

## Research Notes

# Interpretation of the Concept of *Central Asia* in Foreign Policy Texts of Japan: Theory and Practice

Ulugbek Azizov

*Uzbekistan State World Languages University*

Even though the importance of inseparability of facts from values has been theoretically and empirically asserted much in researching international relations, a large majority of International Relations (IR) scholars and experts still opt for materialist interpretation of facts, including concepts in IR. In its turn, this poses fundamental problems in understanding the belief sides of people involved in foreign policy-making practice, and causes misperceptions about real intentions of what has been said or done. A materialist interpretation of the concept of *Central Asia* in Japanese foreign policy practices is a clear example of this fundamental problem.

The paper takes a critical stance by employing post-structuralism in IR to interpret the concept of *Central Asia* in Japanese foreign policy-making practice. In doing so, the paper particularly focuses on the text of 'Arc of Freedom and Prosperity: Japan's Expanding Diplomatic Horizons', the speech conducted by Mr. Asō Tarō, a former Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan. The document is taken for this analysis due to the fact that it is considered to be the last until now Japanese comprehensive foreign policy strategy with regard to Central Asia, and it inherited the same foreign policy dimensions from documents previously introduced vis-à-vis Central Asia, such as from the former Prime Minister Hashimoto Ryūtarō's 'Eurasian Diplomacy' speech of 24 July 1997.

An interpretation of the concept of *Central Asia* in the 'Arc of Freedom and Prosperity: Japan's Expanding Diplomatic Horizons' from the viewpoint of post-structuralism is significant since it opens up new methodological and theoretical perspectives for conducting further researches of other foreign policy texts, where special attention is paid to a systematic analysis of ideational aspects of IR concepts.

**Keywords:** Japanese foreign policy, Central Asia, post-structuralism, epistemology.

## 1. Introduction

Foreign policy-making practice of the key players, including Japan, in Central Asia affects the decision-making processes of Central Asian states in the system of international relations. The states of Central Asia while elaborating their foreign policy strategies take into due consideration how concepts about themselves are materialized in the foreign policy texts of, for example, Japan.

The concept of *Central Asia* that frequently operates in Japanese foreign policy texts thus requires a close scrutiny to understand what Japan's real intentions are vis-à-vis Central Asia, how it perceives the image of Central Asia, etc. To know this is important since states in the system of international relations are socialized based on these perceptions. Actions follow accordingly.

Among other foreign policy documents, the Japanese foreign policy text: 'Arc of Freedom and Prosperity: Japan's Expanding Diplomatic Horizons' that internalizes the concept of *Central Asia* is under the close scrutiny in this article. Even though the concept of *Central Asia* has been researched much, for example, by Japanese scholars and experts, yet their materialist interpretation of the concept causes a shallow understanding about Japanese foreign policy identities vis-à-vis Central Asia. With its

critical stance, this paper tries to go beyond this traditional materialist research framework.

The paper studies the given topic within two parts: theory and practice. In the first theory part, I will discuss about methodological tools within the framework of post-structuralism in order to analyze the foreign policy text of Mr. Asō. In the second part, I will closely read the text of 'Arc of Freedom and Prosperity: Japan's Expanding Diplomatic Horizons' to understand how the concept of *Central Asia* is internalized. In doing so, the second part will focus on the deep epistemological structures of Central Asia that allowed the concept to be materialized in the document.

## 2. Foreign policy texts: theory

An analysis of the ways of how the concept of *Central Asia* is perceived in the mindsets of foreign policy makers of Japan, particularly in Mr. Asō's administration, should be started through interpreting deep epistemological structures of the concept itself. The approach to the close textual analysis of epistemological structures and meanings in international relations are generally regarded as being post-structuralism in IR.

