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REPRESENTATIONS AND FOREIGN POLICY: JAPAN IN RUSSIA'S FOREIGN POLICY DISCOURSE, 2011-2019

MA thesis

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Authorship declaration

I have prepared this thesis independently. All the views of other authors, as well as data from literary sources and elsewhere, have been cited.

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Abstract

This master's thesis aims to expose the conditions of possibility of the Russo-Japanese rapprochement of 2012-19, which happened against the backdrop of Russia's worsening relations with Japan's ally, the US, and the broader Western collectivity, part of which Japan could be regarded as. Based on the theoretical framework of poststructuralist discourse analysis, investigating Russia's official and think tank (semi-official) foreign policy discourse during this period, this study identifies the representations of Japan that enabled Russia to pursue the rapprochement and assembles them into two broader discourses. It is revealed that the rapprochement with Japan was enabled by its dual representation as both an actor moving towards greater independence from the US, thus cementing its independent and influential position in the Asia-Pacific as well as globally; and as a pragmatic, better Western country with intimate relations with the US and Europe. These two discourses, as well as separate representations of Japan as an economic powerhouse and a WWII loser, were found to be largely in line with Russia's broader foreign policy discourses of greatpowerness and multipolarity, meaning that the rapprochement with Japan could be considered as stemming from Russia's central identity of a great power as well as a means to reinforce it. The analysis also suggests that there is a clear need for further poststructuralist research on Russo-Japanese relations since it, as this thesis shows, provides a richer and more nuanced understanding of not only of said relations, but Russian foreign policy more generally.

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Introduction

The year 2012 marked the beginning of a noticeable improvement of Russo-Japanese relations, which have been either stagnant or even confrontational in the previous 10 or so years. What began with Russia's soon to be President Vladimir Putin's call for a fresh start in the bilateral relations and negotiations over the Southern Kurile Island territorial dispute, resulted in a remarkable period of quite warm Russo-Japanese relations, which lasted up until the beginning of 2020. It was exemplified by numerous positive developments. These were ranging from the efforts to revitalise and deepen the economic and humanitarian cooperation between the two countries, most remarkably in relation to the disputed Southern Kuriles, to intensified security dialogue in the form of meetings between countries' National Security Councils and foreign and defence ministers (the so called 2+2 format) as well as resumed negotiations over the disputed territories, which at times even seemed to result in a proper resolution of the issue (Harding and Foy 2018). And even though some argue that the improvement of the relations was not accompanied by any substantial progress, neither in economic dimension nor regarding the territorial issue (Rozman 2017), it was still noteworthy, especially in the context of Russia's actions in Ukraine in 2014 and Japan's reaction.

There are some three main arguments in the literature that might explain the apparent "honeymoon" in the relations between Russia and Japan. The economic argument states that the reason behind the rapprochement is the compatible nature of the countries' economies and economic interests. For Russia, Japan is said to be an attractive investor into the Russian underdeveloped Far-Eastern regions as well as an alternative market for hydrocarbon exports. For Japan, however, the main economic interest lies in Russia's energy sector. The proximity of Russia means that the imported natural gas and oil are cheaper, and are supplied relatively faster, allowing Japan to diversify its energy imports and increase its energy security.

The second set of arguments concerns compatible security interests. For one, argue Dian and Kireeva (2022), both countries view the rapprochement as a wedge strategy, which is aimed at weakening the partnerships Japan and Russia consider threatening. For Japan, the threat would be the China-Russia quasi-alliance, and for Russia the very real alliance between Japan and the United States. Also, in the context of increasingly confrontational relations between Japan and China as well as Russia and the US, the improvement of Russo-Japanese relations serves as a way for the countries not to worry about the potential confrontation between one another and focus on the already existing rivalries.

The third argument is built around the personal relationship that had developed between President Putin and Prime Minister Abe Shinzo. According to the argument, the rapprochement largely comes from the high level of interpersonal trust, or even friendship between the two leaders as well as their personal interest in resolving the territorial issue. For Abe, the interest stems from the desire to secure his legacy as well as the "strong desire to fulfil the political agenda of his famous forebearers," in the case of Russia, of his father Abe Shintaro. For Putin, however, the interest originates in his previous positive experiences with previous Japanese leaders, most notably Mori Yoshiro, as well as his background in judo.

What is unclear, however, is how such close cooperation between Russia and Japan became possible in the first place. What makes the rapprochement peculiar is the fact that in the context of the degradation of Russia-West relationships after Russia invaded Ukraine in 2014, Russia was increasingly strengthening its ties with a country that is in a very close association with the hostile West. As will be shown later, Japan is one of the key US allies in the Asia-Pacific as well as hosts US military bases. It also subscribes to liberal-democratic values, is a member of such organisations as G7 and a looser QUAD dialogue as well as might be said to follow the general Western foreign policy line[1]. So, there is a puzzle to solve – how come that in this broader context of the increasing confrontation with the West and the US in particular, Russia still attempted to "flirt" and managed to maintain a decently warm relationship with Japan, a strongly West-aligned, if not quasi-Western country.

The existing research on Russo-Japanese relations as well as the rapprochement of 2012-2019 mostly focuses mainly on the "objective" reasons behind it, as shown earlier, and factors that hinder Russia and Japan from developing a genuine partnership. Moreover, a very extensive block of literature focuses only on the peculiarities of the territorial dispute. This, however, does not provide a sufficient, comprehensive understanding of the very possibility of the rapprochement as the existing literature focuses on explanations for why-questions. However, as Roxanne Doty (1993, 298) presents it, why-questions are incomplete in the sense that they "generally take as unproblematic the possibility that a particular decision or course of action could happen". The present study aims to close this gap in the literature and provide a better understanding of Russian foreign policy towards Japan by focusing on the conditions of

[1] e.g., Japan's vote coincidence with the US on the UN General Assembly resolutions was on par with the US's European allies (Department of State, 2018)

possibility of such an invigoration of the relationship, employing poststructuralist discourse analytical approach.

Applied to the study of foreign policy, poststructuralist discourse analytical approach states that foreign policy is essentially discursive, implying the significance of the productivity of language and the power of discourses in imposing meaning and constructing possible policy action (Skonieczny (2001, 439). It is hardly possible for a state to undertake certain policies unless they are enabled by the underlying discursive structure, which brings about the notions of the Self, the Other(s) and, deriving from the specific ways in which one relates to the other, the how the latter can and should be treated. As Lene Hansen (2016, 102-103) puts it, "materiality is ascribed through discourse" and it is not the qualities like military might or economic compatibility but rather particular discursive constructions, representations thereof that determine state's foreign policy. That is, there is a significant difference in possible policies towards countries that are discursively constructed, for example, as pragmatic or of equal status and those which are portrayed as irrational or inferior. Thus, taking poststructuralist discourse analytical approach as the theoretical foundation of the current study might help deepen the understanding of Russian foreign policy towards Japan as it allows to explain the very possibility of the reactivation of their relations.

Thus, the study investigates the representations of Japan in Russian official foreign policy discourse and tries to position Japan in Russian foreign policy "coordinates". Accordingly, the research question of the thesis is: **which representations of Japan and its position vis-à-vis the West in Russia's official and semi-official (think tank) foreign policy discourses allowed for a period of relatively good Russo-Japanese relations despite Russia's deteriorating and increasingly confrontational relations with the US and the West more broadly.** The study will thus focus on the significance of certain representations of and discourses around subjects in the context of foreign policy making.

