

# The dream of a unipolar world Recalling my years at Waseda University's Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies

Kurt W. Radtke<sup>†</sup>

## *Grappling with “globalization” in East Asia*

I am deeply grateful that I was given the opportunity to serve the Graduate School of Asia-Pacific Studies of Waseda University as Professor for Chinese and Japanese Studies from 1998 to 2006. In this contribution I should like to present a brief summary of my activities, by first providing an overview of my approach towards “globalization”, followed by a list of publications that appeared in this period.

I chose “Politics and Society in East Asia in the age of globalization” as the general theme for my teaching and research. My major focus was on factors influencing domestic and international stability, the role of elites and the exercise of power in shaping a new future. The nineteenth and twentieth century had seen numerous attempts to construct new polities and a new international order designed at the drawing board, attempts that frequently ended in disaster or war. It soon became clear that I was in need of using “story lines” as a starting point to grasp change in its historical context. I used a narrowly defined concept of identity (see below) to gain insights into the reasons why the drawing board approach to modernization had to fail. Nineteenth century Europe and its regional system of international relations among sovereign states became the starting point for main stream theories. At the start of the twenty-first century global order is still hierarchical, but the patterns of hierarchy, actors, their identity, and the exercise of power have changed. I used the analogy of the franchise system in business to approach the study of the contemporary international system. The breakdown of revolutionary order in China and the Soviet Union provides ample examples for the longevity of indigenous social and political structures. On the surface post-1952 Japan reinvented itself as a nation imbued with “Western” values only to discover half a century on that the structure of Japan’s identity still differs significantly.

## *The aftermath of the Cold War—alignment, and renewed differentiation*

The collapse of the Soviet Union ushered in a new period in global history. The twentieth century was characterized not only by rivalry among old and new nation states, but also by competition among three ideologies that had originated in Europe: capitalism, communism (or socialism), and fascism. State fascism died in 1945, and dreams of communist inspired socialism barely survived the demise of the Soviet Union. Capitalism was the victor, most powerfully represented by the lone global superpower,

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<sup>†</sup> 前 早稲田大学大学院アジア太平洋研究科教授

the United States of America. The victory seemed to prove that “capitalism” as embodied in models derived from the United States was more than just an efficient tool for economic welfare. Coupled with democracy as its leading ideology it promised a new world of justice and morality for all, irrespective of their native religious, civilizational and cultural traditions. Change is the result of the exercise of power—economic, political, military and “soft power”. Power is however not the exclusive preserve of the rich and “powerful”. Military power cannot easily or directly be translated into long-lasting power in other areas. The allied occupation of Germany succeeded by accepting that military power by itself could not achieve a democratic transformation.

Having witnessed the momentous changes occurring in Europe between 1989 and 1991 I wondered what these changes entailed for the future of East Asia, and East Asia’s relations with Eurasia and the United States. China, India, Russia, Indonesia, Japan, Nigeria, Brazil, and states deeply influenced by Islam as both a religion and a civilization, together constitute the majority of the global population. Their traditions set them apart from the idea of the “West” as represented by governments of the European Union and the US. China, Japan, Russia, India amongst others reviewed their political, economic and security strategies in particular in the period between 1994 and 1997. Japan strengthened its cooperation with the United States at many levels. In 1997 Japan unveiled its new Eurasian strategy, and endeavoured to increase regional cooperation in (East) Asia, an initiative given some urgency by the economic crises that commenced in the second part of that year. Chinese reform policies were essential in jumpstarting China’s economy to become a truly global player, taking an active part in a host of international organizations. The economic crises that started in 1997 reminded us that the transition to a “new world” would not occur smoothly. Iraq, North Korea, Iran; 11 September 2001, Afghanistan and Saddam Hussein, and the GWOT (the Global War on Terror) became key words of a new age, with a renewed struggle between ideals defended by the “West” and its enemies. This new “Cold War” differed considerably from the age of the struggle between “Socialism” and the “West” during the Cold War. Widespread support for the War on Terror suggested a global alignment, a growing consensus on visions for a future global order. On closer examination it appeared that this was not necessarily the case in areas that reach from Eurasia and the Greater Middle East to Africa and South America. The ability of North Korea and Iran to withstand enormous international pressures, and the disastrous and tragic sequence of events in Iraq are reminders that “power” - be it military and economic power, or the power of religion, ideas and ideologies - cannot easily be calculated to shape the future. As in the past states and individuals are mostly unwilling to correct, or change deep-seated convictions even when disproved by harsh realities. Words (concepts, ideas) produce actions, and actions change perceptions of realities, but this process remains difficult to analyze.

