

Commemorating National and Regional Identity: Discourse on 'Asia' in Contemporary Japan

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Abstract

This paper examines how the use of language expresses national and regional identity in contemporary Japan through the media discourse of categorisation. Today, the diversity in Japanese society is rapidly increasing while regional immigration remains one of the possible solutions to its problem of an ageing population. At the same time, however, the seventieth anniversary of the end of World War II in August 2015 underlined the persistence of bitter relations between Japan and its neighbouring nations. In such a context, it is timely to re-examine the national and regional identity of Japan. For this purpose, this paper will carry out an empirical analysis of the discourse on 'Asia' by revealing how the notion is perceived and recalled in the media. In doing so, particular attention will be paid to two types of expressions employed to describe the relationship between 'Japan' and 'Asia'. In some cases, Japan is included in Asia, using expressions such as 'Asia such as Japan' while in others, Japan is excluded from Asia using expressions such as 'between Japan and Asia'. They express two points of view based on two types of identities that coexist in contemporary Japan: Japan as part of Asia and Japan in contrast with Asia, the former tends to be triggered by socio-cultural references while the latter trends to be triggered by economic and political references. This paper thus challenges the common notion that 'Asia' is a mere geographical classification by shedding light on varying discourses on the region.

Keywords: Language, Identity, Media, Discourse, Japan, Asia

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Introduction

The central focus of this paper is on how the use of language represents the process in which national and regional identities are renegotiated in the contemporary world through an empirical analysis of the discourse on ‘Asia’ in Japan. The year 2015 marked the seventieth anniversary of the end of World War II. Despite the length of time that has passed since the hostilities, there is still a bitterness from the wartime past lingering in Northeast Asia and, what is worse, the sense of distance seems to have grown in the past few decades. In March 2016, the Cabinet Office of Japan released the result of the Public Opinion Survey on Diplomacy carried out in October 2015.¹ This survey revealed that 83.2% of the respondents answered that they either “do not feel close to China” or “tend not to feel close to China”. This is the lowest percentage since the survey started in 1975. Similarly, a high percentage of the respondents, 64.7%, answered that they either “do not feel close to Korea” or “tend not to feel close to Korea”. The percentage was 61.6% for China and 47.1% for Korea in 2006,² while respectively 49.1% and 40.5% in 2002³ (See Fig.1). Going back further, “Asia” ranked first as “the region in which I am most interested” while China and Korea ranked first and second respectively as “the country with which you think Japan should have close relationship” in the same survey carried out in 1977.⁴ Does this mean that Japanese identification with Asia is declining?

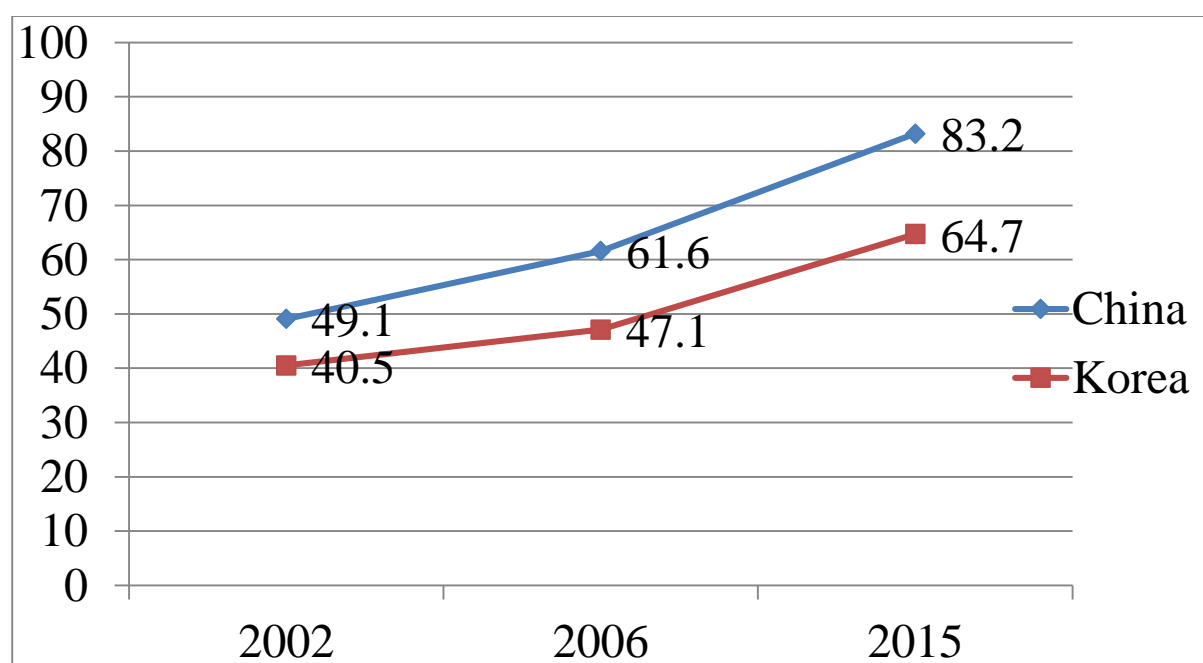


Fig. 1 Public sentiment toward northeast Asian neighbours in Japan
“Do not feel or tend not to feel close” (%)

¹ Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet Public Opinion Survey in 2015. Available at: <http://survey.gov-online.go.jp/h27/h27-gaiko/2-1.html> [accessed on 28.10.2016].

² Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet Public Opinion Survey in 2006. Available at: <http://survey.gov-online.go.jp/h18/h18-gaiko/index.html> [accessed on 28.10.2016].

³ Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet Public Opinion Survey in 2002. Available at: <http://survey.gov-online.go.jp/h14/h14-gaikou/index.html> [accessed on 28.10.2016].

⁴ Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet Public Opinion Survey in 1977. Available at: <http://survey.gov-online.go.jp/s52/S52-08-52-07.html> [accessed on 28.10.2016].

Multiplicity of identity

There are indeed some political factors that may explain the deteriorating regional sentiment in Japan. Territorial and historical disputes between Japan and its neighbouring countries have been recurrent for decades, resulting in stigmatisation and antagonism between Japan and other Asian nations. Furthermore, the rapid rise of China has been hailed as an economic and political threat to Japan, fuelling nationalistic discourse. However, such economic and political factors alone do not explain all aspects of regional identity which, as in the case of any other form of identity, is necessarily established upon multiple processes of understanding ‘Self’ and ‘Other’ or, in the words of Jenkins,⁵ of “our understanding of who we are and of who other people are, and, reciprocally, other people’s understanding of themselves and of others”.

Thus, besides economic and political factors, socio-cultural factors play important role in forming regional identities. The Public Opinion Survey shows that during the past couple of decades, sentiment toward Korea in Japan saw temporary improvements, which resulted, at least partly, from ‘soft’ factors such as cooperation in co-hosting the FIFA World Cup in 2002 as well as the popularity of Korean TV dramas and pop music known as the ‘Korean wave’ [*kanryū*] since the mid-2000s. Another example is the use of Chinese characters that is seen as a shared linguistic heritage. Newspaper discussions on the Japanese language show Japanese linguistic identity closely associated with Chinese elements such as Chinese characters [*kanji*] and Sino-Japanese loanwords [*kango*].⁶ Such cultural and linguistic familiarity towards other Asian nations should not be overlooked. It is also necessary to point out that the concept of ‘Asia’ is not confined to the northeast Asian region where the aforementioned disputes mainly take place. While the sentiment towards China and Korea has deteriorated, the above survey shows that the sentiment toward South, Southeast and Central Asia has improved since the early 2000s. Thus, it cannot be said that Asian identity in Japan on the whole is diminishing. In such a context, it is worthwhile to re-examine the relation between national and regional identity in contemporary Japan, focusing on how the notion of ‘Asia’ is perceived and recalled in public discourse.

In tackling this question of identity, it should be reminded that identity is “always negotiable” and “not fixed” (Jenkins 1996, 5). We witness a growing multitude of national and regional identities throughout the world today as a result of the globalisation and internationalisation. This paper locates the case of Japan as part of this global trend and argues that there simultaneously exists two identities in Japan, Japan ‘as part of’ Asia and Japan ‘outside of’ Asia. It will be argued here that there are two contrasting views of ‘Asia’ in contemporary Japanese discourse, namely the ‘Self’ and the ‘Other’ to Japan, and which one is employed in specific narratives depends on the political, economic, and cultural motivations. This paper thus attempts to challenge the notion of ‘Asia’ as a geographical categorisation that is otherwise too often taken for granted and investigates how regional and national identities are variable according to a number of references employed in the discourse.

⁵ Richard Jenkins, *Social Identity* (London: Routledge, 1996), 5.

⁶ Naoko Hosokawa, “Nationalism and Linguistic Purism in Contemporary Japan: National Sentiment Expressed through Public Attitudes towards Foreignisms”. *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 15/1 (2015), 48-65.

Methodology

In order to validate this hypothesis, it is essential to understand what the notion of ‘Asia’ covers in contemporary Japan. This paper focuses on the process through which the concepts of nation and region are formed by reference to the usages of language to ‘categorise’ the world through the principles of ‘inclusion’ and ‘exclusion’. To this end, the paper empirically analyses the discourse of ‘Asia’ and ‘Japan’ found in newspaper entries, governmental publications, and contents of social network posts issued between 1 January 2011 and 31 December 2015. Newspaper entries have been collected through electronic archives of the two largest nationwide newspapers in Japan, the *Asahi Shimbun Kikuzo*⁷ and *Yomiuri Shimbun Yomidasu Rekishikan*,⁸ which both provide easy and practical access to past printed media content. Publications by the government and governmental agencies were collected through the websites of the Prime Minister of Japan and his Cabinet, the Ministry of Finance, and Japan External Trade Organisation (JETRO). As social network contents, Twitter entries were collected using the advanced search function⁹. Twitter is one of the largest social networking services in the world with more than 320 million active users worldwide and 35 million users in Japan alone as of 2016¹⁰ and is accordingly expected to reveal the perspective of the general public in Japan.

