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Towards Becoming a “Normal Country”.
The History Issue and Sino-Japanese Relations
in the Koizumi Era

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ABSTRACT

The presented thesis was devoted to exploring how the problems stemming from the unsettled wartime past between the People's Republic of China and Japan influence the latter's effort to become a "normal country". It was a non-experimental study based mainly on secondary sources and enriched with the findings from qualitative semi-structured interviews.

The thesis explored the connection between a "normal country" advocacy, state-centred patriotism and history issue in Japan, with reference to the visits of Prime Minister Koizumi Junichirô to the *Yasukuni* Shrine. It also examined the stance of the People's Republic of China on Japanese ambitions to become a "normal country" and prime ministerial visits to *Yasukuni*.

The study argued that the prime ministerial visits to the Shrine might be seen as a mean of encouraging state-centred patriotism, which is expected to help Japan to become a "normal country". Nonetheless due to its past role as a locus of militarism, *Yasukuni* is an ambivalent symbol. Koizumi pledged to preserve peace and denied the accusations about glorifying Japan's wartime deeds, yet his assurances were conflicting with his actual practice. Furthermore they were dismissed by the PRC. China will not accept a vision of a "normal" Japan, if it includes what is perceived by the Chinese side as revisionist references to Japan's militaristic past.

KEY WORDS: "normal country", history issue, state-centred patriotism in Japan, Koizumi Junichirô, *Yasukuni* Shrine, Sino-Japanese relations

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FOREWORD

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The legacy of the Asia Pacific War shapes the nature of bilateral relations between the People's Republic of China and Japan up to the present point. Its influence is visible in the realms of the political co-operation and security policies, since the countries see each other as a potential military threat. The matter of wartime past, often described in various sources as the "history issue" or "history problem" (*rekishi mondai*), seems to be even more problematic in the light of Japan's efforts to become a "normal country" (*futsû no kuni*). These efforts aim at utilising the country's military capabilities and enhancing its position on the international scene.

According to Japanese conservative decision-makers from the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), fostering national consciousness, pride and patriotism are an indispensable ideological underpinning of transforming Japan into a "normal country". At the level of national politics, the strategies that have been implemented to encourage state-centred patriotism among the general public seem to encompass the elements of a "bright" (*akarui*) historical narrative. Its supporters aim at reducing Japan's wartime responsibility towards its Asian neighbours. During the tenure of PM Koizumi Junichirô the frequency and intensity of political incidents, e.g. his frequent and highly controversial visits to the *Yasukuni* Shrine, which were perceived by the international community as stemming from popularising the "bright" historical narrative, increased drastically.

Prime Minister Koizumi's stance on the history issue led to the rise of political tension between the governments of the People's Republic of China and Japan. In the view of many observers the bilateral relationship reached its lowest point since 1972, the year when diplomatic relations were established.

1.2 Purpose and research questions

The purpose of the study is to explore how the problems stemming from the unsettled wartime past between the People's Republic of China and Japan influence the latter's effort to become a "normal country". The time framework of the thesis is narrowed down to the tenure of Japanese PM Koizumi Junichirô (April 2001-September 2006). During that time the disagreements in interpreting certain historical events between the PRC and Japan became more heated than before.

In order to answer the posed research question, the study explores the following sub-questions:

- What is the importance of reviving state-centred patriotism for re-establishing Japan as a "normal country"?
- What is the connection between the "normal country" argument and the history issue in Japan?
- What was PM Koizumi's stance on the *Yasukuni* issue?
- How were the "normal country" advocacy and Koizumi's visits to *Yasukuni* perceived by China?

1.3 Literature review

The subject of redefining Japan's identity from a pacifist country to a "normal" power that can use the threat of force as an instrument of policy is discussed in various security studies, e.g. Singh 2002, Drifte 2003, Hughes 2004a and 2004b. Their authors acknowledge the impact of the war legacy on the regional security concerns, especially those existing between the PRC and Japan. Nonetheless the above-mentioned studies tend to leave aside the nationalist baggage and trials to enhance state-centred patriotism that are tied to the "normal state" advocacy.

The latter aspect of the “normal country” advocacy became a subject of interest of both Tamamoto (2001, 2005/06) and Tetsuya (2006). In his article Tamamoto argues that the “hawks” from the ruling Liberal Democratic Party are unhappy with what they perceive as a lack of state-centred patriotism among Japanese citizens (2005/06:56). According to Tetsuya the conservative policy makers aim at instilling “a rooted love of country in the citizenry” that would substitute the pacifist attitudes, which are widespread in Japanese society (2006:157). Enhancing state-centred patriotism would in turn facilitate Japan's transition to “normality”, the conservatives’ argumentation goes.

Both authors analyse the issue of state-centred patriotism with reference to PM Koizumi’s visits to the *Yasukuni* Shrine, the most important and, in the same time, the most controversial institution of mourning the war dead in Japan. An earlier publication devoted to *Yasukuni*'s place in the domestic socio-political discourse on nationalism and patriotism was written by Safier (1997). The findings of all three authors underline that the conservative establishment has been trying to appropriate *Yasukuni* to certain political ends. Furthermore Tamamoto and Tetsuya underline the significance of historical memory in the process of re-establishing Japan's identity as a “normal state”.

The importance of history and historical memory in constructing a national identity is also discussed in Saaler's publication (2005). According to him the conservative political elites in Japan are trying to “impose a certain historical narrative in the public sphere [...] that lies at the root of the fiery debates over how to memorialize the national story” (2005: 91-92). Furthermore he underlines that this “historical narrative” advocates an affirmative view of the WWII¹ and tends to whitewash the record of wartime Japan.

¹Here the term “affirmative” refers to presenting Japanese aggression during the Asia Pacific War as the war of “liberation”, which was supposed to free Asian nations from the embrace of colonialism. Furthermore the supporters of the affirmative view of the Asia Pacific War often bring to the fore so called “ABCD line” argument. In the light of the latter, the Japanese attack on the Pearl Harbour was justified by the economic embargo by the ABCD countries (American, British, Chinese and Dutch). Thus, in order to survive, Japan had to defend itself. It is also underlined that the fallen soldiers gave their lives to protect their country and their deaths laid foundations for Japan's future well-being.

Saaler's views on the revisionist longings of Japanese conservatives correlate positively with earlier publications of Rose (2000) and McCormack (2000). The authors point out that the vibrant strand of historical revisionism, which emerged in Japan in the 1990's, has its supporters among the highest echelons of the LDP.

In her later publication Rose (2005) also tries to evaluate the impact of the above-mentioned tendencies on Sino-Japanese relations. She underlines that the reason for the current clashes over history are domestic needs in both countries to legitimise diverging understandings of the past. Furthermore she speaks about differences concerning the politics of commemoration and the role of past wars in forming the basis of national identity. Nonetheless her study does not examine the PRC's stance on the “normal country” advocacy in Japan.

