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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Reconstructing hierarchy as the key international relations concept and its implications for the study of Japanese national identity

Michal Kolmaš

Metropolitan University Prague, Dubecska 900/10, Prague 100 31, Czech Republic
Corresponding author. Email: michal.kolmas@mup.cz

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Abstract
For the last few decades, the discipline of international relations has been littered with anarchy. Since Waltz's *Theory of International Politics*, it has been assumed that states are formally equal sovereign unitary actors operating in an anarchic world system and that their identities and interests are defined by the very existence of anarchy. This article shatters this conception. It offers a 'hierarchical worldview' in order to illustrate that the very concepts of state, sovereignty, and anarchy are discursive creations inherently tied to the practice of hierarchy. I use a case study of Japanese national identity to illustrate this practice. The narratives of Japan as an autonomous and sovereign state were inextricably linked to Japan's hierarchical relationship toward Asia and the West (pre-war) and the USA (post-war). Japan's sovereignty and autonomy were then formulated within the practice of hierarchy.

1. Introduction

There are but a few international relations (IR) concepts that have been recently so widely examined and discussed as anarchy. Contemporary IR approaches treat anarchy as a fundamental, defining, and analytical central feature of IR (see i.e., Schmidt, 1998; Deudney, 2000, 2007; Bell, 2002; Donelly, 2006, 2015; Lake, 2009a; Parent and Erikson, 2009; Holmes, 2011). Virtually all scholars agree that 'relations between states are anarchic and that this is one of the most unique, important, and enduring features of world politics' (Lake, 2009*a*: 2). It is further assumed that anarchy has been ever-present in interstate politics and that even the oldest accounts have in their analyses departed from the existence of anarchy as a *de-facto* state of the world. Kenneth Waltz, for instance, claimed that Thucydides' history represented an 'early recognition of the anarchic character of international politics', which 'accounts for the striking sameness of the quality of international life throughout the millennia' (Waltz, 1979 cited in Schmidt, 1998: 40). Similar observations were made about other classical IR scholars including Machiavelli and Hobbes (Schmidt, 1998). But none of these accounts talk about anarchy the same way as contemporary IR scholars. When Hobbes likened the relations between states to kings standing as gladiators in the pit, he used the metaphor to conjure a much more formalized setting with codes of fighting, weaponry, salutes, etc. than the nasty, brutish, and short existence prescribed to states under the state of nature (Mattern and Zarakol, 2016: 648). In fact, as Jake Donelly recently illustrated (Donelly, 2015: 393), until the 1980s, anarchy was rarely used as a central analytical concept. Donelly argues that rather than an objective key feature of IR, anarchy is a mere discursive construction that is historically and culturally contingent.

Nonetheless, since Kenneth Waltz's famous *Theory of International Politics* (Waltz, 1979), the discipline of IR has become preoccupied with anarchy. Waltz argued that there are two kinds of orders: hierarchy and anarchy. Anarchy is the condition in which hierarchy is absent, whereas hierarchy

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consists of 'relations of super- and subordination' in which 'actors are formally differentiated according to the degrees of their authority, and their distinct functions' (Waltz, 1979; Donelly, 2006). Waltz believes that hierarchy can be found in domestic policies of states and is defined in realms of law, government, and order; whereas anarchy is defined as the absence of these qualities that are present in an international system. The system is defined by the formal equality of actors, that is, states are formally independent and have similar interests, albeit differentiated by their power capabilities. States may cooperate with each other, but they never discard their subjectivity as actors in IR. Anarchy, in fact, functions as an 'organizational' principle in world politics, defined by its very relational distinction to hierarchy. Although it might be the case that – given the waning influence of neorealism and growing importance of globalization – there are fewer scholars who explicitly frame their research around the fact of formal international anarchy anymore, as Mattern and Zarakol (2016: 626) point out. However, as a discipline, IR still approaches the study of world politics through the prism of anarchy. At the end of the day, we still speak of inter-'national' relations and although we analyze cooperation, integration, socialization and the like, we manage to do so from more-or-less state-centrist approaches. IR remain littered with anarchy.

Departing from anarchy as a key defining concept of IR predetermines ontological and epistemological foundations of our IR inquiries. Anarchical IR presupposes that states are unitary actors conscious of their subjectivity; states exist in a more-or-less formal and equalitarian international system, in which other possible systems of organization (hierarchy) exist only in relation to anarchy. Hierarchy, in anarchic IR assumption, may exist only as a modality of international system given by distribution of power, much in line with realists' assumptions of hegemony and/or unipolarity. Anarchy also presupposes that state identities are more-or-less similar. Waltz (1979) departed from neoclassical microeconomy and likened states to companies – though they might choose various strategies of functioning, they share basic ideas/interests of survival or making profit. Although this 'status' or 'identity' does not allow for much differentiation between states, the unequal distribution of capabilities still leads to some states being ascribed 'great power' or 'superpower' identities (Waltz, 1979; Mearsheimer, 2001) while others are known as 'middle powers' or 'small states' (Hagström and Gustafsson, 2015: 3).