By answering the research question, I hope to close two main gaps in the literature dedicated to Russo-Japanese relations and Russian foreign policy more broadly. First, as already stated, I try to give an answer to a how-possible question about the latest rapprochement between Russia and Japan, providing a "base" for explanations that rely on non-discursive factors outlined above. Secondly, as the discursive nature of foreign policy also implies that it is the foreign policy discourse through which identity is produced and reproduced (Hansen 2006, 23), investigation of Russian foreign policy discourse towards Japan provides a deeper

understanding of Russia's identity, contributing to a better understanding of Russian foreign policy in a more general sense.

In addition, due to the lack of discourse analytical approaches to the study of Russo-Japanese relations and the rapprochement in particular, by basing the thesis on this theory I am aiming at identifying new and alternative angles from which the relationship with the two countries could be further analysed, which also means that the thesis is of a rather exploratory nature.

The thesis is structured as follows. The first chapter briefly reviews the history of Russo-Japanese relations and reviews the existing literature on Russo-Japanese relations, focusing on the existing explanations of the rapprochement of 2012-19. The second chapter elaborates on the research puzzle by providing justification for positioning Japan as a quasi-Western state as well as giving a brief overview of Russia's position towards the West. The third chapter provides the theoretical foundation of the study, outlining the poststructuralist discourse analysis theory, and its application to the study of foreign policy as well as reviews constructivist and poststructuralist literature discussing Russian foreign policy. The third chapter outlines the methodology of the study. The fourth chapter provides the results of the analysis, outlining some main representations of Japan found in official and think tank foreign policy discourses. In the fifth chapter, discussion, I assemble the main representations into two basic discourses and show how these fit into broader Russian foreign policy discourses which stem from and simultaneously reinforce its identity. The thesis ends with the conclusion where I answer the research question by showing how the particular discursive construction of Japan has enabled the Russo-Japanese rapprochement.

1. Review of Russo-Japanese relations

This chapter addresses the main developments in and explanations of Russo-Japanese relations. The first section gives a brief overview of the development of the relations from the end of WWII until 2012, the starting year of the limited rapprochement, providing some historical context. I also provide some existing explanations for why the relations failed to be taken to the next level. The second and third sections deal with the subject of present study – the rapprochement of 2012-19. The second section provides an overview of the main developments that took place during the rapprochement, emphasising the exceptional character of this period, and in the third section, relying on the existing literature I present three main explanations for why the rapprochement took place and why it stayed rather limited, not resulting in a full normalisation of Russo-Japanese relations.

1.1. Brief overview of Russo-Japanese relations until 2012

For more context on the relationship between Russia and Japan I will begin with a brief description of Russo-Japanese relations and its dynamic until the beginning of the limited rapprochement in 2012.

One might argue that genuine political activity between Russia and Japan began in the last years of the Soviet Union (USSR). Before that, from the end of World War Two (WWII), the relations were in a "frozen" state due to the dynamics of the Cold War (Hirose 2018, 2; Miller 2004, 2). As the two countries belonged to different military and ideological blocks, with Japan associating itself tightly with the US, meaningful cooperation was hindered. Not only did the two countries fail to resolve the territorial dispute over the Southern Kurile islands, but also failed to conclude the peace treaty and fully normalise the relations. It was exactly because of the diverging views on the nature of the dispute as the USSR did not recognise the existence of the dispute whatsoever and Japan insisted on the return of all four islands altogether (Kapur 2012). Although the relations were not completely nonexistent and included an attempt to solve the dispute on the basis of the Moscow declaration of 1956, which ended the state of war and supposed the resolution of the territorial issue by transferring the two smaller islands to Japan after a formal peace treaty will be concluded, due to pressure from Japan's ally the US and Japan's own rigid position the potential was not realised. Moreover, setting aside a more explicitly political relationship, there had been some developments along the economic dimension as Russia and Japan had been involved in joint projects in the Russian Far East

(RFE), the economic volume of those was rather insignificant (Sevastyanov 2017, 41; Zagorsky 1999, 340). The "distance" between the two countries was also deepened due to the USSR's extensive focus on Europe and the Euro-Atlantic region more broadly as it was also the main region where USSR's main contender NATO was most active (Svarin 2016, 132).

The end of the Cold War marked further normalisation and intensification of the relations between Russia and Japan, most notably in the economic dimension. Japan was a natural economic partner for Russia, which was in desperate need of investment and economic development as a result of the shock coming from the breakdown of the Soviet Union. In addition, as Russia was trying to integrate into the US-centred world community, pursuing closer ties with Japan was supposed to make the integration smoother (Sevastyanov 2017, 41). As a result, Japan became Russia's 6th largest investor in 2004 at almost 2 billion USD cumulatively and the trade volume between the two reached 23 million USD (3,7% of total trade), making it comparable to Russia's trade with the US (4.9% of total trade) (Kapur 2012, 398). Most intensive was, however, cooperation in the field of energy as Russia became a significant supplier of oil and liquified natural gas, with Japanese private and public companies being involved in some of Russia's biggest energy projects such as Sakhalin-1 and Sakhalin-2 (Kapur 2012, 396; Yennie-Lingdren 2018, 155).

However, the increasing economic cooperation did not fully translate into better political relations, especially regarding the peace treaty negotiation. Even though there had been some progress in the 1990s and early 2000s, when such landmark declarations as Tokyo 1993 and Irkutsk 2001 were signed, no real progress was made on the Southern Kuriles dispute due to divergent views on the mode of resolution of the issue. These and other declarations and joint statements suggested that the negotiations are continuing based on the principles as stated in the 1956 Moscow declaration (transfer of two smaller islands to Japan after the conclusion of the peace treaty). However, as Russia stuck to the position of unquestionable Russian sovereignty over the islands, which meant that before any negotiations on the territorial issue could be started, the relations ought to reach a qualitatively new level and the peace treaty must be signed, and Japan's position not only became continuously inconsistent but also at times radical (e.g. transfer of four islands before the peace treaty), negotiations reached a stalemate (Kapur 2012, Jung et al., 2016). The respective hardening of Russia's and Japan's positions brought about the low point in their relations in 2010, when then-President Dmitry Medvedev visited Kunashir, the largest of the disputed islands, becoming the first Russian head of state to make such a move. This consequently sparked a series of diplomatic and popular protests in

Japan, which were reciprocated by Russia with an increase in its military presence on the islands as well as statements that suggested that "neither today nor tomorrow will the Russian Federation's sovereignty over the Kuril Islands be subject to any kind of revision" (Brown 2014, 85).

Explanations on why Russia and Japan were not able to make any meaningful progress in their relations has thus mostly been explained by the influence the dispute has had on the overall atmosphere. Most notably, it is argued that resolution of the dispute, and by extension total normalisation of the relations, is impossible due to the place of the islands in both countries' national consciousness. For Russia, the acquisition of the islands is said to be tightly associated with the results of WWII, which is argued not only to secure the legitimacy of the current regime but provide Russia with identity (Wood 2011; Richardson 2015). Stemming from that, there was a strong opposition to territorial concessions from the Russian public, which makes the settlement problematic (Chugrov and Streltsov 2017, 24). The transfer of Southern Kuriles, even if partial, is argued to undermine the historical meaning WWII and Great Patriotic War have for Russians as the territories associated with the great human sacrifice would be unjustly abandoned (Hirose 2018, 9). In Japan, the Southern Kuriles have been portrayed as an indigenous territory that was forcefully and illegally taken away from it. This, in turn, is used by conservatives and nationalists to boost their credentials as well as provide a sense of "psychological comfort" by presenting Japan as an "aggrieved nation", which is "tasked to overshadow the guilt from the aggressive policy of Japanese militarism in World War II years" (Bukh 2020, Chugrov and Streltsov 2017, 32).