The writings of Liao (2006) and Wan (2006) are more illuminating in this respect. They indicate that in spite of a certain plurality of views on Japanese aspirations, the Chinese decision-makers tend to equate Japan's will to become military and political power with the country's failure to come to terms with its wartime past. Furthermore Wan provides a good overview of the consequences of PM Koizumi's visits to *Yasukuni* for Sino-Japanese relations (2006:235-261). Yet as far as the rise of anti-Japanese sentiments among the Chinese public is concerned, the articles of Gries (2005a, 2005b) are valuable source of reference.

Apart from the books and articles, the fragments of official documents as well as statements were used in the thesis. They were a valuable source of reference when presenting the PM Koizumi stance on the *Yasukuni* issue as well as the Chinese government's understanding of the history problem.

1.4 Theoretical framework

The overarching theoretical framework, which is applied in the thesis, rests on the constructivist assumptions concerning national identity. Yet before proceeding with the clarification of the chosen theoretical approach, I would like to elaborate briefly on the two concepts that occurred in the title of the presented thesis. They are the “normal country” and “history issue” concepts.

1.4.1 The “normal country” concept

Bojiang and Hughes point out that the term “normal country” was first used by conservative politician, Ozawa Ichirô in his book “Blueprint for Building A New Japan” (1993) and referred to Japanese security policies. Ozawa argued that Japan needs to abandon its pacifist attitude and become more pro-active military player, revise Article 9 of the Constitution and its defence policy as well as make international contributions that are commensurate with Japan's economic strength. According to him, Japan's military activities would take place within the UN-centred collective security framework (Bojiang 2005:6-7, Hughes 2004b:114).

The source of alleged “abnormality” of the Japanese state has been Article 9 of the Constitution. In it, Japan renounces war as a sovereign right of the nation, repudiates the use of force as a means of settling international disputes and does not recognise the state's right to belligerency, including a promise never to maintain military forces. The pacifist Constitution as well as the pacifist sentiments of the general public imposed limitations on Japan's participation in regional security affairs (Singh 2002:85).

With the passage of time, the idea of a “normal state” has been appropriated by other sections of policy-making circles. The opinions on how normalisation should be achieved are divided. They embrace options such as introducing greater independence of Japanese defence efforts, strengthening the cooperation within the U.S-Japan alliance or developing multilateral security options (Hughes 2004b:51-52). Nevertheless the common denominator is the will to

strengthen Japan's individual military capabilities and revise Article 9 in order to legalise the existence of Self Defence Forces (SDF).

1.4.2 The “history issue” concept

According to Rose the history issue is a set of highly debatable matters stemming from the legacy of wartime past in East Asia and the differences in interpreting the events that took place between 1931 and 1945 by China and Japan. It comprises several issues, such as the debates surrounding the content of Japanese history textbooks, the form and validity of Japanese apologies for waging war in Asia, the stance of some politicians from the ruling Liberal Democratic Party on Japanese war responsibility and visits of Japanese Prime Ministers to the *Yasukuni* Shrine, just to name a few of them (2005:2).

In the presented thesis, an aspect of the history issue which will be discussed at length, is the problem of prime ministerial visits to *Yasukuni*. During the tenure of PM Koizumi, the Shrine became the hallmark of Sino-Japanese conflict over history.

1.4.3 National identity and constructivist approach

Along with the approach proposed by Katzenstein, Wendt and Jepperson (1996), in the following thesis the term “identity” is used as shorthand for varying constructions of nation- and statehood. It refers to the national ideologies of collective distinctiveness and purpose as well as the varying patterns of state sovereignty, enacted both on the domestic and international scene. The process of constructing identity is understood as explicitly political and pitting conflicting actors against each other. It is argued that national identities are constructed through interactions with domestic as well as international environments. Thus, it is possible for identities to change. This change in turn, may perpetuate substantial shifts in interests that shape national security policy.

For identities to be changed radically, there have to occur an external shock. Such events facilitate the change of the most fundamental norms on which the statehood was built and the perception of these norms by policy-makers as well as ordinary citizens. Eventually those norms might be strengthened as a result of the challenge. Alternatively, however, the perception of a rift between the norms and the outside world might lead to their adjustment (Steans&Pettiford 2005:196-197).

In his analysis of Japan's postwar national identity, Berger (1996) argues that the result of the country's war experiences and the manner in which those experiences were interpreted by domestic political actors, the country developed a distinct pacifist political-military culture. The latter has influenced how the Japanese view national security, the military as an institution as well as the use of force in international relations.

The event that challenged the identity of Japan as a pacifist state was the First Gulf War (1991). At that time the Japanese government found itself under heavy criticism for conducting a “check book diplomacy” and avoiding human contribution to the military effort. The humiliating treatment, which Japan received on the occasion of the Gulf War from the side of their American ally as well as changes in the security environment after the Cold War had a great impact on Japanese conservative policy-makers. The latter found reasons to question the feasibility of the old pacifist identity of the state and promote re-establishing Japan as a “normal state”.

According to Berger (1996), changing the core norms on which national identity is built is a long and difficult process, pitting various actors against each other. The new norms and values have to be legitimized by the society, which process often involves reinterpreting past events, current conditions and future goals.

A crucial component of identity politics worldwide is a creation of historical memory. According to Saaler, the selection is the basic mechanism when constructing historical memory intended to become a cornerstone of collective identity. Both he and He argue that the manners in which history is interpreted for the purpose of constructing identities are invariably influenced by political factors and serve achieving certain political ends (2005:90; 2006:70-71).

Assmann argues that the beginning of the new millennium brought with itself a change in the development of historical memory regarding World War II. “Living memory [...] gives way to a cultural memory based on [...] media, with carriers such as monuments, memorials museums and archives.” She also states that “Since there is no such thing as the self-organisation of cultural memory, it has to rely on media and politics”. As such, the cultural memory may be subjected to various distortions and instrumentalization (Assmann in Saaler 2005:91).

However, as Saaler argues, while selecting the criteria for creating a collective historical memory it is necessary to remember that they need to be based on social consensus. Moreover they also must be recognised as legitimate and acceptable by the international community. The existence of shared historical perspectives is the cornerstone of successful reconciliation and bilateral trust (2005:90-91). Hamada ascertains that in a rapidly globalizing world, the consequences of creating and reinterpreting collective memories extend beyond national borders and may lead to regional interstate contention (2003:110).

1.5 Methodology

1.5.1 Design of the study

The overarching methodological perspective which is to be applied in the presented study is an interpretivist one. The presented thesis is a non-experimental study based mainly on secondary sources and enriched with the findings from qualitative semi-structured interviews.

An analytical inductive approach was used while analysing the research material.

An alternative research method could embrace conducting fieldwork in Japan, during which interviews with Japanese policy-makers, political commentators as well researchers involved in the “normal country” debate would be conducted. Nonetheless financial and time constraints made it impossible. The chosen method, despite being less challenging, still allows for exploring interesting angles of the research question.

