus on how to grasp the concept analytically; identity was used loosely, and remained vague and understudied. Even sympathetic scholars, while calling identity the "conceptual shooting star in the International Relations scholarship since the 1990s", lamented the lack of rigorous analytical attention the concept itself received (Berenskoetter 2010: 3595). The conceptual ambiguity invited sceptics who questioned the analytical usefulness of identity. In an influential critique, Brubaker and Cooper accused identity of either "being too much, or too little, or nothing at all" (Brubaker and Cooper 2000: 1). Most importantly, Brubaker and Cooper castigated a lack of analytical clarity in identity theorizing and maintained that its eclectic use made identity 'hopelessly ambiguous' (Ibid. 6).

Nevertheless, even though identity is a much 'looser' analytical concept that escapes the narrow positivist terminology, we do not necessarily have to follow Brubaker and Cooper's suggestions of abandoning identity altogether, as they have certainly raised

⁹ For a rare account, see Harkavy (2000).

¹⁰ This claim does not presuppose that every policy China undertakes towards Japan could be explained through the identity lens. The effect of identity in every case has to be empirically established. If a strong and convincing link between identity and foreign policy cannot be made, then indeed identity has little explanatory value.

important questions for any scholar wishing to use identity analytically in international politics. The fact that identity is an inherently unclear and contested concept should not prevent us from trying to apply it to international relations and foreign policy analysis; however, it must be conceptualized in a meaningful fashion first.¹¹

Therefore, the following paragraphs deal with the various aspects of identity, such as its construction, endurance and effect on foreign policy. The extended theoretical discussion is necessary to make sense of identity conceptually and analytically as well as to prepare the ground for further analysis of Sino-Japanese relations and the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute in the following chapters.

2.3.1 The constitutive dimensions of identity

What is identity? Is it an ideology, a social movement or just a shared understanding? Can we try to define identity analytically or shall we rather think of identity as a series of descriptions? Dittmer and Kim in their influential volume on China's collective identities offered a metaphorical description of identity, as an on-going journey, or as a relationship, instead of a static description (Dittmer and Kim 1993). Nevertheless, as there is no consensus on a single definition of identity, it is useful to start with a minimalist definition of identity offered by Jepperson, Katzenstein and Wendt "as the image of individuality and distinctiveness (selfhood) held and projected by an actor" (Jepperson et. al 1996: 56). For example, I am a professor, a Hong Konger, etc. Therefore, to have a social identity means to live and act under a set of descriptions; identity helps to make sense of myself and also others (Diez 2004).

In international politics an identity takes the form of a predominant set of ideas and images about what a state as well as other states are and should be, and guides the relationship with other states. On the inside of the state, identity pertains to language, ethnicity, and religion together with traditions and collective memory, which allows nation to remain relatively stable over time, and is sometimes referred to as national identity. One scholar offered a definition of state identity as a "set of broadly accepted representations of a country's cultural and societal beliefs about its own

¹¹ After all, other dominant concepts in the discipline, such as power, interest or state, are likewise vague and can have multiple meanings!

orientation in the international political area, as manifested by the rhetoric of official policy, academia and popular culture” (Morris 2012: 137).

As a measure of its strength, individuals would come to the defence of the collective identity, which they see as fundamentally constitutive of their selves, when they feel it was threatened. In the international realm, a state would act in a way that is consistent with its identity. If state behaviour is inconsistent with a particular identity and there is little domestic opposition, then indeed the effects of the identity has little or no effect on the state foreign behaviour. Therefore, state identity could be conceptualized as shaping the boundaries of acceptable and legitimate behaviour in international politics, which could be understood as an international performance of the state identity.¹²

2.3.2 The role of difference in identity construction

Identity is an inherently social concept; it involves an internal (Self) and an external dimension (Other), with internal coherence and external distinctiveness. Nevertheless, scholars disagree over the importance of difference in identity construction. Wendt and the ‘conventional constructivists’ consider identities pre-social and ontologically prior to international system and based on the domestic self-organising properties. In other words, states have a fairly stable sense of self before they interact with other states. On the other hand, ‘critical constructivists’¹³ emphasized the importance of difference discovered in the others contributing to the identity construction (Campbell 1998, Pan 2004). They argued that identities are always constructed against a difference and are based on mutual exclusion and the representation of the ‘Other’ as a threat to one’s identity.¹⁴ As elaborated in the following section, these differences are then translated into representations of dangers that could lead to collective violence against the others. For example, Samuel Huntington portrayed the

¹² Some recent sophisticated accounts of identity have highlighted the connection of between identity and ontological security (Mitzen 2005, Steele 2008). When states face a self-image which they cannot accept, their ‘ontological security’ or the stable sense of self is threatened and it must be reestablished via policy responses. Representations of the other as a threat to the self are not only a theoretical point, they have important security implications in international relations, for example they could lead to conflict or the legitimation of the use of violence.

¹³ Sometimes referred to as post-structuralists or post-modernists.

¹⁴ The self/other framework often utilized by international Relations scholars has its roots in the Hegelian famous master/slave dialectic. Hegel was motivated by the basic epistemic question: how can we know anything? The point taken is that a self always needs an ‘other’ to become stable.

Hispanic population as a challenge to the American identity and threatening to bifurcate the United States (Huntington 2004).

While theoretically intriguing, the debate between conventional and critical constructivists yielded little insights for an empirical analysis of the role of 'other' in identity construction. As other scholars pointed out, we cannot automatically assume that every difference leads to antagonism. Rather what the Self does with the difference discovered in the Other is an empirical question, which has to be investigated (Hopf 2002). Therefore, Hansen called for "ontology of identity that is flexible as to the forms of identity construction that one might encounter in concrete foreign policies" (Hansen 2006:41). The ontological point here is that while identities are always relational, they are only sometimes oppositional. In order to sort through the self/other nexus in the process of identity construction, Rumelili suggested a typology to identify when a difference in identities leads to a relationship of 'Othering' and conflictual identities. Similarly, Gries argued that intergroup competition does not emerge automatically, but only when comparisons between groups are 'made with salient Others', are 'consequential' and are 'framed in zero-sum terms' (Gries 2005). The following figure, which is adapted from Rumelili (2004), graphically represents the conditions under which relations between self/other could lead to negative identifications, mutual exclusion and a production of danger.

Figure 1 : The role of ‘other’ in Self’s identity formation: the constitutive dimensions of self/other interaction¹⁵

Constitutive dimensions of identity interactions	Variation in self/other relationships	Levels of self’s ontological security	Behavioural implications
Nature of identity/ difference	Inclusion « » Exclusion	→ Security « » Insecurity	A relationship of Othering: Other perceived and represented as a threat to self’s identity → Production of conflict and legitimisation of violence
Response of the other	Recognition « » Resistance	→ Security « » Insecurity	
Social distance	Association « » Dissociation	→ Security « » Insecurity	

¹⁵ (Text taken from Rumelili 2004- author’s representation)

As follows from the figure, while some identities may be inclusive, and can accommodate difference, others are exclusive and defined around some inherent characteristics. These understandings about the nature of identity are nevertheless not set in stone or constant but rather contingent and to a large degree socially contested and politically constructed. Secondly, when the content of identity is contested by the 'Other' in its identity performances, the Self is rendered more insecure as it blurs the boundaries between the two. Such an ontological insecurity generates a greater necessity for the Self to reinstate its identity by representing the Other as a threat to the Self. Lastly, exclusive identities based on inherent differences between the Self and Other need to be re-established with clear boundaries to prevent the Other from become like Self. These oppositional constructions naturally decrease the level of affinity between the Self and Other, which makes it easier to present the Other as a threat to the Self's identity. These discursive practices actively link the construction of identity to the legitimisation of violence against the outside groups (Fearon and Laitin 2000).

2.3.3. The role of historical memory in the process of identity construction

History is an important raw source in the state identity formation. History provides the glue that binds the 'imagined communities' together into nation-states. Nevertheless, the relationship between past, present and identity is not linear or predetermined but rather contingent and dependent on actors' interpretation of the past. Trouillot argued that history could either mean a socio-historical process or our knowledge of that process, and the boundary between these two meanings is often quite fluid (Trouillot 1995:3). Past is always negotiated to the present through collective memory, viable representations of the past that occur on the collective level.

These constructions of the past, present and visions of the future are always contested among different groups and are often a product or a by-product of domestic political struggles. The process and conditions of history narratives production need to be examined. Historical memory or what is said and acknowledged that happened in the past, is therefore neither an elite construction, nor a monolithic entity that is not amenable to change. Rather, the past is negotiated in the present through

narratives, the stories people tell about themselves (Gries 2007). While elites influence narratives, they lack the power to invent them from scratch. The process on the one hand requires agents who have the legitimacy and knowledge and on the other agents who accept this narrative and carry it along. Formulating a narrative is always open to contestation, therefore, the process and conditions of history narratives production need to be examined. Some groups might advocate a clean break from the past, others might insist on the continuity of the 'othering' as following from history and being an important part in their current perception of the 'other'. An important theme to investigate is who has the power to create the dominant narratives and whose voices are on the other hand marginalized. Constructing a dominant narrative is a part of a political project that could legitimate action and provide for ontological security for the people (Kinnvall 2004, Krolikowski 2008).

As Gustafsson noted in his discussion of the importance of narratives in Sino- Japanese relations, collectives define their relation to a 'historical other' in a variety of way, which depends on the aspects of the other that are emphasized as different or even dangerous (see Figure 1). The other against which a society is presently defined could be either its own past, as it was for example the case for the European Union, or an external 'other' as a physical entity. As he astutely observed, the discourses of difference only emphasize certain aspects of the 'other' as being different from the present Self, while the other differences will be marginalized or transformed into sameness. Therefore, a past aggressor's violence might only be depicted as a part of the 'historical self', while the 'current other' on the other hand is understood as peaceful and not posing any threat to the physical or ontological security of the Self. This debate highlights the importance of relationship between historical memory and identity; the way the historical self and other are remembered shapes how the current self and the current other and its actions are viewed and understood at the moment (Gustafsson 2011: 45).

Relating the theoretical debate to the current state of Sino-Japanese relations, if China's current identity is based on the historical wrongdoings Japan did to China, then the Chinese will continue to interpret every Japanese action through that prism. Therefore, history is not just a matter of the past, but it is no less relevant in the 21st

century and continues to inform China's relationship with Japan. Japanese aggression is therefore not merely a historical event but rather a continuing Japanese attitude towards China which persists until this day.

Identity stability and change- identity crisis

Despite the prominence and relative stability and endurance of some identities, they can never really be fixed and are amenable to change.¹⁶ As Wendt argued: "social identities not inherently stable or unstable, stability is a product of practices of representations of self and other in certain ways" (Wendt 1994). Legro called this condition the 'plasticity of anarchy'; constructivists see identity as neither a product of systemic pressures nor as a never changing and self-reproducing entity, but rather as fluid, stemming from both domestic and international sources (Legro 2009). He noted that the literature on identity is vague on when changes in identity occurs and does not provide generalizable propositions that could be tested in different contexts (Ibid: 38). As Dittmer and Kim argue, identity change, or identity crises comes upon "when the previously accepted psychical and psychological definitions of the collective self are no longer acceptable in the light new political, economic and/or sociological, developments" (Dittmer and Kim 1993:7). Ringmar called this period of time, a 'formative moment', when old identities are broken down and new ones are put into their place (Ringmar 1996). At this time old meanings are renegotiated and new ones become established, nevertheless, the change is neither smooth nor automatic, but rather depends on the existence of new replacement ideas to fit in the place of the old ones. Secondly, the new ideas must carry sufficient promise to appeal to the wider audiences and must be seen as a being able to deliver the promised change. The old ideas that were the basis of the old identities can re-emerge again if the new ideas do not fare well. Historical memory contestations and changes in remembering are an important part of the process of identity renegotiation and often a sign of identity change.

Therefore an identity crisis and a subsequent change in a country's identity can precipitate substantial change in security interests and even national security policy. As Ringmar put it, "the narratives we construct about our state will specify who we are and what role do we play in the world; how our national 'interests' are to be

¹⁶ This is not merely a moot theoretical point, but rather needs to be empirically investigated.

defined, or which foreign policy to pursue” (Ringmar 1996: 455). For example, both Japan in the 19th century and Soviet Union at the end of 20th century dramatically redefined their identities, which lead to a fundamental change in their foreign policies (Larson and Shevchenko 2003).

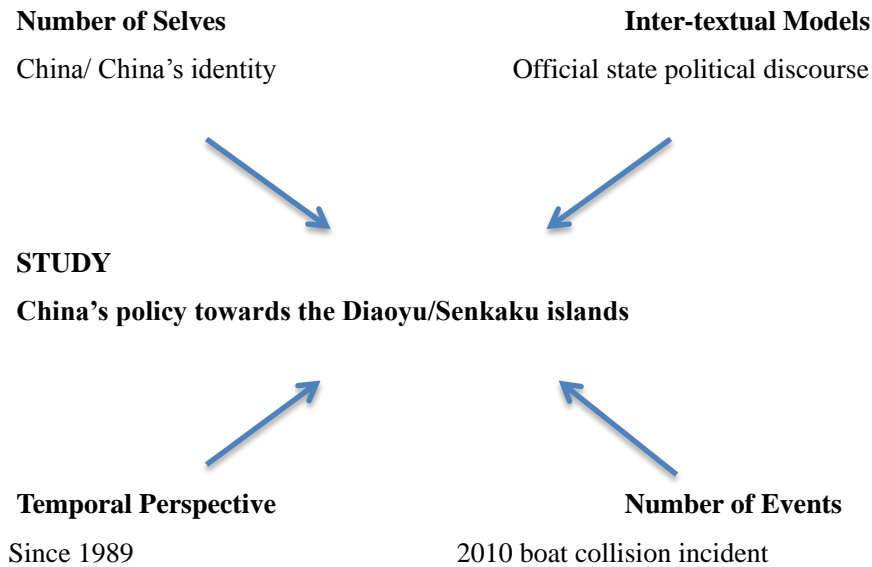
2.3.4. Studying identity through discourse analysis

If identity is an inherently unstable and contested concept, how can we make identity analytically and conceptually useful? How is an identity constructed and reconstructed and, who are the most important actors in the process? When we want to further study identity, how can we recognize it and where shall we look for it? There are inherent constraints on any attempts to quantify identity, as it cannot be readily measured or quantified in the same way positivists treat other variables.¹⁷ Scholars suggested that the content and contestation of identity could be pinpointed via discourse analysis, which is a “qualitative and interpretive recovery of meaning from the language actors use to describe and understand social phenomena” (Abdelal et al 2006: 702). Talking is central to what people do and who they are, which is an important constitutive component of identity formation. As Epstein noted, the methodological advantage of discourse analysis is that it can travel through analytical levels, from individual to state. Therefore, focusing on discourses can be an empirically grounded way of putting together the different levels of analysis in international relations. The key to the study of discourse is according to Epstein identifying of ‘who speaks’, which can uncover complex power relations both inside and outside of state (Epstein 2011). In international relations, states inherently position themselves to or against other states by adopting certain discourses, and these juxtapositions help us identify the most important aspects of state identity. Hansen suggested a methodology through which the identity constructions could be studied in a discourse, which can be graphically represented in the following figure in the case of Sino-Japanese relations:

¹⁷ Nevertheless, some scholars have tried to quantify identity through large sample quantitative questionnaires (Gries et al 2011).

Figure 2: Framework to study identity through discourse analysis.

Adapted from Hansen (2006: 67).



As opposed to quantitative approaches to the study of international relations, discourse analysis requires a degree of cultural sensitivity, which is necessary in order to comprehend variations in meanings and representations. As Neumann noted in his discussion of discourse analysis (Neumann 2008: 61-77), given the abundance rather than paucity of sources, we need to prioritize and identify the most important ones, which help to answer the research puzzle. For example, public speeches of political elites, policy statements, white papers, and records of government meetings are important source of identity construction, as state leaders articulate conceptions of national identity with the greatest salience. In addition, standardized school textbooks, newspaper articles or even cultural monuments, commemorating certain events in the past, can bring attention to some issues as important to the identity construction (Gustafsson 2011, Denton 2005).

Secondly, according to Neumann, we should begin by identifying those terms that indicate a clear construction of the Other and the Self, such as evil, good, justified, attacked, which have to be discursively linked and differentiated in a discourse. An

analytical construction of identity requires identifying which things are articulated, how they are stabilized, and where slips and instabilities between these constructions occur. Foreign policy discourses have spatial, temporal and ethical constructions, all which need to be identified and uncovered. These constructions serve as analytical lenses, which guide the research to uncover the parameters foreign policy discourse. Identity's spatial dimension always involves the construction of boundaries; its temporal dimension deals with themes such as development, change, and repetition. Therefore, the task for the researcher is to map the changes in the spatial and temporal dimensions of identity discourse *vis-a-vis* developments in the state foreign policy in order to establish the effects of identity on policy.

2.3.5 Identity and foreign policy

While the above paragraphs have elaborated on various aspects of identity, its formation and change, they have not yet directly engaged with the most important challenge of identity to international relations, namely its impact on a country's foreign policy. If our understanding of foreign policy is more complex than "the response of a pre-given subject, whether singular or plural, to its environment", (Campbell 1998: x), then identity can greatly enhance our understanding of foreign policy. Nevertheless, to make it analytically useful in international politics, we need to firstly specify the context of state identity in a particular context (Banchoff 1999). Identity is inherently Janus-faced, states do not have a single monolithic identity, but rather as Legro put it "distinct multiple facets of identity that are activated in different contexts and issue areas" (Legro 2009:40). Therefore, China can be socialist, revisionist, and/or developing country, with different views and actions, which all depend on the context. Any constructivist analysis of foreign policy must shift the analytical attention to the state level of analysis. It must explore the links between the identity embedded in the national politics, and the formulation and pursuit of interests. Wendt famously argued that identities serve as the basis of interests (Wendt 1992: 398), however, the relationship between identity and interests remains underspecified.

A particular methodological challenge to studying identity for constructivists is not to conflate identity, interest and behaviour on the one hand, and not to separate them on

the other. As Bukovansky put it “the relationship between identity and interest is dialectical in that both identities and interests may be reconstituted in the political process; and it is through the political process that roles and policies are adopted and challenged” (Bukovansky 1997: 211). However, we need to be careful when utilizing identity, as we cannot easily force identity into the rationalist explanatory framework, which would strip it of its normative and historical dimensions and so would only reduce it into a cognitive instrument in the pursuit of material interests (Banchoff 1999: 262). Rather we need to rethink the relationship between identity and behaviour, which can be seen as safeguarding certain identities, as creating boundaries and forging bonds. Or secondly, we can think of action as an instrument to manifest identity and desire for a particular Self to be satisfied. Nevertheless, identity cannot be conflated with foreign policy, as in some post-structuralist scholarship (Campbell 1998). Identity inherently suffers from an ‘agency deficit’ and does not directly ‘generate motivational dispositions’ (McCourt 2011). Identity is not by itself a concept that has action at its heart and therefore according to McCourt we cannot automatically assume a direct link between a certain identity and action and therefore we need to import agency into identity-based accounts. Similarly Hopf argued, that identity thus shapes notions of interest, identities are linked, causally and constitutively, to foreign policy attitudes (Hopf 2005). On the other hand, other scholars suggested abandoning the concept of interest altogether when incorporating identity into analytical frameworks of foreign behavior (Ashizawa 2008).