1.2. Russo-Japanese Relations 2012-2019: an overview of the main developments

The low point of 2010 was briefly replaced by a temporary improvement of the relations due to Russian assistance in Japan's triple disaster in March 2011 but it was not until 2012 that a significant change happened, as Russian high-ranking officials continued their visits to the disputed islands. Russia changed its position towards Japan in early 2012 when the presidential candidate Putin stated that as soon as he becomes president, "we will gather our foreign minister on one side and the Japanese minister on the other and give them a command—hajime [start]", suggesting thus the need to restart negotiations and resolve the territorial dispute in a way that could be regarded as a draw (Brown 2014, 86-87). Until the breakdown of good relations in 2014 due to Russia's annexation of Crimea and destabilising actions in Eastern

Ukraine, the negotiations over the peace treaty were resumed in 2013 – for the first time since 2001, although only on a vice-ministerial level, and a new format of 2+2 was introduced (Brown 2014, 87). The format, which supposes simultaneous consultations of both countries' foreign and defence ministers was seen as a huge step since both Japan and Russia only had such meetings in place with a very limited number of states (Hirose 2018, 5). The inaugural meeting, for instance, resulted in more intense security cooperation as it was agreed to "conduct ground-to-ground unit exchanges between land forces and mutual dispatch of exercise observers on a regular basis, and bilateral exercises between counter-piracy units of the MSDF and Russian Navy in the Gulf of Aden, as well as regular hosting of the Japan–Russia Cyber Security Meeting" (Brown 2018, 14). Cooperation continued and even slightly improved also in economic and energy sectors as the trade volume rose to 37 million USD in 2013 and in 2012 Japan indicated willingness to build a 17 billion USD LNG terminal in Vladivostok (Yennie-Lingdren 2017).

In 2014, as a consequence of Russia's annexation of Ukrainian Crimea, together with other members of G7 (from which Russia was expelled) Japan introduced sanctions against Russia. Japanese sanctions were rather soft and not imposing any even somewhat significant economic costs for Russia in comparison to those of other G7 members, which indicated Japan's desire to continue pursuing close ties with Russia (Kitade 2016, Yennie-Lingdren 2017, 157). Even though Russia still viewed the sanctions adopted by Japan clearly as an unfriendly move, the reaction to Japanese sanctions was way milder compared to those of the EU and US, and Russia even expressed openness to resume the frozen 2+2 meetings (Dian and Kireeva 2020, 866-867). Nevertheless, negotiations over the peace treaty and various political exchanges were cancelled, including Putin's planned state visit to Japan.

The relations began to improve again in May 2016 with Japan's Prime Minister Abe's visit to Moscow, which resulted in resuming of the contact on all levels, including several Putin-Abe meetings throughout the year as well as the culmination in the form of the Yamaguchi/Tokyo Summit. Although the summit was expected to bring the countries closer to the resolution of territorial issues and the signing of the peace treaty, the result was limited to intensified economic activity. This included an agreement to cooperate based on the 8-point plan that Abe proposed back in May as a confidence-building measure as well as to explore the possibility of joint economic activity on the Southern Kuriles "without compromising on the countries' respective positions on the territorial issue, with a possibility of signing a special accord" (Kireeva 2019, 81). The 2+2 talks were also resumed and continued into 2017 through 2019

and were complemented by exchanges of other security officials such as heads of respective national security councils as well as chiefs of general staff or the countries' militaries. In addition, the countries intensified their security cooperation in the field of non-traditional security threats as well as explored the establishment of joint drug enforcement training facilities (Brown 2018, 15).

1.3. Explanations for the limited rapprochement of 2012-19

The frequent contact between Russian and Japanese heads of state and foreign ministers continued until the beginning of 2020, when communication was thwarted by the global COVID-19 pandemic. And although the relations seemed to be on a quite high level, with negotiations over the peace treaty continuing and economic cooperation showing positive trends, the evident rapprochement was viewed to remain rather limited, unpromising or having no momentum (Rozman 2017, Kireeva 2019; Hirose 2018). The reasons that are brought forward to explain why the potential meaningful upgrade of Russo-Japanese relations failed to materialise largely concern two main dimensions. First, as James Brown (2018, 18) argues, the relationship between the two countries is determined by the fact that "while the Cold War may have ended, Japan and Russia remain on different sides of a geopolitical divide". Russia's interest in developing a closer relationship with Japan is hindered by the fact that Japan heavily depends on the US in its foreign policy decisions, particularly in matters of security, which leads Russia to view Japan as a de facto puppet of the US. The existence of the alliance between the US and Japan as well as their large-scale defence cooperation are viewed by Moscow as a security threat, especially with Russia-US rivalry becoming more serious since 2014. For instance, Japan's plan to improve its missile defence by purchasing Aegis Ashore systems from the US to protect itself from the North Korean threat was viewed by Russia as a way of "undermining strategic stability and triggering a dangerous arms race" and targeting Russian and Chinese nuclear deterrents (Kireeva 2019, 89; Brown 2018, 18). Also, in the context of the territorial dispute, Russia's one big concern has been the potential deployment of US troops and missile systems on the Kurile islands in the case of their transfer, despite the apparent strategic insignificance of such possible developments. Nevertheless, Russia repeatedly asked to guarantee the impossibility of deployment of US troops on the islands, which was rendered a precondition for any possible negotiations on the transfer, even though it is almost impossible that Japan would agree to such conditions (Kireeva 2019, 92-93). Moreover, the possibility of a closer and more strategic relationship between Russia and Japan has been hindered by

Russia's alignment with China against the West. Russia may be hesitant to pursue such a relationship with Japan due to the risk of upsetting its strategic partner China, which has several unresolved and pressing issues with Japan, including territorial disputes. (Pajon 2017, 21).

Secondly, the impossibility of further development of Russo-Japanese relations is explained by domestic constraints that are present in both countries. First, there is a factor of public opinion: while Russians oppose any territorial concessions, especially after the annexation of Crimea, the Japanese are strongly in favour of restoration of sovereignty over all four occupied islands, even if not immediately. Moreover, as Chugrov and Streltsov (2017) show, there are no majorities in either country that would express overly positive sentiments towards the other, even though there is a widespread appreciation of one another's culture, and the negative sentiment is not prevailing either. The close association of the territorial issue with Russian and Japanese national identity, and in particular the view of WWII, leaves little room for manoeuvre for the leaders of both nations to navigate the process of improving relations without risking a loss of popular support. (Rozman 2017, Kireeva 2019, 93).