1.5.2 Data collection

The main bulk of research material was gathered through analysis of written sources. Secondary data were collected in the Asian Library of the Centre for East and South East Asian Studies (Lund University, Sweden) and the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies (Copenhagen, Denmark).

The sources of primary data were official documents and statements as well as semi-structured interviews. The former were reached through the websites of the Chinese and Japanese Ministries of Foreign Affairs as well as the Japanese Cabinet.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted in order to diversify the sources of information. The target group consisted of six researchers specializing in East Asian region in general and Sino-Japanese relations. Three out of the six interviews were conducted face-to-face. The remaining three interviewees were reached with the help of means of electronic communication (e-mail and Internet communicator - SKYPE). The exact wording and sequence of the questions were prepared in advance. The set of questions presented to the latter group of interviewees was shorter and more compact than the one used while face-to-face interviews (five questions against fifteen).

The method of selecting the interviewees, which was used in the thesis, was a non-randomized (controlled) one. The researchers, who took part in the interviews were chosen with the help of my academic tutor. The sample consisted of four Westerners, one Japanese and one Chinese.

1.5.3 Limitations

The length limitation of the thesis is the reason why some interesting aspects of the discussion surrounding the “normal country” advocacy, e.g. the importance of the U.S.-Japan alliance in the process of re-establishing Japan as a “normal country”, were omitted. Due to time constraints the steps, which would allow for establishing contacts with a larger number of researchers in China and Japan were not undertaken.

1.6 Ethical considerations

The study was conducted in compliance with the ethical guidelines for MA research provided by the Centre for East and South-East Asian Studies. The interviewees gave informed consent for including their names and opinions in the presented study.

1.7 Disposition

The thesis is divided into three chapters, all of which are followed by a short summary of their main findings. The first chapter explores the problem of connection between the “normal state” advocacy, state-centred patriotism and the history issue in Japan. It also includes a short presentation of the controversy surrounding the *Yasukuni* Shrine.

The second chapter presents PM Koizumi stance on the “normal country” advocacy as well as his approach to the *Yasukuni* issue. Moreover it explores the possible reasons behind the prime ministerial visits to *Yasukuni*.

The last chapter of the thesis deals solely with the Chinese perspective on the history issue and Japan's efforts to become a “normal country”. Furthermore a brief overview of the consequences of the prime ministerial visits to *Yasukuni* for Sino-Japanese relations is presented. The final thoughts are included in the conclusion part of the thesis.

2. In search for a “normal statehood”

The following chapter is devoted to exploring the importance of reviving state-centred patriotism for turning Japan into a “normal country”. Furthermore the connection between the “normal country” argument and the history issue will be examined. The significance of the *Yasukuni* Shrine in the discussion surrounding the “normal country” advocacy will be touched briefly upon.

2.1 The “normal country” argument and state-centred patriotism in Japan

According to the advocates of reinstating the country's “normality”, both in the parliament (the ruling Liberal Democratic Party) and outside of it (a wide range of nationalistic groups), Japan's postwar sovereignty has been a peculiar construction. The source of this peculiarity is Article 9 of the Constitution, which was imposed on Japan by the U.S occupation forces (1946). The supporters of the “normal state” argument demand legalising the SDF as Japanese military forces and recognising the latter's right to engage in collective security activities beyond Japanese borders (Tamamoto 2005:57). Therefore revising the Constitution stands high on their political agenda.

Nonetheless the revision of the Constitution requires sanction by Japanese citizens in the form of a popular referendum². Moreover, even if a revised Constitution will make military action possible, it is not enough to ensure Japan’s transition to “normality”. If the state is supposed to undertake a military effort, “the strong support, co-operation and participation of the

²As far as amendments to the Constitution are concerned, the Article 96 states that the changes must be endorsed by a two-third majority in both houses of parliament and by a majority of the population in a national referendum (Article 96, Chapter IX: Amendments).

people are necessary”. The citizens need to recognize the necessity of accepting the sacrifice “for one's country” (*okuni no tame*) in order to protect the “national interest”, as Tetsuya puts it (2006:157). In other words, reaching a social *modus vivendi* around the vision of a “normal” Japan is needed.

In his essay Tamamoto underlines that after six decades of isolation from international power politics and of pacifism, the attitude of the Japanese people towards state-centred patriotism is indifferent at best. “It is the widespread loathing and fear of war that has made Japan keep its pacifist constitution [...] intact.” During the post-war years the Japanese have internalized the “spirit of no more war”. Thus, as he argues, “patriotism—which is not qualitatively different from nationalism - is not an operative idea” in Japan. The Japanese postwar national consensus is deeply rooted in the promise that the state will never again resort to the use of force (2001:35, 40).

This state of affairs has been slowly changing during the last decade, with the society becoming more and more receptive towards Japan's pro-active security and military policies, especially those conducted within the framework of the UN³. Nevertheless, the pacifistic attitudes are still pervasive among the Japanese citizens.

Rose writes that starting from the mid 1990s, the LDP undertook a range of measures that were supposed to encourage the growth of a more assertive patriotic mood among the general public⁴. Yet quite the contrary to the expectations of conservative policy-makers, “rather than stirring “mass” patriotic feelings” their efforts met with “vocal opposition or [...] cynicism or indifference” (2000:173). Challenging the collective identity of the Japanese state as a

³After the First Gulf War, in 1992 the Japanese parliament passed the International Peace Cooperation Law (so called Peace Keeping Operation Law – PKO Law), which enabled SDF taking part in the UN peace-keeping operations.

⁴Those measures included among the others: 1) PM Hashimoto Ryūtarō's visit to the *Yasukuni* Shrine in 1996 and 2) passing the law, which officially recognized the *Hinomaru* and the *Kimigayo* as Japan's national flag and anthem in 1999.

peaceoriented country invariably evokes strong protests among Japanese people, especially academics, members of various non-governmental organisations, lawyers and teachers (Saaler 2005:82).

The advocates of turning Japan into a “normal country” ascertain that the domestic opposition to their efforts derives from the pacifism and lack of patriotism characteristic of contemporary Japanese (ibid.:84). For that reason, special measures to instil more patriotic attitudes in hearts and minds of Japanese people should be taken.

The strategies, which have been chosen by conservative policy-makers to reach this aim, thrive on the soil of a historical narrative that closely resembles historical revisionism. More specifically, the elements of so called “bright” (*akarui*) historical narrative, which promotes an affirmative view of the Asia Pacific War and lessen Japan's war responsibility, have begun to appear more often in the official political discourse (McCormack 2000:250)

2.2 The “normal country” argument and the history issue

From the mid 1990s the debates concerning the war and war responsibility, history as well as Japan's role on the international scene were revitalized and acquired a wide coverage in academic journals, popular press and television programmes. One of the most noticeable characteristics of this trend was the growing popularity of so called “new right” or “neo-nationalists” (Rose 2000:175). During the last decade their activities led to the emergence of a vigorous strand of historical revisionism (*rekishi shûseishugi*).