To make identity analytically useful, scholars produced insightful analytical frameworks to make sense of the identity/behaviour nexus. For example, Banchoff (1999) suggested a two-step framework to first pinpoint the content of state identity and secondly establish its effects on state action. To pinpoint the content of identity, we firstly need to delineate the policy idea in question, then secondly, select evidence that illuminates the content of state identity in the given case, such as the public discourse of political elites, media images, and education. Thirdly, we can analyse the descriptive and narrative dimensions of identity discourse, which delineate identity such as how states are identified as friends or foes, or which memories are articulated as a backdrop for current politics. Lastly, the persistence of identity over time must be demonstrated. Identity must have permanence and rootedness, not just

some expression of contemporary domestic forces.

Figure 3: Effect of identity on state international action: a two- step analytical framework (Banchoff 1999)

Analytical steps	1 st step	2 nd step
	<u>Specification of state identity</u> Identity content: internal and external dimension	<u>Effect of identity on state action</u> communicative and descriptive action
1 st	Policy area Delineation of policy area in question- first step to determine state identity	Communicative- Descriptive dimension of identity discourse Effects of the description of events on articulation of state interests
2 nd	Evidence of identity Official political discourse Public discourse, legal norms, media images, education	Narrative dimension of identity discourse Connection between narrative, which links past to the present, and state interests
3 rd	Analysis of identity discourse Descriptive and narrative discourse components	Behavioural- Congruence test State behaviour must be consistent with identity
4 th	Identity persistence Rootedness in state institutions and domestic political discourse	Incongruence test Behaviour criticised as inconsistent with identity

The second step in Banchoff's framework would be to point out how an identity constrains state behaviour; constructivists must demonstrate that publicly articulated conceptions of state identity can constrain the course of foreign policy goals and behaviour in a given international context. Banchoff's framework comprises two components of state action: communicative and behavioural. While rationalist approaches to international relations tend to emphasize the behavioural aspects of state action, such as specific state policy, constructivists pay attention to the communicative component of action as well. Words, just like deeds constitute

international politics; talk is 'not cheap', but helps to shape reality.

When determining the effect of identity on state action, firstly, we need to specify the descriptive and narrative dimensions of state identity. The descriptive dimension of identity discourse reduces the complexity of the international environment by setting states in a particular temporal and spatial context (Banchoff 1999: 270). Moreover, it describes the state position with respect to the other states and in these descriptions some relationships emerge as more important than others. This could be captured by describing a state's position with respect to other state, as to have an identity means to know where we are coming from and suggest visions for the future. Secondly, we need to demonstrate a powerful link between the narrative dimension of identity and the articulation of security interests. Finally, we have to demonstrate the effects of identity: state behaviour should not contradict state identity. Similarly, if domestic actors attack policies for their non-conformity to an identity, then the state identity can be seen as very strong. When a foreign policy fundamentally stems from state identity, then the foreign policy follows a specific path that is within the boundaries of identity discourse.

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter mapped the richness of international relations theorizing. First of all, the dominant theories, realism and liberalism, were introduced and applied to Sino-Japanese relations and the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute. Afterwards, constructivism as an alternative theoretical paradigm for the understanding of Sino-Japanese relations was juxtaposed to the rationalist theories. This meta-theoretical step paved the way for the introduction of the concept of identity in international relations, which is the focus of this research project. Central dimensions of identity, namely its formation, stability and impact on foreign policy were subsequently addressed. The detailed discussion was necessary in order to prepare the ground for further explorations and analysis of China's identity in chapters 4 and 5 which discuss the developments in China's identity after 1989 and China's policy towards the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands, respectively.

Nevertheless, the next chapter, chapter 3, takes a step back and discusses the

formative events in China's history, which serve as important foundations of China's identity. The continuing importance of the Opium Wars and particularly Sino-Japanese Wars in China's relations with Japan necessitates a detailed discussion of these historical events.

Chapter 3: Sino-Japanese relations:

The continuing importance of history

3.1. Past in the present

Since the end of the Cold War, historical controversies have emerged as one of the most heated issues in Sino-Japanese relations (Rose 2005, Gong and Teo 2010). While interpretations of history always divided China and Japan, and were sometimes manifested in brief disputes, such as the 1982 Japanese textbook controversy, nevertheless, history only played second fiddle to economic cooperation after the 1972 normalisation of relations. The 1982 incident, which resulted from an apparent Japanese move to approve a history textbook that whitewashed Japanese atrocities in China,¹⁸ briefly captured the attention of both countries, but was, nevertheless, quickly swept under the carpet and overall caused little damage to the bilateral relationship (Rose 1998).

As elaborated in chapter 2, historical memory, the way the past is remembered in the present is an important component of state identity. Collective memory plays an important role in uniting a group of people, which defines who the group members are and who are outside of the group. The collective membership to a group is often defined around a collection of stories about the past that could be either positive or negative. Particularly important historical events in a state's history, the so called 'chosen traumas' and 'chosen glories' are constitutive elements of the group identity formation (Wang 2012: 20-23). These constitutive stories are reproduced in the society and passed to subsequent generations both through state institutions and family members. Therefore, future generations could share the suffering or humiliations of their ancestors even though they are not the victims themselves. Thus, historical memory can serve as an important foundation of foreign behaviour that shapes a country's foreign policy or patterns of interactions between in the international area.

3.1.1 The historical foundations of China's 'victimized' identity

Since the end of the Cold War, the modern period in China's history since mid-19th century, has received much more attention at the domestic level in China, particularly

¹⁸ For example when discussing the Japanese invasion of China during the Second World War, the textbook would state that the Japanese army 'advanced' and not 'invaded', etc.

in education and popular culture (Callahan 2004, He 2009, Wang 2012). Interestingly, the historical narratives focused less on glorifying the achievements of the Chinese people in the past, as official narratives tend to do, but rather paid close attention to the defeats, injustices and humiliations China suffered in the past (Kaufman 2010). The discourse on China's past humiliations revolves around its central theme- the Century of Humiliation and the quest to restore China's dignity and power.

The Century of Humiliation refers to the 100-odd years from the First Opium War of 1839 when China lost its position of predominant power in Asia to the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949 when Chinese people according to Mao Zedong, 'stood up'. The key events during the century-long period were the two Opium Wars when China was defeated and forced to grant concessions to Western imperialist powers and two Sino-Japanese Wars when parts of China were invaded and subjected to brutal occupation.¹⁹ In the words of Kaufmann, the Century of Humiliation serves as "a historical touchstone for China's aspirations" and continues to impact China's foreign relations today (Kaufmann, 2010: 26).

The goal of this chapter is to review the most important historical events in both 19th and 20th centuries that have recently come to the forefront of China's foreign relations with Japan. These events matter not so much in themselves, but rather because they shape China's understandings of itself and others in the 21st century. Discussing these historical events is especially important in order to understand contemporary Sino-Japanese relations, and particularly to account for China's position towards the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute. This chapter proceeds as follows: firstly, I discuss the two Opium Wars and the two Sino-Japanese Wars with the focus on the most important events and facts themselves. Afterwards, I analyse their psychological impact on China's consciousness. I highlight the idiosyncratic relations between China and Japan, particularly the change of relative status between the two following the subjugation China suffered.

3.2 The Opium Wars: 1839-1860: The first blow to China's self-confidence

The term Opium Wars refers to two separate military conflicts, the 1839-1842 and 1856-1860 wars, which were the consequence of a trade and diplomacy dispute

¹⁹Nevertheless, there are some in China who claim that the humiliation will only end once Taiwan is reunited politically with the Chinese Mainland.

between China and the United Kingdom.²⁰ The First Opium War was an overwhelming British military victory, when the British forces easily defeated the Chinese Imperial army in a string of land and naval battles. The war resulted in a series of concessions to Britain, also known as 'unequal treaties', such as the resumption of the opium trade, opening of new treaty ports and the cession of Hong Kong Island. The Second Opium War waged in 1856-1860 was largely fought for similar reasons, when the Qing dynasty refused the demands of Western imperialist powers. The conflict was another decisive Western victory; in 1857 the joint Anglo-French forces took Guangzhou and following a crucial naval battle, the British captured strategic coastal cities up to Shanghai. In 1860 Beijing was occupied for a month and during the occupation, the Western armies destroyed the Yuanming Yuan palace. The Palace was the home of beautiful gardens and also was also a repository of the best Chinese art and literature, and later came to symbolize the destruction and humiliation brought upon China (Ringmar 2011). The Second Opium War was concluded with the Convention of Peking, where China was obliged to pay indemnities, legalize the opium trade in China, and cede Kowloon to Britain. In both wars, China was defeated due to its inferior military modernisation; the Western infantry and navy possessed superior firepower and therefore easily defeated the numerically superior Chinese army.

The Opium Wars brought upon monumental changes to China which culminated in the demise of the Qing monarchy and the establishment of the Republic of China. Writing half a century ago, Richard Harris noted their significance and claimed that Chinese think about their history in terms of before and after the Opium Wars (Harris 1959). Prior to the confrontation with the West, China sat at a pinnacle of social hierarchy in Asia and the Sino-centric regional order effectively reproduced the social hierarchy and Chinese superiority. Nevertheless, after the Opium Wars, China was reduced to a semi-colonial country itself, 'carved up like a melon' (*guafen*) and divided into foreign spheres of influence.

Following the Opium Wars and the collapse of its self-image, China was faced by an identity crisis which turned it to re-examine its identity. China gradually underwent a transition into a modern polity; the previously accepted social relations started to

²⁰ One of the best history books on the subject is Julia Lowell's 'The Opium War: drugs, dreams and the making of China', which has been consulted for this chapter. (Lowell 2011).

erode and were supplanted by new sets of ideas. The Chinese tributary system was based on cultural rather than on national differences (Chen 2005) and was dominated by Confucian self-images of Self and Other. Its advanced culture had been the basis for Chinese superiority towards the 'Others', who were often referred only to as 'barbarians' (*yidi*). Nevertheless, after the central argument of the Chinese civilisation- the superiority of Chinese culture - collapsed and the Chinese began to embrace notions of Chinese nation and Chinese state (Chen 2005: 38). The Chinese 'self-strengthening' represented more than just economic and military modernisation, but more importantly a change in Chinese identity, an attempt to redefine and reinvent China. The encounter with the West forced the Chinese to accept Western notions, such as nation, state, sovereignty, citizenship, identity, when driven by the urge to become a strong nation again and to repel any future invasion and to redress injustices done to the Chinese people, which is the second central theme in the Century of Humiliation narrative. Therefore, the quest for a new national identity was driven by the urge to make China a strong and powerful state again.

3.3 The Sino-Japanese Wars: 1894-1945: The darkest hour of Sino-Japanese history

Even though the defeats by Western countries decisively impacted on China and shook the Chinese self-confidence, the greatest subjugation and humiliation was inflicted by Japan (Chan and Bridges 2006:131). Both China and Japan were originally affected by Western imperialism in the mid-19th century; what the Opium Wars meant for China, the arrival of Black Ships of Commodore Matthew Perry was for Japan. Japan also had to accept the terms of international society that were very different from its own (Legro 2009, Suzuki 2009), was forced to make concessions to foreign powers and realized its own technological backwardness and need for reform. However, the Meiji Restoration managed in an incredibly short time to reform the country, which led to enormous changes in the political and social structure of Japan, such as power centralised under the Emperor and the abolishment of the Samurai class. Nevertheless, unlike the Chinese modernisation efforts, Japan succeeded in modernizing both its economy and its military, which allowed the emergence of Japan as a great power in less than fifty years and decisively impacted on

Sino-Japanese relations.²¹

The success and failure of Japan's and China's modernisation programs became particularly pronounced during the First Sino-Japanese War from 1894-95. The War emerged out of a dispute over influence on the Korean peninsula. Traditionally, Korea was a part of China's tributary system and was reduced to a semi-colonial status. Nevertheless, Japanese expansionism targeted Korea, and Japan started actively meddling into Korea's affairs in the late 19th century. The Sino-Japanese competition for dominance over Korea culminated in the First Sino-Japanese War. Following a brief period of fighting, Japan pushed Chinese forces out of Korea and even occupied the Liaodong Peninsula. The First Sino-Japanese War was concluded with the Treaty of Shimonoseki, which forced China to recognise the independence of Korea, cede Taiwan as well as open ports to Japan. On behalf of China the treaty was signed by Li Hongzhang, a leading statesman of the Qing Empire. Unfortunately for him, his name entered history as symbol of weakness and he has been depicted as a traitor in modern official Chinese historiography.

Following the First Sino-Japanese War, Japan created a colonial empire itself and joined the ranks of Western powers exploiting China by forcing unequal treaties. Subsequent relations between China and Japan were not based on the principle of equality, but rather on Japanese expansionism. Japanese imperialism culminated in 1930s and 1940s; in 1931 Japanese soldiers conspired to blow up a railway and use it as a pretext for an invasion of Manchuria,²² which became known as the Mukden Incident. The Second Sino-Japanese War²³ from 1937-1945 nevertheless became the most traumatic experience during the Century of Humiliation and the darkest hour of Sino-Japanese relations. The 1937 Marco Polo Bridge Incident evolved into a full-scale war between China and Japan, which ended only after the Japanese capitulation in 1945. The atrocities committed by the Japanese Imperial Army in China have left a profound legacy of humiliation and resentment. Japanese troops

²¹ A Japanese historian writes that the success of Japanese reforms as compared to China can be attributed to three additional factors: the imperialist pressure was not so strong, Japan learnt about China's defeats in time and also the lack of Japan's egocentrism enabled Japan to admit its weakness to pursue necessary reforms in time (Kitaoka 2011).

²² The area covers contemporary Liaoning, Jilin and Heilongjiang provinces. The events are also known as the '18 September Incident' in China.

²³ Also known as the 'War of resistance against Japan' in China.

were found responsible for mass killings, human experimentation, biological and chemical warfare as well as forcing women into sexual slavery (the so called 'comfort women').

Nevertheless, the Nanjing Massacre came down through history as the most horrible atrocity, when the Japanese army killed between 250,000-300,000 civilians after the capture of Nanjing in September 1937. As Rose noted it is difficult to quantify the atrocities committed both against Chinese troops and civilians by the Japanese army, but the reliable estimates are somewhere around 10 million people (Rose 1998:15). Overall, the war left deep physical and psychological scars on China, the country suffered major devastation and conceivably around 20 million casualties, making it one of the most devastating conflicts in history.

3.4 Emergence of Japan as the Other

The sense of inferiority and humiliation was particularly acute when China was compared to Japan; the two Sino-Japanese wars were a particularly bitter psychological blow to China. Firstly, China has always considered itself superior to Japan; China's 'younger brother' was a part of the Chinese tributary system and had to pay tribute to China. Culturally, Japan was heavily influenced by China; Buddhism as well as Chinese characters were introduced to Japan from China. Nevertheless, Japan was much quicker at modernizing in the 19th century and coping with the new challenges and therefore supplanted China as the greatest power in Asia. Therefore the shock and the subsequent humiliation was even more pronounced. As one Western scholar put it:

“[while] China was already accustomed to rapacious Western powers squabbling over its riches, but had remained self-confident in the knowledge of these powers' irrelevance. However, the assault from Japan, a speck of dust in its own backyard, shattered this self-assurance and was experienced as a shocking and intolerable humiliation” (Greenfeld 2012).

Secondly, the inequality and often brutality with which Japan treated China led to indignation among the Chinese people. Originally, the bilateral relationship had been between equals based on the Sino-Japanese Amity Treaty of 1871, but, following the Sino-Japanese War and the Treaty of Shimonoseki, Japan started to systematically exploit China. The 1915 '21 Demands to China', which were as unrealistic as they

were unfair, led to outbursts of anti-Japan sentiment and an upsurge in nationalism, which later culminated in the May 4 Movement (Luo 1993).²⁴ The exploitation of China by Japan manifested in the brutal conduct of the Japanese troops in China during the Second Sino-Japanese War, especially towards the civilian population. Especially, the Nanjing Massacre stands out as a shocking example of the atrocities committed by the Japanese army.²⁵

Before the Japanese invasion in 1930s, Chinese people identified with Japan and only afterward the national consciousness changed against Japan. The 1894-95 War was no longer understood as only the defeat of Manchu Empire, but rather became a defeat of the Chinese people themselves (Friedman 1995: 137). Nevertheless, following the Second Sino-Japanese War the sentiments changed completely and Japan became China's worst enemy. The wrongdoings and injustices committed by Japan were acutely felt by the Chinese people. From that time, Japanese were referred to in China as devils (*guizi*), which captured the Chinese deep-seated feelings of animosity and resentment. While periodically Sino-Japanese relations improved at the official level, at the personal level, the Chinese people were not able to forget the wrongs Japan committed in China.

3.5 Conclusion

The Opium and Sino-Japanese Wars had a decisive impact on the evolution of modern China and its identity. The defeat in the Opium Wars started monumental transformative processes that eventually led to the abolishment of the Chinese Empire and the establishment of the Republic of China. China embraced Western notions of nation and state and started a transformation into a modern polity. Similarly, the importance of Sino-Japanese Wars in China cannot be overestimated. Not only did the two events led to a change of government in China, but rather fundamentally defined the relations between China and Japan. As a result of the atrocities committed in China, Japan became the Other against whom China became to define itself. Even after almost 70 years, the deep-seated feelings of resentment are felt acutely among people in China.

Nevertheless, the traumatic experiences of the past have not stayed in the history

²⁴ The 1919 Treaty of Versailles gave German concessions in China to Japan.

²⁵ The topic was recently introduced to Western audiences by Iris Chang's best-selling book 'The Rape of Nanjing'.

textbooks only, but continued to frame the bilateral relations between China and Japan. The following chapters build upon the historical background and demonstrate how the current Sino-Japanese relations are heavily impacted by the events of the 19th and 20th century. The following chapter discusses the changes of China's self-understanding after 1989. I argue that China has embraced a new, 'victimized' identity as a result of the identity crisis China was embroiled in since 1989. Japan, viewed through the prism of history, became the Other against which the new Chinese identity became defined.

Chapter 4: China's identity after 1989

4.1 China's socialist identity during the Cold War

In 1949, the PRC was established and Communism became the official ideology in China. Although Japan was the main enemy during the Second World War²⁶ and the legitimacy of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was directly tied to its anti-Japanese resistance (Johnson 1962), the fellow-Chinese, the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) with their American sponsors, and not Japan, became the main 'Other' against which the new Chinese socialist identity was defined. Following an exhausting war, the state discourse focused on positive identifications, such as the heroism of the Chinese (Communist) soldiers and the victory in the War against Japan (Gries 2004: 72-79). Contributions by the Nationalist troops were overlooked and all credit was given solely to the Communists under the leadership of Mao Zedong. While the atrocities committed by the Japanese army were not entirely forgotten, they were simply laid aside as they did not fit into the national identity discourse, which championed the building of the 'new man' and the development of communism in China (Reilly 2006).²⁷ There was no meaningful discussion on the roles the Nationalists and Communists had played in the War, or the nature of Chinese collaboration/resistance against Japan in the occupied areas (Mitter 2003). Anti-Japanese sentiment persisted primarily at the personal level, but was suppressed and marginalized in the state dominant discourse, which emphasized socialism/communism at the expense of nationalism.