### On post-structuralism

Post-structuralism is started to be widely used in international relations when 'it has become commonplace to see international politics described as socially constructed'<sup>1</sup> in the post-Cold War era. This period of time was marked by an increase of researches dealing with interpreting and questioning the 'static' and 'materialist' international relations. Among these researches, for example, constructivists who focused on ideational structures that do matter in constructing states, while postmodernists problematized 'long-standing themes (concepts) in the established traditions of IR that have gained renewed importance after the September 11 terrorist attacks'.<sup>2</sup> All these IR critical theories, including post-structuralism are built upon the assumptions that states are living and organic units, and thus their actions cut across the rational ideas or natural science that are embedded in positivists thinking.<sup>3</sup>

Coming from post-positivist camp of social science all these critical IR theories, however, took different approaches while analyzing the system of international relations. And, post-structuralism that I am going to employ to analyze the given topic pays much attention to texts, textual analysis, beyond which there are beliefs, perceptions, discourses that produce social practices in international relations.

Post-structuralism in IR comes to examine in detail how the world appears to be seen, thought, and, particularly read of in particular ways at specific historical junctures. It is especially interested in the processes and social practices that produce entities as distinct in the first place because such processes and practices could not be considered outside of what they produce. And, this framework of analysis of post-structuralism is started by signifying discourse from the viewpoint of interpretation. The importance of discourse from poststructuralist perspectives are in that it (discourse) can produce social practices, consequently certain state behaviors in the system of international relations.<sup>4</sup>

An understanding of how people from Mr. Asō's administration perceived the concept of *Central Asia* from poststructuralist viewpoint is better revealed by analysis of a particular discourse in a specific period of time. Thus, methodologically the paper focuses on a close reading of a speech by Mr. Asō Taro: 'Arc of Freedom and Prosperity: Japan's Expanding Diplomatic Horizons' (further I only use the 'Arc of Freedom and Prosperity' or sometimes the 'Arc' to mean this speech), and it deals with a discourse dominated in the period while Mr. Asō made this speech being in the office. It is necessary to note that

1 Wendt, *Social Theory of International Relations*, 1.

2 Devatak, *Theories of International Relations*, 171.

3 Kleinschmidt, *The Nemesis of Power: A History of International Relations Theories*, 13.

4 Edkins, *International Relations Theory for the Twenty-First Century*, 88–91.

the 'Arc of Freedom and Prosperity' and the other foreign policy texts of Japan have been researched much mainly by Japanese scholars. Yet, their researches principally operate within the materialist ontology and epistemology to analyze *Central Asia*, leaving further research 'rooms' for the studies from critical perspectives.

For example, Japanese expert Yuasa<sup>5</sup> in his article: 'Japan's Multilateral Approach toward Central Asia' researched how *Central Asia* has evolved in the thinking of Japanese foreign policy making practice under the concept of 'multilateralism'. Pointing out 'Eurasian diplomacy' and the 'Central Asia plus Japan dialogue' as the forms of social practices of Japanese foreign policy towards Central Asia, Japanese expert concludes that the idea of *Central Asia* remains unimportant, for example, in terms of security 'because of the geographical remoteness of this region'.<sup>6</sup>

What Japanese expert concludes clearly demonstrates that the social practices that Japan produced within the 'Eurasian diplomacy' and the 'Central Asia plus Japan dialogue' could be merely considered outside of what they produce, that is not post-structuralism. Rather than considering the results of such unimportance of *Central Asia* for Japan in a text and in a discourse that this text is embedded at a particular period of time, the expert's research limits its analysis to materialist external factor, such as 'geographical remoteness'. Hence, the concept of *Central Asia* in his research is static within which social phenomenon (image) and the fact (geographical remoteness) are separated.

Another study conducted by Uyama<sup>7</sup>, a professor at the Slavic Research Center at the Hokkaido University (Japan), asserts that '...on the level of mentality, Japan's Central Asian diplomacy has been affected by the Japanese perception of "Asia", which, in turn, is related to Japanese attitudes toward the West, especially the United States...'.<sup>8</sup> By such a statement professor Uyama means that in the thinking of foreign policy makers of Japan how *Central Asia* was perceived is a way of perceiving the concept of 'Asia' in the context of Japan-U.S. relations. He comes to such conclusion by the concept of 'friends' (that Japan should acquire in Central Asia), which was also identically used by Japanese foreign policy with regard to East Asia in the postwar era.<sup>9</sup>