The main aim of neo-nationalists is establishing a “bright” and “clean” historical narrative in order to “correct” the official “masochistic view of the history”. In their opinion the latter exaggerates Japan’s wartime past as well as the Japanese governments’ postwar shortcomings in facing this past. They insist that this dominant view of history is an outcome of accepting the distorted truths projected by the Tokyo Tribunal (1945-1948). The above-mentioned state

of affairs allegedly has led to the erosion of Japanese nationhood as well as distinctive national identity. The advocates of historical revisionism propose replacing the “masochistic view of history” with an approach that would allow for fostering pride and a sense of affinity with the Japanese nation state (Saaler 2005:15, 36; McCormack 2000:251). What are the main assumptions of this new approach?

According to neo-nationalists, Japan's imperialism in the 1930s and 1940s was a purely defensive measure against the penetration of the European powers as well as the U.S. into East Asia. The main aim of the wars conducted by Japan between 1931 and 1945 was liberating Asia from the Western oppressors. The so called “comfort women” were ordinary prostitutes, who knew what awaits them and received money for their “work”. The events that took place in *Nanjing* from December 1937 to January 1938, were regrettable, yet by no means should they be called a “massacre” (McCormack 2000:251, Saaler 2005:52, Bernard 2003:2)⁵.

The views held by historical revisionists have not become predominant in the Japanese society. Nevertheless the most conspicuous aspect of the the above-mentioned situation is a growing affinity between historical revisionists outside the National Diet and some of the high-profile LDP politicians. Both groups seek to correct the “masochistic tendencies” in educating the young generations about Japanese wartime past (Daqing 2001:18). Saaler pointed out that the close co-operation between the conservative policy makers and the neo-nationalistic organisations⁶ can be seen in the debate surrounding the revision of the Japanese Constitution (2005:81-82).

⁵For broader discussion on the views held by historical revisionists see the chapter written by Gavan McCormack in the book edited by Laura Hein and Mark Selden, “Censoring History: Citizenship and Memory in Japan, Germany and the United States” (London, New York: ME Sharpe 2000, pp. 55-73).

⁶Such as for e.g. the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform (*Atarashii rekishi kyōkasho o tsukuru kai*), one of the most notorious and influential revisionist organizations established in 1996.

2.3 The *Yasukuni* issue

One of the most controversial issues lying in the middle of the heated debates on the Japanese war responsibility, interpretation of the Asia Pacific War and legitimacy of the verdicts of the Tokyo Tribunal is the *Yasukuni* Shrine problem. The latter has also a crucial meaning in the ongoing discussion surrounding the matter of honouring the war dead, nationalism and state-centred patriotism in Japan (Shibuichi 2005, Togo 2006).

The *Tokyo Shōkonsha* Shrine was originally established by the *Meiji* government in 1869 to memorialize the spirits of warriors, who died for the emperor since the 1853 rebellion leading to the *Meiji* Restoration (1868). In 1879, the Shrine was renamed *Yasukuni*, which means 'setting the country at peace'. It was expropriated as an important tool for nation building through which traditional values and emperor ideology were instilled into minds and hearts of the Japanese people. As a place hosting the souls of fallen soldiers, it was also a symbol of the ultimate sacrifice for one's country, loyalty and patriotism (Wan 2006:235-236).

During the Asia Pacific War the Imperial Army and Navy turned the Shrine into a national locus of aggression and ultranationalism used by the government and military to sanction the imperialistic agenda (Safier 1997:32). After the war, American occupation cut the linkages between state and religion.

In 1978 the names of the fourteen people convicted by the Tokyo Tribunal as Class A war criminals were secretly enshrined in *Yasukuni*. This event together with the fact that looking from the Shrine's perspective, an affirmative view of war is necessary in order to commemorate the nation's fallen soldiers without "soiling" their reputation (Saaler 2005:97), turned *Yasukuni* in the focus of the international controversy.

In the postwar Japan the *Yasukuni* Shrine became a symbol of disputes surrounding the commemoration of the Japanese war dead and the display of historical views in the public

sphere (ibid.:94). As Safier remarked, “the ideological diversity and contention seen through the prism of the *Yasukuni* controversy is reflective of Japanese efforts to secure a sense of cultural identity and establish a consensus on the character of postwar nationalism” (1997:70). Yet *Yasukuni* has been too deeply entangled in international political debate for it to have a purely national voice.

2.4 Main findings of the chapter

In the presented chapter it was shown that the support of Japanese public opinion is crucial for transforming Japan into a “normal country”. Yet the willingness of the citizens to accept the transition of the Japanese state from “one country pacifism” to “ordinary power” is limited due to the prevalence of anti-militaristic moods among the citizens.

The conservative advocates of the “normal country” argument see the opposition to their efforts as stemming from the lack of patriotism and affinity with the Japanese nation-state among the general public. They also insist that dwelling on Japan's wartime past deprive Japanese people of pride in their country and its traditions. Here their point of view corresponds positively with the vibrant strand of historical revisionism.

The chapter also provided an insight into the roots of the international controversy surrounding the *Yasukuni* Shrine. The Shrine, as the most important place of commemorating Japanese war dead, remains the focal point of discussions on patriotism as well as war responsibility in Japan.

3. “Normal country” advocacy and the history issue in the Koizumi era

The following chapter will be devoted to examining the stance of Koizumi Junichirô on the “normal country” advocacy and *Yasukuni* issue. Special emphasis will be put on exploring the possible reasons behind his visits to the Shrine.

3.1 The “normal statehood” according to Koizumi

Koizumi Junichiro became prime minister of Japan in April 2001. He proved himself to be a strong supporter of revising the Constitution, conducting a more assertive security policy and enhancing Japan's position on the international scene.

The version of “normality” strongly proposed by Koizumi's administration – heightened patriotism, strengthening the alliance with the US and weakening the constraints on using the SDF - was not a new phenomenon in Japanese policy making. Actually it dates back to the 1980s and was conceptualized by PM Nakasone Yasuhiro.

Nakasone was a supporter of revising the Constitution and Japanese rearmament. He envisioned Japan as a major international actor and a global leader. Interestingly however, Nakasone advocated the “new” vision of Japan by attaching importance to the *Yasukuni* Shrine, a traditional institution, which during the Asia Pacific War was closely connected with Japanese militarism. Nonetheless to Nakasone, *Yasukuni* offered the possibility of returning to traditional reverence for the spirits of those, who had died for their country and showing the gratitude of the people for the sacrifices made by their forefathers. It was a symbol, which in his opinion could foster a strong sense of self-confidence and national pride (Safier 1997:45-50).