### ***United under the banner of “market democracy”?***

The keywords of our day such as “market democracy” are less transparent than suggested. “Market” is an institution mediating the production and consumption of goods in which “economic power” is a major driving force. “Democracy” with its emphasis on equal voting rights is an institution that promises access to the distribution

The dream of a unipolar world Recalling my years at Waseda University's Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies of "political" goods irrespective of "economic" power. Over the past four decades or societies of many countries have seen a reduction in the power of democratic politics to influence "economic" decision making: increasing independence of Central Banks from direct control or interference of governments, and "privatization" as a pervasive phenomenon in all spheres of our lives point to deep changes and shifting boundaries between "politics" and the "economy". This is reflected in shifts in academic discourse, where thinking along lines of "economic" conceptualization, and economic models are a direct reflection of changes in the "real" world. Thinking about globalization thus requires reflection on the social context of academic theories, a realization that academic discourse is a part of our assumed identities, rather than an objective means to transcend subjective prejudice. Visions of "identity", including ideological convictions, are easily confused with "truth", engendering a missionary zeal to remake the world into ONE world consistent with ideology. Any catalogue of ideological, religious and legal norms is insufficient to provide clear and unambiguous guidelines to action. To be operative fixed norms require complex institutions and elite leadership. Imams, rabbis, Confucian scholarship and legal exegesis share similar tasks of reinterpreting fixed canons. The Japanese Legal Office of the Cabinet 内閣法制局 has only a very small staff, but is instrumental in producing a slow, but steadily changing interpretation of the Japanese constitution. Any drastic reinterpretation might easily disrupt the fiction of consistency, and thus undermine the stable identities constitutions seek to protect.

Fixed world views—another manifestation of subjective identity—are also a major cause of intelligence failures and a cause for war. The Opium War and its aftermath, Ishiwara Kanji's religiously inspired visions of a "final war" between Japan and the United States, and Maoist dreams about remaking (Chinese) mankind were rooted in visions of identity and dreams of creating one world, a consequence of an autistic identity that refused to acknowledge that visions of the self are in perpetual need of adjustment to reality. Ideas about a final showdown between the US and China as a future super power recall not only similar ideas prevalent in pre-war Japan, they are also an echo of the deep impact of Darwinian ideas about the struggle for (national) survival in Asia.

### ***There is power pushing for change, and power to resist change***

The tensions between idealized identity and reality continue in the age of a so-called uni-polar world. The demise of the Soviet Union strengthened convictions that market democracy as an ideology was proven right by the collapse of its main opponent, apparently obviating the need to test ideology and its consequences for the real world. As Hans Maull observed:

"A balance-of-power approach to reality may, in fact, create a balance-of-power world. Even if actors preferred qualitatively different foreign policy approaches, they may feel forced to conform. Balance-of-power politics thus may tend to homogenise international relations in dangerous ways."<sup>1</sup>

No single scholastic approach suffices to produce "truth" and new realities. History, ideologies, religion, culture, but also the arts as evinced in advertising and on internet

need to be taken into account. Dreams about reshaping the present must be placed in a historical context. The power to cause change, and resistance to change are deeply influenced by perceptions of all actors best analyzed in terms of “identity”. I concluded that “identity”, if rigorously defined, might be one good starting point for developing tools appropriate for analyzing “power” in the age of globalization. The aim is much more modest than the creation of a new theory of globalization. More than ever “power” cannot be grasped by adopting a mono-disciplinary approach, and globalization demands a re-emphasis on the role of elites and mass society in producing change, or resistance to change.

