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NATIONAL IDENTITY AND SECURITY IN CONTEMPORARY JAPANESE MEDIA DISCOURSE: IMAGES OF NORTH KOREA[1]

David Kožíšek*

ABSTRACT

The paper presents an analysis of the portrayal of North Korea in the contemporary discourse of the two largest Japanese newspapers: the conservative Yomiuri Shimbun and the more left-wing oriented Asahi Shimbun. Analysed patterns and discursive practices in the two major national media outlets attempt to construct a certain notion of national identity, albeit through the use of different means and key ideas. Drawing on a post-structuralist understanding of language and discourse and theory of national identity based on the relational dichotomy between Self and Other, this study attempts to explain the construction of national identity in Japanese print media discourse, demonstrating the link between linguistic and societal practices. While Japan is portrayed as organised, democratic, rational and cooperative, North Korea is associated with discursive practices evoking irrationality, unpredictability and danger, often conveniently represented directly by Kim Jong-un. The newspapers tend to either stress the hard security aspect of the current status quo or emphasise harsh criticism of North Korea while simultaneously posing Japan as a victim. Furthermore, the findings suggest that the Self as well as the Other are rather fluid and context dependent. Given the link between Japanese politics and media, outlets with a high level of trustworthiness and credibility may significantly influence the readers' perception of their own identity and security. Ultimately, this raises questions about the possibility of the country's normalisation of its foreign and security policies.

Key words: Asahi, CDA, discourse, national identity, Japan, media, newspapers, North Korea, Othering, security, Self and Other, Yomiuri

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Introduction

Under its present leader, **Kim Jong-un**, North Korea has been proactively seeking to improve its missile technology and also reportedly developing a miniature hydrogen bomb. Although the majority of related launch tests have ended in failure, North Korea's neighbours, South Korea and Japan – as well as the Asia-Pacific-involved United States – are growing increasingly worried about their own security. While North Korea without a doubt presents a growing security threat, this paper chooses to focus on the domestic discourse of selected Japanese media in an attempt to understand how these events are being portrayed to a local audience and how a certain image of North Korea is being constructed. Through the dichotomisation of Self and Other, this discourse helps solidify a notion of national identity while also aiming to produce a sense of urgency and provoke a range of emotions.

Drawing on a post-structuralist understanding of language, power and discourse, this paper seeks to analyse and explain one possible source for the construction of Japanese national identity in the discourse of two major Japanese national newspapers, the left-wing *Asahi Shimbun* and the conservative *Yomiuri Shimbun*. Using the framework of **Norman Fairclough's** three-directional approach to critical discourse analysis (CDA) combined with a theory of national identity formation based on the Self-Other dichotomy, I analyse the discursive practices behind the current narrative of a unique Japanese Self in the regional context of East Asia. The focus here is on one of the many Others that can be discerned in regional bilateral relations between Japan and its immediate neighbours, demonstrating the link between linguistic and societal practices and showing the mutually constitutive character of discourse and society.

Van Dijk (1995, p. 131) describes Critical Discourse Analysis as a shared perspective on doing linguistic, semiotic or discourse analysis. Furthermore, the three-dimensional approach to CDA presented by **Fairclough** provides an accessible model for discourse analysis. To fully understand the Japanese media discourse on North Korea, our analysis of texts needs to draw on not only the form of the text itself but also its relationship to the production process. This particular concept of CDA approaches discourse as a circular process in which social practices influence texts by shaping the context and mode in which they are produced and texts, in turn, help influence society by shaping the viewpoints of those who consume them (Richardson, 2006, p. 37). We can, thus, see

newspapers as a product of specific social circumstances. Newspapers use particular language patterns in their discourse to mediate various ideologies, especially when covering topical issues pertaining to national security.

Two groups of events occurring in the first half of 2016 were selected to provide some empirical context for this study. For Japan, Asia as a whole retains a dichotomous image as a site of opportunity and a source of threat (Tamaki, 2015, p. 26). Particular objects of analysis are then constructed discursively vis-à-vis their positions on North Korea. In this study, I understand national identity as a socially produced entity influenced by the power and knowledge behind the current socio-historical narrative; it is, thus, viewed as similar to a dependent variable capable of affecting actors' actions, including top-level foreign policy and security practices. Furthermore, by exploring the idiosyncratic link between the mass media and politics, this paper attempts to explain how national identity discourse is formed at the relatively low-level of the high-penetration national print media. The aim here is to uncover manipulative processes in the media discourse that could lead to the imposing of political beliefs, values or goals. By focusing on securitising speech acts and the specific portrayal of North Korea as one of Japan's Others in the media discourse about the selected events, I target issues surrounding Japan's security. This ultimately leads to questions about the normalisation of Japan's military activity.

This investigation is concerned, then, with the present portrayal of North Korea as one of Japan's Others. As such, it follows the discourse of two major Japanese newspapers surrounding two groups of events: an alleged hydrogen bomb testing in January 2016 and several failed missile launches occurring between April and June of the same year (see Figure 1). Relevant data was collected from both the morning (*chōkan*) and evening (*yūkan*) editions of the two largest high-quality Japanese print newspapers, the conservative *Yomiuri Shimbun* and the left-wing *Asahi Shimbun*. The two typically represent different ends of a spectrum of opinions: while the former has denounced de-nuclearisation in the past, the latter is openly pacifist and opposes the idea of collective self-defense.

All of the selected events were characterised by a relative surge in media and political activity linked to the contemporary discourse, generating a mass of available data. These events were, then, associated with the two primary concerns about North Korea: the state's development of its own nuclear devices and its creation of missile technology capable of delivering a nuclear bomb into enemy territory. In order to accumulate the volume of data suitable for this type

of analysis, the collection period was set as within three (3) days of the original occurrence, allowing for both initial reports and commentaries on the topic. The articles were collected from the first two pages of the newspapers (*ichimen* and *nimen*) exclusively as these are typically viewed as the most important section of the paper; any inclusion of an article on the front page is deliberate in order to stress the event's importance. Articles so placed, then, naturally create the greatest sense of urgency and have the biggest impact on the reader. Generally, all of the articles collected were hard news stories with embedded commentaries. Within the set conditions, *Yomiuri Shimbun* appeared to generate more data as *Asahi* published fewer articles. However, this does not necessarily mean that the sample from *Asahi* was significantly smaller as the length of individual articles can vary from several hundred to several thousand characters.