Two decades later, thanks to the repetitive visits of PM Koizumi, the Shrine once again found itself in the centre of the discussion concerning the nature of Japanese national identity.

3.2 Koizumi and the *Yasukuni* Shrine

During his tenure Koizumi visited *Yasukuni* six times. The promise of paying homage to the war dead on the 15th of August, the day of unconditional surrender in 1945, was an important part of his campaign for the presidency of the LDP in 2001. The internal opposition within the LDP as well as protests from abroad contributed to changing the date of the visit. Eventually

it took place on the 13th of August 2001. From that moment onwards, Koizumi visited *Yasukuni* once every year⁷.

According to the official explanation, Koizumi was going to the Shrine in order to thank the dead for Japan's present peace, which was made possible only by their ultimate sacrifice. His position on the *Yasukuni* issue was explained in a statement, which was given on the 13th of August 2001:

“Every year before the souls of those, who lost their lives in the battlefield while believing in the future of Japan in those difficult days, I have recalled that the present peace and prosperity of Japan are founded on the ultimate sacrifices they made, and renewed my vow for peace.”

(The statement of PM Koizumi Junichirô on visiting *Yasukuni*, 13th of August 2001; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs webpage, www.mofa.go.jp)

and confirmed a year later in his observation on the occasion of his second visit:

“The purpose of my visit was to mourn sincerely all those who lost their lives for their country, leaving behind their families, during the course of our country's history since the Meiji Restoration. I believe that the present peace and prosperity of Japan are founded on the priceless sacrifices made by many people who lost their lives in war.”

(The Ministry of Foreign Affairs webpage, www.mofa.go.jp)

Before proceeding with a more detailed discussion concerning the reasons behind prime ministerial visits to *Yasukuni*, it is desirable to clarify how those, who died supporting Japan's aggression in the Asia-Pacific War could contribute to peace.

According to Tamamoto, after the unconditional surrender, Japanese had to find an answer to a difficult question: what do those who survived say to those who died? (2001:34). A reasonable answer would involve stating that the war was a mistake and millions of Japanese

⁷On the 21st of April 2002, 14th of January 2003, 4th of January 2004, 17th of October 2005 and 15th of August 2006.

lives were wasted. The majority of those people did not derive any benefit from the war and died for a lie (Barnard 2003: 21).

The reasoning presented by Koizumi allowed to avoid admitting that the deaths of Japanese soldiers were tragic mistakes. If such is the case, those who were fortunate enough to survive have a moral duty to preserve the peace so that the sacrifice of the war dead would not be in vain. Repentance and atonement were possible only for those, who devoted themselves to constructing a new Japan. To pursue the ideals of peace and justice was to honour the dead, because they were what the dead believed they had been fighting for (Dower 1999:486-490; Tamamoto 2001:34; Wan 2006:241).

An important aspect of the presented statements is the fact that they include an explicit pledge that Japan would never again resort to aggressive war. Furthermore in the first of them, the newly elected prime minister referred to the “immeasurable ravages and suffering” inflicted on the people of the neighboring countries in Asia.

3.3 The objectives of visiting the *Yasukuni Shrine*. A short discussion

As far as the objectives of worshipping the souls of war dead in *Yasukuni* are concerned, the aspect that has been widely discussed in the literature is the influence of *Nippon Izokukai*⁸ on the LDP. If the members of the LDP, including the PM, visit *Yasukuni*, then the ruling party can obtain the votes of *Izokukai*. As it was mentioned earlier in the text, the promise of paying homage at the Shrine was used by Koizumi during the contest for the leadership of the LDP.

⁸*Nippon Izokukai* or Japan War Bereaved Association was established in 1953. Currently the organization represents around 1 mln of families with family members, who lost their lives during the Asia Pacific War. The *Izokukai* has been politically active in demanding the official worship from the side of the prime minister and emperor. Interestingly, on 11th of June 2005 the Association issued an unprecedented statement saying that having prime ministers paying homage at the Shrine “has been an ardent wish of the association and we appreciate it very much but, at the same time, it is most important that the spirits of the war dead rest in peace. It is necessary to give consideration to neighbouring countries and obtain their understanding” (*Kyodo News International*, 13th of June 2005).

All of my interviewees pointed out that domestic concerns were an important factor in undertaking such commitment by Koizumi. The will to garner support of powerful opinion groups, including *Izokukai*, was mentioned by five interviewees. Iwanaga Kazuki referred to the official justification of the visits (interview).

Nis Høyrup Christensen saw the repetitive visits to *Yasukuni* as a mean of boasting Koizumi's public image of strong leader. He also perceived the relationship between the prime ministerial visits and his apologetic statements as a contradiction in itself. Christensen indicated that Koizumi's apologies were thought to alleviate the international consequences of his actions (interview).

Nicola Piper put forward a supposition that Koizumi's adamant stance on *Yasukuni* was supposed to demonstrate that the PRC cannot use so called "history card" any more. Japan will simply not give in to Chinese pressure, as it happened in the past (interview). The aspect of not bending down to foreign pressure was also pointed out by Marie Söderberg. She ascertained that once Koizumi started going he could not stop either as this would be seen as giving in to Chinese demands, which would be a sign of weakness (interview). Guo Xuetang remarked that "being harsh with China" might help Koizumi to win more domestic support for changing the Constitution (interview).

Apart from the above-mentioned justifications, one more was given. According to Mark Selden, the PM's visits to *Yasukuni* served the purpose of legitimizing Japanese military, which suffers because of wartime legacy and constitutional constrains. He ascertained that the prime ministerial visits showing appreciation to soldiers, who died in the military effort, were necessary in the light of dispatching the SDF to Iraq (interview)⁹. In his article he underlines that symbolic elevation of the sacrifice of the dead is an important mean to secure the

⁹In the article he also argues that greater reliance on nationalistic symbols and rituals may conceal the growing structural dependency of Japan on U.S.

willingness of soldiers and civilians to fight and die for goals proclaimed by the state (Selden 2006, www.japanfocus.org).

A similar point of view on the prime ministerial visits to the Shrine is presented by Tetsuya (2006). In his analysis, “The national politics of the *Yasukuni* Shrine”, he argued that the acts of commemoration and mourning the war dead performed by Koizumi, had a certain national objective. Koizumi’s repetitive expressions of respect and gratitude towards the war dead were supposed to send an important message to the public opinion. The deaths of those, who fell in the battle for their country, are “precious deaths”, worthy of the deepest respect. If citizens are expected to recognize the necessity of accepting the sacrifices for their country, their efforts have to become subject of official gratitude from the side of authorities. Otherwise the state will not be able to mobilise people’s support for military actions (2006:156-157).

Nevertheless, in the light of fears that Koizumi's visits to the Shrine and his support for legalising SDF herald the rise of Japanese militarism, it is necessary to bear in mind his repetitive reassurances that Japan will never again resort to war. Looking from this perspective, the tragic deaths of those enshrined in *Yasukuni* are a solemn warning that war brings with itself nothing but destruction. As such it cannot be seen as a way to improve Japan's standing on the international scene. Hence, the sacrifices similar to those made by Japanese soldiers during the Asia Pacific War, will never be repeated.