International implications of China's Cold War socialist identity

During the Cold War period China initially remained outside of the international system due to its capitalist-dominated leadership. Therefore, China began integration into the international society as a latecomer and joined the United Nations as late as in 1971. Kaufmann speculated that the painful memories of the century of humiliation were the driving force behind Chinese isolationism and a general lack of engagement with the international system (Kaufman 2010). The central theme of Chinese foreign policy during this period resulting from its socialist identity was the

²⁶ Also known as the Second Sino-Japanese War, or the War of Resistance against Japan in China.

²⁷ In Europe, major powers, be it victorious or defeated, gradually started to critically reflect on the past, which became the basis for new post-war identities. Former enemies, such as Germany and Poland gradually embarked on a process of reconciliation.

resistance to ‘American imperialism’, which translated into foreign policy themes of anti-imperialism and anti-hegemonism (Friedman 1994). The capitalist Japan became a US ally in the Cold War, which rendered it China’s enemy and effectively separated the two countries in the early Cold War period and reduced bilateral relations. In 1950, China signed the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Alliance with the USSR. China’s socialist identity was manifested again after the outbreak of the Korean War. China entered the conflict on the behalf of the communist North after an exogenously triggered mobilization of China’s national identity (Dittmer and Kim 1993: 259).

Tensions within China’s socialist identity

Despite being firmly embedded in the state structure and domestic political discourse, China’s socialist identity did not remain uncontested during the Cold War period. Periodic tensions within the identity discourse, such as the Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution, concerned different interpretations of socialism in China. Nevertheless, the most serious external manifestation of China’s identity during the Cold War period was the Sino-Soviet Split. Competing visions of socialism led to tensions in the Sino-Soviet alliance and eventually led to the Sino-Soviet split. According to Hopf, Sino-Soviet relations changed following a shift of Soviet identity after the death of Stalin. While, following the death of Stalin, Soviet identity became more relaxed and inclusive, Chinese identity moved in the opposite direction and became even more ‘Stalinized’ (Hopf 2009: 299). The identity gap became significant as of 1959 and started to affect the bilateral relations, such as the Soviet refusal to pass nuclear weapon to China. If anything, the differing identities seemed further apart as China embarked on economic reform and openness after 1978, while the Soviet Union did not start reform until the second half of the 1980s.

4.2 China’s identity crisis

As stipulated in chapter 2, while identities are enduring and stable, they are not set in stone and at the same time are amenable to change. The change comes usually as a result of strong pressure from both domestic and international levels. Temporally, the changes in identity come about when the preciously accepted features of the collective Self are no longer acceptable in the light of new political, social or economic conditions. For China, the domestic and international events of 1989

shattered the already insecure China's socialist identity and put the country into a state of identity crises from which it has still yet not recovered and is manifested in China's international relations, particularly with Japan.

Domestic challenges

The year of 1989 is remembered in the West as the end of the Cold War. Nevertheless, half a year before the wave of European revolutions, the Chinese intellectual and popular movement which culminated in the Tiananmen Square protests was brutally crushed by the PLA. With the demise of the Soviet Union socialism after a decade of liberalisation collapsed as a collective identity in China. As a consequence of the ideological turmoil of the previous decades, Chinese society lacked spiritual instruments, or sets of collective ideas, to guide the economic transition from state to market economy in the post-1989 world. Moreover, after the Tiananmen Incident and an internal conflict among the top leadership, the CCP was in a shaky position and faced an uncertain future.

Nevertheless, at this time of ontological and political instability, Chinese society was experiencing profound economic and social transformations, which started with the 'opening' of China in late 1970s. Economic reforms increased the level of global transactions and at the same time reduced state regulatory controls (Zweig 2002), which weakened the state and decentralised power to local governments, but at the same time created new challenges for sustainable development (Cheng and Zhang 1999). As a consequence, China's proletarian identity which had been the basis of the society during the Cold War, and was successfully mobilized in the 1950s and 1960s, started to wane, which represented a gradual decline of China's socialist identity. Therefore, as a consequence of the 'opening', Chinese society became increasingly pluralistic, which started to impact Chinese politics since the mid-1980s (Chen 1995).

International challenges

After the end of the Cold War the international system was transformed from bipolarity to unipolarity rendering the United States the sole superpower, which rendered China's position in the international society a very ambiguous one. According to one scholar, this was due to three reasons: Western confidence in

liberalism was in the post-Cold War manifested in the “end of history” thesis, and China became labelled as “the last bastion of communism” or “the last Leninist state”, making it the “Other” in the international society. Secondly, China was criticized for its poor human right record and frequent abuses, and finally, China’s economic and military growth gave rise to a “China threat ” discourse in the West (Suzuki 2007:33).²⁸ Therefore the Western powers confirmed their democratic identities by positioning themselves against China, which in turn according to Chinese scholars spawned feelings of injustice and oppression in China (Zhang 2001, Chen 2002).

Following the Tiananmen crackdown, Western countries imposed diplomatic and economic sanctions, which included suspension of high-level official visits, official development assistance, export credits, and sales of military equipment. Consequently, in the following years, tourism, FDI and foreign lending declined; the latter two had played a key role in China’s economic development. Therefore, as a response to the new international environment, China began to experience a siege mentality and a belief that the West (led by the United States) intends to harm China. Chinese intellectuals particularly opposed the often simplistic and biased portrayal of China in the Western media, which did not pay enough attention and sensitivity to China’s development under unique conditions (Jia 2001).

Moreover, they shared the belief that the West was antagonistic to China and treated China unfairly. Memories of the past oppression by the Western emerged again making an easy and obvious parallel to China’s experience during the 19th century when China was bullied by Western powers. Wang Jisi, who now serves as the Dean of the School of International Studies at the Peking University captured this sentiment unambiguously: “More than half a century since the founding of the People’s Republic of China, it is still widely believed among China’s political elites that the United States, joined by other hostile external forces, is intent on efforts to conquer, divide, destabilize, and demonize China” (Wang 2001). While United States and Japan were viewed in the 1980s as role models to emulate, from the 1990s the Chinese views of both became more antagonistic (Rozman 2002).

In general, while China considered the international environment more or less benign in the 1980s, however the perception changed to a more hostile one in the 1990s,

²⁸ For a post-modernist critique of the ‘China threat’ theory, see Pan (2004)

although the immediate Soviet threat had disappeared. Despite the fact that China normalised diplomatic relations in the early 1990s with South Korea, Saudi Arabia and Singapore, events such as the 1995-96 Taiwan crises, when the United States responded with an unprecedented show of force, only confirmed the image of a belligerent and hostile America, while the 1993-94 nuclear crisis on the Korean peninsula implied an unstable regional environment. Chinese analysts in the early 1990s were particularly anxious about the potential “emergence of Japan as a military power” which would be characterized by an independent foreign policy and potential development of nuclear weapons and posing danger to China (Glaser 1993:256-259). Therefore, China’s ontological security did not increase in the post-Cold War period; China still felt insecure and vulnerable in the uncertain world even despite an “unprecedented peaceful national security environment” and an absence of a direct military threat (Shambaugh 1994:55).

The fragmentation of China’s post-Cold War identity

The events of 1989 not only weakened China’s identity, but also fragmented the process of identity renegotiation. As established in chapter 2, national identity is not given but constructed by different groups in the society. In the post-Cold War period, more than ever, according to analysts, China’s national identity has been less stable and more contested (Carlson 2007). Due to China’s economic success, China experiences more pressure from the international community to take leadership roles.²⁹ Nevertheless, previously China has been always reacting to outside influences and pressures and feels uncomfortable with embracing leadership.

While the government is the most important actor, identity formation is not entirely monopolized by the state. The official agents are interested in clear-cut differences, between the inside and the outside. However, there is a plethora of voices and actors who contest these constructions inside as well as outside of China. While the CCP remained the dominant voice shaping the discourse and identity in China, it has faced an unprecedented degree of contestation. Even though China is an authoritarian state and lacks a genuine political opposition, which is present in democratic countries, Chinese society is increasingly becoming more pluralistic and citizens have more

²⁹ See Zoellick’s infamous speech urging China to become responsible stakeholder.
<http://2001-2009.state.gov/s/d/former/zoellick/rem/53682.htm>

opportunity to express their opinions and even to criticize the government (Kelly 2006, Pei 1998).³⁰

While China's Diaoyu/Senkaku islands policy is firmly in the hands of the Chinese government, especially the top leadership, the policy-making process in China has become more contested. A recent study identified changes in the face of China's official decision-making apparatus and noted a fracturing of authority in foreign policy formulation and a diversity of approaches to foreign policy issues (Jakobsen and Knox 2010). Concerning Diaoyu/Senkaku islands policy, Chinese netizens have been particularly vocal about Sino-Japanese relations and unyielding in pressuring the Chinese government to adopt a tougher stance towards Japan, via protests or internet petitions.

Moreover, civil society groups in Hong Kong and Taiwan have been very active about the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands and often have taken positions very critical of Japan (Bridges 2003: 1059-1060), as demonstrated by their repeated attempts to land on the islands.³¹ All these discourses in one way or the other challenge the dominant discourse of the government, which comes under pressure. Given the opacity of China's decision-making process, it is difficult to tell to what extent the competing narratives shaped the dominant narrative championed by the Chinese government. Nevertheless, even if the direct impact is unknown, they have continued to frame the boundaries within which the official policy is constructed and therefore at times reduced or expanded the available policy possibilities.

To conclude, China's socialist identity has been significantly weakened in the post-Cold War era. As a consequence of both the international decline of socialism and domestic liberalisation, China's socialist identity became undermined. Moreover, initially in the post-1989 world when suffering from international sanctions, China was reduced to a position of pariah in the international society. Moreover, China's identity became much more fragmented with a plethora of actors shaping the developments of the new post-Cold War identity. Despite the CCP's dominant position, new voices have managed to create competing narratives challenging the

³⁰ Another source of competing narratives would be from the various ethnic groups in China.

³¹ In Hong Kong, the groups that most loudly contest Japan's claims to the islands are ironically among the fiercest critics of the Beijing government.

official China's narratives, for example in areas such as relations with Japan (Gries 2005).

4.3 China's identity discourses in the post-Cold War world

4.3.1 The decline of Western liberal ideas in economic development discourse

As discussed in the previous section, China's identity entered a period of insecurity and uncertainty in the post-Cold War world. Therefore, in the 1990s, new ideas emerged in the domestic political discourse in China to fill in the vacuum and stabilize China's identity. In the 1980s joint western-inspired political and economic reforms were championed by intellectuals and a part of the political leadership as the only way to modernize China. However, from the 1990s the government actively fostered a connection between strong government and strong China and dismissed the theme of liberalisation. Strong government became necessary to manage China's economic growth; under a weak government the economic modernisation would lead to a profound national crisis, jeopardizing the survival of the state (Zheng 1999: 55). Therefore, the discourse on China's modernisation suppressed free-market capitalism and prioritised the nation-state and argued that any reforms that would threaten the nation-state would be undesirable.

The new discourse championed by the government tapped into the narrative of modern Chinese history, which has been full of crises which happened due to the weakness of the Imperial rule, the intrusion of the Western powers and subsequent humiliations of China. In the 19th century, China due to its weakness lost effective control of one-third of its territory and was internally torn apart by massive rebellions, such as the Taiping rebellion. Similarly, after 1911, the Republican government was unable to restore order and chaos was prevalent especially during the Warlord era. The discourse on the strong government as a prerequisite for a strong country has its roots in Confucianism and legalism, which has likewise with Chinese culture been experiencing a revival in Chinese society following the decline of communism (Meissner 2006: 8-9).³²

Most importantly, the post-1989 discourse imagined the Chinese state, Chinese

³² For a discussion on the relationship and dynamics between the Confucius rhetoric and Marxist orthodoxy in contemporary official discourse in China, see Billioud (2012)

nation and the CCP as one and most importantly conflated the nation with the state.³³ Popular nationalism was reconstructed into patriotism, partially out of fear of ethnic nationalisms, but also to consolidate the power of the Chinese government weakened by the events of 1989 and became in essence similar to Benedict Anderson's "official nationalism" (Zheng 1999: 93).

4.3.2 Chinese intellectual imagining of China after 1989

One of the most unexpected developments in the post-1989 China has been the collusion between state and intellectuals discourses on the future of China. While the two were quite divergent in 1980s, in the 1990s they began to parallel each other. While in the 1980s the government was critical of the West (Shambaugh 1993), Chinese intellectuals rather blamed Chinese culture and indirectly the government for China's backwardness (the so called 'culture fever') and looked up to the West as a source of inspiration (Wang 1996). Namely, intellectuals encouraged by the economic success of reforms tried to promote a new identity for the country- 'love the country-hate the government', and championed political reforms alongside the economic ones, the so called 'liberal nationalism'. Chinese intellectuals were trying to imagine a new China and wanted to distance it from the past; they were alienated by socialism and the state, with which they stopped to identify with and looked for the inspiration in the West (Zhao 2004, chapter 4).³⁴ They praised the economic and political successes of the American system and the legal system as well as checks and balances of power as examples for China to learn from. Japan was likewise featured and covered prominently in this discursive construction, and was presented in a very positive fashion (Rozman 2002:97), as a model to emulate since it was combining Western capitalism and Asian values.³⁵

Chinese Intellectuals perceived acutely the situation China was in after 1989; they were aware of the domestic and international predicaments China was facing. While

³³ The fate of the River Elegy television series is perhaps the most striking example of struggle of competing narratives in the post 6/4 China. After June 4, an official attack from the conservative circles was launched against the series and it subsequently became banned in China.

³⁴ The search for a new national identity culminated with the River Elegy television series, which explicitly called for a transformation of China along the Western standards (Ma 1996)

³⁵ Yang and Lim observed that the "idolisation of Western societies and the sense of national crisis of the intellectuals of the 1970s and 1980s bear great similarities to intellectuals in the late 19th century and early 20th century" (Yang and Lim 2010: 467).

perhaps during the 1980s the anti-traditionalism which dominated the intellectual discourse in China was too cynical towards Chinese culture and too naive and optimistic towards the West, the trend was completely reversed in the next decade. As a consequence, Zhao argued, intellectuals developed a sense for a new collective identity for the Chinese people (Zhao 1997: 731) which suppressed idealisation of the West. They criticized the United States for interfering into the domestic politics of different countries and for inconsistencies in its behaviour. A prominent scholar and member of the executive council of the The Chinese Association of American Studies castigated US foreign behavior:

“This bullying approach (of the United States) may style itself as “playing a leadership role” or “assuming” some “duty,” but in fact it is placing itself in a predicament, being bereft of support because of pursuing unjust causes and incapable of imposing its will upon others” (Yang 1991:162 quoted in Niu 2006).

Some neo-conservative scholars, such as He Xin offered strong critiques of United States foreign policy and Chinese intellectuals admiring the United States. He argued that the US will try to undermine China and its development, particularly in the post-cold War period “the United States will accelerate its efforts to subvert China’s economy, create internal chaos and finally divide and dissolve China” (He 1991:393 quoted in Niu 2006).

Given that the westernisation in post-Soviet Russia ended up in a complete failure, it brought back uneasy memories of a weak China being exploited by Western powers and Japan, making the strong state as the only prerequisite for a strong China became inevitable. Moreover, according to Zhao, the Chinese intellectuals were very sensitive to the popular works in the West that impacted China as well, such as *The End of History and the Last Man* as well as *Clash of Civilisations*, which confirmed the scepticism of the Chinese intellectuals about the hostile intentions of the West, especially the United States. As a response came a wave of popular books such as including *China Can Say No* (*zhongguo keyi shuo bu*, 1996), *Behind the Demonization of China* (*zai yaomohua zhongguo de beihou*, 1996) and *The Way Out for China: Under the Shadow of Globalization* (*Quanqiu hua yinying xia de zhongguo zhi lu*, 1999), which became bestsellers, shared a strong critique of the West and Western-influenced intellectuals in China who are responsible for country’s problems. ‘China can say no’ expressed the dissatisfaction and frustration

of the Chinese intellectuals about the unfair treatment of China by the Western countries, especially the United States, in the early 1990s. The rejection of China's bid to join the World Trade Organisation, failure to win the bid for the 2000 summer Olympics and generally blames the United States for making China the scapegoat of its problems. The book also criticized Japan's policies and attitudes towards Japan, rejected Japan's bid for the Permanent Seat in UNSC and called for reparations for Japan's actions during the Second Sino-Japanese War (Song et al 1996).

Therefore, we could concur with one Chinese scholar who observed a "drastic discourse turn of Chinese intellectual circles" following the Tiananmen Incident (Niu 2006). The official and intellectual discourse coincided in their critique of the Western liberalism and the support of a strong state and Party seemed the only viable way for intellectuals to redress the past injustices and make China richer and stronger.

4.4 China's 'victimized identity'

The construction of national identity is a contested process during which political actors articulate and gain recognition for memories and narratives that underpin specific constructions of identity (Callahan 2010, Wang 2012). Policies often tap into public memory in order to mobilize societal resources when articulating particular visions of collective identity. The CCP in order to restore China from its identity crises and to shore up its waning legitimacy brought up the discursive theme of foreign aggression and Chinese victimization. Renwick and Cao noted the emergence of a new discursive theme of 'victimhood' in the Chinese political discourse since the 1990s (Renwick and Cao 1999).³⁶ Renwick and Cao note that the discourse has overlapping characteristics and themes which are not new to China, such as anti-foreignism, modernism, nationalism and culturalism, which are related yet different discursive themes. Nevertheless, these themes have replaced the traditionally hegemonic discourse of Marxism-Leninism in today's China. The key part of the discourse is the idea of China as a victim of external oppression. China thus identifies as a 'victim' in dangerous world where it is surrounded by belligerent 'victimizing others', such as the United States or Japan. Deng Xiaoping expressed

³⁶ While their claim that it could be called the new hegemonic discourse of the post-Tiananmen era is perhaps a bit exaggerated, it certainly became more visible in the post-1989 China.

this sentiment in 1989 when China was condemned following the Tiananmen Incident:

“I am Chinese, and understand the history of foreign invasions of China. When I heard that sanctions against China had been decided at the G-7 summit, I immediately thought of the time when the Eight-Nation Alliance invaded China in 1900. With the exception of Canada, all the countries, with the addition of Tsarist Russia, were members of the Alliance” (Deng 1993:358).

Atanassova-Cornelis noted that victimization discourse, which utilizes United States and Japan as the significant ‘Others’, has been one of the three major aspects in China’s national identity, following the end of Cold War (Atanassova-Cornelis 2012).³⁷ In 2001, China’s National People’s Congress even passed a law proclaiming an official “National Humiliation Day.” However a specific day was never agreed upon, because there were just so many good candidates for that day, such as 7 July or 18 September (*People’s Daily* 29/4/2001).