Figure 1- Data overview

Date (2016)	***Data collection***	***Event***	**Number of articles**	
			Asahi	***Yomiuri***
6 January	*16-1-6 to 16-1-9*	*nuclear detonation, alleged hydrogen bomb test*	*8*	*13*
23 April	*16-4-23 to 16-6-24*	*submarine missile launch*	*8*	*18*
31 May		*failed Musudan missile launch attempt*		
21 June		*double launch of Musudan-type missiles*		

Source: own compilation.

The main points of interest arose from the following questions: By what means is North Korea being constructed as a security threat in the current Japanese media discourse, and how does Japan portray itself? What emotions and implied meanings are associated with the depiction of North Korea? Do these discursive practices reflect any attempts to normalise Japan?

An essentialist view of Japanese identity draws on several factors, which are stressed primarily in the official discourse on mono-cultural linguistic, ethnic and religious homogeneity and uniqueness being promoted by the government (Burgess, 2004). That view also refers to the country's relative geographic isolation and the legacy of the mythological foundations of the Shintō cult, which shaped the ancient origins of the Japanese polity (Hendry, 2012, p. 5). On this basis, the term "Japanese nation" is defined with ease. This cultural and historical (or rather archaeological) particularism has generated its own genre of

texts on the topic of Japanese identity. The concept known as *nihonjinron*, Japanese uniqueness, became particularly salient after World War II. **Wodak** (2009, p. 16), however, suggests that such an idea of homogenous identity at an individual or collective level is a deceptive fiction and an illusion. We can, thus, assume that the idea of the homogenous nation is largely socially constructed in Japan. Like the dichotomy of Self and Other, uniqueness is a relational term. **Hagström** and **Gustafsson** (2015, p. 2) indicate that Japanese identity is constructed through the drawing of boundaries vis-à-vis several Others and in multiple contexts.

In many ways, understanding the structure of a common language can shed further light on social conditions in that particular state. Language comes close to being a representative reflection of the society and its structures. In the case of Japanese, the linguistic presence of different registers of speech (e.g. humble, plain, distal or honorific) clearly hints at the prominence of vertical stratification (*tateshakai*) in the society. The exceptional vagueness of the language also reflects the fact that Japan is a high-context culture (Hall, 1989) where meaning need not be expressed explicitly but is instead interpreted from the context.

1 Key Theoretical Concepts

The turn toward ideational factors, particularly notions of identity was generated by the broader reflectivist shift in international relations at the end of the 1980s. This was an effort to provide an alternative to the rationalist neo-liberal and neo-realist understanding of the international system while also reconsidering rational choice assumptions given the difficulty of treating non-quantifiable variables such as identity. Despite a great diversity of theoretical positions, the newly conceived project of constructivism particularly stressed the notion of the social production of the world's characteristics (Katzenstein, 1996; Wendt, 1999), defining identity as the basis for interests and actions. More recently, however, constructivism has been criticised for its fixed and essentialized understanding of identity (Epstein, 2010; Rumelili, 2004; Zehfuss, 2001), which **Alexander Wendt**, one of the most prominent constructivists, defines as ontologically intrinsic, partially pre-social and self-organising. His version of constructivism maintains that there is no need to construct identity in relational terms (Wendt, 1999, p. 225). While retaining the focus on identity, I would like to direct our attention to the study of discourse as a starting point for

a more effective approach. Post-structuralism insists that identities are inherently rational and that the Self can only be identified through the establishment of Otherness (Tamaki, 2010, p.25). Although identity remains a potent impetus for actions, it is not seen as an independent variable. This point of view allows us to reconsider the causal relationship and posit identity as a product of the relational and discursive practices in a society.

Contrasting with analyses of identity construction in the foreign policy discourse of national-level elites (Campbell, 1992; Hadfield-Amkhan, 2010; Luther, 2001; Prizel, 1998), including those specifically exploring Japan (Bukh, 2010; Hagström, 2005; Tamaki, 2010), this inquiry into national identity construction in national print media discourse presents an alternative bottom-level perspective on how discourse and identity, i.e. language and society, engage in a mutually constitutive dialectical relationship of construction, reproduction and transformation. Understanding the construction and production of national identity at this level may help us comprehend the behaviour of actors ultimately derived from, and constricted by identity. Nevertheless, it must again be stressed that such a study has one clear limitation: by analysing media discourse, we can understand the discursive practices being used in order to project a certain image and construct a national identity. This does not, however, allow us to determine how a sense of national identity is actually formed at the level of the individual surrounded by the discourse as a media consumer.

Like language, identities are also indefinite and prone to changing boundaries in an ongoing process of construction and reconstruction. Such instability is challenged by the social agency which (re)produces discourses and the identities that are constructed within them as their foundation and product. By adopting a similar discursive epistemology and emphasizing language's ontological properties, we can concentrate on how identity is articulated at the level of the state. At the same time, a focus on the mass media – and particularly on the institutionally-based discourse that these media use to invoke specific images – remains central to our understanding of identity formation at the lowest and least institutionalised level of society. The mass media, particularly television and newspapers in both print and digital formats, are most certainly among the strongest forces behind a discourse. In modern times, the penetration and omnipresence of these media are so striking that their careful analysis is unquestionably helpful if we want to understand how contemporary society works.

Beyond their immediate personal experience, social actors encounter the world indirectly through various media outlets. The themes reflected by the media, thus, assist the public to create and shape beliefs about identity. Arguably, the most researched topic concerns how agenda-setting is mediated through the concentrating of attention on selected issues while others are neglected or deemphasized, thus construing what appear to be the important matters requiring public notice (Hollihan, 2014, p. 9). However, given the above-mentioned limitation, our focus here is not on the identity of any individual but rather the processes that aim to construct a more general and broader notion of national identity.