The concept of 'friends' that was employed with regard to Asia in postwar diplomacy of Japan was identically applied to Central Asia in the Japanese foreign policy conduct, and that was understood in professor Uyama's research that the 'friends' has identical epistemological structure in terms of both Central Asia and Asia. Such an approach is a contrary to what post-positivism in general, and post-structuralism in particular assert in terms of ontology as well as epistemology of the concept itself. That is, while actors are constructed differently under the ideational ontology (they maybe cooperative or uncooperative under the same concept, for example, anarchy)<sup>10</sup>, concepts that operate in the system of international relations to construct states are '...susceptible to limitless reformulation over time by willing and willful actors rather than as a static concept fixed to definable and unchanging conditions...'.<sup>11</sup> This makes me conclude that perceiving *Central Asia* in the context of only 'friends' is a

---

5 Yuasa, 'Japan's Multilateral Approach toward Central Asia', 65–84.

6 Ibid., 83.

7 Uyama, 'Japan's Diplomacy towards Central Asia in the Context of Japan's Asian Diplomacy and Japan-U.S. Relations', 101–120.

8 Ibid., 102.

9 Ibid., 108.

10 Wendt in his *Social Theory of International Relations* talks about 'three cultures of anarchy' under the structure, defined as the absence of central authority: Hobbesian culture is 'enemy'; in Lockean — 'rival'; Kantian — 'friend'. The postwar diplomacy of Japan until the end of Cold War in Asia was seemingly structured under the Hobbesian or Lockean cultures while after 1990s it was — under the Lockean one. That is why Japan's diplomacy could have not been constructed identically under the concept of 'friends' before and after the Cold War era.

11 Kolodziej, *Security and International Relations*, 260–261.

materialist framework, and somehow theoretically limited. In foreign policy practice an employment of the same concept in the Cold War period and after it drives different implications in terms of image. For example, how I call my classmate as a 'friend' does not produce the same image in my mind when I do the same with regard to a person in the market.

At the same time, by reviewing the above mentioned researches from critical perspectives (post-structuralism) I do not want to decrease their values and essence as approaches to study Central Asia. I merely want to point out that since the ideational aspects of international relations play a great role in constructing states<sup>12</sup>, studying of, for example, Central Asia requires more scrutinized analysis through focusing on both facts and values (discourse) that make exist such facts in the system of international relations.

Further, I in detail discuss how the paper theoretically interprets discourse that is important element of understanding of the episteme (epistemological structures) of Central Asia.

### On discourse

The term *discourse*, as how it is applied in this article, 'could be explained by saying that language is structured in different patterns, visible in our statements in a specific social domain. The way we speak about the world does not portray a neutral version of how our surroundings, identities and social relations act out. Instead it plays an active role in how we create and change it'.<sup>13</sup>

When talking about *discourse* as a method of analysis within, particularly, post-structuralism, one should, of course, mention the contribution of Michel Foucault to a contemporary political thought. He paid much attention to what is said in any specific epoch, and examined the connection between the various things that were said, and the other social practices in which these 'things said' that were embedded in any particular era or episteme. He argued that different epistemes could be characterized by different ways of looking at the world, each of which can make a sense of this world depending on a particular era.<sup>14</sup>

One of the key empirical contributions to such a contemporary thought of Foucault of *discourse* is *Orientalism* of Edward Said. I found out two most important methodological parallels, but expressed in different forms, between Foucault's thought on discourse and Said's *Orientalism*, which are also significant to analyze how Japanese foreign policy text interprets *Central Asia*. These two methodological aspects Said called '*strategic location*, which is a way of describing the author's position in a text (representation) with regard to the Oriental material he writes about, and *strategic formation*, which is a way of analyzing the relationship between texts and the way in which groups of texts, ... acquire mass, ... and referential power among themselves and thereafter in the culture at large'.<sup>15</sup>

Why is it important in this paper to look into author's (Mr. Asō) position in the 'Arc of Freedom and Prosperity' and its relationship with other texts? The answer is: because, in that 'Arc of Freedom and Prosperity' the speech-maker is constructed by an episteme that lies behind the materialist concept of *Central Asia*. Hence the focus should be on: firstly, examining in the text of 'Arc' Mr. Asō's position, i.e. how he uses '*I*' and with regard to what; secondly, establishing parallels between what the 'Arc of Freedom and Prosperity' and other foreign policy texts that bear such conceptions as *freedom*, *prosperity*, and more generalized representing concept *democracy*; and, thirdly, if possible, to see whether these established parallels generate the same power in the Japanese foreign policy practice.