This is indeed a very reductionist approach to studying world politics. Not only does a preoccupation with anarchy prevent us from broadening our grasp to incorporate new actors, systems, and processes in world politics (such as socialization, integration, deconstruction of the state, etc.), but also its reliance on formal equality has clouded our perception of other possible interpretations of the organization of the system and its processes. In fact, in order to understand the concepts such as identity, status, and the ways that power is projected between states, it is much more fruitful to engage with the starting point of hierarchy instead of anarchy. Hierarchy widens the grasp of the discipline and offers us an alternative way of interpreting world politics. Focusing on the structure of stratification and differentiation of units, we are able to understand very well not only their peculiarities and identities, but also the ways in which power is projected among them. In order to do so, I build on the post-structural theoretical school in order to illustrate how the departure from hierarchy instead of anarchy can be fruitful for broadening our understanding of national identities and their inextricable link to state's interests. I will illustrate this claim by a case study analysis of the formation and reconstruction of Japan's national identity. Understanding Japan's identity in a hierarchical manner shows that the very notions of sovereignty, autonomy, and, subsequently, national interest, are only defined through the practice of hierarchy.

2. Hierarchy, IR, and identity

Although there is a virtual consensus on the meaning and analytical use of the concept of anarchy, there is much less agreement on the meaning and role of hierarchy. The reason lies in the fact that, although there is a plethora of studies departing from the 'anarchical worldview', there are many fewer authors who explicitly or implicitly depart from hierarchy. That said, an interest in

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hierarchy is definitely growing. Barder (2015), Bukovansky *et al.* (2012), Larkins (2010), Lake (2009*a*, 2009*b*), Clapton (2009), Collard-Wexler (2006), Donelly (2006), or Kang (2004, 2010) have provided us with many interesting insights into how various hierarchies are exercised and what role they play in ordering inter-state relations. Generally, and according to a recent seminal review article by Mattern and Zarakol (2016), we can distinguish two conceptions of hierarchy present in IR literature: hierarchy as legitimate authority and hierarchy as inter-subjectively created organized inequality.

Hierarchy as a legitimate authority refers to a mostly liberal and liberal-constructivist[1] theoretical paradigm. Liberals question the realist claim that states are unitary, hierarchic actors, and, by extension, liberal thinkers are uneasy about the claim that anarchy (the formal sovereignty of states) is analytically very significant to world politics. Liberals define pluralistic conceptions of the state, highlight the role of international law, and focus on international institutions rather than states. However, as a matter of practice, 'liberal IR theory has tended to shy away from its own ambivalence, often conceding the primacy of the sovereign nation-state and anarchy' (Mattern and Zarakol, 2016: 628). Liberals (and sometimes also liberal constructivists, i.e., Ruggie, 1993) define hierarchy in terms of legitimacy under anarchy and illustrate the processes of trade-offs that generate or reconstruct the legitimate political authority in its hierarchical position (i.e., Lake, 2009*a*). Thus, hierarchies may be produced either instrumentally, by vesting rational interest in the organization or one dominant actor, or normatively, through normative 'persuasion' of legitimate authority (in some cases, it can also be the combination of both). Kang (2004, 2010) has, for instance, shown how Asian states became integrated into a tributary system that had guided them for almost two millennia. The system was based in formal hierarchy (and thus different from anarchy) given by China's cultural dominance and its spread to other Asian states – most notably Vietnam and Korea. They have accepted the dominance not only because of their belief in China's cultural superiority, but also because of the favorable economic conditions it entailed.

The second approach to hierarchy – hierarchy as inter-subjectively created organized inequality – is much wider. This broad and unsystematic approach does not immerse itself with political and/or normative authority but indulges the idea that hierarchies are 'particular kinds of organizational forms, that is, systems that arrange units into unequal relationships with one another' (Mattern and Zarakol, 2016: 627). Contrary to the first approach, hierarchies exist without any reference to a legitimate authority. Hierarchies are natural. They can be found in virtually all aspects of international and domestic policy and can emanate in a variety of forms. Hierarchy – as a system of inequality – represents a true organizational form and can very well exist on all possible levels of the 'world' (as opposed to the international) system. What unites these approaches is the belief that hierarchies always imply some form of power. This power can be found within the unequal relations present in hierarchical systems, no matter whether they are intra- or inter-state (which is not significantly different than the anarchical system presented in a neorealist thought; see Walker, 1993). A true research agenda in hierarchy, according to these approaches, lies in uncovering these systems of inequality and finding ways to remedy them.