Just as identity has been made prominent, history and historical memory have also become salient topics (Halbwachs, 1992; Neal, 1998; Wang, 2014). Discourses of national identity almost inevitably make frequent reference to ethnicity and history. Moreover, historical animosity is often named as one of the underlying factors determining relationships among state actors due to its preservation and reproduction within national identities. The situation in East Asia proves no exception to this rule. Still, in his linguistically and textually-oriented theory of discourse, **Fairclough** suggests that a group's identity is constructed through a shared narrative which provides the sense of community needed to maintain a level of group unity and cohesion. This theory also postulates that individual memory is constructed within wider social structures and can only be understood within the context of a group, regardless of the latter's size (Fairclough, 1993, pp. 37-60). For the purpose of this study, a nation-state is considered to be one such group. It is also argued that individual group members only remember concepts and events within the particular social context in which they acquire knowledge and internalise certain behaviour.

Historical narratives are formed in response to the status quo by using selective historiographic means in the service of particular interests and charged emotions (Burger, 1994, p. 168 in Wodak, 2009, p. 20). In other words, national identity, which tells the stories of who we are, is a product of the discourse of national culture narratives. This is hugely affected by the demands of the present, since states, as imagined communities require constant and often violent maintenance (Clifford, 1997, p. 9). Groups within the state can deliberately select certain memories and reconstruct them into a social narrative, thus reducing history to a continuously reinvented and reimagined chain of representations of causally linked events and incidents in a specific discourse. Memories and identity are not things we think *about* but rather things

we think *with* (Gillis, 1994, p. 5). At the same time, as **Okuda** (2014, p. 55) notes, these strategies are employed by all states in a similar manner but with different qualitative results, and they are conveyed not just through the media but via other channels, some of which such as school textbooks are especially capable of imparting propagandistic abstractions. These projects are frequently viewed negatively as attempts to whitewash history, which in the context of East Asia and particularly Japan would refer to the region's wartime past. Pinpointing the reasons for a similar discursive construction, **Martin** (1995, p. 13) explains that the national identity narrative conveys political emotions. In this way, it provides a new interpretation of the world order, modifying perceptions of the past and the present.

We may therefore assume that there is no historically determining context. Rather, there is only the mutual constitution of discourse and identity, a process shaped by the construction and representation of the past from a present-day viewpoint aided by various established symbols, which together give meaning to an individual's social world. The related and in many ways naturalised discourse is then subjectively interpreted as common sense through processes of rationalisation. As such, discourse sustains existing power relations in a society. Ideology in the media is typically, but not exclusively expressed and reproduced in discourse and communication, including extra-textual semiotic features (Van Dijk, 1995, p. 17), and we may therefore identify it to varying degrees. Hard news, for example, does not function primarily as a way of constructing identity. Nevertheless, Fairclough (1995, p. 47) infers that media texts do indeed function ideologically as forms of social control and social reproduction. To this end, he argues that these texts operate as cultural commodities, representing ideology in a discourse that is easily transformed into the common sense perceived by the general population.

In the CDA context, **Ruth Wodak** (2002, p. 9) defines ideology as an important way of establishing and maintaining unequal power relations using the language of various social institutions. Power in the media can be conceived not only as power *over* but also as the hidden power *behind* a discourse. The power relationship between media producers and consumers is a very unequal and one-sided one, defined by the spatial and temporal displacement of the two groups. Media discourse, which has the power to influence knowledge, values, beliefs and social identities, is generated for the masses, and unlike in face-to-face discourse, there is generally no opportunity for interaction.

2 Security and National Identity as Self and Other

A state's national identity is deemed to be inherently relational, with its existence made possible through the delineation between itself and something which is different (Campbell, 1992). This suggests that meaning is constructed through the discursive juxtaposition of two opposing terms, one of which is explicitly or implicitly attributed superior characteristics while the other is purposely devalued to connote the opposite. Defined as a relational term and conceptualised as a link between two or more associated entities in a manner asserting sameness or equality, identity has been the topic of a wide variety of discussions for quite some time (Campbell, 1992; Rumelili, 2004; Wodak, 2009, pp. 10-11). A state's identity can truly be established only after an external enemy is defined, and as such, it functions merely as a discursively homogenised set of individual identities. Interestingly, it has been stressed that Asian societies place far more emphasis on collective identity than Western ones do (Nisbett, 2010). A central discourse of homogenous national identity which emphasizes shared origins, traditions and developments and unique, essential features of national character, i.e. a narrative of the nation and its unity, seems to mask the differences that actually exist among individual members of the society. Similarly, Wodak (2009, pp. 29) objects that the idea of a national character belongs within the phantasmagoria of stereotypes which exist strictly inside the minds of those who believe in them.

In terms of ontological and epistemological positioning, identity is, then, a discursive construct maintained through the relational categories of Self and Other. Moreover, it is bound by a relationship of sameness and difference mediated by a given identity narrative within the state. Narratives about Others are constructed as the main building blocks in the discursive construction of the identity of the national Self (Bukh, 2015, pp. 48). Significantly, Lene Hansen (2013) calls here for the establishment of a further analytic perspective that would reappraise the dichotomy as a series of related but slightly different juxtapositions through crucial processes of *linking* and *differentiation*. Understanding identity through a reading methodology that see it as the product of these two processes would open the way for theoretical and methodological accounts of just how discourses seek to establish stability and how this stability can be deconstructed (Hansen, 2013, p. 37).

CDA identifies linguistic features and signs that indicate the clear construction of the Other through the use of attributes with negative denotations

and connotations. In a similar manner, the Self can be portrayed essentially through imagery evoking the opposite good characteristics. Hansen (ibid., p. 42) argues that the process is more complicated and goes beyond the designation of particular signs for the Self or the Other; rather, a particular sign must be located within a larger system where a series of interlinked signs have a relationship of sameness and are distinguished from another series of juxtaposed signs in that discourse. It is through this pairing and juxtaposition that the discourse can achieve stability.