By including the three types of media sources, with varying degrees of formality and different viewpoints, it is believed that the analysis will provide an accurate insight into the implicit perception of the nation and the region. In doing so, particular attention will be paid to expressions employed to describe the relationship between ‘Japan’ and ‘Asia’. The analysis will particularly look at three dimensions; 1) whether the notion of ‘Japan’ is included in or excluded from the notion of ‘Asia’, 2) if there is any particular ‘trigger’ to induce such discourses of inclusion and exclusion, and 3) if there is any difference in the discourse depending on the enunciator. By examining an extended number of examples with the above three dimensions, the analysis is expected to provide a clear picture of how Japanese regional and national identities are constructed in the two opposing manners and of the contributing factors to the two identifications.

Regional identity in Japan

When discussing regional identity, it is essential to recognise its duality. Stråth (2000, 15) has pointed to the dual characteristic of regional identity by describing the notion of ‘Europe’ as a “Janus head” that is on the one hand contrasted to “the world outside Europe”, thus standing for the individual nations within it, while on the other contrasted to the notion of the nation itself¹¹. Similarly, the notion of ‘Asia’ can not only be employed to encompass its constituent nations such as Japan, but can also be used to contrast with the national identities of these countries. In consequence, ‘Asia’ can be both a synonym, (or ‘Self’) to which the antonym is the world outside of Asia such as the general notion of the ‘West’, and an antonym (or ‘Other’) to ‘Japan’. There are thus two

⁷ Asahi Shimbun Archive. Available at: <http://database.asahi.com/library2e/> [accessed on 28.10.2016].

⁸ Yomiuri Shimbun Archive. Available at: <https://database.yomiuri.co.jp/rekishikan/> [accessed on 28.10.2016].

⁹ Twitter Advanced Search: <https://twitter.com/search-advanced?lang=en> [accessed on 28.10.2016].

¹⁰ Kenji Ando, “Twitter announces the number of Japanese users for the first time: The increase ratio is the highest in the world”. *The Huffington Post*, February 18, 2016. Available at: http://www.huffingtonpost.jp/2016/02/18/twitter-japan_n_9260630.html [accessed on 22.06.2016].

¹¹ Bo Stråth, “Europe as a Discourse”, in *Europe and the Other and Europe as the Other*, edited by Bo Stråth (Brussels and New York: P.I.E. Peter Lang, 2000), 15-44.

notions of Japan, 'Japan as part of Asia' and 'Japan in contrast to Asia', involving the discourses of inclusion and exclusion.

As identity is generally defined through the relation with the other, it is inescapably relational.¹² The processes of identification and othering are thus indeed two sides of the same coin and the notion of the 'Other' is as important as the 'Self' for identity at any level. Jenkins quotes Boom who has claimed that identification is "a game of the vis-à-vis".¹³ Similarly, Gottlieb describes the process of constructing identity as "assigning to ourselves and to others labels which shape our concepts of who and what we or they are", emphasising, "assigning labels to others plays a significant contrapuntal role in building our own concepts of self because by defining others as what we are not, we emphasise what it is that we think we are, at both the personal and social level, often without actually spelling it out".¹⁴ This paper therefore analyses such a dual process of identification and othering in the public discourse.

Historical context

Over the course of the past few centuries, the notion of 'Japan' has been discussed both in terms of its relation to the 'East' (mainly China) and to the 'West' (mainly Europe). In the eighteenth century, scholars of national studies [*kokugaku*], such as Motoori Norinaga, criticised Japan's dependency on the Chinese civilisation as shared across Asia and argued for a distinct native Japanese scholarship. In the nineteenth century, on the other hand, the Meiji Restoration brought a large influx of Western civilisation to Japan, creating the famous slogan by Fukuzawa Yukichi of 'getting out of Asia, entering Europe' [*datsua nyūō*]. At the same time, however, with Japan's emulation of Western imperialism and colonialism, people in the newly colonised Asian territories were politically assimilated as 'Japanese' while at the same time also ethnically discriminated.¹⁵ During the Pacific War, cultural heritage shared with the rest of Asia, such as Chinese characters, was emphasised alongside growing hostility to Western 'enemies'. This phenomenon has been described by Carroll as "Japan's re-Asianisation".¹⁶ In the post-war period, the literature on the uniqueness of the Japanese gained popularity as national confidence recovered alongside democratisation and economic growth. Such literature is often referred to collectively as *nihonjinron* [theories of the Japanese] and its critics, including Dale¹⁷ and Sugimoto,¹⁸ point out their simplistic contrast between Japan and the generalised idea of the 'West'. The overview of the past few centuries shows that the perception of 'Asia' and the 'West' has changed in accordance to multiple factors surrounding Japan and the world. This also means that the perception of 'Japan' itself has changed along with its varied relation to 'Asia' and the 'West'. Regarding the evolution of Japanese identity, Oguma (1995, 1998) argues that the images of 'Self' and 'Other' in Japan have been transformed in accordance with changes

¹² See also, Anthony Paul Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community* (London and New York: Routledge, 1985); Jenkins, *Social Identity*.

¹³ Jenkins, *Social Identity*, 5.

¹⁴ Nanette Gottlieb, *Linguistic Stereotyping and Minority Groups in Japan* (London: Routledge, 2006), 4.

¹⁵ Eiji Oguma. "Les Frontieres du Japon modern", *Ebisu* 30 (2003), 155-177.

¹⁶ Tessa Carroll, *Language Planning and Language Change in Japan* (Surrey: Curzon, 2001), 168.