12 For more information see Wendt's *Social Theory of International Politics*.

13 Klemetti, "The Fear of America' A Discourse Analysis of the Department of Homeland Security's Construction of an American National Identity", 12.

14 Edkins, *International Relations Theory for the Twenty-First Century*, 91.

15 Said, *Orientalism*, 20.

The above discussed makes the early mentioned definition about *discourse* clear and more applicable in this research that the language (text) of 'Arc of Freedom and Prosperity' is structured in different patterns, that is, author's position and relationship of the 'Arc' with other foreign policy texts, and these are visible in our statements in a specific social domain. The paper assumes (further I will test this assumption) that this social domain in the post-9/11 period was characterized by Bush's agenda of *democratization/democracy* which is represented by the norm of *bilateralism*.<sup>16</sup> As Mr. Asō stated himself that the 'Arc of Freedom and Prosperity' 'represents the undertaking of a new investment by Japan in the foundations of the Japan-US alliance'.<sup>17</sup>

Concluding this part, I want to stress that, aside from Said's *discourse* that encompasses analysis of a broad variety of texts which are embedded in (Western) imperialistic social domain, my *discourse* analysis in this paper is limited to examining only Mr. Asō's position in the 'Arc of Freedom and Prosperity', its relationship with other texts, especially with American one for the reason of *bilateralism* that was strongly embedded in Japan-U.S. relations within the Asō/Bush administrations, and if possible, to look into the power relations which these texts can generate. All these I call a textual analysis, or a close analysis of the text of 'Arc of Freedom and Prosperity' that establishes epistemological structures of the concept of *Central Asia*.

### 3. Foreign policy texts: practice

It has been asserted earlier that the analysis of the ways of how the concept of *Central Asia* is perceived in the 'Arc of Freedom and Prosperity' is better understood through interpreting deep epistemological structures of the concept itself. And, in its turn, these epistemological structures are better analyzed by looking into the discourse that the 'Arc of Freedom and Prosperity' is embedded through interpreting: firstly, Mr. Asō's position in the text; secondly, the relationship of the 'Arc' with American foreign policy texts due to the established social domain (Bush's democracy agenda) in which the Japanese text is embedded; thirdly, if possibly, whether this relationship between texts can generate the same power. All these have much to do with post-structuralist interpretation (close reading) of the concept of Central Asia in the 'Arc of Freedom and Prosperity'.

#### On the 'Arc of Freedom and Prosperity'

In November 2006, Mr. Asō Tarō made a speech at the Japan Institute of International Affairs on the 'Arc of Freedom and Prosperity: Japan's Expanding Diplomatic Horizons'. The speech defined the key principles of Japanese foreign policy with the particular emphasis on, firstly, 'the "universal values" such as democracy...', and secondly, on new democracies (countries) 'that line the outer rim of the Eurasian continent, forming an arc'. Hence, the document asserts that Japan wants to design the 'arc of freedom and prosperity' under which, among others, the region of *Central Asia* is looked through the lens of *democracy*.<sup>18</sup>

The 'Arc of Freedom and Prosperity: Japan's Expanding Diplomatic Horizons' is taken for this analysis due to the reasons: firstly, it is considered to be the last until now Japanese comprehensive foreign policy strategy with regard to Central Asia; secondly, it inherited the same foreign policy dimensions from documents previously introduced vis-à-vis Central Asia, such as the former Prime

---

16 The book Japan's *International Relations* discusses internationally embedded traditions of Japanese foreign policy. Among other traditions, it is *bilateralism* that is embedded in the international structure through the US-Japan security treaty system. According to that norm Japan should behave in the international system within the remit of the bilateral alliance and rarely in opposition to it.