Nevertheless, not all texts can be expected to contain formulations of both Self and Other. As a result, the intertextuality of different texts (e.g. newspaper articles) plays an important role in our understanding of these implicit constructions. No text is standalone and in social reality, it cannot be detached from the wider context of the discourse. Texts are neither produced nor consumed in isolation, and hence, they cannot be studied as such; in fact, every text is located within a wider complex network of previous texts and exists in relation to a particular social context (Richardson, 2006, p. 100). In other words, texts draw upon and allude to each other across different genres and discourses. This observation remains an important principle for the understanding of discourse in the present analysis. Intertextuality brings further depth to a text and generates an additional understanding based on readers' prior knowledge.

Ever since its surrender in 1945, Japan has been portrayed as an abnormal state due to changes in its foreign and security policy, constrained by the explicit renunciation of war under Article 9 of its US-drafted constitution. The *Jieitai* (自衛隊, Japan Self-Defense Forces or JSDF) has also undergone slow but continuous changes since its establishment in 1954, and the political Right has expressed a desire to radically review Japan's military affairs, as can be observed in a trend of gradual increases to the country's defence budget. Nevertheless, in the years since 2000, Japan has not re-militarised as much as some observers claim, and the way that the country is currently being positioned vis-a-vis the imagination of Others may well forebode more significant steps toward re-militarisation (Hagström, 2014, p. 138). The discursive representation of external security issues can be seen to be built upon fundamentally the same rubric as national identity, i.e. a standpoint that distinguishes between Self and Other. Security within any state is conventionally conceived primarily as *national* security and, as such, it is given

importance in the domestic political discourse based on the traditional concept of the state as a security guarantor providing an environment devoid of violence. The concept of national security alone implies a particular type of identity construction tied to the sovereign state (Campbell, 1992, p. 63). Through the formulation of national security discourse, most commonly expressed as foreign policy, the state can discursively construct a relational Self against the image of the anarchy beyond its territorial borders. The domestic and the international are, thus, constructed as essentially opposed categories.

The state most certainly needs to be protected from external threats, however, a multi-level security discourse is necessarily cultivated to maintain the state's relational identity vis-à-vis an Other, which is constituted in multiple contexts as insecure, unstable, threatening and anarchic. Establishing something as a threat to national security involves a speech act of *securitization* (a term coined by **Ole Wæver**) and is accompanied by the discursive mobilisation of ideas linked predominantly to national and strategic interests (Hansen, 2013, p. 34). While security discourse is a top-level practice, the move to domestic securitization can also be re-articulated through mass media discourse. In this way, the attention of media consumers at the bottom level of is drawn to securitized concerns. As the discourse about security issues typically receives particular prominence, we may expect this discursively pronounced securitization to create a specific notion of national identity at the level of individual social actors. A discursive analysis of selected events allows us to assess the means and discursive practices by which certain issues are securitized, i.e. portrayed as matters of an Other impinging upon the Self perceived as secure, a move which reinforces the two opposed categories as constitutive of a particular national identity.

In media discourse, securitization can be represented either directly through quotes from top-level policy makers or less directly by evoking particular imagery of the discursive Other as, for example, irrational, overly assertive, abnormal, primitive or generally intimidating. The current dominant discourse in Japan portrays both North Korea and China as undemocratic aggressors, often locating Japan as the victim of their hostile and forceful behaviour. In bilateral disputes, South Korea is then represented as overly emotional and reliant on its own discourse of victimisation. The narrative of a weak pacifist Japan endangered by its immediate neighbours is appealed to as one of the arguments for normalising the country.

3 North Korea's Military Activities in 2016

The Western world remained rather sceptical after **Kim Jong-un's** announcement in December 2015 that North Korea possessed a hydrogen bomb. However, less than a month later, on January 6, 2016, the country conducted its fourth nuclear detonation at the Punggye-ri Nuclear Test Site in the north-eastern part of the peninsula, reportedly causing a sizable 5.1 magnitude earthquake with an epicentre approximately two kilometres underground (McKirdy, 2016). A public announcement of the allegedly successful detonation of a miniature hydrogen bomb soon after on North Korean state television stated that the test had been an act of self-defence against the hostilities of the United States. Foreign measurements suggested that the explosion was roughly the same as a North Korean nuclear test conducted in February 2013, after which the UN adopted numerous resolutions against the country. Shortly after reports of the 2016 detonation, a backlash was sparked around the globe via the UN Security Council (UNSC) as well as through individual states. All of North Korea's immediate neighbours, including the People's Republic of China, condemned the test. Meanwhile in Japan, Prime Minister **Abe Shinzo** publicly denounced the action as a "grave threat to Japanese security" (*waga kuni no anzen ni taisuru jūdai na kyōi*, 我が国の安全に対する重大の脅威) (Kantei, 2016), further implying the need to boost the national defence given the rather unpredictable and steadily worsening security environment in East Asia.

Even so, experts maintained their scepticism about North Korea's possession of a hydrogen bomb, stating that the explosion had been too small and the detonated device was more likely a boosted fission weapon. Others suggested the alternative scenario of a failed thermonuclear test (Faith, 2016). Had the test been a complete success, as described by the North Korean state media, it would likely have produced an explosion roughly ten times more powerful. All this nevertheless suggested that North Korea had been developing a smaller detonation device, which could be fitted to a missile and delivered to a foreign territory, its destructive capabilities being far smaller than those of a true hydrogen bomb. With these signs of an ongoing missile program, **Kim Jong-un** undoubtedly strengthened his provocation game, raising fresh concerns about North Korea's unpredictability and intentions.

Despite the presence of various sanctions against North Korea for nuclear testing and rocket launches dating back to 2006, a month after the January

nuclear detonation, on February 7, 2016, the country successfully launched *Kwangmyeongseong-4*, an Earth observation satellite. The launch was again strongly condemned by the international community, who accused North Korea of testing a ballistic missile capable of reaching US territory after South Korea's Ministry of Defense reported that the launched rocket had a potential range of 12,000 kilometres (Kim and Brunnstrom, 2016). The incident raised fresh concerns about the progress of North Korean missile technology with Pyongyang appearing determined to possess both a destructive nuclear device and a functional means to deliver it.