Furthermore, despite the comments that Koizumi's visits to *Yasukuni* espoused the affirmative view of Asia Pacific War, he disassociated himself from supporting the understanding of WW II validated by the Shrine¹⁰. Officially he also did not question the legitimacy of the Tokyo trials' verdicts.

¹⁰On the 2nd of June 2005, during the House of Representatives Budget Committee session, Koizumi answered several *Yasukuni*-related question. “I do not want my visits to *Yasukuni* Shrine to be taken as a meaning I support the Shrine's view” he stated (Curtin 2005, www.glocom.org).

Taking into account Koizumi's declarations of commitment to peace, anti-war sentiments and objection to associating him with the affirmative view of Asia Pacific War, it is worthwhile to discuss briefly the issue of establishing a new war memorial. In December 2001 a special advisory body¹¹ was established in order to discuss the possibility of erecting a national memorial to commemorate the war dead.

In 2002 the report including the outcomes of group's deliberations was issued. In the report it was stipulated that the new memorial would have non-religious, national character. The facility would commemorate Japanese war dead, both military personnel and civilians, who died between 1868 and 1945, as well as members of the SDF that lost their lives during the UN missions. Moreover the memorial would also commemorate the foreign victims of Japanese aggression. The new memorial would not, however, undermine the position of the existing memorials, including *Yasukuni* (Report of the Advisory Group to Consider a Memorial Facility for Remembering the Dead and Praying for Peace, 24th of December 2002; www.kantei.go.jp).

The new memorial could provide the politicians with an alternative place to pay their respect to the war dead and become a focus of patriotic sentiment that would not be tainted with wartime Japanese militarism. Interestingly, during his second visit to the Shrine, Koizumi remarked that he would still wish to “make official visits to *Yasukuni*, even after the new memorial has been established” (Saaler 2006:120). The decision on erecting a new war memorial has been put aside for the time being.

3.4 Main findings of the chapter

It is impossible to establish “beyond the shadow of a doubt”, which objectives were decisive in pursuing the prime ministerial visits to *Yasukuni*. Certainly the promise of paying homage

¹¹The Advisory Group to Consider a Memorial Facility for Remembering the Dead and Praying for Peace

to the war dead in the Shrine improved Koizumi's standing during the competition for the leadership of the LDP. Retaining the adamant stance on the *Yasukuni* issue in the face of strong criticism from the side of the PRC indeed was a signal that Japan would not bend to Chinese pressure, as it happened often in the past.

Nonetheless, in the light of the ongoing process of transforming Japan into a “normal country”, the points of view presented by Selden and Tetsuya provide an interesting insight into the debate surrounding the *Yasukuni* issue. Their views problematize the importance of commemorating the war dead by Koizumi for legitimizing the SDF and fostering patriotic sentiments among Japanese people. They also leave a lot of space for exploring the role of the Shrine in transforming the identity of Japanese state.

Classifying Koizumi's views on the history issue pose some difficulty. Officially he did not adhere to the affirmative view of history validated by *Yasukuni* and advocated by neo-nationalists. On the other hand however, during his tenure the project of establishing a new national war memorial that would provide policy-makers with an alternative venue of paying their respect to the war dead was shelved. The latter fact as well as Koizumi's remarks that he would like to visit the Shrine even after a new memorial would be built, might leave the observer doubtful about sincerity of his words.

4. Sino-Japanese relations in the Koizumi era

In the introductory part of the thesis it was mentioned that in today's globalizing world displaying certain historical views in the official sphere, especially those connected with wars between the states, is closely scrutinized by the international community. The following chapter will be devoted to the PRC's stance on the history issue and the “normal country” advocacy in Japan. The consequences of Koizumi's visits to *Yasukuni* for Sino-Japanese relations will be briefly presented.

4.1 The PRC stance on the history issue

According to the information posted on the webpage of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the history problem opens the list of the major bilateral issues between the PRC and Japan, ahead of Taiwan, Diaoyudao/Senkaku Islands and Japan-U.S. security co-operation. The Chinese government often refers to the attitude towards history as the political cornerstone of Sino-Japanese relations. On the above-mentioned webpage it is explicitly stated that China wishes to build friendly relations between the two countries and their citizens, nonetheless “the prerequisite for long-term bilateral co-operation is to face and recognize the history”. The Chinese side underlines that “The past, if not forgotten, can serve as a guide for the future” (Bilateral relations, VI. Some sensitive issues; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC webpage; www.fmprc.gov.cn).

The official understanding of the wartime past between China and Japan is enshrined in the “Three Documents”, namely the Sino-Japanese Joint Communiqué (29th of September 1972), the Treaty of Peace and Friendship (1978) and Japan-China Joint Declaration (26th of November 1998). In the Joint Communiqué, the phrase, on which both sides agreed, stipulated that “The Japanese side is keenly conscious of the responsibility for the serious damage that Japan caused in the past to the Chinese people through war, and deeply reproaches itself.” (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan webpage, www.mofa.go.jp).

The above-mentioned statement came to be perceived by the Chinese as the foundation of Sino-Japanese reconciliation. The Joint Declaration signed during the visit of the President Jiang Zemin to Japan in November 1998 included a confirmation that the Japanese side observes the content of the Joint Communiqué as well as the so called Murayama Statement¹². Furthermore the declaration included a passage stating that “squarely facing the past and correct understanding of history are the important foundations for further developing relations

¹²Statement delivered by PM Murayama Tomiichi on the 15th of August 1995. It included passage in which PM expressed “deep remorse” and “heartful apology” for the Japanese wartime aggression (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan webpage, www.mofa.go.jp).

between Japan and China” (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan webpage, www.mofa.go.jp)

The acceptance of the “correct” version of history by the Japanese side, namely its further acknowledgement of the historical grievances inflicted on Chinese people, is seen by the PRC as a crucial component of Sino-Japanese reconciliation. The fact that PM Koizumi paid homage to the Shrine hosting names of people, who were recognized as the class-A war criminals by the Tokyo Tribunal, were perceived by the Chinese government as undermining the foundations of Sino-Japanese relationship.

For Chinese, the manner in which Japan approaches the issue of paying homage to *Yasukuni* is “the touchstone” of the Japanese government's attitude to Japan's history of aggression (Vice foreign minister Wang Yi expound China's solemn position on *Yasukuni* Shrine; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC webpage, www.fmprc.gov.cn). China did not change its view on the prime ministerial visits to the Shrine, despite Koizumi's repetitive reassurances that his actions did not aim towards glorifying Japan's wartime past.