17 Asō, 'On the "Arc of Freedom and Prosperity"'.  
18 Asō, 'Arc of Freedom and Prosperity: Japan's Expanding Diplomatic Horizons'.

Minister Hashimoto Ryūtarō's 'Eurasian Diplomacy' speech of 24 July 1997.<sup>19</sup>

Particularly, both documents treat, even though with different focuses, Central Asia in the context of Japan's broader relations with Eurasia. While the 'Eurasian Diplomacy' asserts that 'Japan's foreign policy toward this region (Central Asia) will be crafted as an organic component of the broad scheme of relations with Eurasia', the 'Arc of Freedom and Prosperity' adopts the idea of new democracies, including the countries of Central Asia 'that line the outer rim of the Eurasian continent...'. So, as the 'Arc of Freedom and Prosperity' adopted the same foreign policy dimensions from, for example, the 'Eurasian Diplomacy' with regard to Central Asia, and it is relatively new initiative in comparison with others documents, Mr. Asō's 'Arc' is worth analyzing by itself.

Further, I will apply the methods that have been discussed in my theoretical part to understand how Central Asia was socially constructed. Particularly, a close reading of the text of 'Arc of Freedom and Prosperity' will be conducted within the discourse analysis (Bush's democratic agenda), and statements that appear in between quotation marks without referring to the source are statements from this document only, unless other citations are shown.

### On discourse

As it has been pointed out in the theoretical part, the text of 'Arc of Freedom and Prosperity' is embedded in the social domain characterized by Bush's democratic agenda that is seemingly constructed by the idea of bilateralism, according to which Japan is expected to act in favor of Japan · U.S. alliance.

The *bilateralism* is a traditionally embedded norm in Japanese foreign policy-making practice. It is embedded through the Japan-U.S. security treaty signed in 1951. It has led to peace in Japan and has also worked effectively as a fundamental framework for stability and development throughout the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>20</sup> Besides, the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001, made the norm of *bilateralism* more salient, within which the concept of 'Japan-U.S. Alliance for Asia and the World' generated a new level of bilateral ties between two countries.<sup>21</sup>

Hence, the post-war international system was marked by the strong instrumentalization of the Japan-U.S. relations in, particularly, security and global-issues realms, that made the norm of *bilateralism* become embedded strongly in foreign policy-making practice of Japan. And, it became impossible for the Japanese government to consider its foreign policy in relation to other regions and global institutions independent of its security relationship with the U.S.<sup>22</sup> Consequently, this foreign policy reality of Japan has reflected in the 'Arc of Freedom and Prosperity', under which Mr. Asō's administration is constructed with the particular emphasis on the idea of *democracy* (Bush's foreign policy agenda).

As the beginning of the text of 'Arc of Freedom and Prosperity' asserts that 'the basis of Japan's foreign policy is to strengthen the Japan-US alliance', Mr. Asō called Japanese diplomacy that encompassed the idea of arc as being 'value oriented diplomacy'. So, this (universal) value oriented diplomacy surely underlines the concept of *democracy* within which Mr. Asō positioned himself in the text.

Throughout the 'Arc of Freedom and Prosperity' Mr. Asō several times referred to the personal pronoun 'I' to demonstrate his personal position towards the concept *democracy*. For example, the following text from the 'Arc' quotes:

19 Hashimoto, Address to the Japan Association of Corporate Executives.

20 Embassy of Japan in the United States of America, 'Overview of Japan-U.S. Relations'.

21 Embassy of Japan in the United States of America, 'Japan-U.S. Security Relationship'.

22 Hook, Gilson, Hughes and Dobson, *Japan's International Relations*, 438-439.

Now, coming as we are from this background with such achievements, when it comes to talk of “universal values” that are commonly held in the world in general, whether it be talk of democracy, or peace, freedom, or human rights, Japan will no longer hesitate to state its views. This is what *I* am referring to when *I* speak of value oriented diplomacy, and my remarks to you here today constitute both a declaration of our qualifications and an expression of our determination.