At the end of April 2016, North Korea tested the submarine-launched ballistic missile *Bukkeukseong-1* in the Sea of Japan. The missile reportedly flew about 30 kilometers, ten times short of the desired distance. This was nonetheless a clear improvement on previous launches. While South Korea proclaimed the launch a failure, the North Korean state media declared it a success, communicating **Kim Jong-un's** satisfaction with the test. This time, the event brought immediate international condemnation including denunciations of the North's violation of several UN Security Council resolutions. Countries that are potential targets for North Korean aggressions have since been growing increasingly worried about the state's offensive capabilities, which are now being regarded as a very serious threat given the North's continuous provocations (Melvin, 2016). Though this launch was deemed only a partial success, it again highlighted the significant progress of North Korea's military technology.

The next observed action was a series of incidents between May and June 2016. In this period, North Korea repeatedly conducted missile launches off the east coast of the peninsula. After several unsuccessful efforts, a Musudan-type missile – an intermediate-range ballistic missile with an operational range between 2,500 and 4,000 kilometres – was successfully launched on June 22.

The four initial tests of a Musudan-type missile had been carried out on April 15 (one test), April 28 (two tests) and May 31 (one test). However, all of these efforts had reportedly fallen short. The first launch coincided with the 104th anniversary of the birthday of **Kim Il-sung**, North Korea's *Eternal President*. South Korean authorities reported that the missile had deviated from a normal trajectory (Jun, 2016), eventually concluding that the test was a failure. On April 28, another two missiles were fired. The first reportedly crashed a few seconds after lift-off, while the second, launched less than an hour later, travelled an estimated 200 meters from the launchpad (McKirdy and Hancocks, 2016). The

fourth unsuccessful Musudan launch occurred a mere month later, on May 31. After being dispatched from a mobile transporter-launcher near the port city of Wonsan, this missile reportedly flew for a few seconds before exploding again (Park, 2016). While these apparently rushed and botched attempts were tracked by South Korea and the United States, there were no official reports from the North about any of the launches.

In its most successful effort so far, North Korea released two further Musudan missiles from Wonsan on June 22. Unlike the previous launch attempts, these missiles are believed to have covered distances of 150 and 400 kilometres, respectively. The second of them also reportedly reached an altitude of 1,000km before tumbling into the Sea of Japan. Opinions vary as to whether the fifth launch was a failure or the missile was deliberately terminated to prevent it from entering Japan's air identification zone (Yonhap News, 2016-6-29). The North subsequently announced the successful launch of its fifth and the sixth Musudan missiles (Kim, 2016), declaring its capacity to strike US positions.

Considering these intermediate ballistic range capabilities, a successfully launched Musudan-type missile could reach the US territory of Guam in the Pacific Ocean while carrying a 1.3-ton nuclear warhead (Fifield, 2016). With every launch, North Korea has been collecting information and is clearly working toward achieving its goal. If Musudan missile technology also attains its designated goal, North Korea could become an even greater concern.

4 The Discourse about North Korea

The first stage of the analysis begins at a micro-textual level by identifying and describing the signifiers that constitute the text along with specific linguistic selections and their juxtaposition, sequencing and layout. In other words, it focuses on the lexical and grammatical choices of the text's author. The choice of words is partially a stylistic and contextual concern since Sino-Japanese compounds invoke a higher register more typical of the written than the spoken language. Due to the nature of the language, headlines tend to consist of abbreviated high-register Sino-Japanese compounds, i.e. strings of Chinese characters that normally convey the desired meaning with an economy of language and space. These resemble a set of keywords, often without any need for verbs denoting a particular tense. Linking devices are commonly replaced by spaces that are not, however, normally used to separate words or morphemes

since Japanese texts do not generally employ spaces. Translated literally, the following headline is representative of the keyword-like headlines that can be found in the collected data: "*Submarine missile test launch? North Korea, 1 [missile] in the Sea of Japan*" (潜水艦ミサイル試射か 北朝鮮、日本海で１発). The headline consists of only two grammatical particles (a question marker and a particle indicating location) and one loanword ('missile') while the rest is Sino-Japanese vocabulary. Furthermore, to create visual emphasis, papers' main headlines are frequently published as white text appearing inside black boxes.

A journalist's choice of descriptive terms for individuals, groups, actions and events frames a story in direct and unavoidable ways (Richardson, 2006, p. 48). The analysis of descriptive terms and prominent topics in the analysed data can be divided into two subgroups: security and emotions. These are direct descriptions, which label events and actions as dangerous or portray them as threats, often achieving this by way of a set of synonyms and their essential connotations.

Given the nature of nuclear testing and missile launches, security and safety were unsurprisingly prominent recurring themes in the majority of analysed articles. Particularly salient here was the topic of responses to North Korea's actions in the form of sanctions or necessary measures to be taken by Japan alone or together with its allies or the international community. Both newspapers depicted the events by repeatedly stressing domestic and international criticism, disapproval and condemnation of North Korea's actions. This was accompanied by the voicing of opposition, protests and objections though the explicit description of the events as illegal actions violating UNSC resolutions.

Both the alleged hydrogen bomb testing and the repeated missile launches were persistently labelled provocations. Though they quoted North Korean media statements that declared the actions successful, both of the analysed Japanese newspapers presented these claims with a degree of doubt and so the issue of failure was another regular topic shared across all the analysed events.