### ***Deja vu: power and hierarchy as keywords in deciphering global order***

The rapid expansion of regional and global economic cooperation suggests increasing horizontal linkages spanning the globe. At the same time, the expansion of military power of the US, and the attempt to extend its system of military alliances and security cooperation far beyond the scope seen during the Cold War, are witness to the strengthening of the hierarchical character of the international order.

The exercise of power in the modern world is unthinkable without all-pervasive institutionalization, both at the level of formal government, but also in all areas of human activities not directly controlled by government. Institutions are much more than simple providers of “services”. In order to function effectively institutions need their own stable “philosophies”, or identities, as well as flexible leadership. Elites, like any human being, are subject to errors and failures to obey common norms. Leadership is required to produce flexible interpretations, and at times the will and power to ignore and contradict institutionalized norms. The limits of power can also be measured by gauging the ability to change “identities” over the long term.

“Globalization” has resulted in the need for instant access to information. The increasing complexities of our world prevent any particular individual, but also collective decision making institutions such as parliaments, from the kind of rapid decision making required ever more frequently. Decisions on exchange rates, stock markets, the ever increasing risks in global markets demand decisions to be taken within minutes, if not seconds.<sup>2</sup> The same applies to the world of military (in)security, exemplified in challenges to effective deterrence, the functioning of an anti-missile shield, and problems of proliferation. Issues of nuclear armament and proliferation in North Korea and Iran, both highly relevant to East Asia, have a structural character and cannot be conclusively solved by merely focusing on the actions of these two governments. The need for rapid decision making increases the need to give leaders greater discretion, reduces possibilities for external supervision, and increases the potential of misuse of power by elites. “Corruption” is only one example for the abuse of discretionary power, but demonstrates the tensions between efficient decision making and the need to maintain morality and justice, core values of our democratic identity. Moral identity remains essential, and does constitute a brake on the arbitrary (mis)use of power.

### ***Forming and educating global elites***

The efficient exercise of power requires that elites need to be infused with a common “identity”. The history of the Chinese imperial bureaucracy spans more than

two millennia. It enabled the Chinese empire to produce homogenous elites that originated from all parts of the huge region of the Chinese subcontinent, irrespective of their local cultural tradition, language, or religion. The Chinese empire relied on a numerically fairly small number of elites that were systematically trained and socialised as supra-regional elites ("Confucianism", "examination system") to constitute an epistemic community engaged in the management of local and regional affairs. The imperial government advocated the spread of a universally accepted form of governance, the use of a common language and culture among the elite, and maintained the right to interfere in local (military) disturbances. China's population was often far from docile - until the present day, Chinese peasants (老百姓) are famous for their "stubbornness". Modern Chinese governments are just as concerned about controlling the masses as were governments in the past, and that applies in particular to controlling secret societies and some religious organisations as well (法輪功). The Chinese empire did not impose one national language or uniform culture on the citizens of the empire, and adopted different forms of taxation according to the economic structure of regions. It accepted the widespread use of self-government both in the economy (會館, frequently mistranslated as "guilds"), moral education (家訓 "clan rules") and even parts of the criminal law. In this sense, the organisation of the Chinese empire presents an early paradigm for "globalisation". Needless to add, the pre-modern age provided only relatively limited means to impose centralised political rule by force.

The mechanism by the Tokugawa central "military" government (the bakufu 幕府) may be interpreted as a precursor for systems of control over weapons of mass destruction in the hands of local rulers (guns, swords), so characteristic of the globalizing world that seeks to prevent "rogue" states and groups of "terrorists" from threatening universal order. As recent research has demonstrated, the power of the central government and domain (藩) rulers was much more circumscribed by active or passive resistance at the local level than pretentious documents issued by ruling elites suggested. History provides numerous lessons for those who assume that "power" is sufficient to change and transform societies by sheer force.