There have been a variety of studies that have accepted this broad version of hierarchy. Many of them have tried to transcend national state and focus on different forms of stratification – for example, Wallerstein's World System Theory. Some have tried to emancipate various 'silenced' approaches to studying politics such as post-colonial or feminist approaches (Nussbaum, 2001; Tickner, 2003; Chen, 2010), some have dealt with civilizations and the formulation and reformulation of identities (Neumann, 1996, 1998; Suzuki, 2009; Buzan and Acharya, 2010). These studies, although implying/departing from hierarchical ontology (the performativity of hierarchy), have rarely focused on hierarchy *per se*. To the contrary, although they have revealed systems of hierarchy, their interest was in how particular systems were 'performed' in a specific case. Suzuki (2015), for instance, illustrated how Japan's national identity has been defined through its hierarchical relationship with China.

[1]'Liberal constructivist' is a term used by (for instance) Rumelili (2004) and Bukh (2010), in order to characterize the authors working with 'thinner' versions of constructivism that has tried to bridge positivist and post-positivist approaches to science: for instance, Alexander Wendt, Peter Katzenstein, and John Ruggie.

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Suzuki's goal, however, was not to question the anarchical assumptions of contemporary IR but to illustrate how Japan's national identity and foreign policy were reconstructed through Japan's hierarchically positioning narrative *vis-à-vis* China.

Epistemologically, these studies have focused on specific discursive regimes and have deployed various forms of narrative/discursive analyses (cf. Ringmar, 1996; Campbell, 1998; Waever, 2002; Rumelili, 2004; Hansen, 2006; Suzuki, 2009, 2015; Bukh, 2010; Kolmaš, 2014, 2017; Hagström and Gustaffson, 2015; Tamaki, 2015). They start with the premise that the contours of our world (borders/states/civilizations/identities) are produced through the discursive practices by which we try to understand them. All political concepts (including anarchy, sovereignty, or the state) are defined by these discursive practices. The practices themselves are historically, contextually, and culturally contingent (as there are no universal truths), and through them the relational (hierarchical) statuses of their objects and subjects are being reconstructed. Although discursive structures are a key for our understanding of virtually any political concept (civilization, borders, states, etc.), the notion of identity has been of particular interest to post-structural scholars. Post-structuralists understand identity in a very much different way from traditional social constructivists (Wendt, 1992; Hopf, 1998), who believe that identities are produced by domestic cultural contexts, histories, traditions, and/or sedimentation of international norms (for Japan-related research, this line of research is represented by the works of Katzenstein (1996), Katzenstein and Okawara (1993), Berger (1998), Oros (2008, 2015) and others).

Post-structural identity research understands the identities to be produced by the practices of 'othering', in which various conceptions of a state's self are being formulated through its interaction with one or more broadly defined 'others'. The idea of the 'self' is not tied to any particular quality or characteristics that could be defined with reference to culture, history, and/or any objective characteristics of the nation. For post-structuralists, the 'self' is produced and exists only 'within' the interaction with others and is produced/reproduced by discourse. This differentiation, by its very nature, is always hierarchical. Similar to the aforementioned article by Shogo Suzuki, there has been a quite interesting set of papers published over the last two decades that approach the formation of Japan's national identity through this theoretical prism[2]. They have identified a number of 'others': both external ones – such as the West, Europe, the USA, Asia, China, North Korea, and South Korea – and internal ones – such as the outcast group at the bottom of Japan's social order (*burakumin*), the Ainu people (often described as 'indigenous'), Okinawa, and the Korean minority in Japan. Some have focused on temporal othering and showed how the positioning of the 'self' has been carried out in distinction to previous 'selves'. By identifying the other, they have analyzed how these others have been juxtaposed with Japan to emphasize what Japan is, and hence to construct Japanese identity (Hagström and Gustafsson, 2015: 5, also Oguma, 2002; Bukh, 2009, 2010, etc.). Identifying self-perception of various states does not only help us understand the features and tenets of their identities. Understanding states as 'passive', 'reactive', 'normal', 'superpower', etc. has a tacit connection with the ways these states behave. Unlike social constructivists, who understand identity as an independent variable that influences state's behavior, post-structural research treats identity as inextricably linked to foreign policy creation. Discursive formulation of identities enables or constrains certain kinds of action, by either promoting or excluding certain possibilities. The process of identity construction creates a range of imaginable conduct and propels policymakers to act accordingly. Edward Said, for instance, demonstrated how statements about 'the Orient' provided means for the appropriation of the Orient by successive waves of European colonization and imperialism. Michel Foucault illustrated how discourses on 'madness' affected medical, psychiatric, and legal practices and institutions (Hagström and Gustafsson, 2015: 13). National identity – defined