However, the limited rapprochement of 2012-19 took place despite these limitations. There are three main explanations that are presented in the literature on the topic. First, the overtures by both countries might be seen as wedge strategies, that are used to de-align Russia from China and Japan from the US amidst growing tension in Sino-Japanese and Russo-American relations. Dian and Kireeva (2020) argue that Russia has been wooing Japan to breach Western solidarity as well as improve its own security providing Japan with incentives to pursue policies more independent from the US. To achieve this, the transfer of some disputed territories as a reward is coupled with a coercive strategy of linking the potential resolution to Japan's willingness to compromise on its alliance with the US. On the other side, Japan has been using mainly economic incentives, providing Russia with an alternative to Chinese money and lowering thus its dependence on Beijing. This, in turn, is argued to prevent Russia from siding with China in the issues concerning Sino-Japanese relations. It is also argued that Russia has been indicating the willingness to build closer ties with Japan with the ultimate goal of the resolution of the territorial dispute and signing of the peace treaty in order to "provide the incentives for Japan's overtures towards Russia and its willingness to implement rewarding measures and take a muted stance on Russia's conflicts with the West" (Dian and Kireeva 2020, 877).

The question of economic benefits that both countries could get from building a closer relationship is one of the most discussed in the literature on the recent rapprochement. Many have argued that it is the complementarity of the countries' economies that has been the driving force behind the developing partnership. Wrenn Yennie-Lingdren (2017), for instance, focuses on the energy relations between Russia and Japan, and argues that they "are not just a case of a "marriage of convenience" […] but rather provide an impetus for frequent high-level political dialogue on issues that have long plagued the bilateral relationship, namely the unsigned peace treaty and dispute over the Northern Territories". It is argued that it is both in Russian and Japanese interests to diversify their energy relations – in the case of Russia it is the consideration of the decrease in the importance of its European market, and in the case of Japan its desire to guarantee a more secure and cheap energy supply, which Russia is able to provide in comparison with that coming from the Middle East, Japan's main energy supplier (Brown 2014, Yennie-Lingdren 2017). Moreover, it is the economic potential of the RFE that plays a significant role. As a rather underdeveloped region of Russia, it is in need of considerable investment that Japan is able to provide, especially considering the fact that the development of its huge energy potential would both improve hydrocarbons-reliant Russian economy as well as, again, provide Japan with cheaper energy (Sevastyanov 2017. 53).

Also, as Brown (2014) argues, attracting Japanese investment would reduce Russian dependency on China. Regardless of Russia's decisive "pivot to the East" and closer alignment with China in foreign policy, Moscow is argued to still have serious concerns about Chinese influence. Expansion of energy sales to other Asian countries is thus necessary and Japan, as the world's third economy, is an attractive destination since Russia is "reluctant to tie itself into a monopolistic relationship in which China, as the stronger economy, would be able to dictate terms" (Brown 2014, 98). Moreover, it is not only the Chinese economic influence that Russia might be worrying about. The increasing Chinese military capability as well as its bolder activity in regions Russia views as being its legitimate, traditional sphere of influence such as the Arctic or Sea of Okhotsk have also been of great concern for Russia (Kireeva 2019, 83; Brown 2014, 105). So, despite Russia's welcoming attitude towards the rise of China as an antidote for US hegemony and its continued orientation towards building extensive strategic partnerships with Beijing, Russia is said to have been building ties with Japan as a counterbalance to the increasing Chinese military and economic power (Brown 2014, 105). However, it is also argued that there is another reason why Russia is building closer ties with Japan in the context of the Sino-Russian partnership: by pursuing closer cooperation with Japan

Russia is showing China that it is not the only economic actor in the RFE, incentivising it thereby to increase its economic activity in the region (Sevastyanov 2017, 55).

Lastly, the rapprochement is explained by the personal interest of and relationship between the respective leaders, Russia's Putin and Japan's Abe. As far as Abe is concerned, his strong desire to resolve the dispute and normalise the relations with Russia was attributed to his family legacy, as well as his position on the resolution of the territorial dispute, which is much more compatible with the Russian position thereon (Rozman 2017, 79). This softer position was in turn permitted by his popularity at home, strong nationalist credentials as well as considerable political power and influence vis-à-vis his ruling party and the bureaucracy, which is very rare in Japanese politics (Brown 2014, 90-91; Rozman 2017, 79). Gilbert Rozman (2017, 80) also argues that the normalisation of relations with Japan and the associated resolution of the territorial issue lingering from the end of WWII serves the realisation of Abe's desire to "put an end to the post-war era of Japan being perceived as a defeated power, and, on the other, to find room to construct a different narrative of history and the national identity of Japan".

As for Putin's personal interest in advancing Russo-Japanese relations, it has been viewed as relatively unimportant if not non-existent. However, Brown (2014) has argued that it is the history of close personal relationships he has developed during his years at the top of Russian politics that made him more inclined to pursue a closer relationship with Japan, notably with former PM Mori Yoshiro who has been a significant factor of Japanese politics even after leaving the office. He also emphasised Putin's personal interest in judo, which is, according to Brown (2014, 89), "not as flimsy a reason as it first might appear" and suggested that "some of his affection for the sport might extend to its country of origin [i.e., Japan]. What is more important, however, and what has been brought forward as one of the reasons, or at least supporting factors of the rapprochement, is the close personal relationship the two leaders managed to develop (Brown 2014, Sevastyanov 2017, 57; Yennie-Lingdren 2017, 158).

What is not addressed in the existing scholarship on the limited rapprochement of 2012-19 is, however, its conditions of possibility in the context of the 2014 situation in Ukraine. That is, even though the literature provides reasons as to why the rapprochement happened and why it was limited and unfruitful, none of the studies tries to answer the question of n how it became possible in the first place. The conditions of possibility of the rapprochement are not questioned – it is assumed that the interplay between enabling and restricting factors led to the kind of limited rapprochement we could witness in 2012-19. What is not explored is how Russia was

able to resume amicable relations with Japan against the backdrop of the sanctions and overall downgrade of the relations in 2014-15 Even the explanations based on the fact the Japanese sanctions were lacking in substance, had no significant effects on Russian economy and were accompanied by much more temperate rhetoric in condemning Russian actions, it is not obvious or self-evident that Russia would not have reacted to Japan's action in a more confrontational way that would not allow for the "honeymoon" between the two countries.

In order to get a deeper understanding of Russo-Japanese relations and the rapprochement in particular, it is necessary to explore Russian foreign policy towards Japan from a poststructuralist perspective, focusing on the discursive construction of Japan, the ways in which it was represented in Russian foreign policy discourse. For it is the representations that "enable actors to 'know' the object and to act upon what they 'know'", making certain paths of action possible while others unthinkable (Dunn 2008, 80). Before moving to the part where I will outline the fundamental theoretic assumptions behind the present study and explain how exactly poststructuralist theory of International Relations helps to understand the Russo-Japanese rapprochement of 2012-19, it is worth giving a brief outline of Russia-West relations relevant to the period as well as the relationship Japan has with the West.

2. The research puzzle: Russia, Japan and the West

In this chapter, I explain the research puzzle of the thesis in more detail. I start by explaining the reasoning behind considering Japan as Western, at least to a degree, showing why Russo-Japanese relations could be studied in the context of Russia-West relations. And in the second section, I give a brief overview of the Russia-West relations, outlining why the Russo-Japanese rapprochement as examined from the perspective of Russia-West relations seems to be an outlier that needs to be researched in more detail.