It is not only the different size, but also factors such as the completely different pattern of relationship between local inhabitants and elites towards central governments shape qualitatively different structures of "national" identity in Japan and China. To impose modern visions of "national" Japanese or Chinese (Han 漢民族) identity on the premodern age is committing a serious anachronism.

### ***Identity change in the age of globalization***

During the Cold War the concept of the "Free World" involved a life and death struggle that went far beyond a "classic" power struggle. Having grown up in West Germany I still remember the slogan "rather dead than red". Conquest by Communism might not only result in physical death, but lead to something worse: the loss of one's moral identity. For religious believers it threatened hell to those succumbing to atheism, but resistance held up the possibility of eternal life. This presented a classical example how "identity" may become a potent force for resistance to external enemies and domestic change. Early discussions that eventually resulted in the establishment of NATO it was clear that NATO was set up not only as a military alliance or to defend the

security of member states, it was also entrusted with working towards a common moral, political and economic identity among member states. In actual life the front lines of the Cold War were less clear than suggested by images of a fight between good and evil. NATO operated in Europe and the Atlantic area, but most allies of the US in Asia—with the notable exception of Japan—hardly qualified as democracies. It is striking that alliance systems in Asia did not envisage the creation of common identities, and the cooperation of authoritarian or elected governments to explore possibilities in that direction. The benchmark criterion was the willingness of governments to oppose communism, anticipating the more recent US concept of “alliance of the willing” that bears so much similarity to communist inspired “United Front” tactics.<sup>3</sup>

The split between the Soviet Union and China went far beyond ideological hair splitting or irreconcilable national interests. During its revolutionary phase the PRC made it quite clear that it expected its socialist identity to become the model for a new world order whose pillars would be the power of the poor of the world (“the Third World”), epitomized by dreams of an axis Beijing-Jakarta in the early sixties, and a strategy of encircling the industrialized world and choking off the supply of essential raw materials. By 1993 the PRC became a net importer of oil, and increasingly dependent on uninterrupted economic exchange for the first time in China’s entire history. This has had a huge impact on China’s political and security identity with consequences that go far beyond a mere increase in power relative to its neighbors and the US.

Japan recovered its formal sovereignty in 1952, and for the next three decades cooperated with the United States closely on issues that ranged from the Korean War to the Vietnam War. During this period Japan maintained a political, economic and security identity that was explicitly different from that of the US. Prime Ministers like Yoshida Shigeru and Ikeda were not in favor of permanent reliance on foreign military power, and the liberal Ishibashi Tanzan stressed the importance of increasing Japan’s independence in defense as a corollary to self-determination and a sovereign, democratic identity. Such opinions were placed squarely within an image of a “pacifist” Japan, and its identity was enshrined in its peace constitution, in particular Article Nine. As I set out in a recent publication<sup>4</sup> developments in the seventies resulted in a basic change of Japan’s political discourse, culminating in the announcement of Japan’s “Comprehensive Security” concept (総合安全保障). Its basic ingredients originated from discussions very similar to thinking of the Trilateral Commission. The “Comprehensive Security” concept itself has been much maligned, both within Japan and the United States, but it was instrumental in changing basic parameters of Japan’s discourse which from the early eighties on moved much closer to that of the United States. Japan was increasingly described as a “member of the West”. This change of words implied much more than a mere increase of a (still limited) cooperation at the level of security. This trend continued in the nineties, and reached new heights during the Koizumi era when shibboleths such as “privatization” became a mainstay of the “Koizumi reforms”. A closer examination of the privatization processes in Japan and China and their political consequences demonstrates, however, that the interpretation of this fundamental concept continues to differ greatly in Washington, Tokyo and Beijing. Globalization does not automatically bring about a coalescence of the discursive identity in different parts

The dream of a unipolar world Recalling my years at Waseda University's Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies of the world. Not only do different parts of the globe react different to changes in the real world, these changes are also likely to affect the interaction of different sets of identity at the local level, and within the individual as well.