While especially prominent today, China’s victim identity was not an entirely new identity; it has existed before 1989 but was rather marginalized due to the more dominant socialist identity in China. The theme of ‘victimhood has been present in the entire modern Chinese history, has its origins in the resistance to Western powers in the mid-19th century, but its significance has been changing over time. The narrative itself has a distinctively modernist character; it adopted themes such as citizen, state and class, which makes it an explicitly future-oriented discourse (Renwick and Cao 1999:114). The 1990s upsurge of writing on national humiliation and the prominence of the discourse of victimisation were similar to the sentiment of the Republican era. In both periods the emphasis was in the official discourse on the shameful humiliations China suffered from the Western powers following the Opium Wars. KMT leader Chiang Kai-shek’s *China’s Destiny* (1943) lamented the humiliations China has suffered. The discourse on humiliation and victimhood in China is selective in its prioritisation of the suffering of the Chinese. It captures the moral high-ground for China as a ‘peaceful state’, which became the innocent victim of the aggressive Western powers. Denton captured this trend unambiguously

³⁷ The other two are: developing country and great power. Victimization is not only prominent in China; for the discourse has been actively promoted by various societal and political groups in Japan as well (Jeans 2005).

“Since the 1990s, the discourse surrounding the War of Resistance has shifted away from the place of Japanese imperialism in the temporal narrative of liberation and nation-state building toward an obsessive attention to China’s victimization at the hands of the Japanese; tragic tales of horror are displacing, though by no means replacing, the heroic narrative of resistance” (Denton 2007).

Therefore, the dominant discourse on humiliation by prioritizing the ‘not-forgetting’ of China’s victimhood of silenced other aspects in the discourse, such as an analysis of why such humiliations were happened in the first place (Cohen 2002:20-22). By blaming China’s humiliations and sufferings on the foreign countries exclusively, the calamities Chinese brought upon themselves, such as during the Taiping rebellion or the Cultural Revolution are simply silenced and omitted in the discourse.³⁸

The narrative of victimhood was evoked in Jiang Zemin’s Report at the 15th National Congress of the Communist Party of China of 1997. His speech began with the description of the modern Chinese history full of China’s humiliations suffered by Western powers and Japan. Therefore, according to Jiang the future task of the CCP and China is to prevent further victimisations at the hands of foreign powers in the future and to build a strong and prosperous nation (Jiang 1997). More recently, Hu Jintao in a speech about the future of the PLA noted the aggressive intentions of the Western countries towards China and warned that “Western hostile forces have not given up the wild ambition of trying to subjugate us, intensifying the political strategy of Westernizing and dividing up China” (Hu 2004). Even more recently, Xi Jinping in 2009 as Vice-President accessed foreigners of interfering into China’s affairs “*Some foreigners with full bellies and nothing better to do engage in finger-pointing at us [China]*” (*The Strait Times* 14/2/2009).

The emergence of the discourse of victimisation perhaps answers the confusion of analysts who wondered why in the 2000s a country aspiring to become a global leader would keep emphasizing its past injustices (Schell 2008). They have been

³⁸ In 2006, the *Freezing Point*, a state-run Chinese magazine was shut down after publishing an article by a university professor Yuan Weishi, which accused the government of teaching incomplete history and promoting excessive nationalism and anti-foreign sentiment, for example on the causes and events in the Second Opium War (*The Washington Post* 25/1/2006). The English translation of his article is available online at : http://www.zonaeuropa.com/20060126_1.htm Moreover, the essay elicited a strongly negative reaction on the Chinese Internet; Yuan was repeatedly called a “traitor”.

puzzled why the government continues to remind people of the former humiliations. As China takes an increasingly greater role in international affairs, is emphasizing past weaknesses a way to future greatness? Scholars have explored the impact of memories of humiliation on contemporary China; Kaufmann argued that “Chinese elites today draw on the “Century of Humiliation” (1839–1949) as a starting point for their views on how China should interact with other nations.” (Kaufmann 2010: 1). Similarly, Gries noted that victimisation has become a fundamental theme in China’s collective identity; he put it, “The West is central to the construction of China’s identity today; it has become China’s alter ego” (Gries quoted in Schell 2008).

4.4.1 The Othering of Japan

Victimisation as a form of collective identity is always about the sharpening of the distinction between the inside and the outside. As discussed in detail in chapter 2, the practice of Othering or emphasizing the different discovered in the Other as a threat to the Self could lead to conflict and the legitimization of inter-group violence. While these distinctions are always present, sometimes they are sharper and more visible. Anti-foreignism was an important part in shaping China’s national consciousness in the late 19th century, where the Chinese began to distinguish between themselves and the foreigners at the basis of nation and state. Similarly, in the process of identity reconstruction in China since the 1990s China was increasingly presented as a victim of Western and particularly Japanese aggression. The previous ‘victor’ narrative that dominated in the public discourse in China after the founding of the PRC was gradually supplanted by a new narrative that emphasized the injustices China suffered, especially at the hands of Japan (Gries 2004, He 2009, Wang 2012).

Resisting Japan has been a long-standing theme of the CCP leadership and could be traced back to the year 1921 when the Party was founded.³⁹ However, the theme of resistance against Japan has been increasingly used since the Reform era, particularly since the 1990s (Hughes 2008). As Denton argued, this discourse has an important political role: “depictions of Japanese atrocities are morally unambiguous and serve to direct divisive class resentments toward an external other; national unity and shared national sentiment grow out of this ‘othering’ of Japan, “as he pointed out

³⁹ The national anthem of China was originally an anti-Japanese song.

during the time “when China’s economy and culture increasingly merged with the global and its identity became murkier, “(Denton 2007: 248). A Japanese scholar further noted that the Chinese perceptions of Japan became more negative since the end of the Cold War and particularly since the mid-1990s (Kobayashi 2008: 89 in Wu 2012: 52).

The shift in perception and deterioration of relations came at a time of uncertain national identity when Chinese leaders were trying to reinvent China after 1989. Previously, Japan was lionized as an example for China during the transition from socialism to capitalism, and was particularly praised for its hybrid system of capitalism and socialism. According to a 1987 survey reported by a Shanghai journal, the highest amount of respondents chose Japan as the foreign country with the best reputation, which testifies to the prominence Japan enjoyed at that time (Rozman 2002:98).

Nevertheless, since 1993 and particularly since the 1997 financial crisis, Japan ceased to be a role model and China did not want to learn from Japan anymore. It was seen not only in the official discourse, but also in a general downturn of public opinion towards Japan. Rozman quoted a 1997 report of the 1996 survey of young people feelings about Japan where only 15% had good feelings about Japan, which testifies to a dramatic deterioration in perceptions of Japan in China (Ibid.). Officials reinforced the image of China as a victim of Japan after 1989 particularly through patriotic education. In the popular culture, Chinese media and cinema industry fostered a negative image of Japan; for example the popularity of Japanese TV shows declined dramatically (Rozman 2002: 116). Moreover, the grass-roots campaign demanding reparations from Japan has become strong again and is more prominently featured in the media particularly on the Internet.⁴⁰

Moreover, China has been very anxious about Tokyo’s apparent post-Cold War great power ambitions and a potential return of Japanese militarism, which China perceives Japan’s behaviour through the lens of past humiliations. Chinese have been also sensitive to Japanese ‘China threat’ theories, which they see as carefully manipulated to justify increases in military expenditures and a closer alliance with

⁴⁰ For example, when Japan tried to make a bid for permanent membership in the UN Security Council in 2005, a Chinese grass-roots campaign opposing Japan’s membership boosted at least 22 million signatures in China (The New York Times, 1 April 2005).

the United States to bully China (Deng 2008:190). Moreover, the Chinese fear that by pointing finger to China first, Japan would be absolved of the War responsibility, which is a part of larger anti-China plan. For example, a 2005 China Daily commentary maintained that “Japan has tried every means to disseminate the idea of a “threat” from China’s military build-up,” and went on to argue that Japan’s “desire to abandon its post-war path of peaceful development to pursue political and military power has become increasingly strong” (*Xinhua* 11/4/2005). Japan’s aloofness and lack of sensitivity and respect for China was echoed in a comment made by prominent Chinese scholar Liu Jiangyong who admonished Japan for “despising, discriminating against, and even disregarding its Asian neighbours” (Liu 2006:8).

Undoubtedly, Japanese themselves have been active actors in reinforcing the ‘Othering’ of Japan in China and done not enough to assure China of taking full responsibility and contrition for the past and recognizing China’s current situation. Recurring themes in Japan such as history textbook revisions and visits of politicians to the Yasukuni Shrine only add insult to injury and confirm the image of Japan as wanting to hurt China, which was particularly pronounced during the Koizumi era (2001-2006). Japan’s 2010 National Defense Program Guidelines were received with great anxiety in China. A newspaper editorial titled “Japan’s military ambition” harshly criticized Japan’s policy, and while describing China as a “peace-loving nation that adheres to peaceful development,” accused Japan of abusing the “China threat” theory to augment its military build-up and warned of Japanese militarism (*China Daily* 20/12/2010). The discourse of danger juxtaposed the antagonistic Japan and victimized China who is the target and scapegoat for Japan’s aggression. Japan due to its construction in China and its own behavior became one of the main Others in China’s national identity construction and augmented China’s victim identity in international relations. According to a joint Sino-Japanese opinion poll conducted in 1997, 86% of Chinese considered Japan’s War compensations as inadequate, 74% believed that Japan should show contrition and only 20% would choose “constructing a new cooperative relationship unconstrained by past” (‘Japan-China society of media studies’ quoted in He 2009: 252).

The following figure, which is the updated version of the figure introduced in chapter

2, represents the changes in China's identity and the role of the Other Japan played in this construction. As follows from the table, China's identity became increasingly exclusive and less able to accommodate difference discovered in Japan. Moreover, Japan's active resistance to China's narratives made China even more insecure, as it challenged China's construction as the victim of Japan. The resulting ontological insecurity only generated a greater necessity for China to reinstate its identity by representing Japan as the oppressor of China. Also, the renegotiation of China's identity decreases the level of affinity between China and Japan Self and Other, rendering it much easier to dehumanize Japan and present it as a threat to China. The resulting relationship of 'Othering', when Japan was represented as a threat to China is translated into insecurity in the Sino-Japanese relations. As the levels of trust decrease, the threat perception between China and Japan increases and brings China and Japan to the Hobbesian culture of anarchy (Wendt 1999) where they see each other as enemies and act as if driven by fear of death. The lack of China's ontological security has behavioural implications for its relationship with Japan. It increases the potential for conflict between China and Japan and could serve as the legitimization of China's violence against Japan.

Figure 4: The role of Japan as the ‘other’ in China’s post-1989 identity formation: the constitutive dimensions of self/other interaction⁴¹

Constitutive dimensions of China/Japan identity interactions	Variations in Sino-Japanese relationship	Levels of China’s ontological security	Behavioural implications for China’s relations with Japan/ Diaoyu/Senkaku islands policy
Nature of identity/ difference	Inclusion « »» Exclusion China’s identity became more exclusive and built upon the discourse of difference from Japan	→ Insecurity	A relationship of Othering: Japan is perceived and represented as a threat to China’s identity → Production of insecurity in Sino-Japanese relations: Potential for conflict and legitimisation of violence in Sino-Japanese relations, such as during the 2010 boat collision incident
Response of the other	Recognition « »» Resistance Japan ‘s active resistance to Chinese identity discourses	→ Insecurity	
Social distance	Association « »» Dissociation Social distance increased China distanced itself from Japan, downplayed similarities and emphasized differences	→ Insecurity	

⁴¹ (taken from Rumelili 2004-my own representation)

4.4.2 The persistence of China's victim identity in the new millennium

China's victim identity that again came to prominence in the 1990s continued to impact China and its foreign relations also in the next decade. In the narrative of China's victimhood is deeply rooted in the historical experience of disrespect and victimization at the hands of Western nations and Japan. Writing in 2008, Chinese scholar captured the continuing prevalence of this mentality among the Chinese elites: "what is indeed striking is the extent to which the Chinese elites attribute their country's foreign policy predicament to how it is mistrusted and mistreated" (Deng 2008: 10). The events surrounding the 1999 Belgrade embassy bombing and the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games point to the continuing relevance of China's victim identity in foreign relations.

In 1999 during the conflict in Yugoslavia, United States aircraft inadvertently bombed the Chinese embassy in Belgrade killing three Chinese nationals, which led to serious diplomatic crisis between the two countries. The incident not only led to massive demonstrations in China, but a reject of official American apology to China. The Chinese believed that the attack was intentional and they understood the incident through the prism of victim identity as a deliberate act, but also a part of a plot of the United States to undermine China (Hess 2010: 49). Chinese state media made the parallel between after the bombing of the embassy between the current US actions and the "gunboat diplomacy" of the 19th and 20th centuries. An editorial in the *China Daily* made the comparison between the 1999 bombing and the 1899 Eight Nation Alliance invasion as a symbol of foreign oppression (Wang 2012: 183).

Moreover, the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games not only presented the success of China's economic reforms, but also pointed to China's continuing insecurities *vis-a-vis* the international society. China also aspired to host the 2004 games, but after narrowly losing to Sydney, the Chinese were convinced that the Western powers and particularly the United States worked to thwart China's bid.

Prior to the 2008 Games, a series of violence erupted in Tibet following demonstrations in the capital city, Lhasa. The subsequent repression of protests led to international condemnations and disquiet about Beijing hosting the Olympic Games.

As a consequence, the Olympic torch relay was interrupted by pro-Tibetan activists in both Paris and London. As a response, the Chinese government promoted a counter narrative of “Tibetan separatists and some people with ulterior motives disrupted the Olympic torch relay in London and Paris” (*China Daily*, 4/11/2008). Moreover, the Western press was accused of “biased media coverage” of both the protest in Lhasa and the Olympic Games and the politicians in the United States were accused of “double standards” in foreign policy [towards China] and their arrogance and lack of respect for the other people in the world (*China Daily*, 21/4/2008). The Chinese believed that the campaign was orchestrated by the West to humiliate China before the 2008 Olympic Games. The Games were a symbol of ‘rejuvenation’ for China and a way to overcome the ‘sick man of Asia syndrome’. Hence the obsession with winning as many gold medals as possible, while ignoring the silver and bronze medals won: only a victory in the Olympic Games would wipe away this national humiliation.

In general, despite decades of rapid economic growth, China still faces huge economic and political uncertainties. Rapid economic growth in the last decades created huge social, economic and political tensions in contemporary China. Moreover, a year after the protests in Tibet, tensions broke out in Xinjiang in 2009, which created further domestic instability. This has exacerbated the pressures on the Chinese government, which is now even more anxious to meet the various domestic and international challenges. Moreover, according to the China watchers, in the recent years as their leadership tenure was going to an end, the Hu-Wen was in a very weak position and very nervous (Zhao 2013). Therefore, Chinese domestic and international insecurities have not lessened, but arguably became even more severe. Despite the calls of Chinese intellectuals such as Zi Zhongyun to abandon using the “excuse of ‘five thousand years of civilization plus one hundred years of humiliation’ “, but in the 21st century China should rather strive to “create new spiritual sources of inspiration” (Zi quoted in Deng 2008:51). China’s victim identity, which again came to prominence after the end of the Cold War and became embedded in China’s domestic political structure, is not likely to wither away. The following sections show was China’s victim mentality constructed in China in the post-Cold War era.

4.5 Locals of identity construction- China's patriotic education

The patriotic education has played an important role in the process of identity construction in China since 1989. History and its interpretations are inherently intertwined with a particular identity, on the individual as well as collective level. Constructing the past is therefore an act of self-identification with political implications. More than merely an academic exercise, “making history is a way of producing identity insofar as it produces a relation between that which supposedly occurred in the past and the present state of affairs” (Friedman 1992: 837).

Patriotic education establishes an artificial sameness in China's history and foreign relations over time by a particular recollection of the past, which is necessary for the stability of identity construction in the post-1989 China. Friedman argued that the “construction of a history is the construction of a meaningful universe of events and narratives for an individual or collectively defined subject” (Ibid: 837). The Self needs to be set in and stabilized by a series of narratives that enable the temporal stability of the Self, which is a particular construction of national subjectivity, such as China as a socialist country, China as a victim of Japanese oppression, etc. Narratives of history thus provide important epistemological resources to confirm and reproduce a particular identity.

Therefore, patriotic education plays such an important role in contemporary China in enacting a particular construction of the Chinese Self and the foreign Other, which provide the basis of China's national identity. Also, the patriotic education through the educational process effectively silences and marginalizes any other voices within the society that might challenge the official historical narrative. Scholars have observed a strong link between the patriotic education and the nationalistic sentiment of the Chinese since mid-1990s (Zhao 1998), which would also shape China's foreign relations, especially with Japan (He 2007, Wang 2008).

In September 1989 Deng Xiaoping reflected on his leadership and domestic affairs in China by saying that the “gravest failure has been in education- we did not provide enough education to young people, including students. We can curb inflation quickly, but it is much more difficult to make up for lost education.” (*People's Daily*, 19/9/1989). In his speech Deng linked the absence of proper education *[read*

political and ideological education] for students to the events of 1989. Therefore, to prevent any future upheavals, Deng thought that the students needed to be educated to love the country and the CCP. Chinese government pushed for patriotism, which conflated the love of China with the love for the Party as opposed to keeping the distinction alive. Patriotism was mobilized to fill in the ideological void in the post-1989 China. Upon examining 19 political education-related policy documents concerning the patriotic education curriculum reform, Fairbrother argued that patriotic education in the society serves multiple functions in contemporary China. Firstly, it contributes to the maintenance of territorial integrity, national unity and national pride. Second, it transports knowledge and attitudes on China's international relations. Thirdly, patriotic education helps to maintain the socialist system in China and boost government legitimacy (Fairbrother 2002: 93).

4.5.1 Beginning of the campaign- the official structure

In 1991 the patriotic education campaign was formally institutionalized but it did not start in practice until 1994 when it was massively implemented throughout China. The target of the campaign were the young people who were to study Chinese history and the humiliations China suffered and how has the country benefited from the leadership of the CCP. One of the key documents that institutionalised the patriotic education was the "Outline on the implementation of patriotic education" published by the Central Committee of the CCP in 1994. It gave the following description of the Chinese history as the foundation of the patriotic education.

"Chinese modern history is a history of humiliation in which china gradually degenerated into a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society; at the same time, it is also a history that Chinese people strived for national independence and social progress and persisted in their struggle of anti-imperialism and anti-feudalism. It is also the history of the success of the New-Democratic Revolution under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party" (quoted in Wang 2012:103).

The patriotic education campaign was carried out in a very practical and sophisticated way and affected all schools from kindergarten to university level. Patriotic education was carried out in schools in Mainland China not only through the curriculum but also extracurricular activities, such as visits to museums and war memorials or screenings of patriotic films. Analysing the campaign from the

perspective of China's foreign relations, another scholar argued that the main goals of the reform were to "educate Chinese people, especially the young people, about China's humiliating experience in the face of Western and Japanese incursions" (Wang 2012: 96-97).

4.5.2 The contents of patriotic education

Students of patriotic education are taught about various social, economic and political issues, such as current national conditions and policies, including economic and political systems and policies, policy on reunification, nationalities policies, military affairs, foreign affairs, society, culture, population, and national resources and so on (Fairbrother 2002: 95). Nevertheless, the two dominant themes in the campaign, which are especially important for China's foreign relations, are national history and culture as well as national unity and territorial integrity (Zhao 1998: 296).