Guo underlined that for the Chinese, the history issue is a “matter of principles”. He also ascertained that Koizumi's leadership could hinder Japan's efforts to become a “normal country”. According to him, Japan cannot de-link the history issue from her trials to acquire the status of a “normal power” (interview).

4.2 The PRC stance on Japan's efforts to become a “normal country”

Both Liao (2006) and Wan (2006) write that most Chinese officials as well as a large number of scholars have a tendency to link Japan's refusal to “acknowledge” its past wrongdoings with Japanese ambitions to become a military and political power. According to Liao some of the politicians and scholars advance a theory that Japan's great power ambition may lead to a

revival of its past militarism (2006:194). It is claimed that since Japan has not squarely faced its wartime past, it is bound to repeat its mistakes in the future.

Similar opinion was voiced by Söderberg, who pointed out that the critics of Japan claim that Japan has not yet apologised and made up for the atrocities during the war. This needs to be done before Japan should be allowed to become a “normal” country. As long as Japan does not do that it should be seen as a morally inferior country and as such can not be trusted if it builds up its defence (interview).

There is of course a significant group of Japan specialists in China, who believe that Japan's efforts to become a military and political power is simply a natural reflection of the country's economic status. They oppose the claim that enhancing Japanese security policies will lead to the resurgence of militarism (Liao 2006:15). Nonetheless, as Wan argues, even they believe that China is being provoked by what is perceived as growing revisionist tendencies in Japanese politics (2006:112).

In late 2002, a new movement called “new thinking” toward Japan was started in China. The discussion was initiated by Ma Lincheng, an editor of the *People's Daily* and Shi Yinhong, a professor at the People's University of China. The focal points of their arguments were as following. Firstly, history should cease to be an issue in Sino-Japanese relations, since Japan had apologized for its past wrongdoings. Secondly, Japan's economic assistance in the form of Official Development Assistance should be appreciated accordingly. Thirdly, Japan's expanding role on the international arena should be welcomed. The “new thinking” drew a lot of popular criticism and the discussion was prohibited (Gries 2005a:838-840, Kokubun 2006:30).

Despite the existence of a plurality of views on the “normal country” advocacy in Japan and a certain degree of discussion in China, it seems that the dominant outlook among the Chinese

policy-makers assumes the following. The Japanese inability to come to terms with its wartime past is the main cause for the Japan's growing political and security assertiveness towards its neighbours (Wan 2006:258).

4.3 The consequences of the prime ministerial visits to the *Yasukuni* Shrine

As expected, Koizumi's repetitive visits to the Shrine invited strong criticism from the side of Chinese government. The consequences of Koizumi's adamant stance on *Yasukuni* were more serious than a ritual filing of official protests on the hands of Japanese ambassador to China.

Throughout the tenure of PM Koizumi summit meetings between the leaders of the two countries did not take place. On the other hand however, even though China kept refusing Japan's requests for holding summit talks, Koizumi had the opportunity to meet with Chinese leaders at multilateral summits¹³. Furthermore, since Hu Jintao became the secretary general of the CCP, he did not put so much emphasise on the history issue as his predecessor, Jiang Zemin. The new leader of the CCP also undertook efforts to organize mutual visits of other high state officials (Rose 2005:115-117, Wan 2006:250).

Thus, it is possible to argue that the steps undertaken by the PRC were sufficiently serious to demonstrate the depth of Chinese displeasure with Koizumi's actions. Nevertheless they did not have a negative impact on vital China-Japan bilateral interests.

Selden underlined that despite the high political tension surrounding the *Yasukuni* issue, “Koizumi did not pay a heavy price neither at home, not abroad”. The Chinese government refrained from punishing Japan. There were reports indicating that Japan might have lost some contracts connected with building the Shanghai-Beijing bullet train. Nonetheless in overall terms Sino-Japanese economic co-operation did not suffer (interview).

¹³The Asia-Europe summit in Copenhagen (September 2002); the APEC summit in Mexico (October 2002); the ASEAN-Plus-Three summit in Bali (October 2003); the APEC summit in Chile (November 2004); the ASEAN Plus Three summit, Japan-ASEAN summit, East Asia summit in Kuala Lumpur (December 2005).

One of the most worrisome consequences of Koizumi's administration's approach to Japan's wartime past, was the growth of anti-Japanese mood among Chinese people. The wave of anti-Japanese sentiments dates back to the summer 2003, when the Internet nationalism started to flourish in China. The number of anti-Japanese web pages grew rapidly heralding the eve of national debate on China's Japan policy (Gries 2005b:106).

Koizumi's visit to *Yasukuni* in 2004 led to moving the protests from the realm of cyberspace to the streets. The demonstrations took place in Beijing and Shanghai (Wan 2006:253). Nonetheless the most violent protests were yet to come. They were triggered by the news that a revisionist history textbook, whitewashing Japan's wartime past¹⁴, passed the screening of the Japanese Ministry of Education.

In April 2005 the protests were organized in Canton, Shenzhen, Beijing and Shanghai. They lasted for three weekends and the number of people involved in those protests was tens of thousands. The demonstrators vandalized property belonging to Japanese nationals and Japanese diplomatic missions. The posters prepared by the participants reflected a variety of grievances, such as opposition to Japanese imperialism and history textbooks as well as postulates of boycotting Japanese goods and denying Japan the UNSC seat. The protesters also displayed a number of insulting images of Koizumi (*People' Daily* On-line, 10th of April 2005 and 13th of April 2005; Gries 2005b:105).

The recent rise of anti-Japanese sentiments stems partly from the Chinese government propaganda, yet according to Gries, it “should not be reduced to the elite instrumentality”. He underlines that the importance of genuine emotions in Sino-Japanese relations should not be neglected (2005b:105).

¹⁴It refers to the events that took place in *Nanjing* as mere “incident” and suggests that Japan's actions during WW II were motivated by “self-preservation”(BBC News, 13th of April, 2005).

Iwanaga Kazuki pointed out that Chinese people are to a significant degree history conscious. The negative perception of Koizumi's visits to *Yasukuni* was also amplified by the intense pride characteristics of Chinese people (interview). In other words, Koizumi's behaviour might have been treated as a challenge to the Chinese nation. According to Guo the visits to the Shrine were perceived as deliberately provocative (interview).

Referring to the upsurge of anti-Japanese sentiments in China, Christensen agreed that this tendency is perpetuated by Japanese handling of the history issue, yet he also indicated that the conflict runs much deeper. In his opinion the animosity towards Japan has grown into a whole generation of Chinese. In other words, the conflict is no longer about history only (interview).

The Chinese authorities did not orchestrate the anti-Japanese demonstrations, but they did tolerate them, hoping that the public anger could be utilised to exert pressure on Japan (Wan 2006:133). On the other hand however, the growth of popular anti-Japanese sentiments has become a serious constraint in China's Japan policy. In the face of the collapse of communist ideology, the CCP is increasingly dependant on its nationalist credentials to rule. According to Thomas Christensen, since the CCP is no longer communist, it has to be even more Chinese (Christensen in Gries 2005b:112).