A particularly interesting development was the inclusion of several references to bilateral issues that were often emotionally charged but not directly related to any of the 2016 events. This specifically concerned the so-called *rachi mondai* (拉致問題, i.e. North Korean abductions of Japanese

citizens) and the issue of comfort women. While the former was presented to bolster the argument against the North, the latter provided an opposing example of cooperation with the South. These inclusions may be interpreted via the concept of Othering. The seemingly unrelated abductions were mentioned in connection with the ongoing sanctions against North Korea, which Japan imposed in 2015. In this context especially, the topic served as a tool to firm up the boundary in the existing oppositional relationship between the two countries. Similarly, the reference to the 2015 deal between Japan and South Korea on the comfort women issue drew more attention to the identity-constructing Self-Other relationship between Japan and the North. In contrast to the uncooperative and dangerous North, South Korea was seen as an ally against **Kim Jong-un's** unpredictable regime even if the actual Japan-South Korea relationship was not so harmonious in many cases. Direct quotations from North Korea's **Kim Jong-un** and Korean Central Television (KCTV) also recurred throughout the published articles. They were placed in the opening sections, instilling a sense of threat and urgency.

The newspaper articles used words imbued with negative connotations about the Other as well as other emotionally charged language, including expressions of shock, fear and tension. Outside of explicit statements, similar emotions were evoked indirectly. For example, though lacking any of the mentioned attributes, a statement such as "*It is believed there are signs that a fifth nuclear test might be conducted*" could still be seen to convey a sense of danger, fear and unpredictability. In morphological terms, these devices were predominantly adjectives and adverbs, with each group expressed through a set of synonymous terms. They commonly appeared as set phrases such as 'serious provocation' (重大な挑発, *jūdai na chōhatsu*), 'to respond promptly" (迅速に対応する, *jinsoku ni taiou suru*), 'clear violation' (明白な違反, *meihaku na ihan*) and 'resolute opposition' (断固反対, *danko hantai*).

This set of negative emotions in the Japanese discourse about North Korea reinforced the dichotomy between Self and Other, underscoring readers' sense of domestic security, safety, peace and unity. While it cannot be denied that North Korea's actions and policies now pose a security threat to neighbouring countries as well as to the US as the primary target for North Korean propaganda, the domestic discourse in Japan uses this situation as a means to solidify the nation's own image and identity.

The use of names and references is another textual property that warrants close examination. Individuals are assigned different attributes and associated with a group or institution, which stresses a particular social category. Reisigl and Wodak (2002, p. 45) use the term *referential strategies*, suggesting that the choice to describe individuals and groups as one thing or another can serve different psychological, social or political purposes. In the vertically stratified society of Japan where belonging to a larger social group (institution, government office, university etc.) is an integral principle from which one derives one's own identity, proper referencing is of critical importance. As such, it can be expected whenever an individual is mentioned in a text. Based on the principle that shared knowledge is implied in communication, important public figures may be referred to only by way of their positions. Instead of his full title, **Shinzo Abe** is, thus, often mentioned simply as the PM (首相, *shushō*). However, at the same time, Japanese newspapers also tend to obscure quoted sources by dropping their names and referring to them solely by their titles or roles such as 'an expert' or 'a person concerned' (関係者, *kankeisha*).

By far the most frequently appearing person in the analysed data was North Korea's **Kim Jong-un**. Whether he was referred to by his full name and official title as Chairman of the Workers' Party of Korea or by one of the abbreviated variations, **Kim** appeared to be the main symbol of Japan's discourse on North Korea. He was quoted directly and his picture published alongside some of the articles, locating him as the instigator of the condemned actions, which instilled feelings of danger and insecurity in readers. Depicted as the young leader of an often bizarre and economically unstable dictatorship regime, which actively violates human rights, **Kim** bore a close resemblance to his grandfather, **Kim Il-sung** in both appearance and behaviour. Actions by North Korea understood as aggression and provocation were ultimately deemed to be **Kim's** personal efforts to cement his power and boost his domestic prestige and legitimacy as Supreme Leader while pushing the country into even deeper international isolation. **Kim** was also directly identified as the one who ordered and oversaw the events in question, thus reinforcing the negative image already associated with his role in North Korea's antagonistic policies and actions. Shown to be pursuing interests that had ultimately deepened its isolation and worsened its economy under the imposed sanctions, the North, represented primarily by **Kim Jong-un**, was, thus, depicted as an irrational Other opposed to Japan's

peaceful, rational, righteous, human rights-respecting Self. **Kim** here undoubtedly served as the visual representation of North Korea as a whole.

Moving on, we may turn our attention to sentence structure, syntactic choices and modality, i.e. strategies for portraying actions through sentence construction. Agency may be expressed directly or omitted completely by various means, e.g. use of the active or passive voice. Typically, any sentence can be converted from the active to the passive voice to serve the goal of obscuring agency. In addition, the so-called *adversative passive* is often used in Japanese to refer to undesirable actions involving one's property or an event caused by another person without necessarily identifying the agent of the action. Demonstrating the link between content and function, this use conveys an attitude towards or opinion about the truth of the proposition signified by the sentence (Simpson, 2003, p. 47). Newspapers make heavy use of this construction in passive tense phrases such as とされている or と見られている (*to sareteiru, to mirareteiru*), which both serve the exact same function of modifying the whole previous sentence and can be translated as '*it is believed*,' '*it is considered*,' '*it is feared'* or '*it is said*.' In this way, *Yomiuri* directly identified Japan as a possible target for North Korean missiles: "*It is believed that the goal of the weapon is a surprise attack on Japan and the US military base in Guam*" (日本やグアムの米軍基地への奇襲攻撃を目的とした兵器とみられている). Moreover, the use of the particle *ya* suggested that there was a wider list of potential targets. This tactic obscures agency as well as the information's source. In hard news stories, modality is typically expressed through the use of direct quotations. The inclusion of these quotations should ultimately, however, be seen as a deliberate choice.

Reflecting Japan's high-context society, the Japanese language characteristically employs minimalism and concise expression. In Japanese texts, one may expect shared knowledge and known information to be conspicuously absent (Maynard, 1998, p. 13). This linguistic feature brings us back to the problem of vagueness. In combination, these characteristics absolutely necessitate the existence of a context since in its absence any sentence could hypothetically be understood and translated in a variety of ways. As has been noted, the interpretation of Japanese texts relies heavily on their intertextuality. The existence of discourses and the texts within them implies a

temporal axis, a history of production within which each text is situated. This creates a context of presupposed meanings that should be interpreted by discourse participants including the analyst herself or himself.