Following the introduction of patriotic education, Chinese history broke with its tradition of focusing on the victory and achievements of the CCP, but rather depicted history as a series of struggles against foreign aggression and the pivotal role of the CCP in the resistance against imperialism. Likewise, through the patriotic education campaign, Confucianism and Chinese cultural traditions likewise experienced a revival. Interpretations of history abandoned Marxism-Leninism and class struggles, which was originally employed in the communist historiography to explain the Western imperialism and the Civil War. Rather, the new focus was on the national rather than class component of these conflicts. Wang calls this a shift from the "class struggle narrative" to the "patriotic narrative" (Wang 2008: 791). Another scholar maintained that "Unlike its previous emphasis on class struggle and CCP-KMT confrontation, the new history education curriculum centered on the conflicts between the Chinese nation and those foreign nations that invaded China in the past, especially Japan, so that it could inspire the people to redeem past humiliations and restore national glory." (He 2007:7). According to Jones, the history education content was recast in 'purely ideological terms', which highlighted China's "glorious (pre-modern) cultural history and superiority over contemporary civilizations, and demonstrated how 'frenzied plundering' by wicked imperialists and hopeless

incompetence and ossified thinking on the part of China's feudal rulers had brought China to a nadir from which the nation could never have recovered without the CPC." (Jones 2002:560).

Second Sino-Japanese War

The Sino-Japanese war featured more prominently in the new curriculum and particularly Japan was portrayed in much more negative light. The official historiography started paying more attention to events such as the Second Sino-Japanese War and the injustices and humiliation China suffered from Japan. The previous school curriculum ignored Japanese atrocities committed in China and according to Reilly played a "surprisingly minor role in the wartime history depicted in current Chinese high school and college textbooks" (Reilly 2004: 279). Instead of suffering, the textbooks emphasized the heroic resistance of the Chinese (Communist) soldiers. Reilly quoted a textbook from Hunan province, which is in his view representative of the scholarship and in its discussion of the Second Sino-Japanese War: "Japanese imperialism started the war of invasion against China, bringing heretofore unseen disasters to the Chinese people...but the Chinese people's heroic resistance, at great cost, led to the eventual victory...with a great contribution to the global anti-imperialist struggle" (Ibid:279). The new portrayal of Japan challenges the older image of a small clique of (capitalist) warmongers conspiring to bring China and Japan on the collision course. Likewise, the responsibility for the war and the damage lies not with the Japanese people, who were likewise victims of the capitalists.

In his article titled '*China's "New Remembering" of the Anti-Japanese War of Resistance, 1937–1945*', Coble mapped how Chinese official historiography has mapped the conflict. Despite its devastating nature, over 20 million casualties and around 100 million refugees, the memory of the war was suppressed in China. As he put it: "a visit to China in Mao's day would have given no hint of the magnitude of this conflict" (Coble 2007: 395). Another reason for the renewed attention to the war is the change of attitude towards Taiwan and the ambition for its reunification with the mainland. Coble emphasized another theme that dominated the recent historiography on the Sino-Japanese War, the victimisation of China, particularly by

the meticulous coverage of the atrocities carried out by Japanese troops during the war. Especially the emphasis on not forgetting the past humiliations (*wuwang guochi*) trickles through the contemporary narrative on the war. Similarly as Gries observed, the suffering of the Chinese people has been emphasised. While previously the number of casualties stood around 9 million, Jiang Zemin elevated the number to 35 million, which now stands as the official figure (Gries 2004: 80). Similarly, there has been a boom in new scholarship on the Sino-Japanese war; one scholar estimated that as of 2007, there were hundreds of publications in China (Coble 2007:405-406).

4.6 Locals of identity construction- Public sites and monuments of the post-1989 China

Alongside school textbooks, public sites and memorials are another important local of identity construction in China, which are significant for the understanding of Sino-Japanese relations. The museums help to propagate an identity narrative to a wider audience, they do not only reflect on the Chinese history but they also shape the understandings of the world of Chinese people today. And by examining the exhibitions we can capture the changing and evolving views China holds of its past, particularly concerning some sensitive events in the past. Mitter noted that “institutions such as the Nanjing Massacre Museum show how deeply the Massacre has helped to bolster the part of China's self-image that is rooted in victimhood in the political culture of the 1990s.” (Mitter 2003: 122).

Museums and public monuments have played a role in the discourse of victimisation in the post-1989 China. According to one scholar, monuments such as the Yuanming Gardens and the Dagou Forts help to keep the imaginary of national humiliation alive and they help us understand the contemporary memory of war in China (Hevia 2007).⁴² Through their exhibitions, they present a shift in the collective memories from class struggles which emphasized the victorious cadres to a much darker portrayal of Chinese history. Parallel to the representations of China, its history and particularly relations with Japan, similar representations can be found in the museums around China. Denton argued “*there has been a general trend in such representations toward an emphasis on atrocity and victimization and away from*

⁴² The Dagou Forts were a place of battle during the Boxer rebellion between the Chinese and allied Western and Japanese forces and ended in a Western victory.

the narratives of heroic resistance that dominated in the Mao era.” (Denton 2007).

Since 1989, the number of history museums in China commemorating the Second Sino-Japanese War increased dramatically. The Memorial Hall of the People’s War of Resistance Against Japan (*Zhongguo renmin kangri zhanzheng jinianguan*), Memorial to Victims of the Nanjing Massacre by Japanese Invaders (*QinHua Rijun Nanjing datusha yunan tongbao jinianguan*), Crime Evidence Exhibition Hall of Japanese Imperial Army Unit 731 (*QinHua Rijun di qisanyao budui zuizheng chenlieguan*), and September 18 History Museum (*Jiuyiba lishi bowuguan*), which were established in the 1980s and 1990s. Similarly to the school textbooks, the museums mushroomed only after a relaxation of research on sensitive events in Sino-Japanese history, such as the Second Sino-Japanese War. Since 1991, Chinese government put great effort into constructing these memorials: over 100 were declared national-level patriotic bases, in the form of memorials, museums or monuments, and more importantly, half of them are dedicated to the Anti-Japanese War. For example, the Memorial Hall for the victims in Nanjing Massacre was built in 1988 but it was renovated in 1995.

These museums link lost territory to the suffering of the Chinese to the present day domestic and international situation. After the founding of the PRC, memorials were built for the heroic resistance and not to commemorate the victims (Reilly 2004: 278). Nevertheless, analysts have highlighted the role which history plays in the portrayal of China as a victim of Western and Japanese aggression (Renwick and Cao 1999, Wang 2012).

4.7 Conclusion

As examined in detail in this chapter, the post-Cold War period was a ‘formative moment’ for China, when it began to search for new identities that would define the 21st century China. Nevertheless, the rapid and often incoherent development China experienced since the ‘open door policy’ exacerbated the feelings of ontological insecurity. Following 1989 Tiananmen Square events China was sanctioned and was reduced to a position of pariah in the international society, which further aggravated the feelings of oppression and humiliation (Shih 2003). Thus, as a result of the

demise of socialism in China, the legitimacy crises of the government and the ambiguities of China itself in the early 1990s, China descended into a state an identity crisis. To fill in the ideational gap both the government and the intellectuals embraced the idea of a strong state to reinvent China. As opposed to the 1980s, these new ideas did not look to the West and Japan for inspiration, but rather emphasized and mobilized the richness of China's philosophical traditions.

Nevertheless, this quest for new greatness opened up the wounds of the past. As one observer noted that "China's restless search for a more self-confident, less-aggrieved persona has paradoxically been made more complicated by other wounds not directly related to foreign attacks, for much of the past hundred years Chinese themselves have also been engaged in a series of assaults on their own culture and history" (Schell 2008). The shift from praising West and Japan as role models for China and their critical re-evaluations led to their increasingly negative portrayals. Therefore, as a part of the discursive construction of China following 1989, a much prominent role was given to the injustices that happened to China during the Century of humiliation. In this discursive construction, China was depicted as the victim of Western and particularly Japanese oppression.

This discourse highlighted the humiliations and defeats suffered from the foreigners, but ignored the calamities Chinese brought upon by themselves. The self-other dialectic has been recalibrated from class to national dimension- no longer the communist self against the nationalist (capitalist) other, but rather the national (Chinese) self against the foreign other. In this dichotomous construction, Japan occupies a place at the end of spectrum, as the most brutal and oppressive of the foreign invaders, against which the Chinese Self has been juxtaposed. Through patriotic education and public monuments a new narrative of victimisation has reached dominance in China.

The following chapter builds upon this chapter's work and examine how China's 'victimized' identity impacts on China's relations with Japan, particularly as to related to the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute. Building upon the work of other scholars, the chapter reconsiders Sino-Japanese relations as an 'identity conflict'

(Suzuki 2007) and accounts for China's evolving policy towards the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands.

Chapter 5: China's foreign policy towards Diaoyu/Senkaku islands

The territorial dispute between China and Japan revolves around the contested Diaoyu/Senkaku islands. The islands are located in the East China Sea between China and Japan, 230 nautical miles east of the Chinese mainland and 200 nautical miles southwest of Japan's Okinawa. The total territory of the 5 islands is 7 square kilometres. United States served as the islands' custodian from the end of the Second World War; however, in 1972 it returned the administrative rights over the islands to Japan. The sovereignty of the islands has been one of the most contested issues in Sino-Japanese relations since that time. The Diaoyu/Senkaku islands are also claimed by the Republic of China (Taiwan), however since it is outside the scope of this thesis, the role of Taiwan in the on-going dispute is not discussed. Even though Japan's official position is that there is no dispute and Japanese politicians regularly deny the existence of any dispute, the islands have been disputed since the late 1960s and in recent years significantly impacted on Sino-Japanese relations.

Given the importance of the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute not only for the bilateral relations, but also for the East Asian security, there has been a growth in the English language political science literature on the issue. Book length monographs by political scientists have analysed either territorial disputes in East Asia or focused on the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands in specific terms (Chung 2004, Koo 2009, Suganuma 2000). Some scholars (Downs and Saunders 1998, Deans 2000) argued that the elites in China manipulated domestic nationalism over this issue to gain concessions in Sino-Japanese relations. Other scholars such as Koo (2009) and Liao (2008) emphasized the economic dimension of the dispute. Koo argued that economic interdependence has helped repeatedly to deescalate the conflict over the disputed islands. Others provided detailed empirical accounts of historical or contemporary events in the dispute (Valencia 2007, Drifte 2008). With the current heightened nature of the dispute, the literature on the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute is only expected to burgeon.

Justification for the research topic

There are many contested issues in the Sino-Japanese relations, such as the visits to the Yasukuni Shrine by Japanese politicians and disagreements over interpretations of sensitive historical events, besides the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute. However,

the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute is arguably the most difficult nut to crack as it could be plausibly accounted for by both realist and constructivist theories. A justification for this particular case study and a particular event in time, the 2010 boat collision incident, is therefore necessary.

Firstly, as Forsberg noted, territorial disputes represent an important test field for theories in International Relations. Therefore, the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute represents a 'hard case' for any IR theory. Even more so, territory has been always considered a prime materialist concept and traditionally accounted for in the security studies literature as a result of the power struggles, and therefore the realist theories would be expected to perform best in accounting for territorial disputes (Forsberg 2003:10). Thus if a constructivist analysis could convincingly account for the ideational value of territories as well as territorial behaviour in terms of identities, then they would become convincing explanatory factors. Therefore the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute and China's policy towards the islands, are not only one of the most important issues in China's foreign relations, but also they would be the critical test of any theoretical paradigm attempting to explain international relations. Moreover, Nippon Research Centre opinion polls conducted in China in 2005 and 2007 confirmed that the Chinese perceive the territorial disputes as a significant obstacle in Sino-Japanese relations. 50,6 and 47,1 per cent of respondents, respectively, who claimed they have no affinity for Japan, cited the unresolved territorial disputes as one of the reasons (Nippon Research Centre, 26/11/2007).⁴³

Secondly, this thesis focuses on the 2010 boat collision incident, because it was the immediate intellectual motivation for this research project. The incident was arguably the most serious issue in Sino-Japanese relations since the end of the Koizumi era in Japan, and therefore a very important development in the bilateral relations. Moreover, China's Diaoyu/Senkaku islands policy and its response to the 2010 incident are a prime example of the effect of the 'victimized' identity on China's foreign policy. Therefore, the focus on the 2010 incident not only contributes to the scholarship on the Sino-Japanese relations by covering the latest developments in the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute, which has not been covered in IR

⁴³ The respondents were asked to choose three reasons.

scholarship.⁴⁴ More importantly, it applies the identity perspective to account for China's policy towards the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands and therefore makes a novel contribution to scholarship.

5.1 Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute summary

Historical background

The territorial dispute effectively started in 1968 when a United Nations research team revealed that the waters around the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands might contain rich hydrocarbon resources. Following the report, PRC, ROC as well as Japan made strong public claims about the sovereignty of the islands. The Diaoyu/Senkaku islands became a heated issue again in 1972 and 1978 during the period of Sino-Japanese reconciliation. Nevertheless, both China and Japan agreed to shelve the dispute and did not deem its persistence as a significant obstacle to the improvement of Sino-Japanese relations. The islands remained unoccupied, apart from occasional visits by Japanese fishermen, but nominally were owned by a Japanese family. In 1990, the dispute inflamed again after Japan was preparing to recognize a lighthouse built on the islands by Japanese right-wing activists two years before. In 1996 a group of Japanese right-wing activists landed on the islands and built another lighthouse. In the same year, a Hong Kong activist drowned when attempting to land on the islands. Protests took place in Taiwan and Hong Kong against the Japanese behaviour; however, there were no large scale protests in China.

During the 2000s, the dispute further escalated with frequent attempts usually unsuccessful by Chinese, Hong Kong and Taiwanese activists to land on the islands. Moreover, China continued to raise its physical presence in the area by dispatching both scientific and maritime police vessels to the waters surrounding the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands. In 2008 and 2010 Taiwanese and Chinese vessels were arrested by Japanese Coast Guard near the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands. Especially, the 2010 boat collision incident precipitated a major diplomatic spat between China and Japan, and elicited a heated and forceful reaction both from China's government and the public. Moreover, in 2012 following Japan's proclaimed intention to nationalize the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands. Large-scale demonstrations took place in many Chinese

⁴⁴ The exception is Hagstrom (2012).

cities which drew large crowds and were also comprehensively reported by the international media. Therefore while the dispute was always a contested issue in Sino-Japanese relations, since the 2010 boat collision incident the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute has taken on a higher international profile and it has drawn increasing attention of Western observers.

Competing positions and claims

The Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute is complicated because it is not a single, but rather a multifaceted and complex issue connected to other difficulties in Sino-Japanese relations. The dispute pertains to history, sovereignty, identity, security as well as unresolved demarcation boundaries in the East China Sea, all of which are closely connected and often go beyond Sino-Japanese relations. Both China and Japan base their sovereignty claims to the islands on historical sources and legal documents.

Japan insists that when incorporated in 1895, the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands had already been discovered by Japan 10 years earlier. More importantly from the perspective of international law, Japan maintains that when incorporated, the islands were *terra nullius*, belonged to nobody and therefore could not be claimed by any other country. Japan also argues that the incorporation and the legal status of the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands are not linked to the Treaty of Shimonoseki, and therefore independent of the return of Taiwan as stipulated in various international World War Two treaties. Therefore, Japan claims “there exists no issue of territorial sovereignty to be resolved concerning the Senkaku Islands” (JMOFA, May 2013).

On the other hand, China claims that the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands are an “inseparable part of the Chinese territory” and were first discovered and exploited by China as early as in the 14th and 15th centuries.⁴⁵ The islands were used as navigation points for ships and later as a source of medical herbs. According to China, the islands have been under Chinese jurisdiction and even have been shown on both Chinese and Japanese historical maps as belonging to China. China argues that the Chinese discovered the islands first, centuries before Japan and that they were only “grabbed from China” following the First Sino-Japanese War and their subsequent occupation

⁴⁵ For an overview of Chinese perspective, see Pan (2007).

was therefore “illegal and invalid” (SCIO, September 2012). Even though the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands were not included directly in the Treaty of Shimonoseki, The Treaty of San Francisco, or in other international treaties, nevertheless, China maintains that Japan was obliged to return all territories taken before World War Two.

The Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute is further exacerbated by the stance of the United States who maintains no position on the sovereignty of the islands and claimed that the dispute must be resolved between China and Japan. United States argues that when returning the islands to Japan in 1971, merely the ‘administrative rights’ were returned. According to United States, the islands are still covered by the 1960 US-Japan Security Treaty even though United States continues to make no judgements on the sovereignty of the islands. Nevertheless, until 1971 United States treated the islands as a part of Okinawa and favoured Japan’s claim to the islands ‘in both word and deed’ (Blanchard 2000:97).

From a perspective of international law the dispute boils down to whether China or Japan has a better claim to the islands. The dispute, nevertheless, pertains not only to the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands, but also to the demarcation of borders in the East China Sea. China and Japan apply different maritime demarcation principles to push their border claims, which would serve to their respective advantages. Therefore China champions the approach of natural prolongation of continental shelf, but Japan rather advocates the application of the equidistance approach. This thesis neither judges the strength of the respective legal claims in the light of the international law nor examines their historical and legal validity. Rather, this section sets the background for the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute that would help us understand current China’s policy towards the islands.

China’s policy towards the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands before 1989

In 1972 and 1978, the issue of the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands sovereignty was raised during the negotiations surrounding, respectively the Sino-Japanese normalisation of relations, and the signing of the Peace and Friendship Treaty. Nevertheless, Chinese and Japanese leaders showed no interest in pushing the issue and did not consider it

an important part of Sino-Japanese relations. Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping famously suggested shelving the dispute for the moment and leaving it for the future generations to resolve.

“Our two sides agreed not to touch upon this [Diaoyu/Senkaku islands] question when diplomatic relations were normalised between China and Japan...It does not matter if this question is shelved for some time, say, ten years. Our generation is not wise enough to find common language on this question. Our next generation will certainly be wiser. They will find a solution acceptable to all” (quoted in Suganuma 2000).

Therefore, while the two sides still had different opinions on the islands, according to Drifte they avoided the issue by “agreeing to disagree for the time being” (Drifte 2008). Nevertheless, later when the dispute was inflamed again, both China and Japan denied that there was such an understanding.

5.2 The value of Diaoyu/Senkaku islands

The Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute has gained in notoriety and has moved to the forefront of Sino-Japanese relations. Various arguments have been put forward why the disputed islands are so important for China and why the dispute remains such an obstacle in Sino-Japanese relations. Before turning to the identity-based explanation of China’s policy *vis-a-vis* the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands, which is based on the islands’ sentimental value in China, nevertheless, their economic and strategic value would be briefly examined. The inadequacies of these approaches would be identified and would pave the way for the constructivist identity-based account of China’s foreign policy towards the islands.