[2]I am focusing on Japan so I will be analyzing studies centered on Japan. There have, however, been many post-structural analyses of national identity and foreign policy of different cases than Japan. Most notably, Campbell (1998) and Hansen (2006) illustrated to formative of American national identity; Iver Neumann (1996, 1998) focused on European integration and the formation of European identity. Ole Waever (Waever and Hansen, 2001) studied the identities of Nor dic states, Ringmar (1996) focused on the role of identity in Sweden's engagement in the 30 years war, whereas Wittinger (2010) and Wodak (et al., 2009) illustrated the discursive constructions of German and Austrian national identities.

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through hierarchy – is then much more than a simple description of state's 'self', it is the very essence of state's behavior.

In this vein, Hagstrom and Hanssen (2015) illustrated the ways in which Japan reconstructs its 'normal' identity and subsequently its 'more assertive' security and defense policies by defining itself as a victim to North Korean aggressive policies. Similarly, Tamaki (2010, 2015) highlighted how Japan's narrative on a widely defined 'Asia' has prompted Tokyo to engage in its program of colonialism before World War II and compels policymakers to address territorial disputes with Asian neighbors in the present. Much in the same line, Gustafsson (2015) illustrated how the Chinese government has come to be seen as 'denying Japan's self-identity as a peaceful state that has provided China with substantial amounts of official development aid during the post-war era'. China is then – according to Gustafsson – not regarded as 'anti-Japanese' merely because of protests against Japan and attacks on Japanese material interests, but for denying a key component of Japan's self-image (Gustafsson, 2015: 117). What all of these studies apparently have in common is that, although they might not explicitly state so, they inherently depart from the hierarchical worldview. Hierarchy did indeed play a key role in defining Japan's self-conception, as will be revealed in the following chapter. Unlike the previously mentioned studies, however, my aim is not to illustrate narratives on various 'others' and their role in reconstructing Japan's national identity. My aim is to emancipate hierarchy as an organizational principle and the role it plays in defining basic political concepts that are seen as 'unchangeable' by the anarchy-based worldview. The following part of this paper will then tie the conception of Japan's statehood, sovereignty, and autonomy to its very hierarchical roots present in the narratives on Japan's national identity.

3. Japan's national identity from a hierarchical perspective

Throughout its history, Japan has found itself in a more-or-less formal hierarchical relationship with other countries. Up to the Meiji revolution in 1868, which effectively started Japan's opening up to the world, Japan was a part of the Chinese tributary system that spread across Asia. According to Kang (2004: 339–340), the system (being built on Chinese internal culture and namely Confucianism) was defined by 'formal hierarchy among nations while allowing considerable informal equality'. Kang believed that for most parts of Asia's history, Japan understood and accepted its position within this system: 'Japanese elites consciously copied Chinese institutional and discursive practices in part to craft stable relations with China, not to challenge it' (Kang, 2010: 593). Yet unlike Vietnam or Korea, Japan was a boundary case. Although clearly deriving many of their domestic ideas, innovations, writing, and cultural knowledge from China, Japanese elites were always skeptical of China's central position. Indeed, 'Japanese scholars and officials often made an explicit distinction between Chinese civilization, which they revered, and the Chinese state, which they often held in contempt' (Kang, 2010: 593–594, also Kolmaš, 2016).

China's humiliation by the West during the Opium Wars destroyed China's legitimacy necessary to run the tributary system. Japan's opening up to the world followed just two decades later, albeit in a somewhat 'softer' manner. In the 1850s, American ships first tried to open Japan up to foreign trade and, by the 1860s, they had succeeded. The Meiji Revolution of 1868 started the process of Japan's modernization, industrialization, and general change from a secluded, isolated (*sakoku*) country into a modern, open, and ultimately expansive power. Here, Japan found itself in a precarious situation. Simply accepting Western influence would forever position Japan into a low hierarchical status *vis-à-vis* the Western countries that had ended Japan's isolation policy in the first place. At the same time, however, disregarding the West in Japan's identity formation would rob Japan of the technological modernity it revered (Oguma, 2002). Japan's national identity became locked between these two worlds – superior West and inferior Asia – and precisely this interlocked hierarchical position played a key role in Japan's identity formation. Japan introduced a variety of Western practical, technological, philosophical, and scientific ideas and connected them to its own cultural and

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philosophical sources. Although conscious of its own origins, Japan reflected desires to catch up and be recognized by the West (Suzuki, 2005, 2009).

