

***Japan's Security Identity: From a Peace State to an International State.* By Bhubhindar Singh. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2013. Hardcover: 212pp.**

How have Japan's security policies changed from the Cold War period to the post-Cold War period? In *Japan's Security Identity: From a Peace State to an International State*, Bhubhindar Singh seeks to answer this question as he traces the evolution of Japan's security policies over recent decades. The book's focus is ostensibly on the period from the end of the Cold War until the 2009 lower house election, although it also provides a comprehensive account of Japan's security policies since the 1950s. At different points, it discusses such diverse events as the creation of the 1957 Basic Policy on National Defense, the 1976 National Defense Program Outline, and the 2010 National Defense Program Guidelines, among others.

The overall aim of *Japan's Security Identity* is to analyze “what these changes mean for Japanese security policy and what kind of role(s) Japan would assume in ... regional and security affairs in the post-Cold War period” (p. 2). The argument, as the subtitle indicates, is that between these two periods Japan has moved from a peace state to an international-state identity. As Singh explains, the “role conceptions or identity that determine Japan's role in regional and international security affairs” have shifted, with Japanese policymakers recognizing that the country's “Cold War approach ... was inappropriate in the post-Cold War period” (p. 3).

Adopting key elements of Constructivism from International Relations theory, Singh sets up a complex conceptual framework in which the “normative context” of Japan's security policymaking is a key variable engendering a “transformation of Japan's security identity and its resultant security policy” (p. 3). According to Singh, Japan's normative context consists of three dimensions: (1) the scope of the country's territorial conception of national security; (2) the extent to which the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) operate internationally; and (3) the “institutional culture embedded within the policymaking structure” or the policymaking regime (pp. 3–4). The shift from peace state to international state, therefore, can be understood as the outcome of a shift in this normative context — from a narrow, territorial, Yoshida-bound, limited security identity to a more regional and international, revisionist and expanded security identity (pp. 4–5).

To make this case, Singh divides *Japan's Security Identity* into seven chapters, including the introduction and conclusion. The book also includes extensive notes, some of which run to multiple paragraphs. In chapter two, Singh outlines the main concepts and principles, as well as the chief explanations for change, in Japan's security policy (pp. 9–40). He then explains in further detail the book's conceptual framework (pp. 41–76), which is divided into four parts examining the idea of security identity, Japan's particular peace-state and international-state identities, the three normative contexts and the key elements of the following empirical chapters. In the three chapters that follow, Singh examines each of the three normative contexts in depth.

By focusing on these ideational concepts as the drivers of change in security policy, *Japan's Security Identity* is seeking to resolve some of the weaknesses of existing understandings of Japanese strategy. Realist, Mercantilist or Liberal explanations, which emphasize international factors, overlook many important features of the change in Japan's security policies. On the other hand, Constructivist explanations, which emphasize domestic factors, cannot adequately account for the shift away from anti-militarism in Japan's security identity. Singh's context-identity approach, by comparison, incorporates the "mutual interaction between the international structure and states" (p. 46) and encompasses not just material factors but also the cultures (social structures) operating both domestically and internationally (pp. 47–52).

A key challenge when using multiple variables is to delineate the important cause-and-effect relationships. In this regard, Singh sets himself an immense task juggling these interests, norms, and intersubjective understandings of identity (p. 42), as well as mutual interactions between international and domestic levels (p. 46), and also material and ideational structures (p. 67). Given this inherent complexity in the framework, it is not always clear how or whether the multiple factors identified as important are driving policy change in Japan, whether they reflect deeper transformations, or possibly both. Why, for instance, did the country's "aversion to military-strategic affairs" (p. 131) decline in the post-Cold War period? Further, if this decline was due to the increasing influence of an international-state security identity, what specifically made this so? Realists might point to changing power balances and newly emerging threats as the most likely candidates for Japanese policymakers' change of view. In regularly framing his analysis in terms of a comparison of Cold War and post-Cold War periods, Singh appears

to view this structural transition as important, although its place in the identity-context argument is assumed more than explained explicitly. Other structural factors that might have played a role, such as the 1969 Nixon Doctrine and the 1973 oil crisis (p. 99), are also left relatively unexplored. In the end, the context-identity argument could be more persuasive if such matters were addressed more substantively.

Overall, *Japan's Security Identity* offers a thorough account of Japan's evolving security policies and demonstrates a keen sense of their inherent complexities and complications. The book also provides a valuable entrée into future debates on whether an international-state identity is a final destination in Japan's security transformation or merely a stop-off point along the way to somewhere else. Since returning to power in late 2012, the Liberal Democratic Party led by Shinzo Abe seems intent on further reform. Whether Japan would still be an international state if it were to allow itself the right to collective defence, participate fully in a regional ballistic missile defense shield, or upgrade its helicopter carriers into aircraft carriers may be a central argument for the field in coming years.