¹⁷ Peter N Dale, *The Myth of Japanese Uniqueness* (London: Routledge, 1986).

¹⁸ Yoshio Sugimoto, *An Introduction to Japanese Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

in the national and international environment, giving an example of the fear of Western powers.¹⁹

In the contemporary context, it has been pointed out that books and TV programmes that emphasise the international appeal of Japan have been popular since around 2010.²⁰ It has been explained that this phenomenon is a response to an insecurity and lack of national confidence in relation to other Eastern Asian nations, namely China and Korea. Funabiki refers to the fact that in those books and TV programmes, Japanese superiority is often asserted through the adoption of an alleged ‘Western value framework’ in an attempt to combat the growing fear about rising neighbours, thereby again ‘de-Asianising’ Japan. It is also true that a certain psychological distance from the rest of Asia is growing today, as has also been suggested by the aforementioned Public Opinion Survey. However, as Joseph²¹ points out, there are multiple levels and multiple aspects in identity, as 1) identity can vary according to one’s relation to each of the ‘Others’ and 2) one can be seen differently by each one of the ‘Others’. Such a complex relation of ‘Self’ and ‘Other’ is partly observable in public discourse. Therefore, the objective of this paper is to enrich the discussion on Japanese identity in relation to Asia by pointing to the interplay between ‘Japan in Asia’ and ‘Japan outside of Asia’ embedded in public discourse after the year 2010 which Funabiki sees as the period in which the new discourse on Japan’s international appeal becomes more visible²².

Categorisation

In examining the use of language in the relation between ‘Japan’ and ‘Asia’, the main analytical object will be the discourse of categorisation with its instances of inclusion and exclusion. Categorisation is an essential process that significantly impacts human cognition. Fowler has argued that “[w]e understand the multitude of things and events we encounter in our daily lives by seeing them as instances of types or categories” and that “without any categorisation, it is doubtful whether we could think or communicate at all”.²³ Similarly, Lakoff and Johnson have argued that “categorisation is a natural way of identifying a kind of object or experience by highlighting certain properties, downplaying others, and hiding still others”.²⁴ In other words, the manner in which things are classified into types or categories is profoundly revealing of the significations attached to them.

¹⁹ Eiji Oguma. *Tan'itsu minzoku shinwa no kigen: Nihonjin no jigazō no keifu* (単一民族神話の起源—「日本人」の自画像の系譜) [The Origin of the Myth of Ethnic Homogeneity: The Genealogy of ‘Japanese’ Self-Images] (Tokyo: Shinyōsha, 1995); Oguma, Eiji. *Nihonjin no kyōkai: okinawa ainu taiwan chōsen shokuminchi shihai kara fukki undō made* (〈日本人〉の境界：沖縄・アイヌ・台湾・朝鮮植民地支配から復 帰運動まで) [The Boundaries of “the Japanese”: Okinawa, Ainu, Taiwan, and Korea from Colonial Rule to Reversion Movement] (Tokyo: Shinyōsha, 1998).

²⁰ Takeo Funabiki, “Tokushū waidō: Kenkan kenchu shinogu ikioi? Nihon raisanbon ga būmu no wake” (嫌韓・嫌中しのぐ勢い？日本礼賛本がブームのわけ) [Stronger than Anti-Korean or Anti-Chinese Sentiment?: Reasons why books praising Japan are popular]. *Mainichi Shimbun*, February 25, 2016. Accessed 8 August, 2016.

<http://mainichi.jp/graph/2015/02/25/20150225dde012040002000c/001.html>.

²¹ John Joseph, *Language and Identity: National, Ethnic, Religious* (Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 8.

²² Funabiki, “Kenkan kenchu shinogu ikioi? Nihon raisanbon ga būmu no wake”.

²³ Fowler, Roger, *Linguistic Criticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 16.

²⁴ Lakoff, George and Johnson, Mark, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 123.

In order to unearth how the concept of ‘Japan’ is categorised in relation to the concept of ‘Asia’, the paper particularly focus on two recurrent expressions to link the words ‘Asia’ [*ajia*, アジア] and ‘Japan’ [*nihon*, 日本]. They are: ‘Asia such as Japan’ [*nihon nado (no) ajia*, 日本などアジア] and ‘Japan and Asia’ [*nihon to ajia*, 日本とアジア]. In the former, Japan is included in Asia while in the latter Japan is excluded from Asia. The two types of categorisation exemplify the dual identification of ‘Japan’ in relation to ‘Asia’, emphasising two different perspectives and values with regard to the national and regional identity of Japan. When Japan is included in the category of Asia through the expression ‘Asia such as Japan’, this manifests a certain understanding of Japan, such as that the country of Japan is geographically situated in the Asian region or that it shares cultural or traditional values with other Asian nations. In other words, similarities between Japan and other Asian countries are underlined. On the other hand, the expression ‘Japan and Asia’ implies that Japan and Asia are two distinct entities. Such a discourse of exclusion often focuses on differences between Japan and other nations in Asia. For example it illuminates the fact that Japan is a developed country while most other nations in Asia are emerging countries, or that Japan is somehow isolated from the rest of Asia due to historical or territorial disputes with other Asian nations. The following sections will show how these two perspectives are manifested in the actual public discourse and what context ‘triggers’ each type of discourse.