### ***Changes to the international order***

The rather complex relationships of Asia's major countries with the leaders of the Cold War confrontation, the Soviet Union and the US indicates basic differences between the hierarchical power structure that determined the international order within the NATO and Warsaw Pact alliances, and patterns of power hierarchy and international order in East Asia and its wider neighborhood (South and Central Asia).<sup>5</sup> From the age of nineteenth century European and US imperialism through the life and death struggle of the Cold War, the globe seemed to be governed by a Darwinian struggle for survival. Earlier visions of an international order centered on the study of relations among more or less sovereign governments pursuing their respective domestic and national interests. This order gave birth to mainstream theories about international (political) relations (IPR).

The two invasions of Iraq, the Balkan wars of the nineties, the war in Afghanistan, and the Global War on Terror (GWOT) are reminders that military power exercised by governments of states remains one of the most important ingredients in the international order. It also leaves deep imprints on the domestic and international political and economic order. The exercise of military power, and the repercussions caused by them deeply affect the identity of the (super) powers themselves. The GWOT has lasting impacts not only in the field of international relations, it has brought changes to domestic and international financial markets and the banking system, and raised the issue of the defense of civil liberty rights in democracies not only in the US but also among EU member states. As a result of government policies Great Britain now ranks low in the EU with regard to the protection of privacy and civil liberties. The erosion of fictions of national sovereignty is not merely a consequence of peaceful transnational economic transactions. The proposed EU constitution makes it compulsory for member states to follow "market economics", thus limiting the freedom of choice of political parties and the electorate.

Despite numerous discussions on regional cooperation in (South) East Asia, and among countries of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), Asia has so far been unwilling, if not unable, to embark on regionalism European style. Different from Europe, countries with a history of colonisation —and that includes the United States(!) — are clearly averse to conceding part of their sovereignty, a cornerstone and basis of a newly conceived national identity. This partially explains the fact that building a NATO-like structure in Asia seems virtually impossible.

### **The international order conceived in terms of a franchise system**

Mainstream IPR tends to associate globalization with a general erosion of the power of the state, in particular its "sovereignty". Sovereignty is not only difficult to define in legal terms—vide changes from the nineteenth definition from the nineteenth to the twenty-first centuries that have given rise to divergent definitions used in international law. "Cultural sovereignty" used to be an important part of sovereignty in the nine-

teenth century, but is no longer so. Sovereignty is a building block of identity both in the formal and informal sense, but key concepts of US-led globalization have accelerated change in other states in a manner reminiscent of the franchise system known from the business world. The early, unforced adoption of principles of a market economy by Chinese leaders in the eighties was the first step in remolding the domestic order with huge consequences for the international system as well. The adoption of new forms of economic management may be compared to the owner of a shop who decides to join the crowd of a franchise chain without giving up personal ownership.

A franchise enterprise is likely to bind the franchise takers into a lasting relationship with franchise headquarters, often through practices highly questionable under anti-monopoly or consumer protection laws. The structure of the international order since World War II, dominated by alliance systems, may be likened to the rivalry among two franchise enterprises: the Soviet one, and the project later to be known as market democracy led by the United States. Both leaders endeavoured to spread their own domestic order to their alliance partners. It is easy to see that the reality of governance in Poland and Hungary followed lines fairly different from the Soviet Russian model, nor did the members of the EU whose legal system was rooted mainly in French traditions (Great Britain being the lone exception) adopt the Anglo-Saxon system of law. The Soviet Union and the US considered themselves guardians of two different collective identities, and selectively handed out (economic) rewards and punishment for members of their alliance systems in the pursuit of a more coherent identity. The impact of global forms of governance pushed by international institutions such as the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund on countries as different as China and South Africa extends far beyond the economic realm, and touches on core elements of national identity such as models for the reform of education systems, including the privatization of universities and schools. We may liken the export of forms of organization in the political, cultural, social and economic sphere to the spread of a network of *franchise enterprises*, not “owned” by company headquarters, but bound to it in a complex set of relationships. Debates on particular policy issues (“*discourse*”) tend to be structured by the pattern of the franchise headquarters irrespective of specific local conditions. Discursive politics (“spin doctors”), and psychological warfare have grown more important than ever, and have become more effective in the age of the internet—only partially offset by the active participation of single individuals.