So, Mr. Asō is directly referring to ‘universal values’ and positioning himself in the concept of *democracy*. This establishes a social domain of the discourse in the ‘Arc of Freedom and Prosperity’ with regard to also *Central Asia* within which the region should be interpreted. However, as I have stated earlier in the theoretical part, it is not methodologically enough to discuss only the position of the speech-maker to understand the discourse as a whole.

The discourse that takes place around the ‘Arc of Freedom and Prosperity’ is structured in different patterns, that is, in author’s position that I have already examined, and also relationship between the text of ‘Arc’ and American foreign policy texts because of *bilateralism* for the purpose of establishing correlated parallels (the same conceptions and ideas appear in the texts).

The following statement of Mr. Asō from the ‘Arc of Freedom and Prosperity’ is an example to make such parallels:

I will work to ensure that in the future, in this sweeping arc stretching from Northeast Asia to Central Asia and the Caucasus, Turkey, Central and Eastern Europe and the Baltic states, Japan will serve as an “escort runner” to support these countries that have just started into this truly never-ending marathon.

In this passage, by ‘never ending marathon’ Mr. Asō means surely democracy and that leads to a logical conclusion that Japan ‘supports’ the countries in the *arc*, including Central Asia, to become democratic. Bush’s, for example, the ‘National Security Strategy’, introduced earlier than the ‘Arc’, in March 2006, asserted that ‘it is the policy of the United States to seek and “support” democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world’, or ‘the United States will stand with and “support” advocates of freedom in every land’.<sup>23</sup>

A close reading of these Japanese and American foreign policy texts leads to an understanding that there are the same parallel ideas in both texts with the particular focus on ‘support’, however with different context-meanings because of cultural factors (later I will touch upon this). Both countries clearly meant that they ‘support’ the countries, in Japanese case they are in the ‘arc’, and in U.S. case — it is all over the world.

Besides, in the above-mentioned ‘National Security Strategy’ there is a clear indication that with supporting democracy in every land the U.S. hopes to bring stability in the world. That is the way how Mr. Bush described his strategy to establish stability in the world. In this regard, again, the same parallel ideas find its reflection in the ‘Arc of Freedom and Prosperity’ in terms of establishing stability through democracy. The following statement of Mr. Asō asserts such a relationship with the Bush’s idea of establishing stability:

With the “arc of freedom and prosperity” extending all the way to the Baltic Sea, in order not to see gaps develop within this belt, it is essential to bring stability to the so-called “GUAM” nations—that is, Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Moldova.

---

23 Bush, ‘The National Security Strategy’.

Even though the statement describes the other countries in the *arc* in terms of establishing stability, the context allows me to conclude that Mr. Asō, as Bush did, considers the issues of stability through the lens of *democracy* that should be brought, in Mr. Asō's understanding, also to the region of Central Asia to achieve peace and stability.

The above discussion clearly demonstrates that in the 'Arc of Freedom and Prosperity' Mr. Asō is strongly embedded in the social domain of *democracy* discourse constructed by the Bush administration in the post-9/11 era. However, even though the above discussed texts of Japanese and U.S. administrations produced social practices with certain meanings and structures into which Mr. Asō's is embedded, at the level of traditional culture the term of *democracy* (*minshushugi*) differs from what Mr. Bush interpreted in the 'National Security Strategy'<sup>24</sup> as to the concept of American *democracy*.

Such cultural differences were salient in analyzing the text of 'Arc' in comparison with the U.S. 'National Security Strategy'. While the 'National Security Strategy' emphasizes the policy of the United States of '...promoting effective *democracies* and the expansion of free-market reforms, diversifying global sources of energy, and enhancing security...' <sup>25</sup>, the 'Arc of Freedom and Prosperity' asserts that '... there are the successfully budding *democracies* that line the outer rim of the Eurasian continent, forming an arc'.

Aside from the U.S. document, in which the concept of *democracies* represents the result of the U.S. efforts with the focus on democratic movements and institutions (direct democracy), Japanese concept *democracies* represents states themselves. Whereas American concept *democracies* underlines the essence of local governments and institutions that to be promoted, *Japanese minshushugi* (democracy) still asserts the central role of the national governments.<sup>26</sup> This is also clear within the 'Arc' in which *minshushugi* underlines the importance of national governments in the outer rim of the Eurasian continent themselves to achieve democracy (they can be democratic all by themselves<sup>27</sup>).