Koizumi's refusal to acknowledge the Chinese objections towards his stance on the *Yasukuni* issue and the upsurge of anti-Japanese sentiments in China led to a situation in which the PRC refused to accommodate Japanese interest to a certain extent. The prime ministerial assertiveness brought with itself diplomatic costs, such as the Chinese opposition to Japan's bid for a permanent seat in the UN Security Council.

Acquiring the permanent seat in the UNSC was one of the most important aims of Japanese diplomacy during Koizumi's tenure. Becoming a permanent member of the UNSC would

greatly enhance Japan's international profile. Furthermore Iwanaga stresses the legitimizing functions of the UN. According to him, because of its wartime past, Japan suffers from the “legitimacy deficit” overseas, which may be overcome by using the “good name of the UN”. (Iwanaga 1998:34).

On the 13th of April 2005 Chinese PM, Wen Jibao, announced that China will oppose the Japanese bid to gain the permanent seat in the UNSC and used Japan's inability to come to terms with its wartime past as the justification for the PRC's decision. He stated that “Only a country that respects history, takes responsibility for the past, and wins over the trust of the people of Asia and the world at large can take greater responsibilities in the international community” (*People's Daily Online*, 13th of April 2005).

Later in June, the Chinese ambassador to the UN said that China would cast a “no” vote if the so called Group of Four (Japan, Germany, Brazil and India) forced the UN Assembly to vote on its resolution to increase the number of the UNSC members. China's opposition contributed to the subsequent failure of the Group's project in August 2005 (Wan 2006:126,137).

4.4 Main findings of the chapter

In the presented chapter it was shown that for China, Japan's recognition of the “correct” version of history is the foundation of Sino-Japanese reconciliation. The visits of Japanese PM to the *Yasukuni* Shrine, were seen as undermining the basis of the bilateral relationship. The action, which according to Koizumi was natural and normal for a Japanese national, appeared to be a revisionist aberration in the eyes of the Chinese government and Chinese people.

Furthermore, Chinese authorities tend to link what they see as a failure of Japan to deal with her wartime past with Japanese efforts to become a “normal country”. The major question

seems to be what kind of a “normal country” Japan will become, if she continues to avoid accepting the responsibility for the Asia Pacific War.

Although during Koizumi's tenure both countries managed to uphold a working relationship, the latter was in its worst shape since 1972. The message was easy to read. If Japan's effort's to become a “normal country” involve redefining the existing understanding of wartime past between the two countries, this kind of “normality” will not be accepted by China.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The aim of the thesis was to explore how the problems stemming from the unsettled wartime past between the PRC and Japan influence the latter's efforts to become a “normal country”. The theoretical approach, which was applied in the study utilised the constructivist assumptions concerning the change of the state's identity. The current debates surrounding the “normal country” advocacy in Japan and abroad are in fact discussions on the changing identity of the state from a pacifist power to a country that can officially poses military forces and use them.

In the Introduction it was stated that the re-examination of the core beliefs and values on which a certain national identity is built, is a complicated affair. It always brings with itself conflicts between different actors competing to establish their understanding as the dominant one for the whole society. In case of Japan, the will of the conservative policy-makers from the ruling LDP to re-establish Japan as a “normal country” clashes with the pacifist attitudes of Japanese society. In the eyes of the conservative politicians, the Japanese people lack the sense of national consciousness. Fostering more patriotic attitudes among the general public would lead to the demise of pacifism, what in turn would facilitate Japan's transition to “normality”. Nonetheless the trials to achieve the above-mentioned aim has been coupled with the revisionist references to the Japanese wartime past.

As it was mentioned earlier in the text, the creation of historical memory is a crucial component of identity politics. That process is a highly politicized action. In Japan, moving beyond the legacy of wartime past and restoring the ability of feeling proud to be Japanese has stood high on the LDP's political agenda. Yet, re-establishing the sense of national pride has involved, among other issues, using a tool that is strongly rooted in Japan's militarist past – the *Yasukuni* Shrine, which hosts the spirits of Japanese war dead. The Shrine up until this point is the most important symbol of the ultimate sacrifice for the homeland.

It has been argued that Koizumi's visits to *Yasukuni* and his constant expressions of respect towards the war dead could be seen as a mean of encouraging state-centred patriotism among the Japanese public opinion. It is less clear however, whether he could be seen as a historical revisionist. Officially Koizumi did not adhere to the revisionist perspective on the Asia Pacific War. He also denied allegations that he had been going to *Yasukuni* in order to pay respect to the Class A war criminals. Koizumi himself strongly underlined his commitment to peace and pledged that Japan will never again resort to aggressive war. Nevertheless his defiant attitude hurt the feelings of former victims of Japanese aggression.

In the introductory part of the thesis it is written that the state displays its identity both in the domestic, as well as international spheres. Furthermore it is also argued that the historical views displayed in the official sphere need to be recognised as legitimate and acceptable by the international community. These two facts occurred to be especially relevant for the analysis of the impact of the domestic aspects of re-establishing Japan as “normal country” on the state's relations with its neighbours.

The emerging identity of Japan as a “normal state” has influenced the shape and conduct of the country's foreign policy, including the relations with China. As mentioned above, Japan's efforts to play a greater role on the international scene, both politically and militarily, are connected with a diminishing willingness to apologize for the wartime past. Under such

circumstances, China's insistence on further acknowledging by Japan the pain inflicted on Chinese people leads to a clash of interests. In China's opinion, Japan still has not come to terms with its wartime past. Koizumi's adamant attitude on the *Yasukuni* issue was but another proof to support such view.

The manner in which Koizumi approached the *Yasukuni* issue led to alienating the country from its closest neighbour and disrupting arguably the most important relationship in East Asia. Furthermore it contributed greatly to the rise of stronger anti-Japanese sentiments among Chinese public opinion. Judging after the consequences of Koizumi's actions, it is possible to ascertain that neither the Chinese government, nor Chinese people will accept Japan's ambitions to become a "normal country", if such process includes what is perceived as a distortion of history. For Japan proceeding further along this path may only exacerbate the existing conflicts between two countries. The "normality" that encourages hostilities and turns the closest neighbours into enemies is dangerous.

On the other hand however, Koizumi's policies also revitalised the discussion about Japan's wartime aggression and started a new period of "soul searching" among the Japanese. Perhaps this will contribute to renewal of the efforts to achieve a true reconciliation with Japan's wartime past.

The presented study aimed at providing the reader with a better understanding of the subject under discussion, yet many interesting angles of the presented research problem were omitted for the sake of the study's feasibility. Further research concerning for e.g. the role of the U.S factor in Japan's transition to "normality" or the Japanese citizens' attitudes towards the conservatives' campaign to enhance state-centred patriotism would make a valuable contribution to the existing discussion.

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