Although this system exercises an important role in shaping and maintaining a stable international order, stability still needs to be underwritten by the use, or the threat of use of military power.

### ***The future role of alliances in the international order***

The inability of Asia to evolve regional alliance systems along European/Atlantic lines was partially caused by Asia’s different geopolitical texture, the evolution of Japan’s maritime based empire that attempted to control the East Asian continent as well, and the complex, still continuing evolution of nation states in Asia that include giants such as China, India, Russia and Indonesia, but also relative dwarfs such as Mongolia, Singapore, and newly independent states such as Kirghizstan. In its early phase the Cold War seemed to extend unchanged to Asia, where it split countries like



Korea, China and Vietnam into territories rule by pro- and anti-communist governments. It soon became apparent that no Asian nation followed Soviet leadership the way members of the Warsaw Pact were forced to do. Despite sharing an anti-communist identity, governments on Taiwan, in South Korea, Japan and beyond in the Philippines and Indonesia were unwilling to join a common, US-led treaty organization. In addition to the impact of "history", and specific military and economic issues, it was deep structural differences of identity that prevented the establishment of a NATO-like organization in Asia. Forms of defence co-operation such as TMD, NMD or AMD<sup>1</sup> increase the leverage of the US over its military partners in Asia. More recently efforts are being made to increase defence cooperation between NATO, Japan and Australia as revealed by the US President.<sup>6</sup> Such efforts rather underline the continuing difficulties to establish more formal cooperation even in the face of the Korean and Middle Eastern crises. China has repeatedly refused to answer to requests by one or the other member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization to assist in building a quasi-alliance system. The Six Party Talks on North Korea also aim at increasing China's participation and role in a more formalized system for the security of Asia. The future of the Korean peninsula remains uncertain, but it is hard to conceive a scenario in which Korea—divided or united—would join with any of its neighbours in a formal alliance system.

### ***Beyond the age of US and Europe-centred building of theory***

The deep structure of the international order in Asia is not susceptible to concepts of international relations theory derived from Europe and the Atlantic world without major adaptations. I suggest that concepts rooted in an approach towards "identity" are a suitable tool to view the power structures of Asia in a more comprehensive way. To do so requires a massive cooperation of scholars from Asia. Historians need to be prepared to abandon Euro-, or Western-centred approaches towards world history. It is unlikely that the relatively small populations of the US and major EU members will determine the course of world history single-handedly. Theories of international (security and political) order will have to show that they are productive in developing scenarios for East Asia, the Eurasian Continent, the Greater Middle East, and other parts of the world. This will require a major change of the identities of these academic disciplines.

Theoretical approaches towards "balance of power" need to focus more on factors limiting the efficacy of the exercise of military power; they also need to take greater account of the role of weak points, and the impact of anxieties among the leaders of militarily strong nations. Traditional Asian concepts of security include "chaos", a concept akin to the role of "anarchy", but usually place the focus on internal security rather than chaos as a concept of international order.<sup>7</sup> Following the impact of Darwinian concepts East Asian commentators heatedly debated the concept of "clash of civilization" more than a century before Samuel Huntington once more made the concept popular in the West.