Newspaper entries

The first group of data has been collected from newspapers. According to an opinion survey carried out by the Agency for Cultural Affairs, 75.8% of respondents answered that they read a newspaper either frequently or sometimes in 2009²⁵ and 77% answered that they obtain necessary information from newspapers in 2008²⁶. The discourse in newspapers is thus considered to be an important barometer of public perception.

The frequency of employment of the two expressions ‘Asia such as Japan’ and ‘Japan and Asia’ in the two newspapers for each five-year period since 1996 is shown below. While the use of the latter has been more common in both newspapers, the two expressions have both been recurrent for twenty years, suggesting that both points of view have been co-existing (See Fig. 2). It should also be pointed out that the overall frequency of both expressions is in decline, which may suggest an overall decrease in the discussion on Asia in general.

‘Asia such as Japan’ [*nihon nado (no) ajia*] (or ‘Asia including Japan’ [*nihon o fukumu ajia*])

- 84 entries in Asahi and 88 entries in Yomiuri (2011-2015)
- 90 entries in Asahi and 72 entries in Yomiuri (2006-2010)
- 116 entries in Asahi and 87 entries in Yomiuri (2001-2005)

²⁵ Agency for Cultural Affairs Statistics in 2009. Available at: http://www.bunka.go.jp/tokei_hakusho_shuppan/tokeichosa/kokugo_yoronchosa/pdf/h21_chosa_kikka.pdf [accessed on 28.10.2016].

²⁶ Agency for Cultural Affairs Statistics in 2008. Available at: http://www.bunka.go.jp/tokei_hakusho_shuppan/tokeichosa/kokugo_yoronchosa/h20/ [accessed on 28.10.2016].

- 123 entries in Asahi and 128 entries in Yomiuri (1996-2000)

‘Japan and Asia’ [*nihon to ajia*] (or ‘Asia and Japan’ [*ajia to nihon*])

- 123 entries in Asahi and 105 entries in Yomiuri (2011-2015)
- 165 entries in Asahi and 129 entries in Yomiuri (2006-2010)
- 281 entries in Asahi and 153 entries in Yomiuri (2001-2005)
- 328 entries in Asahi and 191 entries in Yomiuri (1996-2000)

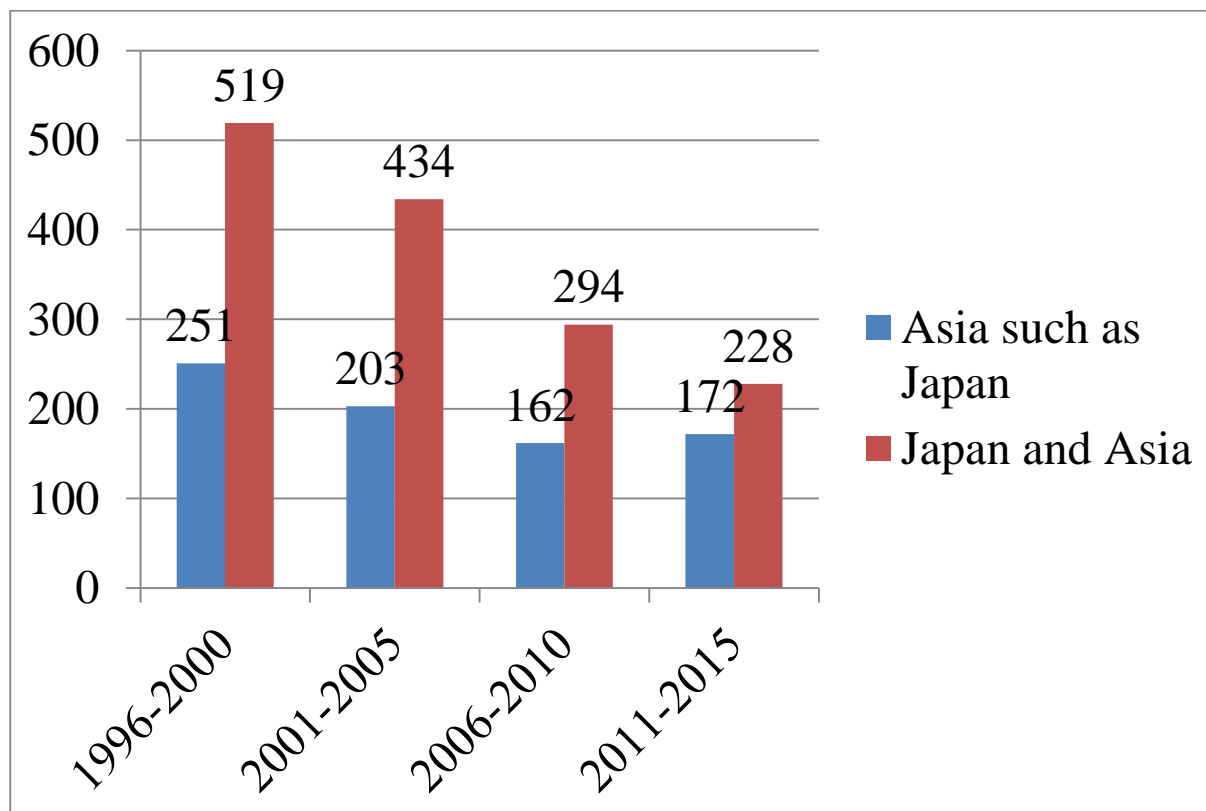


Fig. 2 “Asia such as Japan” versus “Japan and Asia” (1996-2015)

The extracted newspaper contents reveal that the discourse of inclusion is employed when there is a reference to a third party outside of Asia, often an actor that is associated with the ‘West’ in Japan, such as the U.S. Secretary of Defence, the Russian government, the U.S. President, or the CEO of McDonald’s. On the other hand, the discourse of exclusion is employed when the difference in viewpoints between Japan and the rest of Asia is emphasised, particularly related to political and historical disputes as well as economic development. The following are sample extracts from the two newspapers. The relevant expressions as well as the ‘triggers’ for the discourse are underlined for reference.