Van Dijk (1996, p. 24) identifies a wide range of tropes which express different opinions and are embedded in argumentation. These rhetorical devices render such arguments more or less justifiable or legitimate as conclusions by drawing attention to and indirectly emphasizing specific meanings. Such tropes are, however, very scarcely used in hard news stories in Japanese newspapers. The most common, synecdoche (*totum pro parte*) can be seen in the sentence "North Korea has announced the successful completion of its first hydrogen bomb test," where the whole country serves as a substitute for one of its parts such as the Korean People's Army or KCTV. These tropes may also create a sense of sameness or opposition. Similarly, inclusive deictic expressions like "we," when used metonymically, are effective means of reinforcing the idea of the Self. The most widely used *deictic we-expression* is *wagakuni* (我が国), a phrase that can be translated simply as *our country* but is used to denote Japan exclusively. In a single dictionary entry, this term directly incorporates an *Us* (the Self) which is in a dichotomous relationship with *Them* (the Other).

5 North Korea as Japan's Other

Current Japanese media discourse about North Korea emphasizes Japan's status as part of the international community while conversely portraying North Korea as an irrational outsider which is only continuing to deepen its isolation through the actions of **Kim Jong-un**. While the Other is given and fixed, the Self appears to be somewhat more fluid and context-based. Of course, the Self primarily consists of the state itself but it can also be expanded beyond state borders. The discourse about North Korea does not only feature Japan as the Self but also extends to other countries such as South Korea and the US. Yet, if we were to examine the media coverage of the contested islands of Dokdo (Takeshima) and the US military presence in Okinawa, we would see that these two allies are otherwise portrayed quite differently.

The discourse about North Korea repeatedly stresses the good relations and past achievements of the three allied states, showcasing them as key partners in dealing with the threats posed by the North. In this case, a dichotomy is constructed between peace- and stability-seeking *Us* and hostile and warmongering *Them*. The notions of good relations and successful cooperation

are reinforced through the media's use of seemingly unrelated references to Barack Obama's praise for the Korean-Japanese deal on comfort women, including direct quotes from the US President about **Abe Shinzo's** courage and determination to maintain peace and balance. Such coverage also points out that even South Korea's constant monitoring of North Korea's activities could not predict nuclear testing or some missile launches, again emphasizing the North's dangerous unpredictability.

As long as this dichotomy remains in place, the extended Self can include the notion of a peace-protecting international community. Incidentally, in 2016 and 2017, Japan is also serving as a non-permanent member of the UNSC. The media is using this fact to stress the country's important position in an international community faced with the North Korean danger. To this end, for example, they quote **Park Geun-hye** on South Korea's expectations of Japan's role as a non-permanent UNSC member in tackling the issue.

The portrayal of the People's Republic of China in this discourse is similarly interesting. The PRC has recently been depicted as a growing threat especially in connection with its activities in the South China Sea as well as the East China Sea within the Japanese Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Nevertheless, the representation of China in the context of the discourse on North Korea is quite different. Here, the country is presented as the North's former biggest supporter (最大の後ろ盾, *saidai no ushirodate,* literally a 'shield') which has recently turned away due to the worsening of bilateral relations. After no warning was issued to China about the fourth nuclear test in January 2016, the Japanese media speculated that the North would go as far as to risk the loss of China's backing and support in order to boost **Kim's** domestic prestige as First Secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea and display his tangible achievements. *Asahi* has suggested that since North Korea in a state of ongoing economic stagnation, **Kim's** only demonstrable accomplishments are nuclear tests and numerous nuclear launches. This reinforces the image of North Korea as an irrational Other. The emphasis on the lack of any warning fuels the idea of the state's unpredictability. In contrast with China's previous rather passive approach to criticisms of North Korea, the country's reaction to the analysed events is shown as surprisingly entirely critical of the North and supportive of the new sanctions.

6 Social Context of Japanese Newspapers

The peculiar relationship between the media and politics in Japan also deserves our attention. In her outline of the characteristics of information-

gathering and processing, Freeman (2012, p. 68) uses the term *information cartels* to describe the media complex in Japan. Contact with official sources is regulated and limited to a select group of journalists who obtain access to information and sources through so-called *kisha kurabu* (press clubs). These clubs are located in every government office, ministry, and political or business organisation, as well as via the police. Their exact number is unknown but it is estimated to be several hundred across the whole country. The clubs consist primarily of reporters from large high-quality national papers (*Asahi, Yomiuri, and Mainichi*), the largest news agency Kyodo, or national public broadcaster NHK. They typically exclude outsiders, particularly foreigners. Interestingly, magazine (*shūkanshi*) journalists are also prevented from participating in these clubs. These magazines rely on alternative or anonymously leaked sources of information, which are then reported as rumours, without quoting sources, and thus, have less news value and credibility. National newspapers with a significantly higher level of penetration are naturally, then, seen as far more trustworthy. As has been noted, with a daily circulation in the millions, these papers rank among the most widely read in the world. At the same time, they seem to be unaffected by audience fragmentation, rendering them powerful vehicles for the discursive construction of national identity.

Richardson (2006, p. 41) argues that our assessment of the meaning of a text is often affected by our judgment of whoever produced it since we tend to believe the testimony of people and institutions we trust. Credibility is, hence, a socially constructed characteristic. Contrary to expectations, the two streams of the Japanese media complex – i.e. quality papers and tabloid-like magazines – co-exist in a rather symbiotic relationship devoid of competition since the tabloids often benefit from information that quality papers may not officially release.