The increasing global division of labour makes for deep asymmetries in the global economic and political order—at the same time, it increases interdependence and mutually shared vulnerabilities, best visible in the way financial currency markets link all major currencies. I advocated the concept Mutual Assured Instability (MAI) (inspired

by the MAD, Mutual Assured Destruction) as one factor working for increased systemic stability, deterring the use of financial/economic means for the destabilization of opponents or enemies. Last but not least, the function of (nuclear) deterrence so well known from the Cold War era has also undergone fundamental change affecting the cohesion of US-led alliance systems. There are deep doubts in the US and elsewhere whether North Korea, Pakistan, Iran and others might not consider suicidal attacks, thus rendering the logic of mutual assured destruction useless in the post-Cold War period. Any limitations to the credibility of the US (nuclear) umbrella is prone to cause calls for greater self-sufficiency of defence capabilities, and foster multipolarity - but it is unlikely that greater Japanese defence capabilities are reason for joy in Beijing, Pyongyang and elsewhere.

### **Storylines to trace globalization—franchise system, identity, non-constitutional actors**

Above I suggested the comparison of the international order to a franchise system. A second story line is “identity” to denote the peculiar interaction between words and deeds, possessing a characteristic pattern for institutions, organizations and individuals. Such story lines are presented as a heuristic device for developing questions that may contribute to the creation of hypotheses, and eventually allow us to build universally valid theories, in which the much larger Asian reality is no longer perceived as atypical, or exceptional from a theoretical point of view.

I employed “identity” in a more technical sense, and not in the popular sense of “self image”. I use the term to denote a construct for justifying alternatives and choices for future action. Once choices have been made and action implemented, “identity” is a means to justify one’s actions in terms that make it appear as consistent as possible with the whole array of previous actions. “Identity” may figure in the form of an inner monologue or dialogue, for internal use of individuals, or groups (organizations, institutions). It may also be used to legitimize choices and actions to outsiders. The verbal rationalization adopted may differ significantly from hidden, or unconscious motives and intentions. Individuals and groups tend to present the positive consequences of their actions as if they were intended, and to disown unfavorable consequences.

It follows that the consequences of actions may have a strong bearing on the structure of identity. Defeat in war in particular, or upheavals such as the Cultural Revolution in China, are examples of events with deep reverberations in the identity discourse that may last decades.

One reason for adopting this definition was to avoid the popular, but superficial and often highly misleading description of identity as a more or less fixed canon of abstract principles and norms inspiring group behavior. We notice this usage in pairs of concepts such as “Asian” or “Western”, “catholic” versus “protestant”, “Sunni” versus “Shiite”. Most popular ethic systems make extensive use of stories - often linked to icons such as saints - that provide the opportunity for flexible interpretation that is needed to translate rigid dogma into guidelines in a complex, and self-contradictory environment. We encounter such simplistic usage in terms like Maoist, Stalinist, or fascist terms lacking the required precision.<sup>8</sup>

The definition of identity given above also takes into account the innate tension

The dream of a unipolar world Recalling my years at Waseda University's Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies between moral values and political expediency, "might" versus "right", or the tension between "Western" democracy and the reality of European history—the twentieth century in particular saw most of Europe ruled by one or the other dictatorial government for extended periods, often lasting decades.

I should like to suggest an additional story line that involves the division of society into institutions and organizations that formally constitute large units such as states, replete with claims of an explicit, and fairly constant identity, and other institutions not provided for in formal constitutions. An example might be Japan's "peace constitution" that for a time cemented Japan's self-image as a "pacifist" nation. Such "constitutional" identities include the potential for gradual evolution and change. The transition of Japan's security relationship with the United States towards a full fledged military alliance entails much more than a convenient re-interpretation of a distant constitution: it has already changed the discourse used to describe Japan's national identity both at home and abroad.

There is a wide variety of forces working towards such change: they include political parties and sections of "civil society", a term derived from an "ideal type" description of nineteenth century West European society, and further other forces in society not subsumed by formal organs of the state. For want of a better term I suggest the term "non-constitutional" institutions, thus including political parties whose role lacks definition in most constitutions. These days "civil society" usually refers to an institutionalized citizenry, gathered in organizations such as NGOs, rather than an amorphous mass of "citizens".