‘Asia such as Japan’ [*nihon nado ajia*]

- (1) U.S. Secretary of Defence Carter announced his ten day trip to visit four countries in Asia such as Japan [*nihon nado ajia*] from 17 July. (Asahi, 17 July, 2012)
- (2) The Russian government aims to export 15 million tons of LNG annually to the Asian region such as Japan [*nihon nado ajia*]. (Yomiuri, 17 March, 2013)

- (3) This visit [of President Obama to Japan] also aimed at giving a sense of trust to Asian countries such as Japan [*nihon nado ajia*]. (Asahi, 25 April, 2014)
- (4) It has been seen that he [the former CEO of McDonald's] resigned to take the responsibility, as the sales in the Asian region such as Japan [*nihon nado ajia*] declined sharply while the main U.S. market also remains sluggish. (Asahi, 29 January, 2015)

‘Japan and Asia’ [*nihon to ajia*]

- (5) When it comes to the relation between Japan and Asia [*nihon to ajia*], Japan (...) has an advantage of being geographically close to the emerging countries in Asia. (Asahi, 23 May, 2012)
- (6) It [a special lecture held at Nagoya University] covered the war responsibility of Japan as well as history, territorial issues, and post-war diplomacy between Japan and Asia [*nihon to ajia*]. (Yomiuri, 22 November, 2012)
- (7) In a reply in the Diet, Prime Minister Abe Shinzō commented regarding the relations between Japan and Asia [*nihon to ajia*] that “[during the war] Japan once caused tremendous damage and suffering to the people of many countries, particularly those of Asian nations”. (Yomiuri, 10 May, 2013)
- (8) It will be sixty-nine years on the 15th August since the war ended, leaving deep scars for the people in Japan and Asia [*nihon to ajia*]. (Asahi, 15 August 2014)

Governmental documents and reports

While the above newspaper entries represent the perspective of the nationwide media, publications from the government and governmental agencies are expected to reveal the perspective of the official view of the government. They are often written in English or translated into English and it is assumed that the language used in such publications is carefully chosen to represent the governmental view, as they are likely to be read by government officials abroad. The extracts from such publications have shown similar tendencies to those of newspaper entries.

The discourse of inclusion is employed when there is a reference to a Western third party. The following is an extract from Focus Newsletter released by JETRO in November 2010²⁷.

- (9) *Former Prime Minister Hatoyama stated, “Of course developing Asia is not free of problems. In this regard, the presence of the United States has been playing and will continue to play an important role in ensuring the peace and prosperity of Asia, including Japan. This is one of the greatest reasons that Japan continues to regard the Japan-US alliance as the linchpin of Japanese foreign policy ... Together with you, I would like to welcome this commitment.”*

On the other hand, the discourse of exclusion is employed when there is a reference to the economy such as the words “trade and investment”, as most of the other countries in Asia are considered to be emerging economies.

²⁷ JETRO Focus Newsletter. Available at: https://www.jetro.go.jp/ext_images/en/reports/survey/pdf/2010_11_epa.pdf [accessed on 28.10.2016].

The following is an extract from a JETRO Global Trade and Investment Report released in 2011²⁸.

- (10) *The Great East Japan Earthquake of March 11, 2011, affected not only the Japanese economy but also the Asian economies to a certain extent, but it also drew renewed attention to the close linkage between Japan and the Asian economies. Take a look at the interdependency between Japan and Asian countries and regions in terms of trade and investment. In trade, while exports to Japan of Asian countries and regions account for between around 4% and 15% of their total exports, the share of imports from Japan in their total imports ranges from 7% to over 20%, with imports by Hong Kong, Taiwan and Thailand reaching levels in excess of 10% of GDP. Looking into direct investments as well, the ratio of direct investment from Japan to the total balance of direct investment goes into double figures in many countries and regions, with direct investment from Japan reaching around 10% of GDP in Hong Kong, Thailand and Singapore.*

Similarly, the below extracts are from a research paper²⁹ issued in 2014 by the Policy Research Institute under the Ministry of Finance.