This had a profound effect on Japan's self-perception *vis-à-vis* Asia. When Japan accepted much of Western modernity, it began to differentiate itself very much from other 'backwards' Asian countries. As Tamaki wrote, Japanese narratives have tended to portray Asia as inferior to Japan. 'Japanese elites in the nineteenth century shared the view that a weak Asia was being devoured by the West, ultimately symbolizing Asia's purported backwardness. This translated into the notion that Japan, which embarked on rapid modernization following the Meiji Restoration of 1868, was superior to backward Asia' (Tamaki, 2015: 25). The depiction of Asia as a hierarchically lower entity reconstructed the idea of Japanese uniqueness. The idea that Japan is superior to 'backwards' Asia had a profound effect on the way Japan treated it. Although Japan felt it should cooperate with 'culturally close' China, Tokyo's perceived uniqueness and China's perceived backwardness led it to establish itself as a leader of Asia instead (Iriye, 1992). Positioning itself as a hierarchical leader of Asian countries legitimized much of Japan's military ventures across Asia. Both Japan's invasion of Manchuria and its colonization of Korea were encouraged by many intellectuals across Japan who believed Japan to be waging a war of liberation from Western 'predators' who were already devouring much of China (Takeuchi, 1979 cited in Tamaki, 2015). Japanese leaders often made remarks about Japan's perceived superiority toward other Asian countries. Ukon Matsui of the Imperial Army General Staff Office likened the Sino-Japanese conflict to a sibling rivalry within the Asian household (*Ajia no ikka*): it was a way for the elder brother (Japan) to instill repentance in the younger brother (China) purely out of brotherly love (Matsuura, 2010: 512 in Tamaki, 2015: 29). Similarly, Foreign Minister Ishii Kikujiro wrote in July 1931 that 'it is imperative that we use our holy interests as a shield with which to refuse pleasure to backward peoples' (Tamaki, 2015).

Yet feeling superior to Asia is only part of the story. In a similar vein, Japan felt its inferiority toward the West. Japan sought the West's acceptance as a part of the 'modern' nations with a significant power status. As Shih points out, Japan's invasion of Russia in 1904/1905 was precisely guided by Japan's quest for appraisal by Western powers. 'The Japanese government was thrilled by the opportunity of becoming a party of balance of power which presumably only modern nations were eligible for participation' (Shih, 2010: 552). Western powers were slow and cautious in embracing Japan's power status. Although Japan was one of the victorious powers that emerged from World War I, there was a visible notion of inequality on the part of the USA and the European powers. The West placed restraints on Japanese trade; was unwilling to allow the Japanese the same kind of freedom in Manchuria that the Western countries regularly exercised across Asia, Africa, and Latin America; and notwithstanding Japanese pressure, the USA kept in place their anti-immigration policies toward the Japanese people (Smethurst, 2012). In this sense, Japan's involvement in the World War II was not only due to its perception of superiority in Asia, but also in its perception of inferiority toward the West. 'The bitter victory in the Russo-Japanese war inspired Japan into all-round involvement in the so-called China Theatre, where supposedly only European nations were entitled to play in the balance of power' (Shih, 2010: 552–553).

Japan's defeat in the war brought a change in the nation's self-perception. Its vision of hierarchical leadership in Asia was crushed along with its imperial ambitions. The Douglas MacArthur-led occupation aimed to reconfigure Japan along American ideas and traditions. Japan was to renounce Shinto as a state religion, reconstruct democratic parties and representation, reform land ownership, and – among many other changes – partially reconstruct its economic system to fit with Western ideas of liberalism and individualism (see i.e., McClain, 2002; Hayes, 2009; McCargo, 2013). Japan emerged from the occupation as a country that not only accepted some Western models of political life, but more importantly as a country whose security was guaranteed by the USA. In order to demilitarize Japan and prevent it from waging future wars, the USA forced Japan to enact a peaceful Constitution in 1947. The key part of the Constitution was its Article 9, which effectively prevented Japan from possessing a regular army. It states that Japan 'forever renounces war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes' and

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that 'in order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized'. According to the constructivist authors (Katzenstein and Okawara, 1993; Berger, 1998), this article was the defining element of Japan's nascent post-war pacifist/anti-militaristic identity. However, the nation's post-war identity was by no means simply pacifist. With the end of the American occupation of Japan, Tokyo took steps to reconstitute its own military forces. In 1950, Tokyo established its National Police Reserve. Following the establishment of Japan's Defense Agency in 1954, the reserves were transformed into the Japanese Ground-Self Defense Forces, with the aim (along with Maritime SDFs and Air SDFs) of defending the homeland from external aggression. As Oguma (2002, also Bukh, 2010; Almog, 2014) illustrated, these newly formed troops enjoyed significant support from the Japanese society. According to Oguma, Japanese people were not against the army/military in general, they were against the military cooperating with a former 'enemy'; and rather than against conflict, violence, and war in general, Japanese society stood against the war on Japanese territory.