5.2.1 Economic value

Scholars have pointed to the economic value of the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands which drives the Sino-Japanese rivalry over the islands. To begin with, the economic value of the islands themselves is negligible, the islands are barren and only the largest one is habitable. Due to their small size, the islands cannot really support a larger population. Nevertheless, while the islands themselves do not contain any valuable natural resources, the surrounding waters are tipped to contain rich hydrocarbon resources, such as oil and gas. The 1968 United Nations survey argued that the

hydrocarbon resources in the East China Sea are comparable to those of Saudi Arabia. Had China exercised sovereignty over the Diaoyu/Senkaku, it could claim an Exclusive Economic Zone in the surrounding waters as well. Given the China's growing dependence on energy imports and the new urgency that the debate over energy security gained in China, China's grasp of the valuable economic resources would be undoubtedly strengthened by occupying the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands. One Chinese analyst emphasized the importance of proximity of the islands to China's coastal cities, which are an important production base but have no natural resources (Guo 2010:9). Therefore, energy would not have to be transported from different parts of China and it would be closer and cheaper to transport from the East China Sea. While Japan's energy consumption has stagnated,⁴⁶ China's has been rising steadily and therefore China's has even stronger incentives to push the issue. Drifte quoted both Chinese and Japanese estimates of the amounts of hydrocarbon resources, which confirm the rich hydrocarbon resources located in the adjacent waters to the islands (Drifte 2008).

Resource scarcity provides at the first glance a plausible account for territorial disputes. The economic value of the islands in the form of an Exclusive Economic Zone would present a plausible account for China's desire to reclaim the islands in order to exploit the resources. Nevertheless, are the potential gains significant enough to justify China's position and policy? If the legitimacy of the Chinese government dependent on improving the economic conditions of the Chinese people, then antagonizing one of its most important trading partners would certainly hinder this goal. For example, the 2010 and 2012 boat collision incidents not only affected political relations, but also the dispute has harmed economic bilateral relations. As a direct consequence of China's harsh stance, some production areas, such as the automobile industry, experienced serious difficulties. Up to date, China's hard and uncompromising position has overall achieved little economically and only served to antagonize Japan even further.

⁴⁶ Japan's energy imports increased temporarily following the 2011 earthquake and tsunami; Japanese government data proved that oil imports rose by 2% and LNG by 11.2% in 2012 (Reuters 23/1/2013). Nevertheless, in the long term, Japanese energy imports are likely to continue to decrease due to the decline of Japan's economy.

5.2.2 Strategic value

Many scholars have framed the territorial dispute largely in strategic terms (Emmers 2010). Pan claimed that the strategic position of the islands between China and Japan makes the islands special to both China's and Japan's national defences. Furthermore Pan argued that "should either China or Japan legally secured the sovereignty over the islands, they would grant their owner an advantage in military security with a prolonged and enlarged frontier, putting the other side into a disadvantaged position" (Pan 2007:71). During the time of escalating Sino-Japanese rivalry, which is the consequence of the rise of China and decline of Japan, the strategic value of the islands has increased exponentially. Even if they were not strategically as important in the late Cold War era, especially after the Sino-Soviet split and Sino-American rapprochement, their strategic value must have increased especially in the recent years in the wake of tensions with the United States and particularly Japan.

However, given the small area of the islands, it is dubious whether or not it would be possible to establish a forward military base at the islands. Even if such a base was established, would that put China at any strategic advantage? Similarly, in the event of a military attack, would the possession of the islands improve China's ability to defend itself from Japan or the United States? Even if in the present international context the value of the islands increased, it is far from certain whether or not the persistence to the claim enhances or jeopardizes the security of China. Moreover, scholars have questioned how the islands would enhance a military capability of either country. Gabe Maasaki, a Professor from the University of the Ryukyus, Japan estimated the strategic value of the islands as "negligible". He quoted the small terrain of the islands, so any bases would be small and therefore militarily insignificant (O'Shea 2012: 172). Moreover, in general by taking such a hard line on the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute, China paid a significant opportunity cost, which has resulted in a marked deterioration of Sino-Japanese relations and China's security.

China's unyielding and stubborn position has led to a series of embarrassing diplomatic incidents, such as the 2010 boat collision incident, which undoubtedly undermined the image of China as a 'responsible stakeholder' and also contradicts the vision of 'harmonious world', which China has tried to promote. Furthermore,

China's policy only fuels anti-Chinese sentiment in Japan, which helps right-wing groups in Japan to play on the 'China threat' theory, which would only worsen the threat perception and strengthen the security dilemma between China and Japan. In addition, by attaching such importance to the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands, the government in China becomes vulnerable to the growth of popular sentiment, which is overwhelmingly anti-Japanese. Therefore, the autonomy of its foreign policy towards Japan would be eroded and Sino-Japanese relations would be affected adversely even more from popular sentiments (Suzuki 2007).

All in all, China's policy towards the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands cannot be accounted for on rational grounds alone. The China's current position, which gives very little space for any compromise thus renders it impossible to exploit the contested resources, either jointly with Japan or on its own, thereby, not only jeopardizing China's energy security, but has also been hurting China's economy. In conclusion, what is China maximizing when clinging to the islands? Japan's military strength is technologically superior compared to China and is further corroborated by the US support, which is bound by a Security Treaty. Is it therefore viable to explain China's behaviour as power maximization, which could be accounted for through the rational choice?

5.3 China's identity crisis and the sentimental value of the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands

States value territory for more than strategic or economic consequences. They also attach sentimental value to territories with particular historical or cultural significance (Buruma 2012). The value of a particular territory for state is never static, but rather evolves during time and depends on the political, social and cultural conditions. Claims to territory could be motivated by injustice- territories have been wrongfully taken away and therefore to reclaim them constitutes a 'national mission' and cannot be compromised upon. Territory is likewise inherently linked to the questions of national identity. As Forsberg argued "creating the idea of spatial unity, teaching the boundaries and presenting visual maps with sharp lines and different colours underlines the cartographic background elements of state and national identity"(Forsberg 2003:14). Identity therefore becomes a quintessential element in

territorial disputes. Nevertheless, in such an analysis, the link between identity and land must be explained properly and how the link has been maintained or has changed over time. While during the Cold War, politicians were able to glance over the disputed islands, and leave them for the further generations to resolve, the symbolic value of the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands to China has not remained static, but has changed following 1989 during the period of China's identity crisis.

Since the 1990s as a response to changes in both domestic and international environments new narratives were constructed in China that defined what it meant to be Chinese, and impacted on China's relations with other countries. These narratives or 'constitutive stories' that were actively promoted by the Chinese leadership differed dramatically from the previous forms of the communist discourse. These narratives were institutionalized into the patriotic education and public monuments around China. These stories China told about itself situated China into a particular time and space; they linked the achievements of the CCP in fighting against the Japanese oppressors and provided additional legitimacy for the government. The new narratives after 1989, particularly that of victimisation at the hands of Japan, also redefined China's foreign relations. Rignmar called this discursive construction an 'affective geography of friends and enemies' (Ringmar 1996: 164). Enemies were described as countries that were defined as the opposite of China, which also served the purpose of confirming the identity of China, as you can only know who you are when you know who you are not. In the post-Cold War era, Japan became the significant Other against which the Chinese identity became redefined (Wirth 2009).

Therefore, while in 1970, the interests in the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands were purely material, that is the discovery of hydrocarbon resources, there was little sentiment attached to the islands. Nevertheless, increasingly since the end of the Cold War, the Diaoyu/Senkaku

islands became embedded in the victimisation narrative. The new narratives that came to dominate China emphasized not so much the achievements of the Chinese civilisations, but also the humiliations China suffered. Diaoyu/Senkaku played a key role in this new narrative, as a prime example of China's humiliation at the hands of Japan and provided meanings of what China was and who the Chinese people were and who they were not. Chinese policy towards the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands can be therefore understood as a part of identity politics, giving the dispute a role in the process of Chinese national identity construction since the end of the Cold War.

While the Chinese government was able to win the legitimacy for the narratives inside China where the citizens accepted these stories because the narratives tapped into the deep seated feelings of animosity against Japan. However, in the international area, Japan continued to challenge this self-description of the Chinese, which led to practices of 'Othering' and increasingly oppositional identities. Japan actively undermined and contradicted constitutive narratives told by the Chinese government about the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute and thus denied the stories international recognition. The Japanese side continuously refuses to recognize Chinese claims and the Chinese positions to the islands, for example by maintaining that there is no dispute at all. According to Japan "there is no doubt that the Senkaku Islands are clearly an inherent part of the territory of Japan, in light of historical facts and based upon international law. Indeed, the Senkaku Islands are under the valid control of Japan. There exists no issue of territorial sovereignty to be resolved concerning the Senkaku Islands" (JMOFA, April 2013). In all official documents, Japan has always described the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands as 'inherent part of the territory of Japan' and therefore ruled out any possible room for compromise. For example, when a China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs Report from February 2013 portrayed Japan as "extremely provocative", and "causing further escalation of the situation" (MOFA 2/2013), Japan responded by describing itself as a victim of China's aggressive behaviour, and as a "peace-loving nation", which "will continue to contribute to peace and prosperity in Asia" (JMOFA, 7/2/2013).

5.4 China's policy towards the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands: from interests to identity

As a consequence of its identity crisis, China redefined its relationship with Japan and Japan emerged as the main 'Other' in China's identity formation. Invoking China's identity is essential to grasp the value of Diaoyu/Senkaku islands to China as well as China's post-Cold War policy towards the islands. National identities are bound up with territory, which reinforces the 'in group' and 'out group' distinctions.

Generations of Chinese leaders were socialised into believing that China has a better claim to the islands and that they have always been a part of China. Individuals do not have to have a direct personal experience with the territory to become emotionally attached, that is done through state socialisation, such as through patriotic education. The injustices done to China will not be fully redressed until the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands are returned to China.

Therefore, the hardening of the China's position and policy towards Japan is a reflection of its quest for an identity in the post-Cold War world. On February 25 1992 China passed the Law on Territorial Sea. Article 2 argued: "PRC's territorial land includes the mainland and its offshore islands, Taiwan and the various affiliated islands including Diaoyu Island, Penghu Islands, Dongsha Islands, Xisha Islands, Nansha (Spratly) Islands and other islands that belong to the People's Republic of China" (PRC, 25/2/1992). This was the first time that a law in China exclusively stipulated that the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands as a part of China. Since 1999 the Chinese government raised its presence in the area by dispatching scientific vessels and maritime police vessels to the islands (Pan 2007: 75).

More recently, China's White Paper on the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands published in September 2012 refers to the islands as an inherent territory of China. In fact the very title of the white paper reads "Diaoyu Dao, an Inherent Territory of China," which emphasized the islands' connection to the Chinese mainland. The White Paper called the Japanese occupation of the islands since 1895 "illegal and invalid". Moreover it claimed the islands should have been returned to China after the Second World War. Likewise the September 2012 nationalisation of the islands by Japan was condemned, which according to China "grossly violates China's territorial sovereignty and seriously tramples on historical facts and international jurisprudence" (SCIO, 9/2012). Moreover, according to the White Paper, the United States illegally included the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands in its trusteeship and Japan's claim over the sovereignty of the islands is likewise 'totally unfounded'. The White Paper corroborated and built upon the 1992 Law on the Territorial Sea and the Contiguous Zone, which unequivocally prescribed that Taiwan together with the affiliated islands including Diaoyu Dao belong to China. The White Paper described China as a 'peace-loving

nation' which has the determination 'to uphold China's state sovereignty and territorial integrity'. A *Xinhua* commentary described the nationalisation of islands as 'theft' (*Xinhua*, 24/9/2012), emphasizing the connection between the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands and China. The White Paper thus discursively linked the history of Japanese oppression of China to the current Sino-Japanese relations

5.5 China's response to the 2010 boat collision incident

The importance of the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands in China's identity construction has been established in the previous paragraphs. This section will discuss the 2010 boat collision incident and examine China's policy and its handling of the incident. I will discuss the incident itself- how it evolved into a serious diplomatic crisis with major repercussions for Sino-Japanese relations, but rather than being considered as a nuisance that could be quickly resolved. The underlying claim of this logic is that there are no objective incidents or crises to be discovered by state officials, rather state officials through their actions actively contribute to the production of events (Weldes 1999). This line of reasoning supports the broader meta-theoretical claim of this research that reality does not present to states unproblematically but rather through the subjective understanding of the world filtered through historical experience. The 2010 boat collision incident enabled the reconstruction of China's identity as a victim and Japan as the aggressor disrupting peace and stability in Asia. A strong reaction by China was therefore obvious and justified, such as the postponement of bilateral meetings (*China Daily* 23/9/2010), to prevent Japan from further bullying China.

5.5.1 The events of the 2010 boat collision Incident

On 7 September 2010, a Japanese Coast Guard vessel found a Chinese fishing trawler 12 kilometres north-west of the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands. The Japanese ship requested that the Chinese boat leave the area, which is administered by Japan. Nevertheless the Chinese fishing trawler not only ignored the requests but also reportedly tried to crash into the Japanese coast guard ship. Nevertheless, in the end the Chinese fishing boat was finally boarded by the Japanese coast guard and the 14 crew members were arrested and the captain of the trawler was charged by the Japanese authorities. The 2010 boat collision incident impacted negatively on the

Sino-Japanese political and economic ties. The issue became top news item in both China and Japan and captured the attention of civil society in both countries. Demonstrations in China grew especially violent and often resulted in damage to Japanese companies or brands. These developments coincided with the anniversary day of the Mukden Incident and the Japanese invasion of China on September 18 in 1931, which only aggravated the already sensitive atmosphere.

China responded to the arrest of the fishing boat crew by both by word and deed. On 7 September, on the very day of the incident, China lodged an official diplomatic protest and summoned the Japanese Ambassador to China Uichiro Niwa. Again on September 9, Assistant Foreign Minister Hu Zhengyue summoned the Japanese Ambassador to lodge another formal protest. The detention of the captain was labelled a “protruding obstacle” in the Sino-Japanese ties by a Foreign Ministry spokesperson. China called the arrest an illegal detention and demanded that the Japanese side immediately release the ship and crew members on board as well as restated its claim to the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands.

As a result of the incident, China cancelled some economic transactions and tourist trips to Japan. The trawler and its crew were released on September 13. On September 19, the period of detention for the boat captain Zhan Qixiong was extended for 10 more days, which was again met with a strong reaction from China. The captain was released and returned to China on September 24, 2010. Nevertheless, even after Japan released the captain, Chinese demands did not stop, on September 25, Beijing demanded an apology from Japan as well as compensation for the damage of the Chinese fishing trawler. Moreover, a halt in the export of rare earth metals to Japan occurred during the rise of tensions between China and Japan from September 23 to November 13, 2010.

According to the *New York Times*, the incident set the tensions between China and Japan to the highest point since Koizumi left the office of Prime Minister in Japan in 2006 (*The New York Times*, 19/9/2010). In the international media, the incident was interpreted as a victory for China and a defeat for Japan; China’s aggressiveness and Japan’s weakness were depicted as reflecting the rise of China as a great power and the decline of Japan. Hagstrom called this dominant media narrative a “power shift”, which was interpreted by the media in Asia as taking place with a more assertive

China emerging (Hagstrom 2012).

5.5.2 The production of the 2010 boat collision incident in China: the incident was ‘what China made of it’

Regardless of whether China’s response to the 2010 boat collision incident could be interpreted as strength or weakness, we need to ask first why China reacted in such a particular way. Why did Chinese officials consider Japanese actions in the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands area as such a serious threat to China? I will go on to argue that rather than a rational response to a pre-given condition, Chinese policy towards the islands is constructed in relation to China’s identity. Rather than an objective fact, the 2010 boat collision incident was understood and actively produced as a threat to China and Japanese actions were understood as aggressive intentions. China’s responses and policies would have been different if China had different identities towards Japan. Perhaps then China would have interpreted the incident as just a misunderstanding, with no specific Japanese agenda behind.

The 2010 boat collision incident was forged by state officials in China to produce and reproduce China’s ‘victimized’ identity. Powerful historical analogies of Japan oppressing and humiliating China were activated during the engagement with Japan. The 2010 boat collision incident activated the identity of China as a victim of Japan and therefore elicited a strong reaction in China, which enabled China to re-establish moral authority against Japan and emphasize Japan’s continued intentions to humiliate China. The identity of China as a victim of Japan therefore gave China moral credentials and the resolute stance against aggressive Japan were enabled by a particular Chinese identity.

Nevertheless, the 2010 boat collision incident was not only a product of a certain identity, the incident actively helped to reproduce and secure China’s victimized identity. China’s narrative around the incident was constructed to secure China’s identity for the representations of the events of the 2010 boat collision incident helped to define it as a dangerous event that required a strong response. China’s policy also helped to marginalize any other narratives, such as promoting Sino-Japanese friendship or the strength of the Japanese claim, or maybe to obscure China’s irresponsible behaviour and expansionism and aggressive intentions.

Therefore, the 2010 boat collision incident enabled China to articulate relations of difference that constrained but at the same time secured its 'victimized' identity. In the case of China the securing of the Chinese Self is based on the 'Othering' of Japan. The difference in Japan, such as the different view on the sovereignty of the islands, was transformed into a threat to China. Therefore events such as the 2010 diplomatic incident presented opportunities to reinstate China's and Japan's identities. What follows is a constructivist analysis of the 2010 boat collision incident. This following part of this chapter applies Banchoff's framework (1999) for foreign policy analysis to account for China's policy towards the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands, and the response to the 2010 boat collision incident. The framework links China's identity and its foreign policy and its effect will be meticulously demonstrated.

Figure 5: The effects of China's 'victimized' identity on its response and the handling of the 2010 boat collision incident: a two- step analytical framework revisited

Analytical tasks	1st step	2nd step
	<u>Specification of state identity</u> China's 'victimized' identity China as a victim of Japan	<u>Effect of identity on state action</u> China's response to the 2010 incident
1st	Policy area China's Diaoyu/Senkaku islands policy	Descriptive dimension of identity discourse Description of the incident- Japan as the aggressor and China as the victim
2nd	Evidence of identity Political discourse in China- official documents, speeches by leaders, public opinion, laws, and patriotic education	Narrative dimension of identity discourse Connection of the 2010 incident to the victimizing by Japan narrative
3rd	Analysis of identity discourse Japan humiliating and victimizing China Japan's intentions have remained hostile, China must prevent further humiliations	Congruence test China's response and handling of the 2010 incident must be consistent with its 'victimized' identity
4th	Identity persistence Rootedness in state institutions, structures, domestic political discourse must have historical foundations and resilience	Incongruence test The failure of China's 'new thinking' on Japan debate

According to Banchoff's framework to demonstrate the effect of identity on foreign policy, first, the contents of state identity must be pinpointed and their effect on state action must be subsequently established. The first part will therefore, specify the relationship between China's 'victimized identity' and the 2010 boat collision incident. Secondly, the effects of the victim identity on China's action will be demonstrated.

5.5.3- 1st step: China's 'victimized' identity

Chapter 4 mapped the emergence of the victimized identity of China as a product of an identity crisis China was embroiled in after 1989. As a consequence, China redefined its relationship with other countries, particularly Japan. While before Japan was an example that China was striving to emulate, in the post-1989 climate China was increasingly imagined as a victim of the foreign countries, which constantly strive to harm and humiliate China. Japan played a particularly prominent role in this construction as the 'Other' against which China's identity is defined.

Given the developments in Sino-Japanese relations, the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands became firmly embedded in the discursive construction of China's victimized identity.

The 1992 Law on Territorial Sea specified that Diaoyu islands are an inherent part of China. This was the first time that a Chinese law stipulated Diaoyu/Senkaku islands as a part of China. Moreover, Chinese leaders tended to emphasize the link between the islands and Chinese mainland by referring to Diaoyu/Senkaku islands as China's "inherent territory" or "sacred territory" (*People's Daily*, 12/10/2010). These discursive constructions therefore construct a strong link between China and the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands and then can serve as foundations for a specific policy.