Japanese journalists pursue stories and conduct interviews in a manner that is frequently institutionalised. From early morning until late at night, groups of journalists follow around powerful individuals with whom they ultimately develop very close relationships (Freeman, 2012, p. 74) while obtaining privileged information. Even the Japanese Prime Minister has his own press club and maintains personal contact with selected journalists on a daily basis. Each press club can, thus, control the amount and nature of the information released to the public via official channels while also maintaining control over how and when the news is released. Selected journalists have access to a large volume of information about the government and its activities. Information obtained

through these reporters represents the particular viewpoint of the source and is printed as such in the national newspapers and broadcast on television. Due to these constraints on the gathering and release of information, mainstream Japanese newspapers display a high degree of predictability (Krauss, 2000, p. 77), with press clubs being largely responsible for this homogeneity and lack of diverse viewpoints. Indeed, some phrases used in the pages of both *Asahi* and *Yomiuri* appeared rather formulaic and were often repeated across several articles published over a period of days. Very occasionally, the exact same quotations and expressions featured in both newspapers, suggesting that the original and main source of information had been shared across media outlets.

Conclusion

Understanding the role of media in the modern world is without a doubt one of the keys to decoding various social processes. Set into individual national contexts, media outlets with a high degree of trustworthiness hold massive amounts of discursive power allowing them shape individual subjects' world view, as well as a certain understanding of self, i.e. the people's own identity. Studying the discourse utilised by large national newspapers does not necessarily reveal how identity is constructed on the level of an individual. Yet, it helps uncover discursive practices that aim to construct particular imagery, often based on a relational dichotomy where the domestic *Self* is sharply contrasted with a distant alien *Other*, conveniently constructing a black and white imagery of internal unity and integrity.

Given the rather formulaic conventions of hard news and its rather rigid reporting style as well as the way information is managed through press clubs in Japan, the content of the analysed newspapers was to some degree predictable and their information often seemed to come from the same official source through a related press club. The link between the media and the political sphere described in this paper cannot thus be overlooked. Being often based on interpersonal relationships, it can be understood as an effective means for governments to manage information. It has been shown that Japanese media outlets are often quick to criticise foreign media for serving as couriers of state-sanctioned messages and orthodox ideologies, yet they tend not to be very reflective about their own adherence to strictly Japanese convictions (Suzuki and Murai, 2014, p. 161). Similarly, when covering territorial disputes, the Japanese media never fail to mention that the disputed territory is part of Japan,

usually specifying the prefecture to which the contested islands belong. In this way, the media are especially prone to stressing the position held by the government domestically, which may lead to the escalation of nationalism among the public. Consistent with the theoretical understanding of language, power and discourse in the society sketched in this article, we can conclude that the form and shape of any media discourse does inevitably reflect a deliberate choice rather than being the mere portrayal of events.

The three dimensional model of CDA utilised in this study is concerned not only with the text itself, the circumstances of its production, but also the immediate social context surrounding the events and their portrayal. From a hard security standpoint, the recent development and gradual advance of North Korea's weaponry can objectively be seen as a threat, and Japanese media reports very much reflect this opinion, with North Korea being portrayed as an unpredictable, unlawful and isolated dictatorship, the *Other* to Japan's rational, lawful, cooperative, democratic *Self*. Both the conservative *Yomiuri Shimbun* and the left-oriented *Asahi Shimbun* depict North Korea and its leader **Kim Jong-un** similarly as the main representatives of the state, constructing the enemy as the dichotomous *Other* to the Japanese *Self*. In this context, the *Self* is rather fluid, often extending to the international community and specifically highlighting the existing relationship among Japan, the United States and South Korea. The importance of this security alliance is heavily stressed due to the constitutional limitations imposed on Japan's military. At the same time, emphasis is put on Japan's role as a non-permanent member of the UNSC in 2016-17.

Interestingly, a different fluidity or perhaps an inconsistency can be observed in the portrayal of the People's Republic of China. While China is typically portrayed as militaristic, assertive and quite brazen about its behaviour in the South China Sea, in the Japanese media discourse on North Korea these qualities of China as one of Japan's Other are completely ignored. Instead, both analysed Japanese newspapers similarly emphasize China's role as a permanent member of the UNSC, as well as a certain stabilising influence the country could have on North Korea's behaviour. Such contextual fluidity further suggests the socially constructed aspect of these relational dichotomies.

In analysing the front pages of both newspapers, we could undeniably observe differences in prominent themes, i.e. in what was purposely stressed as discursively important. *Yomiuri* emphasized the hard security aspects of events and did not hesitate to point out the threat posed by North Korea, using quotes

which securitized the issues and called attention to Japan's potential inability to defend itself should North Korea perfect its current Musudan technology. *Asahi*, on the other hand, appeared to be more focused on criticising North Korea's behaviour and therefore shifted its attention to portraying the domestic Self as a victim or sufferer. As a result, it highlighted stories not directly related to the central events, including a protest by atomic bomb survivors and even a journalist's personal account of visiting North Korea 25 years ago.

In the case of the analysed events, the Japanese media were rather quick to conclude that the missile launches had been a failure. They, thus, explained the motivation behind these tests as **Kim Jong-un's** effort to boost his own domestic status as Chairman of the Korean Workers' Party. However, in light of this series of North Korean missile tests, ongoing tensions with China in the South and East China seas and PM **Abe Shinzo's** securing of a two-thirds Upper House majority after the July 2016 regular elections, it appears that this was a rather critical moment for Japanese national security. The allegedly failed North Korean missile launches are now being countered by some fairly serious diplomatic and economic sanctions that the North can hardly afford. As such, its behaviour may indeed appear to be somewhat irrational; it certainly goes beyond the mere parading of threats as political tools to rally domestic influence for top party officials and obtain concessions from foreign governments. North Korea's current missile and nuclear bomb technology stockpile points to a pattern of steady improvement over time. If Pyongyang does acquire a WMD capable of reliably striking the US, as well as its military positions in Japan and South Korea, then the security relations among these three allies may need to be significantly revised. A potential limit on the security which the US and South Korea provide to Japan could strengthen the state's revisionist discourse. This is despite the majority of the public's opposition to the controversial constitutional revisions, which PM **Abe Shinzo** has been calling for since his second ascent to power in December 2012.

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