Indeed, many of the post-war debates on Japan's national identity have been centered on the Constitution and its Article 9. Many conservative right-wing politicians, who later formed an anti-mainstream group within the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), argued that the very existence of Article 9 robs Japan of its international sovereignty and political independence. Pre-war minister and Class-A war criminal suspect Kishi Nobusuke and war-time foreign minister and diplomat Shigemitsu Mamoru, among others, strongly protested against the peaceful Constitution and pressed on Yoshida Shigeru and other leading LDP politicians to alter it. In Kishi's own words: 'It is not the policy of an independent nation to have troops of a foreign country based on its soil' (Samuels, 2007: 30). They favored a combination of rearmament and conventional alliances and pressured for rebuilding Japan's security capabilities and reciprocal security commitments with the USA. But as Suzuki (2015: 100) reminded us, 'what is often missed is the fact that the fundamental issue undergirding these discussions has frequently been about constructing an identity of Japan as an "autonomous" state. Whatever one's political colors were, debates surrounding Article 9 were intimately linked to a persistent fear that Japan had a "weak" or "subservient" identity that allowed it to be dominated by foreign powers'. The very sovereignty and statehood that Japan acquired after the Americans left in 1952 was only created in a hierarchical relationship toward the USA, and remains to be inextricably linked to it.

The Yoshida Doctrine and Japan's security alliance with the USA that was signed in 1952 in many ways codified this status. The doctrine was defined by three key points: continued reliance on the alliance with the USA to ensure Japan's security; emphasis on economic relations overseas to assist in the reconstruction of the domestic economy; and a limited military presence including the low level of armament. Although it gave Japan much-needed security guarantees, as well as access to American markets, it placed the USA in a controlling power-position *vis-à-vis* its Asian ally. The resulting policy was nonetheless a great success for the Yoshida government. Although Yoshida had to do much to balance the dissent within the LDP, he set the conditions for Japan's rocket economic growth while maintaining popular satisfaction with not breaching Article 9. This was no easy task. The conservatives within the LDP – including two soon-to-be Prime Ministers Kishi and Nakasone Yasuhiro – remained dissatisfied in the ways the alliance limited Japan's perceived independence and steadfast that Japan would eventually take on a larger strategic and military role that are the 'normal' signs of 'independent diplomacy' (*jishu gaiko*). As Samuels (2007: 42–3) noted, because they, and not Yoshida, controlled the formation of the LDP in 1955, the original platform of the party actually stated: 'In order to protect the liberty of our citizens, the independence of our national and the peace of the world, we will ready – under a collective security system – a self-defense capability commensurate with our national power and conditions that will prepare the country for the withdrawal of foreign forces stationed here'.

It should be noted that Yoshida was by no means a simple anti-militarist. In many ways similarly to Kishi and Nakasone, Yoshida believed that Japan would eventually accept a larger role in providing for its security and a larger independence *vis-à-vis* the USA. Yet Yoshida was also a pragmatist and knew

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that reliance on the doctrine would set the best possible conditions for Japan to acquire the 'first-rate power' (*ittokoku*) status. Winning over the nationalists within the LDP required an immaculate political skill and cooperation with the USA. Washington eventually agreed to promise Japan – among other nations – greater autonomy and a reduced base presence. The renegotiated defense treaty that was signed in 1960 also eliminated the USA's right to intervene in domestic security problems in Japan (see i.e., Williams 2013; Easley, 2017). Although over the course of the next decades, Japan's security capabilities increased significantly, the discussions about Japan's independence *vis-à-vis* the USA remained a key part of the construction of Japan's national identity. In light of the war in Vietnam, the USA adopted the Nixon Doctrine in 1969. The doctrine called on America's Asian allies to make a bigger commitment to sustaining Asian security. The 1970s' 'Nixon shocks' – China rapprochement and the dismantling of the Bretton Woods currency system – disconcerted Tokyo and made it reconsider a more robust role for the SDFs in providing state security. In 1978, the USA–Japan 'Defense Guidelines' added sea lanes to the SDF's jurisdiction. The 1981 Reagan–Suzuki communiqué extended Japan's commitment to defending sea lanes out to 1000 nautical miles. In 1983, Tokyo exempted the USA from its export ban on arms technology, paving the way for alliance cooperation on defense research (Easley, 2017: 70); and yet, as Inoguchi and Jain (1996) wrote, 'Japan's reliance on the USA resembled "karaoke diplomacy": Japan's foreign policy choices were circumscribed by a set menu of alternatives determined by the United States. As with karaoke the background music, the American policy line, was predetermined; the only scope for the singer is in the style of delivery, policy implementation'.