- (11) *Japan's economic relations with Asian countries have rapidly become increasingly close in recent years, mainly through trade and direct investment. In Asia, Japanese companies have pursued a "fragmentation strategy," which refers to breaking down production processes and assigning each process, through direct investment, to the country or region suited to implement it most efficiently. As a result, when a certain product is manufactured, its intermediate materials and parts are actively traded between production bases located in various Asian countries, leading to the formation of a regional production network. The formation of such networks has significantly contributed to the economic growth not only of Asian countries but also of Japan. Factors behind the formation of such networks include the presence of wide gaps in the quality of workers and the level of wages between Asian countries due to differences in the degree of economic development as well as the liberalization of policies on trade and direct investment in Asian countries. However, barriers on trade and direct investment remain. To further promote the economic growth of Japan and Asian countries, it is necessary to reduce and abolish such barriers.*

It is worth noting that the two opposing perspectives are able to coexist alongside according to the context. The below two extracts are from the statement released by the Prime Minister of Japan, Abe Shinzō, on 14 August for the occasion of the 70th

²⁸ 2011 JETRO Global Trade and Investment Report. Available at: https://www.jetro.go.jp/ext_images/en/reports/white_paper/trade_invest_2011.pdf [accessed on 28.10.2016].

²⁹ Shujiro Urata, "Japan's Trade Policy with Asia". *Public Policy Review*, Policy Research Institute, Ministry of Finance, Japan 10/1 (2014), 1-31. Available at: https://www.mof.go.jp/english/pri/publication/pp_review/ppr024/ppr024a.pdf [accessed on 28.10.2016].

anniversary of the end of the war³⁰. In the first extract, one can see that Japan is included in the concept of ‘Asia’ through the expression ‘earlier than any other nation in Asia’ while in the second extract, Japan is excluded from the word ‘Asia’ through the expression “Asia as our neighbours”. In the former instance, there is a reference to ‘Western powers’ while in the latter instance, there is a reference to ‘the war’.

- (12) *More than one hundred years ago, vast colonies possessed mainly by the Western powers stretched out across the world. With their overwhelming supremacy in technology, waves of colonial rule surged toward Asia in the 19th century. There is no doubt that the resultant sense of crisis drove Japan forward to achieve modernization. Japan built a constitutional government earlier than any other nation in Asia. The country preserved its independence throughout.*
- (13) *Japan has repeatedly expressed the feelings of deep remorse and heartfelt apology for its actions during the war. In order to manifest such feelings through concrete actions, we have engraved in our hearts the histories of suffering of the people in Asia as our neighbours: those in Southeast Asian countries such as Indonesia and the Philippines, and Taiwan, the Republic of Korea and China, among others; and we have consistently devoted ourselves to the peace and prosperity of the region since the end of the war.*

Twitter Entries

The newspapers and governmental documents both reflect the collective perspective in the society to a certain degree. On the other hand, social network contents tend to represent more personal views. While the accuracy or validity of the contents is not controlled, they can also sometimes reveal the more crude opinions of the general public. Furthermore, the growth of the use of social network sites is so rapid that the impact of the discourse spread through such a medium is undeniable in contemporary society. This section thus examines extracts from Twitter entries. Even though the enunciator of Twitter entries can vary from individuals drawn from the general public, public or private institutions, or influential individuals whose names are widely known, this section will treat all entries as ‘social network contents’, as one of the characteristics of information shared on social network sites is that they are shared and spread through multiple users.

Extracts from Twitter entries have revealed similar tendencies to those of newspapers and governmental publications. The discourse of inclusion was triggered by a reference to a third party as ‘Other’ such as “Western Europe” in (16). The discourse of exclusion was triggered by a reference to war-related issues such as in (18) and (20) as well as economic and financial issues such as in (19). In (17), a reference to the third party, Germany and Europe, does not function as a trigger to the discourse of inclusion, as Germany and Europe are not used as the contrapuntal ‘Other’ but as a parallel example to the relation between ‘Japan and Asia’. Thus, the discourse of exclusion is employed.

Twitter entries however also revealed some new triggers particularly to the discourse of inclusion that were not very evident in newspaper or governmental

³⁰ Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet Website. Available at: http://japan.kantei.go.jp/97_abe/statement/201508/0814statement.html [accessed on 28.10.2016].

discourses. Firstly, the discourse of inclusion was often triggered by socio-cultural references. Indeed, Asian culture, whether traditional or contemporary, was mentioned frequently when there was an expression ‘Asia such as Japan’. For example, (13) refers to a cultural code in Asia while (15) has a reference to a Korean pop group and (16) discusses the cultural and societal differences between Asia and Europe. Thus, it can be said that in addition to the reference to the external third party, socio-cultural factors also constitute an important trigger for the discourse of inclusion. In particular, the reference to Korean pop culture also mentioned above as the Korean wave was recurrent in Twitter entries often followed by an expression of inclusion. On this point, Kang among others,³¹ has discussed the impact of Korean popular culture as effective soft power, which can also ameliorate diplomatic relations in Asia. Secondly, it should also be mentioned that in (16), Japan is included in Asia while China is excluded from it. There were some other similar cases in which the discourse of inclusion was employed as opposed to China that is excluded from ‘Asia’, playing the role of ‘Other’. It can be said that this is due to the fact that China has been becoming a more significant ‘Other’ through its rapid economic growth and social transformations as well the large population that can be seen in contrast to the aging population of Japan.

The below are extracts from Twitter entries that contain the respective expressions.