2.1. Japan as a part of the West

The main premise behind the research puzzle I am trying to solve in this study is the fact that Japan could be regarded as a "quasi-Western" state, a part of the West. Most explicitly it is obvious from its close relationship with the US, on which it is reliant for its security, and which has been exerting influence on Japan's foreign policy since the end of WWII. Even though some have been arguing that Japan is seeking a more independent foreign and security policy, Adam Liff (2019) argues that these efforts are nevertheless consistent with Japan's deep political integration with the US and are exemplary of the indispensability of the Japan-US alliance. For instance, he argues that since 2012, i.e. the beginning of the Russo-Japanese rapprochement, Japan has "doubled down" on the alliance with the US and shown unambivalent alignment with it: as he argues, it "has actively pursued significantly deeper ties and even rendered possible, and made an implicit political commitment to take on, far greater security risk vis-a`-vis its ally than ever before – even beyond a strict 'defence of Japan' scenario" (Liff 2019, 16). Or, as Christopher Hughes (2018, 55) shows, the several significant developments in the Japan-US alliance, including the revision of Japan's Defence Guidelines in 2015 that widen and deepen the scope of the allies' military and security cooperation, indicate Japan's willingness to "function as a more capable and willing US ally, or a "normal" ally in the sense of being willing not just to provide support, but now, in certain contingencies, even to fight alongside the US".

It is also Japan's invocation of certain values in its foreign policy that indicate its location in the West. Its foreign policy behaviour, be it Abe's signature vision of Free and Open Indo-Pacific, its intensifying security cooperation with states other than US in the Asia-Pacific or its relation with the European Union, is largely based on values one might consider Western as they are practically identical to the ones present in broadly Western foreign policy discourse

(Wirth 2015; Hosoya 2012; Kitaoka 2019). Christian Wirth (2015), for example, argues that Japan has been consistently trying to secure its position at the top of the hierarchy of the US-centric international society exactly through its alliance with the US, trying thus to secure and maintain its place in the West. Building closer ties with the US by emphasising the bond between the two counties based on such values as democracy, liberalism, respect for human rights and the rule of international law serves Japan the purpose of differentiation from inferior Asia as stereotyped by Japan (especially in the context of Sino-Japanese relations) and reinforcement and stabilisation of Japan's identity as a first-tier country (Wirth 2015, 299). And even though it has been argued that Japanese identity is not and cannot be purely Western as the West is still seen as an Other (e.g. Tamaki 2019, 122), the acknowledgement of its superior status leads to the efforts to catch up with and be recognised by it. In this context, examining the Japanese Self versus Russian Other, Bukh (2009, 339) shows that the incorporation of Japan into Western hierarchical international order and the subsequent internalisation of Western modes of othering resulted in the construction of Russia in the way it was constructed in the Western discourse, as inferior and at times even dangerous, thus "reproducing Japan as part of the universal realm of Western values and, simultaneously, as a unique nation located outside of the West". However, regardless of Japan not fully being a Western country, considering its foreign policy behaviour, especially since Abe's return to power in 2012, and the meaning of the US and the West more broadly for Japan's identity, I would nevertheless argue that with certain limitations it could be seen as a quasi-Western or at least essentially West-aligned country when it comes to considerations of foreign policy.

2.2. Russia-West relations

Having established that Japan can be considered a part of the West, at least when its foreign policy is concerned, in this section I will give a brief overview of the West's position in Russian foreign policy so that the surprising nature of Russo-Japanese rapprochement could be understood.

Russia's relationship with the broader West, which includes the states of Western Europe, the US and such organisations as NATO etc., has been profoundly complex and in constant evolution. At the time of the rapprochement with Japan, Russia-West relations have been experiencing an acute degradation, most notably after the annexation of Crimea in 2014. However, the relations with the West started deteriorating even earlier, since around the late

2000s, when Russia took a course on a more assertive and confrontational foreign policy. This turn is generally explained as a reaction to the West's unwillingness to recognise it as an equal partner and include it in the Western-centric international order. As Tsygankov (2019, 1) argues, Russian foreign policy is "particularly influenced by the development and behaviour of Western nations" and largely determined by "whether or not the West's international actions are perceived by Russian officials as accepting Russia as an equal and legitimate member of the world". As Russia's overtures towards the West in the 1990s and early 2000s failed since the West, in Russia's perception, failed to recognise its legitimate security concerns and has been dismissing its perceived great power status, confrontational foreign policy came to the fore. Since the positive engagement with the West did not bear any fruit, i.e., did not deliver any meaningful recognition, the hope of becoming an equal, recognised member of the international society has changed to frustration with and fear of the West, resulting in, as Tsygankov (2014) puts it, Russia seeking to "actively shape the international relations by challenging actions of others, particularly the United States, if they were "unilateral" and disrespectful of international law". This is being expressed in the emergence of the idea of Russia as a true defender of uncorrupted European values, a member of international society, which, unlike the West is not hypocritical, does not strive for unipolarity and domination but promotes just world order (Neumann 2016, 1393; Roberts 2017). Or, as Roberts (2017, 37) argues, Russia's new narrative "appears to be shaped in part by an understanding of Russia's global potential as an alternative to the West, combined with concerns about a hostile West that has failed to acknowledge Russia's rightful place as a major power in the international system by denying its cultural and strategic relationships in its own backyard".

It is exactly these changes in Russia's foreign policy discourse that call for a closer investigation of its relations with Japan, which have been quite amicable against the backdrop of this discursive turn in Russia's foreign policy. If we consider Japan's solid position in the West, its quite unequivocal adherence to the Western, US-centric international order, and on the opposite, Russia's rather negative, challenging attitude towards it that was dominant at the time of the rapprochement, it is necessary to understand how Russia was able, for whatever reasons, to pursue the policy of improving relations with Japan.

3. Theoretical foundation: poststructuralist approach to foreign policy

As outlined in previous chapters, the most suitable theory that could help solve the research puzzle, i.e., how was it possible for Russia to advance the relationship with Japan in the context of deteriorating Russia-West relations, is poststructuralist discourse analysis. This chapter will give an overview of its main theoretical assumptions as well as how its application to the study of foreign policy could provide an understanding of the rapprochement in the sense of its conditions of possibility by focusing on representations of Japan in Russian foreign policy discourse, study of which is currently largely missing from the literature on Russo-Japanese relations.

3.1. Poststructuralist discourse analysis: general assumptions

In a broader sense poststructuralist discourse analysis theory refers to the study of social relations with a focus on language in use, or "language as power", as it is through language objects come into being, and are constituted (Dunn and Neumann 2016, 4; Hansen 2016, 101). As Henrik Larsen (2018, 64) puts it, "our knowledge about the social world is not a mirror image of the world but a product of our ways of categorising it". That is, there is no objective material reality independent of discourse, where discourse is "a system of statements in which each individual statement makes sense, produces interpretive possibilities by making it virtually impossible to think outside of it" (Doty 1999, 302). Objectivity in this sense is what we make of it – it is discursively constructed through language and its meaning is subject to change, i.e., what is considered to be objective now might be deemed not as such depending on the relevant discursive structure. What is important here, is that language, through which the construction of reality is taking place, is, as Lene Hansen (2006, 18) argues, social and political in its nature. It is social in the sense that it is not bound to the individual level but is "a series of collective codes and conventions that each individual needs to employ to make oneself comprehensible" (ibid.). And language is political in the sense that it should be seen as a "site for the production and reproduction of particular subjectivities and identities while others are simultaneously excluded", which means that representations produced through it are contestable and unstable in nature, and thus subject to change (ibid.). Moreover, as Kevin Dunn (2008, 80) argues, the political nature of language is also relevant so that the representations produced through it have "very real political implications" since they enable actors to "know"

the reality in a certain way which means that certain ways of acting upon this reality become possible, while others are being excluded. That is, it is through discourse the meaning of reality is generated, allowing subjects to act upon this materiality depending on how it is represented (Hansen 2016, 96). So, employing the example of Dunn (2008, 80-81), representing a hurricane survivor carrying food as a "looter" or "having found" makes a difference: in the first case, the police might be expected to arrest or even shoot the person, while in the second case assist the survivor.