The 'independence' discourse *vis-à-vis* the USA never really left Japanese political narrative. Nakasone's vision of the autonomous defense (*jishu boei*) or (originally) Ozawa Ichiro's vision of Japanese normalization (*futsu no kokka ni mukau*, Ozawa, 1993) were formulated in relation to the USA. Maybe the clearest line of the hierarchical foundation of Japan's national identity can be found in discussions regarding the change of the post-war peaceful Constitution and Japan's political and defense reconstruction. Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the resulting change in the IR system both globally and in the Asian region, Japan came to discuss the viability of the Yoshida doctrine for the upcoming age. If there was a key topic to these debates, it was the notion of Japanese autonomy (see i.e., Fouse, 2004; Mochizuki, 2004). The 'autonomy' narrative, as shown above, was a key to the discussions of Japan's post-war statehood and sovereignty. After the institutionalization of the Yoshida Doctrine, the narrative became muted; yet in the 1990s, it re-emerged and gained a substantive momentum. Advocates of autonomy (such as the former governor of Tokyo and a now-retired politician Ishihara Shintaro, or former mayor of Osaka and currently a leader of conservative Japan restoration party, Hashimoto Toru) have doubted the US obligation to defending Japan and have argued for a significantly larger role for the Japanese military, which would restore Japan's national prestige. They have criticized the 'US-imposed' Constitution and called for its revision that would grant Japan the autonomy it needs to deal with deteriorating security conditions in Asia. They have also called for a tougher position *vis-à-vis* China and questioned many of the regretful and conciliatory statements of the Japanese government toward its Asian neighbors, such as the Murayama apology for atrocities of the World War II (1994/1995) or the Kono statement of remorse for the comfort women Japanese soldiers enslaved during the war (1993). In a rally for the Japanese restoration party in 2012, Ishihara explained: 'I cannot allow myself to die until my Japan, which has been made a fool of by China, and seduced as a mistress by the United States, is able to *stand up again* as a stronger, more beautiful nation' (Fackler, 2012, italics added)[3].

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[3]Ishihara is, to some, a 'political celebrity' in Japan. Originally an award winning writer (in 1956, he won the Akutagawa Prize, Japan's most prestigious literary award, for his novel, *Season of the Sun*), Ishihara gradually evolved into a full-fledged politician and vocal representative of Japan's nationalism. In 1992, he co-authored a book *Japan That Can Say 'No'*, in which he (along with his co-author and Sony chairman Akio Morita) advised the Japanese people to stand up to the USA. He gained further international attention after he declared that he would buy the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu islands in the East China Sea. His declaration prompted Japanese government to nationalize the islands, sparking a row with China,

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It should also be noted that this 'conservative' discourse focuses not only on the USA. As Suzuki (2015) pointed out, China gradually became to play a similarly significant role in Japan's identity narrative. Especially during the heated Senkaku/Diaoyu crisis of 2010–2012, the Japanese media portrayed China as a 'revisionist bully' with 'mafia-like' practices that directly interfere with the international law. Japanese politicians, who proposed a conciliatory approach toward China, were depicted as weak-kneed and 'naïve' (*amai gaiko*). For instance, the visit of DPJ lawmakers to China in December 2009 was interpreted in the media as 'tributary foreign policy' (*choko gaiko*) in an obvious reference to China's hierarchical ordering of foreign policy where all non-Chinese states were seen as 'barbarous' and inherently inferior (Suzuki, 2015: 111). What is apparent in this narrative is the fact that both the USA and China are depicted as nations who are robbing Japan of its sovereignty and independence. Japan's autonomy and autonomous national identity are inextricably linked to this hierarchical link. Sovereignty and autonomy – key pillars of the realist approach building on anarchical worldview – exist only within this hierarchical relationship and are 'defined' by it.