Thus, Mr. Asō in his speech of 'Arc of Freedom and Prosperity' is carefully using the term of *democracy*, even though he is embedded in the discourse of the Bush's democracy agenda. Particularly, he is not forcing the promotion of democratization process in each country in the 'arc'; rather he is making an accent on each country's potential to be democratized within itself gradually. The following statement in the 'Arc' says about this potential:

Let it be such that within this broad area in which this arc is drawn, these countries find their freedom and democracy, market economies, the rule of law, and respect for human rights expanding bit by bit, growing in the same way that a mere reef over time becomes an island, and later even a mountain range.

From the statement of 'these countries find their freedom and democracy', it is clear that at the level of traditional thinking of Japanese foreign policy, even though the Bush's discourse constructed Mr. Asō's administration, the idea of *democracy* in Japan still generates different images, eventually different power relations towards the concept of *Central Asia*.

---

24 Abe in his research 'Minshushugi and Democracy' discusses the differences between Japanese democracy and American democracy. He stresses that these differences come to exist at the level of, for example, direct democracy. He says that whereas the direct democracy with its accent on local governments and institutions is functional in the U.S., in Japan it is not the case for traditional cultural reasons.

25 Bush, 'The National Security Strategy'.

26 Abe, 'Minshushugi and Democracy', 5-6.

27 Wendt, *Social Theory of International Relations*, 226.



#### 4. Conclusion

Japanese foreign policy conduct (intentions), particularly within the Mr. Asō's administration, vis-à-vis Central Asia is better known after analyzing the epistemological structures of the concept of *Central Asia* in the 'Arc' that are possibly understood through the discussion of the Asō/Bush discourse. Particularly, the discourse analysis (close reading) has focused on the Mr. Asō's position in the text, the relationship of the 'Arc' with the U.S. foreign policy texts, and different power relations that these texts can generate. Consequently, the paper drives the following conclusions:

Firstly, even though in the 'Arc' the concept of *Central Asia* is embedded strongly in the discourse of *democratization* dominated in Bush's foreign policy agenda due to the norm of *bilateralism*, the differences in traditional thinking in terms of Japanese *minshushugi* and American *democracy* contributed to internalizing *Central Asia* in the 'Arc' differently from the U.S. document ('National Security Strategy'). The 'Arc' still interprets *Central Asia* as being *democracies* with its central governments (in the region), and their potentials to be democratized within themselves gradually, while the U.S. 'National Security Strategy' stresses the idea of democratization that to be applied to Central Asia from outside with focusing on local institutions in a country (direct democracy).

Secondly, even though the paper was able to make due parallels between Japanese 'Arc' and the U.S. 'National Security Strategy' in the context of Said's *strategic formation*, the concept of *Central Asia* did not acquire the same power relations in two different cultures — Japan and the U.S. Social practices follow accordingly (while Japanese foreign policy is oriented at the central governments in Central Asia, the U.S. foreign strategy focuses much on local institutions in the region). Hence, though one finds parallels (the same concepts, ideas, etc.) in the analysis of a broad variety of texts between Japanese and the U.S. foreign policy texts, it should be still read closely for the reason of being culturally different even if these foreign policies are embedded in the same discourse.

Thirdly, the idea of 'geographical remoteness' of Central Asia to Japan is not the major factor to perceive *Central Asia* in terms of being important or unimportant in Japanese foreign policy-making practice. This is clearly seen in the text of 'Arc', which tries to design the *arc*, in which there are countries in East Europe that are geographically farther to Japan than Central Asia. But, they (East Europe) are still important for Japan in the context of the idea of *arc*. Hence, while interpreting *Central Asia* in further foreign policy texts of Japan the 'geographical remoteness' should remain as a factor, but not the main while conceptualizing.