### ***The State, the armed forces and civil society: re-enter the elites of the global age***

We are now ready to ask questions concerning the role of civil society and other non-constitutional institutions, including political, economic and security elites, in shaping and transforming the identity of polity and the economy both at the informal, but also the formal level, as expressed in the change of written constitution, an issue Japan faces in the near future. Non-constitutional forces are not limited to domestic actors, but include foreign actors, as suggested by the term "franchise order".

The disasters caused by the Soviet and US invasion of Afghanistan, and the havoc wrought in Iraq is rooted in serious shortcomings of intelligence.<sup>9</sup> More importantly, it demonstrates much more that *military power is good at deconstructing, but not well at reconstructing*. Societies and identities cannot easily be rebuilt on the drawing board. A major reason for this shortcoming is ignorance about the way military force can be used to change identities and impose new types of governance to create a stable order. The failure of Mao Zedong's attempt to rewrite the identity of all Chinese in his image during the Cultural Revolution, or Soviet dreams of creating a "Soviet man" transcending former identities belong to the same category. The acceptance or outright rejection of identities pushed by elites can make, or break stable societies, and have long-lasting international repercussions. Japan's invasions of its neighbors, resulting in the occupation of Korea and Taiwan, went far beyond the exploitation for narrowly defined economic or security interests. Japan also attempted to ruthlessly stamp out Korean identity by imposing the of Japanese family names and force Koreans to attend Shinto rituals in support of the Japanese emperor. China's post-1949 revolutionary project

failed, both at home and at the international level. The Islamic world, Russia and some South American countries provide more recent evidence that globalization does not lead to a smooth synchronization of political and other identities despite globalization.

It was Japan's pre-war Foreign Minister Matsuoka who fully understood the difficulties of changing the identity of the ordinary Japanese. In a speech in 1940 he assured his public that Japan would eventually evolve into a Fascist state, but that this could not be achieved by force as in Germany.<sup>10</sup>

“Matsuoka talked along the following lines “for background” not (repeat not) for attribution. . . .

Three. In the battle between democracy and totalitarianism the latter adversary will without question win and will control the world. . . .

Four. Matsuoka said. . . . Not months but years will be needed to weld Japan into a totalitarian state, but Japanese totalitarianism will be unlike the European brand. It is contrary to the Japanese character to be coerced into adopting an idea. Concentration camps would be futile. The people would fight back. Fascism will develop in Japan through the people's will. It will come out of love for the Emperor but the people cannot be forced. It is because of the special system in Japan with the Emperor at the head that the Japanese state is better adapted than any other state to unify the nation in Fascism. . . .“

Five years later, Matsuoka's dreams were shattered. The history of rebuilding Japan's identity entered a new phase.

### ***Building a more predictable world?***

Academic theories, like ideologies and other guides for action, tend to promise the building of a predictable, rational world. Rational outcomes depend on a clear setting of goals and a choice of means for their implementation contingent on a well disciplined institutional system. No system, however clever designed, is able to guarantee such an outcome—just like computer models depend on the input, the input usually supplied by elites plays a decisive role. Systems may be designed to limit the arbitrariness of inputs, or put brakes on “irrational” inputs. The greater the complexity of our civilizations the greater the difficulty for any elite to process available information to produce rational outcomes. It is deeply worrying that the ensuing difficulties of supervising elites and their decision-making has created opportunities for misuse and abuse greater than ever before. Democracy only has a future if it is created and supported at the grass roots level, by the citizens themselves.

### **Publications by Kurt W. Radtke 1998–200611**

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## Footnotes:

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The dream of a unipolar world Recalling my years at Waseda University's Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies

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- 11 This overview is limited to research formally published, and excludes other contributions such as lectures, conference papers and articles in newspapers.