Although these politicians do not represent the mainstream political leadership of the ruling LDP, they are by no means fringe players in Japanese politics. In fact, many of their views are shared by the contemporary Prime Minister Abe Shinzo. Abe believes that, for reviving Japan's national identity, the systematic dismantlement of past and externally imposed structural obstacles is necessary. According to Hughes (2015), Abe's ultimate objective is the revision of the war-renouncing Constitution that Japan was forced to accept following World War II. Hughes stresses that Abe is the founder of 'Japan Rebirth' (*Sosei Nihon*), a National Diet members' group dedicated to rethink the post-war order. As a member of the Diet's cross-party Alliance for Promoting the Assessment of a New Constitution (*Kenpo Chosa Suishin Giin Renmei*), he pushed his LDP into drafting a new version of the constitution in 2012. The final documented reminisced about Japan's pre-war posture. To illustrate Abe's revisionism, Hughes has furthermore stressed that the Prime Minister has been a key member of the LDP Historical Investigation platform as well as other bodies that have revisited Japan's history textbooks (Hughes, 2015: 12–13, see also Glosserman, 2014; Hosoya, 2015; Dobson, 2017; Lande, 2017). Abe is also the member of the Japan Conference (*Nippon kaigi*), a conservative nationalist and state-Shinto religious organization, which calls for the revision of Article 9 and 'a beautiful traditional sovereignty for Japan's future' (*dentoteki no kunigara*, see nipponkaigi.org). Abe's narrative defines Japan as a 'weak' and 'bullied' 'victim' country that has been robbed of its national prestige and is being bullied by aggressive neighbor. Defining Japan as a victim legitimizes dismantling the pacifist posture that Japan united itself following the World War II. Only through this change can Japan 'stand up' to the security challenges of contemporary Asia and 'regain' the confidence it lost following the war. Security changes that Abe promotes (such as the 2015 security laws that effectively breach Japan's post-war ban on collective security) are, in this vein, the way to reconstruct a 'normal' country with a traditional army.

4. Conclusion

In recent decades, the discipline of IR has become increasingly 'anarchical'. Anarchy prescribes that states are unitary actors that operate in an (more or less) unruly and lawless environment of anarchy, which preconditions them to seek survival, maximize national interest, and protect their sovereignty. An international system consists of sovereign units that may engage in forms of cooperation, but, at the end of the day, define themselves precisely in the very sovereignty that anarchy prescribes. Hierarchy in the system is virtually nonexistent and, if a hierarchical system emerges, it is just a possibility rooted in the division of power within the anarchical system. In a nutshell, anarchy and sovereignty are often

who also claims these islands (McCurry, 2012). Between 1999 and 2012, Ishihara served as the long-serving governor of Tokyo. Since 2012, at the age of 80, Ishihara became the leader of Japan's nationalistic Sunrise party, which after the December elections merged with Hashimoto's Japan restoration party. Following the 2014 elections, in which he was defeated, he retired from politics altogether.

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seen as 'natural' concepts that have objective validity. It was the goal of this article to illustrate that this is by no means so. By applying post-structural theoretical framework, this paper argues that anarchy and sovereignty are mere discursive constructions produced by the practice of hierarchies. Hierarchies, in fact, are central to our understanding of the world. Understood as social practices, hierarchies are 'cultures-inaction that are materialized through bodily activity and discursive regimes' (Mattern and Zarakol, 2016: 641). The practice of hierarchies produces actors and defines/limits the pallet of actions they engage in. By defining boundaries and shaping opportunities, hierarchies construct state identities and their preferences. The very concepts of sovereignty and anarchy are, in fact, produced by the practice of hierarchies.

In order to illustrate this theoretical claim, this article interpreted the practice of hierarchies within Japan's national identity narrative. National identity is inextricably linked to a state's foreign policy. Through shaping the narrative, competing visions of national identity define the framework of possibilities in which policies are executed. The construction of Japan's national identity was produced in an inherently hierarchical framework. The differentiation from Asia and the West defined Japan's national identity before World War II and legitimized the territorial conquests Japan made. The post-war construction of a 'peaceful' Japan, similarly, was carried out in a hierarchical fashion. By defining the USA as the 'dominant' actor robbing Japan of its national prestige, Japan tied its autonomy and sovereignty to its relationship with Washington. The 'normalization' discourse, which emerged after the dissolution of the Soviet bloc, highlighted this process. By (once more) defining Japan as a 'weak' country dominated by foreign powers, Japanese politicians framed the narrative to create conditions for Japan's security reconstruction. In this sense, we understand the nascent security changes of the Abe administration as a result, as well as a symbol, of the reconstruction of Japan's national identity as an 'autonomous' and 'independent' state. The very definitions of autonomy and sovereignty are then inherently tied to the hierarchical discourse of Japan's national identity.

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Michal Kolmaš, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor and the deputy head of Asian Studies Department at Metropolitan University Prague, Czech Republic. He obtained his Ph.D. from Charles University and he was a visiting research scholar at Hokkaido University and Akita International University in Japan. He focuses and published (in journals including *The Pacific Review*, *China Report*, *Asia-Pacific Social Science Review and Perspectives*) on Japan's foreign policy, security in Asia-Pacific, contemporary IR theory, and national identity. His latest book entitled 'National identity and Japanese revisionism' was published by Routledge in 2018.

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