‘Asia such as Japan’ [*nihon nado no ajia*]

- (14) What is often said is that in Asian countries such as Japan [*nihon nado no ajia*], there is a cultural code in which one is not supposed to say “you are wrong!” to his/her superiors or seniors. (16 July, 2011)
- (15) The Chinese population of 1.3 billion is equivalent of the total population of Europe, the United States, and Asian countries such as Japan [*nihon nado no ajia*]. (28 September, 2012)
- (16) SUPER JUNIOR [a Korean pop music band] will have a tour around the world for SUPER SHOW5 not only in Asia, such as Japan [*nihon nado no ajia*] and China, but also South America and Europe. (13 February, 2013)
- (17) Asia such as Japan [*nihon nado no ajia*] consist of pastoral societies! If there is a large outbreak of grasshoppers in the rice field, everyone will cooperate to get rid of them. The Western Europe on the other hand consists of hunters! It is a meritocratic society where rewards are given according to what one can hunt! (19 August, 2013)

‘Japan and Asia’ [*nihon to ajia*]

- (18) Contrary to the win-win relation of Germany and Europe both of which have properly accepted their mistakes, there are persisting problems such as the problems regarding the past history of the relation between Japan and Asian countries [*nihon to ajia*] and it is thus impossible to build a sustainable relationship. (19 November, 2012)
- (19) I would like to study a wide range of subjects such as the political situation in Ukraine, energy issues, the relation between Japan and Asia [*nihon to ajia*] and the U.S. politics. (2 March, 2014)
- (20) The relation between Japan and Asia [*nihon to ajia*] has dramatically changed in the past several years since the Lehman Shock. (4 April, 2014)

³¹ Hyungseok Kang, “Contemporary Cultural Diplomacy in South Korea: Explicit and Implicit Approaches”. *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 21/4 (2015), 433-447.

- (21) When I was in the second year of high school, there was a class in which students choose a topic related to the relation between Japan and Asia [*nihon to ajia*] and give presentations. I chose to look at the Sino-Japan War and the depiction of Japan in Chinese and Taiwanese films. (10 October, 2015)

Findings

Based on the above analysis of the entries in newspapers, governmental documents, and social network contents examined above, the following findings can be submitted.

The discourse of inclusion is employed when:

- 1) There is a reference to the 'West' as the 'Other' for 'Asia'

Example:

- U.S. Secretary of Defence (1)
- Russian government (2)
- U.S. President (3)
- CEO of an American company (4)
- United States (9)
- Western powers (12)
- Western Europe (17)

- 2) There is a reference to China as the 'Other'

Example:

- Chinese population (19)
(Mainly visible on social networks)

- 3) There is a reference to an Asian socio-cultural product or practice

Examples:

- Asian cultural code (18)
- Korean pop music (20)
- Asian social structure (21)
(Mainly visible on social networks)

The discourse of exclusion is employed when:

- 1) There is a reference to war-related issues

Examples:

- Sixty-ninth anniversary of the end of the war (8)
- Tremendous damage and suffering [during the war] (7)
- Actions during the war (13)
- Sino-Japan War (21)

- 2) There is a reference to other political or diplomatic issues

Example:

- History, territorial issues, and post-war diplomacy (6)

3) There is a reference to economic or financial issues

Examples:

- Emerging countries (5)
- Asian economies (9)
- Economic relation (11)
- Trade and direct investment (11)
- Lehman Shock (20)

It can thus be said that there is a multiple and complex interplay between the discourses of inclusion and exclusion when Japanese identity is expressed in relation to Asia, and there are recurrent triggers that induce each discourse.

Conclusion

There are no universal boundaries by which to divide the regions of the world. While appearing given and natural, regional categorisation is a product of discourse. This paper has examined the discourse on the relation between 'Asia' and 'Japan' in contemporary Japanese expressions in various types of media, newspapers, governmental publications, and social networks. It has been suggested that the notion of 'Asia' serves both as the 'Self' and the 'Other, thereby demonstrating the dual characteristics of the national and regional identities. While the discourse of exclusion has recently been gathering more attention due to the economic and political distance between Japan and the rest of Asia, a regional identity as part of Asia has also been observed based on a shared socio-cultural heritage. While this is a study of Asian or Eastern identity in Japan, the reference to the 'West' also plays a key contrapuntal role, as identity is always constructed or imagined in relation to an equally constructed or imagined 'Other'. Thus, it can be said that the discourse on 'Asia' delineates not only the notion of 'Asia' but also the notion of the 'West' that is highly visible in Japanese discourse.

The findings of this paper can be compared to the cases of other nations in Asia, such as China and Korea that have so far been discussed by scholars such as Befu³² and Kim.³³ Furthermore, this study also offers insightful comparative case studies for other regions in the world. In particular, it is hypothesised that relevant comparisons can be drawn with the case of Europe, as the notion of Europe is simultaneously assimilated and contrasted with the identity of individual nations. European regional identity has been an extremely important question since the creation of the European Union with several processes of enlargement as well as debates on the membership criteria involving political, economic, social, cultural, and religious issues as well as the issues of the 'othering' of immigrants or religious and ethnic minorities, such as those included in the study of Hellyer.³⁴

³² Harumi Befu, *Cultural nationalism in East Asia: Representation and identity* (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 1993).

³³ Nam-Kook Kim, *Multicultural challenges and redefining identity in East Asia* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014).

³⁴ H. A. Hellyer, *Muslims of Europe: the 'other' Europeans* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009).

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