Fourthly, concepts in IR, including *Central Asia*, for Japanese foreign policy-making practice are not static and tend to limitless reformulation depending on different discourses which are social products of Japanese government itself. Thus, the concept of *Central Asia* cannot exist outside of social practices that a particular Japanese government is going to generate (each new Japanese government can generate different epistemes through different foreign policy texts, discourses). Therefore, an interpretation of *Central Asia* in the foreign policy of Japan with the focus on one government's foreign policy texts within limited period of time does better. The present article exemplifies and proves this idea.

#### References

- Abe, Hitoshi, 'Minshushugi and Democracy', *the Japanese Journal of American Studies*, 10 (1999): 5–14.
- Asō, Tarō, 'On the "Arc of Freedom and Prosperity"', 12 March 2007, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/pillar/address0703.html> (accessed 15 September 2010).
- Asō, Tarō, 'Arc of Freedom and Prosperity: Japan's Expanding Diplomatic Horizons', 30 November 2006, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/fm/aso/speech0611.html> (accessed 15 September 2010).
- Bush, George, 'The National Security Strategy', The White House, 16 March 2006, <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/nsc/nss/2006> (accessed 20 June 2010).

- Devatak, Richard, 'Postmodernism', in Scott Burchill, Andrew Linklater, Jack Donnelly, Matthew Paterson, Christian Reus-Smit and Jacqui True, *Theories of International Relations*, Third edition, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, 161–187.
- Edkins, Jenny, 'Poststructuralism', in Martin Griffiths, ed., *International Relations Theory for the Twenty-First Century*, New York: Routledge, 2007, 88–98.
- Embassy of Japan in the United States of America, 'Overview of Japan-U.S. Relations', [www.us.emb-japan.go.jp/english/html/japanus/japanusoverview2008.htm](http://www.us.emb-japan.go.jp/english/html/japanus/japanusoverview2008.htm) (accessed 15 May 2009).
- Embassy of Japan in the United States of America, 'Japan-U.S. Security Relationship', [www.us.emb-japan.go.jp/english/html/japanus/japanusoverview2008.htm#security](http://www.us.emb-japan.go.jp/english/html/japanus/japanusoverview2008.htm#security). (accessed 15 May 2009).
- Hashimoto, Ryūtarō, Address to the Japan Association of Corporate Executives, 24 July 1997, <http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/0731douyukai.html> (accessed 15 September 2010).
- Hook, Glenn, Julie Gilson, Christopher Hughes and Hogo Dobson, Japan's *International Relations*, Second Edition, Routledge, 2005.
- Kleinschmidt, Harald, *The Nemesis of Power: A History of International Relations Theories*, London: Reaktion Books, 2000.
- Klemetti, Sanna, "'The Fear of Amexica" A Discourse Analysis of the Department of Homeland Security's Construction of an American National Identity', Master thesis, Centre for Theology and Religious Studies, University of Lund, 2008, <http://lup.lub.lu.se/luur/download?func=downloadFile&recordId=1315866&fileId=1316356> (accessed 15 April 2009).
- Kolodziej, Edward, *Security and International Relations*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Said, Edward, *Orientalism*, New York: Vintage Books, 1978.
- Uyama, Tomohiko, 'Japan's Diplomacy towards Central Asia in the Context of Japan's Asian Diplomacy and Japan-U.S. Relations', in *Models of Cooperation in Central Asia and Japan's Central Asian Engagements: Factors, Determinants and Trends*, in Christopher Len, Uyama Tomohiko, Hirose Tetsuya, eds., Japan's Silk Road Diplomacy: Paving the Road Ahead, Washington, Stockholm: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, 2008, 101–120, <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/isn/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?ots591=0c54e3b3-1e9c-be1e-2c24-a6a8c7060233&lng=en&ord582=grp2&id=110797> (accessed 15 August 2010).
- Yuasa, Takeshi, 'Japan's Multilateral Approach toward Central Asia', Slavic Eurasian Studies, Hokkaido University, Japan, [src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/coe21/publish/no16\\_1\\_ses/04\\_yuasa.pdf](http://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/coe21/publish/no16_1_ses/04_yuasa.pdf) (accessed 15 August 2010).
- Wendt, Alexander, *Social Theory of International Relations*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Lecturer  
Uzbekistan State World Languages University