Another crucial assumption is the role and importance of identity. Hansen (2006, 20) argues that discourses give materiality meaning by "drawing upon a particular set of identity constructions". That is, the actor's identity is relevant in the sense that based on it representations of reality are being constructed. That is, however, not to say that the relationship between identity and discourse is straightforwardly causal – rather, discourses and identity are co-constitutive, that is, "identities are […] articulated as the reason why policies should be enacted, but they are also (re)produced through these very policy discourses: they are simultaneously (discursive) foundation and product" (Hansen 2006, 19). That means that while identity could be relatively stable, being thus able to shape policymaking for quite long periods, it is still fundamentally unstable and malleable – since discourses themselves are inherently changeable and historically contingent, as Roxanne Doty (1996, 6 quoted in Milliken 1999) argues, "any fixing of a discourse and the identities constructed by it can only be partial in nature".

In poststructuralist theory, identities are seen also as relational, i.e., constructed through practices of linking and differentiation which stems from the very nature of language, where meaning creation is based on the juxtaposition of the object to its opposite (Hansen 2006, 17). That is, an object is defined not only by the qualities directly attached to it but abut by how these qualities related to this object's opposite. But it is not only the sheer difference that is of importance – it is also the positioning of these differences in terms of social qualities attached to them that has an impact on how these objects are treated (Larsen 2018, 64). That is, as Hansen (2006, 18-19) shows, for example, in traditional family discourse not only are men and women represented as having certain qualities that are opposite to the ones of men, but also as being supplementary to the superior male.

3.2. Poststructuralist discourse analysis in the study of Foreign Policy

This broader poststructuralist approach, applied to the study of foreign policy, treats it as fundamentally discursive. As Amy Skonieczny (2001, 439) argues, discourse analytical approach to foreign policy implies that language is significant as it has productive power, and discourses, thus, "impose meaning and construct possible policy actions". This means that when conducting foreign policy, states are not basing their action on the objective factors out there but are rather basing their conduct on certain representations thereof and are constrained by the discursive structures. As Hansen (2006, 15) puts it, "the productive nature of language implies that policy discourse is seen as relying upon particular constructions of problems and subjectivities, but that it is also through discourse that these problems and subjectivities are constructed in the first place", which means the co-constitutive nature of policy and identity. In this sense, for certain policy choices to be made, they need largely be discursively constructed in a way that would correspond to the state's current identity – i.e., foreign policy discourse could be regarded as a link that stabilising the relationship between identity and policy (ibid., 25). In that way, as David Campbell (1990, 266) shows, foreign policy is instrumental in reinforcing of the state's Self by being "a boundary-producing practice central to the production and reproduction of the identity in whose name it operates". However, though in his understanding, the Other needs to be radically different and threatening so that the Self's identity can be secured, Hansen (2006, 36) shows that it is not the case and "the articulation of less-than-radical Others within foreign policy discourse can also be shown by how the Other is situated within a web of identities rather than in a simple Self-Other duality". Thus, investigation of a state's foreign policy discourses not only allows to discover the structure that enables and constrains its foreign policy choices vis-à-vis one particular Other but also gives a better understanding of the Self's broader identity, allowing thus to grasp its behaviour more broadly.

As state's articulation of its identity through foreign policy is fundamentally discursive, stemming from the understanding of language having productive power, political speech is not seen a haphazard and offhand but as being constrained by the existing discursive structure, the basic conceptual logic available in society, and at the same time reshaping these very constraints, thus "setting the conditions for the next political struggle" (Wæver 2003, 30-31). This means, as Larsen (2018, 66) argues, that instead of focusing on what policymakers "really" mean by talking about foreign policy, what should be really paid attention to is the discursive structures cutting across texts, the ways discourses dominate and compete. Foreign

policy in this way, seen as a discursive practice, constructs the reality, and gives the reality its meaning as policymakers also are situated in the discursive space and are constrained by it (Doty 1993, 303). For the study of foreign policy, it means that the way reality is constructed and shaped by discourses constitutes policymaking in the sense of making some policies possible, while others unthinkable. These possible policy choices are determined by the way issues, which these policies are meant to address, are represented, where issues are meant in the broadest sense, i.e., including various actors, ideas and actions. This takes us back to the fundamental premise of poststructuralism, where materiality is inseparable from discourse, and it is the representation of reality that matters.

One important point therein is the non-causal nature of discourse, the fact that it does not fully explain foreign policy choices. As discourses only delineate the possibility of action, since they, by their very nature, never achieve full fixity so they rather "establish preconditions and parameters for the possibility of action, rather than explaining why certain choices are made" (Dunn 2008, 84). As Doty (1993, 298) argues, discursive approach is suited to answer how-questions and examining "how meanings are produced and attached to various social subjects/objects, thus constituting particular interpretive dispositions which create certain possibilities and preclude others". The non-causality of discourses is determined by their instability as there is always room for change. Hansen (2016, 106) suggests there are two ways in which changes in foreign policy are produced: the pressure appearing on the level of discourse itself and the changes in the foreign policy "issue". The first case stems from the competition of different discourses and the possibility of the fact that non-dominant discourses are able to challenge and influence the dominant one. In the second case, however, the change might come from the "material shifts", which render existing discourses irrelevant or create the necessity to locate the shift in a new discourse.

3.3. Identity and discourse in Russian foreign policy

As far as the specific topic of Russian foreign policy is concerned, there is a solid corpus of literature that addresses it from the point of identity and discourse, with most of them emphasising the role of Russia's great power identity is central to its foreign policy making. Ted Hopf (2002), studying Russian identity discourses in 1955 and 1999, for example, argues that the idea of Russia as a great power and the unthinkability of losing this status is present in all identities he identified, liberal and nativist-conservative alike. Consequently, this

omnipresent self-representation has accordingly been delineating its foreign policy options, although depending on the broader dominant foreign policy, or more broadly identity discourse. For instance, in his later study Hopf (2005) shows how different articulations of Russia's identity produced different foreign policy options in the case of its military intervention in Abkhazia with the crucial point being that all these identities "entailed the idea of Russia as a great power" (ibid., 226).