Analysing Sino-Japanese relations through the lens of China's 'victimized' identity, the current situation regarding the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute is merely a continuation of Japan's policies intended to harm China. In 2012, after Japan announced its decision to nationalize the islands, the Chinese Vice-Foreign Minister Fu Ying commented: "what the Japanese government has done over the Diaoyu Islands *was like robbing salt into a deep open wound on the heart of the Chinese people*" [emphasis mine](*China Daily*, 21/9/2012), which emphasized the Chinese perception of continuous Japanese aggression and insult towards China. Parallels and analogies as featured in the Chinese media are important in the narrative of victimhood that discursively links the current Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute to Sino-Japanese history. Japan's aggressive intentions and China's rightful defence and resistance are a recurring theme. On 18 September 2010, on the anniversary of the Mukden incident and a heated period of the dispute, *People's Daily* published an

editorial “Never Forget National Humiliation, Join up for National Renaissance”, which noted the invasion of China by foreign powers (*Xinhua*, 18/9/2011).

The narrative which has been recovered from Chinese media about the 2010 incident underscores Japan’s belligerent intentions and absolves China of any blame or fault. Jiang Lifeng, former director of the Institute of Japanese Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, blamed the deterioration of Sino-Japanese relations following the 2010 incident on “Japan’s reaction to the [boat] collision”. He subscribed Japan’s “wrongdoing” to the policies of DPJ and conservatism in Japan. In the narrative, China’s patrolling and fishing in the waters adjacent to the islands was a legitimate action to protect national sovereignty, while Japan’s “aggressive marine policy” and “irrational behaviour” were portrayed as the very root of the problem (*China Daily*, 4/11/2010). Therefore, the discourse on China’s victimhood not only put all the blame on Japan, but also legitimises Chinese behaviour, such as dispatching Chinese surveillance ships into the waters near the disputed islands, which might be seen as escalating the dispute. This sentiment was confirmed one year later in an opinion poll conducted one year after the incident took place out that 51 per cent of Chinese believed the Japanese government’s tough stance had escalated the 2010 boat collision incident (*China Daily*, 12/8/2011). In 2012, Prime Minister Wen echoed this sentiment by saying China would not make any concessions on the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands (*Xinhua*, 11/9/2012).

5.5.4- 2nd step: Effect of China’s ‘victimized ‘identity on Diaoyu/Senkaku islands policy: China’s response to the 2010 boat collision incident

Descriptive dimension of identity discourse

Representations of China’s identity impacted and constrained China’s policy options when dealing with Japan and the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute. Likewise, China’s construction of the 2010 boat collision incident guided the Chinese decisions and behaviour *vis-a-vis* Japan in the aftermath of the incident. As stemming from the victimized identity, the Chinese narrative around the 2010 boat collision incident began with the collision of two vessels, the Chinese fishing boat and the Japanese coast guard vessel, and the subsequent detention of the crew. According to China’s account, the collision took place next to *China’s Diaoyu islands*. China interpreted

and described the boarding of the fishing trawler and arrest of the crew by the Japanese coast guard as an illegal and unlawful act. In the narrative, Japanese actions were depicted as “absurd, illegal and invalid”, “seriously infringed upon China's territorial sovereignty” and “China will never accept that” (*China Daily*, 11/9/2010). A month later the Japanese government released the video of the incident (also available on the YouTube), which clearly confirmed that the Chinese fishing boat actually rammed into the Japanese coast guard vessel. However, the Chinese official account of the events either ignored this, (MOFA, 1/11/2010), or continued to deny any responsibility for the maritime collision and in accused Japan back of trying to put the blame on China. According to the Ministry spokesperson, Japan “seriously infringed upon China's territorial sovereignty and legal rights of the Chinese fishermen. The so-called footage cannot change the facts, nor can it cover the illegality of the Japanese move” (*China Daily*, 2/11/2010).

Such discursive constructions reduced China to the position of an innocent victim of Japan's actions and assigned all the responsibility to Japan. The Foreign Ministry spokesperson described the incident flowingly: “the current situation was caused by what Japan has done on the Diaoyu Islands, so Japan should completely accountable for it” (*Xinhua*, 16/9/2010). Moreover, Premier Wen subscribed the entire responsibility for current and any future developments to Japan: “If Japan acts willfully despite advice to the contrary, China will take further actions, and Japan must accept full responsibility for all the severe consequences” (quoted in Hagstrom 2012). Moreover, Japan's motives were questioned; Zhang Zhirong, a professor at Peking University, said the incident reflected Japan's lack of respect for human rights and [hostile] “hidden political motives” (*Xinhua*, 20/9/2010).

To take any blame for the events of the incident it would be inconsistent with the victimized identity, even though the video of the incident which was leaked and subsequently posted online showed that the Chinese ship rammed into the Japanese vessel. Therefore, the victim analogy only reinforces the image of Japanese aggression and Japanese intentions as unfriendly to China. The actions of Japan were continuously described as illegal, and belligerent which not only secured the moral high ground for China, but also prescribed China's action in order to protect its dignity and self-reflect. Returning to Banchoff's framework, descriptive dimensions

of identity inform the content of interests communicated by national leaders.

Nevertheless, by emphasizing China's victimhood, the Chinese official discourse excluded other experiences. For example, as observers noted, it failed to mention that in the past Chinese vessels captured and held Vietnamese fishermen in the waters surrounding the Paracel archipelago, which is controlled by China but claimed by both countries (*South China Morning Post*, 21/9/2010). In this case, China acted rather like a bully than as an innocent victim and clearly held double-standards; nevertheless, this would not be consistent with the self-identity as victim and was therefore absent from China's account of the 2010 incident.

Narrative dimension of identity discourse

Secondly, description of the 2010 boat collision incident will be corroborated by a narrative dimension of identity discourse that puts the current events into a historical perspective. In China's understanding, China has been continuously victimised by Japan and Japan's intentions have always been malignant. According to the *China Daily Hong Kong* editorial accused Japan of constantly "keeping on trying, using dirty measures [towards China and the Diaoyu islands]", nevertheless, as the author added, these will inevitably fail as they "only serve to anger and unite all Chinese around the world" (*China Daily Hong Kong Edition*, 21/9/2010).

Similarly, the official discourse highlighted the continuing hostile intentions of the United States towards China who continues to manipulate the Diaoyu/Senkaku dispute to split China and Japan. Feng Zhaokui, a researcher with the Institute of Japanese Studies under the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, wrote that "Diaoyu Islands dispute was a disruptive mine planted by the United States into Sino-Japanese relations nearly four decades ago". He further lambasted American policy and described it as "tactic often employed by imperialists" and held it responsible for the deterioration of Sino-Japanese relations and the territorial dispute (*China Daily*, 15/9/2010).

Therefore, anchoring the 2010 boat collision incident into the victim narrative, Japanese (and American) actions of 2010 are a continuation of the aggressive action that started with the First Sino-Japanese War. By placing the incident into a wider narrative, the past is discursively linked with the present; Japan's aggression and

China's weakness resulted into a profound Chinese humiliation in the past and therefore China must resist Japan's current hostile policies. Chinese officials frequently maintain that "China hopes Japan can have a correct view and proper handling of the history" (*Xinhua*, 16/9/2010). Narrative is not merely a story of what happened to the past- but it is likened to the present experience and future solutions. It also prescribed China's action at the moment- China must oppose Japan and prevent any future humiliations.

The analysis of China's political discourse show how the identity as a victim of Japan influenced China's response to the incident. But did the actual behaviour of China prove congruent with the victim identity? In order for the identity to have an effect on state behaviour, China's behaviour must be consistent with China's victimized identity and also the mechanisms that link the two must be demonstrated. Or at least according to Banchoff, state behaviour should not contradict state identity; it must at least demonstrate a correlation between state identity and behaviour (Banchoff 1999).

'Congruence test'

China's victim identity influenced a certain course of behaviour and prevented other policy options. Therefore, options such as making concessions on the dispute, or appeasing Japan by downplaying the incident, or merely interpreting Japan's action as a mistake with no specific agenda behind it were not considered as they would be inconsistent with China's identity. According to an analysis of the international press following the incident, China's reaction was "unprecedented and harsh", "aggressive", "very tough" and "fierce and violent" (Hagstrom 2012: 276-277). Moreover, the popular response to the incident in China in the form of large scale demonstrations only confirmed the embeddedness of the victimized identity in China. There were large scale protests in China's major cities, including Chengdu, Xi'an and Zhengzhou and included slogans such as "Defend the Diaoyu Islands" and "Fight Japan" (*China Daily Hong Kong edition*, 17/10/2010). In Beijing, dozens of protestors gathered outside the Japanese embassy, unfurling banners and shouting "Japan, get out of the Diaoyu Islands," "Boycott Japanese goods," "Don't forget national humiliation, don't forget Sept. 18" (*Xinhua*, 21/9/2010). In Hong Kong, there

was an attempt by activists to sail to the dispute islands as well as a protest in front of the Japanese consulate, which condemned Japan's actions (*The Standard*, 14/9/2010).

In the 2010 boat collision incident, therefore, China's behaviour proved remarkably congruent with China's 'victimized' identity. The strong verbal reaction was complemented by continuous demands for a Japanese apology and compensation (*Xinhua*, 25/9/2010). These demands persisted even after the fishing trawler crew including the captain were released on September 24. China's push for apology is consistent with its identity as a victim. Japan refused to apologize and denied recognition to China's narrative of the events.

Moreover, as described in the international media, China's handling of the incident was characterized as extremely heavy-handed or even hysterical. This could explain the disproportionate diplomatic response, for example, summoning the Japanese Ambassador for at least 6 times between September 8 and 19 and requesting Japan to release the arrested captain and recognize China's claim to the islands (Hagstrom 2012: 272). On the bilateral relations level, serious damage was caused to diplomatic relations and confidence-building, the planned visit to Japan in mid-September of vice-chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress Li Jianguo was called off, citing 'various reasons', similarly, Chinese Premier Wen refused to meet Prime Minister Kan during a UN development conference in New York on September 22. Similarly, China suspended also a host of other bilateral meetings with Japan, such as on the East China Sea issue scheduled for mid-September (*Shanghai Daily*, 11/9/2010). According to a *Xinhua* agency statement of September 21 "China has already suspended bilateral exchanges at and above the ministerial levels, and halted contact with Japan on the issues of increasing civil flights and expanding aviation rights between the two countries" (*Xinhua*, 21/9/2012).

Lastly, China's handling of the incident damaged the bilateral economic relations with Japan. China's second largest trading partner is Japan, only after the United States.⁴⁷ 9% of China's overall trade is with Japan. Japanese firms account for 4% of

⁴⁷ China is actually Japan's number one trading partner.

China's FDI and Japanese businesses in China employ directly one million workers. Moreover, China is Japan's top tourist destination (*International Business Times*, 19/9/2012). Nevertheless, as a consequence of the tensions, Chinese tours to Japan were cancelled. Moreover, the violence that became a part of the anti-Japanese demonstrations decreased the confidence of Japanese to either visit China or to pursue business relations, due to concerns about security and anti-Japanese sentiment.

Moreover, in the midst of the diplomatic spat, China halted the exports of the rare earth minerals to Japan. The rare earths are essential for Japan's high-tech industry and Japan's economy heavily depends on China's rare earth imports. The exports were halted approximately for two months, from September 23 to November 19 (Hagstrom 2012: 274). According to reports from the Japanese press, Chinese companies either scrapped the export contracts unilaterally, or merely suspended them for fear of punishment from the Chinese authorities (*The Associated Press*, 21/10/2013). Undoubtedly, the 2010 boat collision incident had a negative impact on the Sino-Japanese economic ties. Nevertheless, China actively sought to escalate the incident and as a consequence the harmful impact on economies ties was even more damaging. A similar pattern was observed during the 2012 incident, when large Japanese factories in China were forced to be closed down. Such an adverse environment might discourage investors and hamper Sino-Japanese economic cooperation.

'Incongruence test'

As of now, we have established congruence between China's victimized identity and response to the 2010 boat collision incident. An absence of criticism in China of the government's handling of the incident was noticeable; there were hardly any voices criticizing China's government policy towards Japan. Even though China is not a democratic country and lacks any political opposition, policy debates sometimes soak into the public discourse. However, approval can be inferred from the large-scale demonstrations that took place in China's cities; the people in China were generally in favour of the government policy and the tough line it took against Japan.

The incongruence test maintains that if behaviour violates the core of the identity and then the policy remains intact, then the identity has no explanatory value. On the

other hand, if policies are criticized for their non-conformity to identity and those policies are not repeated, then according to Banchoff the effect of identity on state behaviour is strong (Banchoff 1999: 278-279). While it is difficult to apply the incongruence test to the 2010 boat collision incident, it could be applied to the developments in China's Japan policy. This would demonstrate the rootedness of the victimized identity in China and its resistance to change. In early 2000s, a group of Chinese scholars suggested closer relationship with Japan based on strategic interests. Ma Licheng criticized Chinese popular nationalism for being arrogant and xenophobic and likened it to 'the spirit of the Boxers' (*The Asahi Shimbun*, 26/1/2013). Moreover, he called for "generosity of a great and victorious nation, and do not need to be excessively harsh with Japan" (quoted in Gries 2005:408); this would have likewise affected the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands policy. Moreover, other scholars such as Shi Yinhong supported a rapprochement with Japan from the perspective of geopolitics highlighting the common strategic interests of China and Japan (Shi 2003). Gries argued that the 'new thinking on Japan' debate failed and the policy suggestions for a more conciliatory approach to Japan [the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute] were not successful following a huge domestic outcry in China and the death threats against these analysts (Gries 2005).

The policy suggestions were criticized and ultimately rejected due to their incompatibility with China's victimized identity towards Japan. And while that debate took place in China ten years ago, the implications remain the same for the China's present-day Japan policy. Closer cooperation with Japan and even a pursuit of common rational and material interests was rendered impossible, as that would not be compatible with China's identity. Therefore, even if there were strong economic reasons to deescalate the territorial dispute, as this would go against the identity China has adopted, it is therefore unlikely to take place.

5.6 Conclusion

China's post-1989 identity crisis has manifested itself in China's relations with Japan, in particular relating to the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute. China's Diaoyu/Senkaku islands policy as demonstrated by the 2010 boat collision incident is more complex than just the pursuit of material interests, and points to the importance of the 'victimized' identity for China's international relations. Consequently, the

Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute cannot be reduced to a scramble over a few uninhabited islands, or the resources contained in the surrounding waters. The economic or the strategic values of the islands are insufficient to convincingly account for China's policy or the response to the 2010 incident. Rather, the dispute pertains to the unhealed wounds of Sino-Japanese history, from a lack of Japan's full apology for the misdeeds done to China (Matthews 2003). The sentimental value of the islands has increased dramatically and they became firmly embedded in the victimisation narrative in China. China's tough stance and hostility towards Japan is congruent with its identity as a victimized state, where Japan is the main victimizer. As a constant victim of Japan's real or perceived aggression, China must resist Japanese policies towards the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands; as opposed to protecting its national interests, China is protecting its dignity. Humiliation is an insult to the dignity and self-respect of the victim and Chinese policies have strived to restore its dignity and wash away the national humiliation.

The analytical framework of Banchoff (1999) logically captured the relationship between China's victimized identity and the Diaoyu islands policy. The close fit between China's identity, the communication and implementation of policies of resistance and opposition to Japan's actions towards the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands support a constructivist account of China's foreign policy. The descriptive and narrative dimensions of China's identity continue to inform China's understanding of the Sino-Japanese relations and the territorial dispute. Moreover, China's policies towards Japan and the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands are congruent with China's identity and any domestic attempts to adjust the policy towards Japan were quickly silenced.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This thesis put forward a theoretical explanation of Chinese foreign policy towards the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands in the post-Cold War era. It utilized a constructivist identity-based perspective on international relations arguing that China's policies towards the islands can be understood as stemming from China's 'victimized' identity. The discipline of International Relations has struggled to account for China's policy towards Japan and the disputed islands and the identity-based approach provides an alternative explanation. In this chapter, I begin with a brief summary of the thesis chapters and the outline of the main arguments. After pointing to the limitations of this research, I will discuss its broader implications for constructivist international relations research and territorial dispute literature. I will conclude by suggesting ways for Sino-Japanese reconciliation based on the identity change and describe the process on the issue of Japan's apology to China.

6.1 Thesis summaries

6.1.1 Chapters summary

Chapter 2 firstly explored various approaches to international relations and discussed in detail the identity perspective to international relations. The discussion emphasized the importance of difference in the process of state identity formation and the impact of identity on a country's foreign policy. Chapter 3 documented the important historical events that continue to frame China's understandings of Japan nowadays. Chapter 4 explored the evolution of Chinese identity after 1989. With the withering of the socialist identity and an imminent identity crisis, China's identity started to become more exclusive, and began to emphasize difference as its new constitutive dimension. The West and particularly Japan became the 'Others' against which the 'victimized' identity became defined. The patriotic education as well as public monuments in China became the locus of this particular mode of identity construction. Chapter 5 extended the argument from chapter 4 to the international realm, particularly to China's relations with Japan and policy towards the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute. The chapter argued that the symbolic value of the islands increased following the Cold War and now occupies an important place in China's identity construction. The continuous Japanese denial of Chinese narratives

and perceived aggressive actions only help to reinforce the role of Other Japan plays in China's identity construction. China's 'harsh' response to the 2010 boat collision incident and its unyielding position demonstrate the salience the identity has in China's foreign policy formation.

6.1.2 Main arguments summary: Research questions revisited

This thesis championed an identity-based explanation of foreign policy. As opposed to material interests, such as military power or trade, identity as a variable, anchored in constructivist ontology and epistemology, focuses on a state's subjectivity. States are fundamentally social actors whose behaviour cannot be reduced to interest maximization. Moreover, reality does not present itself to states unproblematically, but is rather filtered through specific historical and social experiences. Therefore, a foreign policy is not a result of ahistorical interest calculation, but rather stems from and must be consistent with a particular conception of state identity.

The following paragraphs will revisit the research questions stipulated in the Introduction. Most importantly, this thesis proposed that in the post-Cold War period, China's policy towards Japan and particularly the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands stem from its 'victimized' identity *vis-a-vis* Japan. As a result of an identity crisis, since 1989, Japan became the 'Other' in China's identity construction, in other words, China's identity was defined against Japan by emphasizing difference and negativity. The painful memories of the Century of Humiliation provided the epistemic foundations on which the identity construction took place in post-Cold War Chinese society.

The motivations of China's foreign policy towards Japan and the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands are more complex than the pursuit of material interest. Rather, Japan and its actions *vis-a-vis* the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands were presented to China through the lens of history and the humiliations suffered at the hands of Japan. Therefore, China's policy towards the islands is driven by an emotional and cognitive need aimed at preventing further humiliations and redress the injustices perpetuated by the Japanese in the past. Only by grasping the sentimental value of the islands as a part of the Chinese Self and the Japanese Other, which produces affective practices of Othering that re-inscribe the identity of China as a victim of Japan, can we account for the China's

policy towards Diaoyu/Senkaku islands. The impact of China's 'victimized' identity was evident from China's heated and uncompromising response to the 2010 boat collision incident.

Finally, while presently Sino-Japanese relations and the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute have deteriorated, there are still ways for China and Japan to mend their relations. This chapter offers ways for the two countries to transform their relationship based on identity change.

6.1.3 Caveats and research limitations

This thesis has had a particularly narrow scope, namely the Chinese policy towards the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands after 1989, with a particular focus on the 2010 boat collision incident. The research focused exclusively on the Chinese side of bilateral relations with Japan and even though the adopted self/other framework is a dynamic one, the motivations behind Japanese policy were not examined. Rather, Japanese actions towards the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands were analysed only when essential for the confirmation of a particular construction of China's identity. The limitation of the identity-based approach is that it is harder to make broader generalisations for China's foreign relations, let alone testable hypotheses that could be applied to different cases.

Moreover, despite the main actors in the territorial dispute being China and Japan, this thesis neglected the role that Taiwan and particularly the United States play in the dispute. Taiwan also claims the disputed Diaoyu/Senkaku islands; nevertheless as its claim overlaps with China it was not a topic of investigation. Similarly, United States has been a major player in East Asia since the end of the Second World War and any thorough analysis of the region is incomplete without grasping its role. The United States certainly plays the role of the 'Other' against which China defines its identity (Atanassova-Cornelis 2012) and it might impact on China's foreign policy towards the United States regarding various different foreign policy issues not necessarily related to Japan. Nevertheless, as the scope of this research endeavour has been China's policy towards Diaoyu/Senkaku islands, the role of United States or any other party was not considered.

Despite its analytical purchase, and promise to "apply the conceptual baggage of

individual or small group psychology to nation-states” (Harkavy 2000: 355), substantial methodological challenges still linger in utilizing identity in International Relations. This thesis has championed the strategy of discourse analysis, with a focus on English language translations of official Chinese documents, or secondary sources in English written by Chinese or Western scholars. The advantage of this approach is that it can capture the essence of identity in a discourse, either in a verbal or written form; a discourse analysis can also travel between the state and the individual levels of analysis. The focus on patriotic education and public monuments help illustrate how self and other are constructed through the narratives about war in China.

On the other hand, pinpointing identity can be challenging and depends to a large extent on the researcher’s interpretation. Moreover, a more genuine and comprehensive picture of China’s identity would have undoubtedly emerged had Chinese primary sources been examined. Furthermore, by focusing exclusively on the elite level, this thesis effectively ignored different voices that shape China’s identity construction. Undoubtedly, different constructions of identity would have emerged from the societal level. Similarly, by examining literature at the popular level, the resonance of the ‘victimized’ identity in China could have been more convincingly demonstrated.

More generally, an identity-based account of foreign policy would never completely satisfy a rationalist convinced that interests, such as the pursuit of material wealth and security, are determined by the international system and the distribution of power. Given the preference for exogenous factors in foreign policy formation, rationalists pay little attention to or ignore endogenous factors such as (national) identity. Secondly, state behaviour is prioritized for the analysis of international politics; for rationalists ‘talk is cheap’ and therefore inconsequential. Political leaders tend to ‘play domestic audiences’ and carefully calculate political decisions in the light of political costs. Given the fundamental differences between the rationalist and constructivist approaches to international relations at the meta-theoretical level, it would be difficult to convince realists of the importance of identity for international relations analysis. Rather than doing that this thesis merely offered an alternative reading of Sino-Japanese relations and has painted a convincing picture of the relationship between China’s identity and Diaoyu/Senkaku islands policy.

6.2 Thesis contributions

6.2.1 Contribution to International Relations scholarship

In line with critical constructivists, this thesis emphasizes the role of the Other in the identity construction. By employing the self/other framework, this thesis conceptualized Japan as the ‘Other’ in China’s identity construction. Without grasping Japan and the active role it has played in China’s identity construction, it would be impossible to convincingly account for the change and nature of China’s policy towards the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands. By utilizing Rumelili’s (2004) and Banchoff’s (1999) analytical frameworks, this analysis demonstrated that the difference China discovered in Japan led to practices of ‘Othering’, which not only resulted in China’s conflictual identities towards Japan but also actively impacted on China’s policies towards the disputed islands. More generally, this research confirmed the constructivist argument that state interests must be treated analytically as historically, culturally and politically contingent.

Secondly, the identity perspective provides a sophisticated account of China’s policy towards the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands that combines domestic and international influences. Scholars suggested that the domestic politics in China are salient to the understanding of Sino-Japanese relations (Cheung 2010) and China’s policies towards Diaoyu/Senkaku islands (Downs and Saunders 1998, Deans 2000). This thesis maintained that the developments in the dispute are more than a consequence of the manipulation by the government nor merely are they a function of state-society relations in China. While undoubtedly the Chinese government tried to use the dispute to its advantage, the dynamics of the dispute are much richer than those captured by the domestic legitimacy thesis, as Japan continued to play the role as the Other even without government involvement (Suzuki 2008: 324).⁴⁸

6.2.2 Contribution to the literature on territorial disputes

Finally, this thesis makes a contribution to the voluminous literature on territorial disputes. In IR, territorial disputes are usually studied through large samples backed

⁴⁸ Another interesting question not explored here is whether China’s policy towards Japan and the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands would be the same if China were to be a democracy. The democratic peace hypothesis does not work for Japan and Korea who have failed to develop a collective identity.

by the rationalist hypothetico-deductive approach which utilizes the same method to analyze all territorial disputes. Such an approach led Vasquez and Henehan to conclude that territorial disputes were more war prone than disputes over other types of issues (Vasquez and Henehan 2001).⁴⁹ While feasible for some case studies, this approach tells little about the nature of a specific dispute and is not particularly helpful to the study of the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute. State responses to territorial disputes are not merely responses to objective facts but rather social constructions created (not only) by state officials to reproduce a particular mode of state identity. For example, the events of 2010 boat collision incident were simply not apprehended objectively by the Chinese and Japanese participants. The events were described by the Chinese government as the continuation of the narrative of Japan's oppression and humiliation of China, which was connected to China's post-Cold War narratives about itself and Japan. The definition of the Sino-Japanese relations and China's subsequent reaction to the 2010 boat collision incident are a part of this process of China's post-Cold War identity construction.

Moreover, because many of the disputed territories such as the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands have intrinsic value to the claimant countries that cannot be readily measured or quantified, quantitative approaches that focus on the outcome of disputes also tell us little about the changes in state behavior *vis-a-vis* the territorial dispute (Goertz and Diehl 1992). Rather, according to Forsberg, future studies of territorial disputes need to pay attention to the variations of territorial discursive practices with a "focus on demonstrating how the constructions have been established in particular contexts and how they change" Forsberg (2003: 20). The detailed attention given to the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute, particularly its construction in post-1989 China and its impact on China's policy and Sino-Japanese relations, provides an example of such a research. This is not to say that this is the best method to study all territorial disputes, but it does seem rather well-suited to study the Diaoyu/Senkaku dispute, particularly to account for changes in China's policy towards the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Interestingly, while, according to the CIA, around half of all of the world's states are involved in territorial disputes, nevertheless, these disputes overwhelmingly do not complicate relations among the states.

⁵⁰ For a detailed discussion on utilizing quantitative and qualitative methods for the study of territorial disputes, see Kimura and Welch (1998).

6.3 Sino-Japanese reconciliation as identity change

Given the gravity of the territorial dispute and Sino-Japanese relations, this thesis by way of a conclusion offers suggestions for Sino-Japanese reconciliation, which could lead to an eventual territorial dispute resolution. The goal here is not to sketch a road map of Sino-Japanese reconciliation, or to suggest a timetable of specific steps that need to be undertaken, as this was done elsewhere (Gurtov 2008).

Rather, I want to put forward the idea of reconciliation as identity change (Kelman 2004). This perspective provides a theoretical alternative to conflict resolution that goes beyond the interest-based settlement, such as via economic cooperation, which has done little to melt the ice between China and Japan. Rather, according to this perspective, “the primary feature of the identity change constituting reconciliation is the removal of the negation of the other as the central component of one’s own identity” (Kelman 2004: 119). Reconciliation therefore requires a degree of ‘negotiation’ of identity where China and Japan would stop seeing each other as enemies but rather as partners coexisting with each other and trying to manage differences. In the language of Wendt’s structural theory of international relations (1999), China and Japan would move from the Hobbesian culture to the Lockean culture, where they would stop seeing each other as enemies and interpret every action of the other as belligerent.

While the Chinese and Japanese identities are locked in as conflictual at the moment (Wirth 2009), reconciliation would therefore require a degree of acceptance of the other’s identity. Returning to Rumelili’s framework from chapter 2, only in particular cases is the other perceived and represented as a threat to self’s identity (Rumelili 2004). Therefore, the difference in the ‘other’ can be acknowledged without necessarily interpreting it as a threat to one’s own identity. China and Japan have a rich history of interactions and share many parts of their cultures. Therefore, while national identities are defined around inherent characteristics, however, that does not necessarily have to exclude Japan. While this task is extremely difficult, there are abundant micro foundations for a collective identity: China and Japan share many aspects of culture and history and have therefore much to build upon to forge a common collective identity.

Secondly, Japan would have to cease its aggressive actions or actions that would be understood as aggressive by China. Reconciliation is a two-end process, which

requires both the support of China and Japan. If Japan recognized the discourses of China's identity, China would feel more ontologically secure and would not have to feel the need to re-inscribe its identity. Recognition and adjustment in identities are central to achieve a break from the vicious circle in protracted identity conflicts (Strombom 2012). Recognition makes identity more secure and lessens the urge of the self to secure its identity by pointing to the dangerous 'other'. After China's identity adjustment, Japan could not be so easily dehumanized and demonized; similarly, any difference would not lead to Othering and a need to safeguard the Chinese Self. As Strombom put it, "the goal is not to reach consensus on one identity or one grand story, but rather an acceptance towards the other's identity and history" (Strombom 2012:4). The advantage of recognition is that it does not mean agreement; China and Japan could keep different interpretations of history or even competing claims to the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands. Nevertheless, as long as these differences would not be perceived as a threat to China and they would not require such a strong and aggressive response.

The following figure captures the process of Sino-Japanese reconciliation as identity change. It is adapted from the original figure from chapter 2 which discussed the role of 'other' in the 'self's' identity formation. As chapter 4 demonstrated, in post- 1989 China, Japan became the other in identity formation. China's new identity became based on the difference and Japan's active resistance to this identity construction only reinforced its role as the oppressing and dangerous Other. Nevertheless, identity constructions can go both ways and the 'Othering' of Japan can be reversed. As this section outlined, the processes of 'Othering' can be reversed. This process will undoubtedly be neither easy nor straightforward; nevertheless it provides a sketch for eventual Sino- Japanese reconciliation. This reconciliation is based neither on the military balance of power, nor the economic independence but would result from a collective identity between China and Japan. Such reconciliation would have a decidedly stabilizing impact not only for Sino-Japanese relations but also for the entire East Asian region and the world.

Figure 6: Sino-Japanese reconciliation as identity change: collective identity as a means for conflict transformation⁵¹

Constitutive dimensions of China/Japan identity interactions	Variations in Sino-Japanese relationship	Levels of China's ontological security	Behavioural implications for China's relations with Japan/ Diaoyu/Senkaku islands policy
Nature of identity/ difference	Inclusion «« » Exclusion Relaxation of China's identity: Ability to acknowledge difference and not see the 'evil' in Japan's actions	→ Security	Japan could NOT be perceived and represented as a threat, but as a partner Japan could not be dehumanized so easily and turned into a danger → Transformation of Sino-Japanese relations- foundations for a collective identity: Empathy for the feelings and experiences of Japan. Competing claims to the Diaoyu/ Senkaku islands would not be seen as a threat
Response of the other	Recognition «« » Resistance Narratives of recognition: Japan recognizes China's past suffering Such as through an apology	→ Security	
Social distance	Association «« » Dissociation Common cultural heritage as a basis for a collective identity Such as the common history textbooks	→ Security	

⁵¹ (taken from Rumelili (2004) and Strombom (2010)-my own representation)

6.3.1 Issue of Japan's apology

A salient step in the relaxation of China's identity would be Japan's assurance that Japan not only does not have aggressive intentions towards China, but is also fully aware of the suffering Japan inflicted on China in the past. In other words, an unambiguous and comprehensive apology by Japan could serve as an important fuel of Sino-Japanese reconciliation. In the realm of foreign policy, an apology could viably act as a non-military security policy that could facilitate the transformation of relations between China and Japan (Suzuki 2008). China's victimized identity and the negative role Japan plays in China's identity construction have become a security issue in China. An apology from Japan could help to 'desecuritize' the issue and make the identity of China less exclusive and oppositional. The identity adjustment would render Japan less threatening in China's eyes, which would make China's identity more stable and secure. Most importantly, as China's ontological security would be increased, it would lessen China's urge to reaffirm its identity, for example *vis-a-vis* Diaoyu/Senkaku islands policies. Suzuki outlined a 3-step framework of how a Japanese apology could be transformed into a security policy and impact on Sino-Japanese relations. Firstly, the apology must be seen as reflecting the will of entire Japan. Japan's identity must become more inclusive; the suffering of the victims of Japan's aggression must become a part of Japan's identity. Secondly, education in Japan must include the restitution of the past wrongs suffered by the victims. Thirdly, an apology should further facilitate joint historical research, which provides a vehicle to share historical narratives and mediate national identities. An apology by Japan might help transform the identity of China as a victim of Japan. As Suzuki put it: "apology helps us tell a new story that could have transformative effects on "victims" of war and lead them to shake up the shackles of the past." (Suzuki 2008: 330).

Undoubtedly, practical difficulties surrounding the issue of apology do linger. Too much emphasis on apologies could create a domestic backlash in politics and society (Lind 2010). Moreover, an apology must be performed at the right time and right place. There is not a recipe for a successful apology; apologies are not objective statements and ultimately the acceptance of an apology depends on the victim's evaluation of contrition (Lind 2009: 523). However, it is important to keep in mind

that any apology should at least contain admission and remorse. The official apologies of Japan's government often faced opposition from the Diet or took place only after international pressure, which could account for a lack of Chinese acceptance and demand for a more comprehensive and sincere apology. Undoubtedly, Japan's unwillingness to fully come to terms with the past prevents a more comprehensive reconciliation between China and Japan.

Nevertheless, the recent apology in January 2013 of former Japanese Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama provided an example of how Sino-Japanese reconciliation could look like. The apology for Japan's war crimes at the symbolic location of the Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall is a valuable symbolic gesture as it has the potential to prove to the Chinese people that Japanese people are fully aware and sorry about the wartime misdeeds.

The Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute is a real political issue that has not only caused international instability, but could even lead to a military conflict between China and Japan. An Australian professor writing in December 2012 admitted publicly and openly that war could very well be a likely outcome of the current dispute (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, 26/12/2012). Therefore, creative visions for the mending of the Sino-Japanese relations are urgently needed. While divisive and exclusionist national histories are likely to cause international antagonism, then a joint history textbook could begin the process of collective identification and identity renegotiation. While the joint history textbook project between China, Japan and South Korea has been stalled and so far yielded little, they still have a tremendous potential for healing of historical wounds and leading the way to reconciliation. The increasing collaboration of the Chinese academics with their colleagues from Japan could help create an epistemic community that could help transform and moderate the foreign policies in both China and Japan.

6.4 The endurance of China's victim identity

A *Financial Times* commentary on 23 March 2013 observed that Western countries tend to worry that an overconfident China would destabilize international relations and precipitate international conflict. Nevertheless, the author also astutely observed that actually a of self-confidence is actually much more perilous, as "far more

dangerous than a hubristic China is one that feels cornered and threatened and which views aggressive actions on its part as justifiable” (*Financial Times*, 23/3/2012). As this research demonstrated, nowhere else is this lack of China’s self-confidence anchored in its victim identity more pronounced than in its relations with Japan.

While clinging to negative and painful memories is one way for the Chinese people to express connection to their Chinese heritage, there are dangers of reducing one’s identity to victimhood. Buruma called this tendency the ‘pseudoreligion of victimhood’ and warned of the potentially disastrous consequences for China and the world. He maintained that “it becomes questionable when a cultural, ethnic, religious or national community bases its communal identity almost entirely on the sentimental solidarity of remembered victimhood, “ For that way lies historical myopia and, in extreme circumstances, even vendetta” (Buruma 1999: 3). Similarly, Japanese intellectual Haruki Murakami, in an opinion piece in *Asahi Shimbun* after the 2012 incident, was critical of the “hysteria” that surrounds the territorial dispute. He likened the present sentiments in both countries that surround the dispute to “cheap alcohol”, which makes countries speak loudly and boldly but leaves them only with a hangover the next morning (*The Guardian*, 1/10/2012).

Notwithstanding the prominence of the victim identity, , what will be the future of China's national identity ? Is the victim identity likely to become a long-term phenomenon ? Likewise, if the 'China threat' perception strengthens around the world, how will China's victim identity evolve ? According to the analytical 'Self-Other' framework, identity of the Self is closely linked to the perceptions and behaviour of the Other. Therefore, if the "China-threat" perceptions strengthens in the West, particularly the United States, China's natural defensive reaction would to further embrace its victim identity, which would become even more exclusive, emphasizing the oppressive nature of the West and reducing options for reconciliation.

While the prominence of victim identity during historical periods varied, it has never completely withered, so therefore it is unlikely to go away any time soon. Similarly, China's victim identity does not apply to all aspects of China's foreign policy, it becomes activated only during specific circumstances. If other countries show sensitivity and understanding of China's historical experience, that could in turn weaken the victim identity internationally. Similarly, China's victim identity

is stabilized in domestic discourse in China; therefore, if the discourse changed, then the identity itself would be weakened. State leaders in China have almost a monopoly on the state discourse, which gives them often more agency than the leaders in democratic countries have, and which could be utilized to renegotiate China's identity and make it more inclusive.

The current generation of Chinese leadership do not have personal experience of the Sino-Japanese War and therefore have not directly suffered from Japanese atrocities. Jiang Zemin's personal experiences of war have reportedly impacted his behaviour, such as the insistence on apology during his visit of Japan in 1998, which effectively marred the summit. The new generation of leadership should not be encumbered by these negative memories, and this therefore should not impact Sino-Japanese relations negatively. On the other hand, the present leaders have been most likely socialised in the memories and beliefs of China's victimhood either in family or society. Nevertheless, as President Xi consolidated his power only this year, it is too early to tell strongly are the current Chinese leaders impacted by the victim identity.

There are ways that could increase China's self-confidence without necessarily harming or ostracizing other countries. Events such as the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing came with the potential to reassure China and the Chinese people of China's prominent place in the world and demonstrate the obsolescence of the 'inferiority complex'. A senior Chinese commentator urged that following the Olympic Games the 'baggage of history' be dropped in China. He argued that "the glow of the Games should have dispelled any lingering bitterness arising from the humiliating defeats China suffered in the hands of imperialist aggressors in the past century" (*China Daily*, 2/9/2008). Moreover, he urged that the newly gained self-confidence can be used in guiding China's relations with the world.

Unfortunately, the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute is a prime example of national insecurities being manifested in China's foreign relations. Until both China and Japan decide to re-examine their identities and make them more inclusive, Sino-Japanese reconciliation or the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands dispute resolution remain unlikely.

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