Identity is relational, i.e., formed through interactions with significant Others, Russian identity is not an exception. As Iver Neumann (2008, 2016) convincingly shows, Russia's main significant Other has been the West – first and foremost Europe but more recently and prominently, the United States. With the West being the main referent point, Russian identity discourses have been largely themed around the exact connection the two should have, generally speaking whether of similarity or difference as represented by the two broad Westerniser and Slavophile discourses (Neumann 2008; Malinova 2013, 74-75). This means that it is the interactions with and foreign policy towards the West that are most significant in the sense of Russia's identity formation. The concern is, however, rooted not only in the degree of similarity/difference but also recognition. As the notion of Russia as a great power is deeply rooted, as Hopf (2002) shows, in every Russian identity discourse, the interactions with the West are argued to be oriented towards gaining recognition from the outside as great power status cannot be fully attained by domestic means. Erik Ringmar (2002), employing Hegelian concept of "struggle for recognition" he argues that states too are driven by the desire to reaffirm their self-identity by seeking recognition of this identity from others. In this vein, he shows how Soviet Russia's foreign policy choices towards the West are best explained as being informed by the desire to be recognised as either as legitimate, great and superpower. Viacheslav Morozov (2013) similarly argues that Russia's subaltern position vis-à-vis the West, the lack of Western recognition as well as Russia's normative dependency on the West is what is shaping Russia's foreign policy choices.

Based on this and in line with this study's poststructuralist approach, Russian foreign policy could be said to be largely shaped by Russia's desire to seek recognition of its great power identity from the West, its main significant Other. Thus, the (ongoing) confrontation with the West could be regarded as exactly an example of Russia trying to articulate this very identity. This is a part of a cyclical pattern, where more liberal discourses that emphasise the commonality of Russia and the West are replaced with the ones emphasising difference and hostility and so on. As Neumann (2016) shows, for example, the current discourse where

Russia is represented as true Europe that is the only one standing for truly European values as opposed to rotten degrading (Western) Europe, and more hostile foreign policies deriving from this discourse have replaced the more integrationist identity discourse of the early 1990s. The logic behind this cyclicity lies again in the (perceived) backwardness of Russia vis-à-vis the West: more integrationist and liberal discourses become dominating when the backwardness is felt the most, creating the need to emulate the Western Other, which, at some point, is countered with a nationalist, anti-Western reaction – and as these two broad identity discourses have been omnipresent in Russia for centuries, the cycle is repeated (Neumann 2016, 1397). Or, as Andrei Tsygankov (2014) explains, Russia-West relationships cyclicity is based on emotions of fear, hope, frustration and anger, which Russia experiences towards the Western Other depending on the level of Western support in terms of recognition of its greatpowerness. He bases his approach on the idea of established social relations between Russia and the West which produce this cyclicity and likens the relationship to that of sibling rivalry, again emphasising Russia's inferiority and its desire not only to be recognised as *a power*, even if a *great* power, but rather as an *equal* great power that is included and recognised by the West. That is, it is not enough for Russia to just be given more leeway, stakes or a larger role in the international system so that it could pursue policies that would reinforce its claim of status – its actions and its status are to be not only recognised but almost approved, deemed acceptable for the Western community (Tsygankov 2014, 353).

This dual identity of being a great power along with the feeling of inferiority to the very states the recognition of great power identity is sought from has shaped Russian foreign policy in numerous ways. Looking at contemporary Russia (i.e., from 2000 on) it could be seen that the range of foreign policy choices has varied, leading to both more cooperative and confrontational behaviour towards the West. The more conciliatory path has much to do with Russia's quest for positive recognition in the form of its participation in various Western forums and associations as well as a demonstration of its "Western" credentials. As Morozov (2013) and Zarakol (2011) argue, Russia's inferior position vis-à-vis the West along with the West being the significant Other brings about Russia's strong dependence on the Western norms. That is, not being able to create an alternative vision of the international system it is forced to adhere to Western norms and values – like democracy and rule of law – even if only declaratively. For this reason, it had been seeking to join such formats as G7 and joined the US in the War on Terror hoping to be thus included into the Western collectivity and recognised as an equal great power. It has also to do with the apparent redefinition of what being a great

power means which, as Neumann (2008) and Zarakol (2011), for instance, argue, has shifted from being defined as having material capabilities to exercising a certain (modern Western) mode of governance. This is why even when Russia is exhibiting clearly antidemocratic behaviour it is still represented through the prism of Western norms. As Morozov (2013, 21) puts it, "the normalization and normativization of the West is a wide-spread phenomenon [and] references to Western norms and practices are often used to legitimize political choices, sometimes of the most illiberal nature". Moreover, as Malinova (2013) shows, even when setting Russia apart from the West and emphasising its great power identity, Russian presidents have resorted to the kind of language that still emphasises equality and commonality with the West, especially Europe. Neumann (2016) again is relevant here, stating that the latest confrontational, anti-Wester turn in Russia's foreign policy discourse still relies on heavily on normatively Western representation, even though some of them might be lagging in temporal dimension. That is, Russia is actually seeking to be recognised as a great power that is part and parcel of the international society or, as Anne Clunan (2018,49) argues, "most Russians today want to participate in the contemporary, Western-dominated international society, but on their own terms—terms that were defined in the early 1800s, before the global dominance of liberalism". The West's central role in Russia's identity is also visible in the ways Russia's presents oneself to Western audiences. Valentina Feklyunina (2008) thus shows that the images that Russia projects to external audiences, and particularly to the West, are the ones that emphasise Russia's value as a reliable partner, both in economic as well as political sense, which is in fact indispensable – the West needs Russia to tackle the challenges it faces. Russia in this sense, again attempts to gain recognition by presenting oneself as a great power which is befitting the role of such, the one they can share their role in the international system – the one that respects democratic principles, having contributed to the perseverance of democracy through its sacrifice in WWII, and the one that has no imperial ambitions (Feklyunina 2008).

It is also the case with Russia's representation of some of its foreign policy actions, such as, inter alia, invasions of Georgia and Ukraine, as being in accordance with international law. Russia's self-representation as a moral actor committed to the non-ideological application of international law as opposed to Western states which exhibit staunch hypocrisy and selectivity when practising international law in this sense has a dual significance. First, as Kurowska (2014) argues, the purpose of challenging Western hegemony and promoting Russia's vision of multipolarity, articulating thus its great power identity. And second, the emphasis on Russia being a state that conforms to international law, most prominently to the principles of the UN

Charter, however, misinterpreted or mocked they might be, reinforces its greatpowernes as adherence to international norms is the very definition of a proper great power (Reshetnikov 2011, 160)

Even such foreign policy discourses that might seem to be rooted in anti-Western sentiment are arguably fitting the frame of Western normativity. Russia's multipolarity discourse is a prime example here. Having become one of the main focal points of Russian foreign policy already from the late 1990s, it entails the understanding that the unipolar world order based on Western collective unipolarity, with the US and the broader West being the only, should be and even is being replaced with another, more inclusive, equal and diverse arrangement (Makarychev and Morozov 2011, 335-336). The notion itself is argued to be rooted in the dissatisfaction with the inability and unwillingness of the West to include Russia in the global decision-making process, denying it thus the recognition as a world power it deserves (Kurowska 2014, 491-492). Deriving from this, Russia has been envisaging a more balanced and accepting system of international relations that also includes Russia, as well as other non-Western members as centres of power. And although as Makarychev and Morozov (2011) as well as Smith (2013) argue that the debate on and practical application of the concept has been inconsistent with many varieties of multipolarity existing and none becoming the dominant mainstream, the one closest to achieving this status is what the former call the "great power management" approach and latter calls "concert-based multipolarity" with elements of "competitive multipolarity". This vision of multipolarity, similarly to what used to be the Concert of Europe, suggests that there are several truly sovereign similarly powerful poles that are to manage world affairs, with their role being times more significant than that of inferior "non-poles". This model implies several aspects to be workable. First, the poles are the only truly sovereign countries, which are able to conduct independent foreign policy (Smith 2013, 46). And second, despite the competitive relations between the poles, there is mutual respect for the respective chosen models of development and value systems, which are the preconditions for successful depoliticised management. In this way, by promoting the idea of multipolarity, rejecting thereby the idea of Western dominance, Russia again attempts to reinforce its great power identity by casting itself as one of the few truly important states that should have a special position in the international system, i.e., one of the great powers. However, as Morozov (2013) argues, even if this idea at the first sight challenging the existing liberal, Western world order, it nevertheless relies on exactly Western normative concepts, first and foremost democracy and liberalism. Analysing Russia's main foreign policy documents,

he illustrates that "even when it opposes the West, cannot present a meaningful alternative and thus has to use the language of liberal democracy to voice its concerns" (Morozov 2013, 22). Or, as Clunan (2018, 53) similarly puts it, looking at Russia's attempt to promote multipolarity "we see a state seeking rules-based means to govern interstate relations mainly through the addition of new multilateral and regional institutions, not a grand plan to overthrow the existing system". So, when emphasising the unfairness and abnormality of the current world order, Russia is in fact just seeking to democratise it in a way that would result in Russia becoming a more significant actor in this very order, becoming equal to the West and be recognised as such.

Moreover, adherence to the idea of multipolarity creates an opportunity for Russia to expand the number of states that could be regarded as sources of recognition for its great power identity. The inability to receive Western recognition thus produces discourses emphasising alternative sources of recognition – emerging non-Western great powers – and the discourse of multipolarity being the prime example. The case might also be not only the reluctance of the West, but also, as Ayse Zarakol (2011, 237) argues, the conditions Russia finds itself in relation to the West which puts it into "the kind of position to attempt status enhancement by leading a charge of outsiders". The great emphasis that Russia puts on, for instance, BRICS is a prime example of that – Russia leading a loose community of states that are, to various extent, dissatisfied with the current world order, and Western dominance it presupposes. However, while this discourse might be an integral part of Russia's great power identity, it nevertheless is insufficient. As Neumann (2016, 1399) argues, "[a]lthough China, and to a lesser degree India, are emerging as alternative Great Powers from which to seek recognition as a Great Power, the point at which such recognition would remove the need for Russia to have the recognition of western powers to maintain its Great Power status remains a long way off". The centrality of the West as Russia's main Other precludes it from happening as relating to these alternative great powers is not as integral to Russia's (great power) identity.

3.4. Utility of poststructuralist approach for the study of Russo-Japanese rapprochement

The framework for the study of foreign policy as outlined above is extremely relevant for the study of Russo-Japanese relations in 2012-2019 due to the following reasons reasons. First of all, there seem to be no studies (at least in English and Russian languages) that would address

the discursive dimension of Russo-Japanese rapprochement nor the role of Russia's identity in this context. These studies, reviewed in detail in the first chapter, are approaching the rapprochement from the perspective of objective interests of the two countries when explaining the enabling factors behind it, or relying on rather rigid conceptions of identity when explaining the factors that have been constraining the development of a closer relationship. Thus, employing a poststructuralist approach for the study of this period in Russo-Japanese relations would close this gap in the literature and provide a more comprehensive understanding thereof by providing insight into the discursive structure that has brought these factors about.

Secondly, this approach, by focusing on the Russian side of the dyad, would help comprehend the very possibility of the rapprochement that was taking place in the context of deteriorating Russia-West relations. In this case, poststructuralist framework is helpful in providing an explanation for the seeming contradiction, where regardless of Russian representations of the Western Other as radically different and threatening, which are currently central to its identity, Russia has still been pursuing closer relations with a quasi-Western Japan. This unlikely development calls for the investigation of Russian foreign policy discourses so it could be understood how Russia has been representing Japan as something different to the West, which allowed Russia to maintain the stable link between this particular policy and its anti-Western identity. Thus, understanding what kind of Japan was being constructed, what identity was ascribed to it, and how this identity relates to the radical Western Other, and also to the Russian Self, would allow us to understand how the rapprochement became imaginable and thus possible for Russian policymakers.

4. Methodology

This study's methodology is informed by the poststructuralist discourse analytical approaches as developed by Hansen (2006, 2012) and Doty (1993). According to Hansen (2006, 37), due to the discursive epistemology of discourse analysis its focus lies at the level of explicit articulations. As she explains, it is due to the centrality of language as the social medium where the meaning is generated, implying that foreign policies are to be connected through discourse, which provides representations for the issues the policies are meant to solve (Hansen 2012, 102). That is, what is investigated is the linguistic practices, or "how language works to produce subjects and their relationships" (Doty 1993, 305). Thus, it is necessary to analyse how, in which ways Others and the Self are constructed and positioned vis-à-vis each other. Following Doty (1993, 306), there are three main linguistic mechanisms, or analytic categories at play when the construction of reality is concerned, and enable one to get at "how discursive practices constitute subjects and objects and organize them into a "grid of intelligibility". The first, presupposition, refers to the practice of giving background knowledge that is taken to be true, i.e., "implying something about the existence of subjects, objects, and their relation to one another" – therefore, presupposition "constructs a particular kind of world in which certain things are recognized as true" (ibid). The second mechanism, predication, refers to the practice of bestowing particular qualities to subjects, thus constructing these subjects as having a particular identity as well as being able to act in certain ways (ibid). The third mechanism or subject positioning implies the process of relating the subjects, constructed through two previous mechanisms, to each other, creating a particular relationship between them. Hansen (2006), in a similar vein, refers to the simultaneous process of linking and differentiation. According to her, linking means ascribing certain qualities to the subject, bringing it thus about. At the same time there is the process of differentiation or juxtaposition of the links of one subject to another, i.e., positioning of them vis-à-vis each other. It is through these mechanisms, Doty (1993) argues, the "world" is produced as various subjects are given certain positions and attributes, which in turn is the basis for the possibility of certain actions. For the present study this approach means that in order to understand how the rapprochement had been viewed as a possibility, I will analyse how Japan was constructed through these three mechanisms. That is, what kind of relevant background knowledge was accepted as true, what qualities was Japan attached (including those related to its Western association), and this particular representation of Japan was positioned vis-à-vis that of Russia.

Furthermore, Hansen (2006) proposes that a useful methodological technique for discourse analysis is identification of a limited number of basic discourses. As she argues, the analytical value of adopting the basic discourses approach is that they provide "a lens through which a multitude of different representations and policies can be seen as systematically connected and that they identify the key points of structuring disagreement within a debate" (Hansen 2006, 46). In this study, it is expected that Russia's representations of Japan are not bound to one discourse due to its simultaneous status as a desirable partner for Russia and a close associate of the West. Thus, adoption of the approach of basic discourses, which articulate different Selves and Others and due to the interlinked nature of identity and policy advocate rather different foreign policies (Hansen 2006, 48), might be relevant and useful for understanding how the rapprochement became possible but at the same time remained quite limited.

As for the point of text selection, there are several methodological choices to be made. Hansen (2006), for instance proposes three models of intertextuality for analysing foreign policy discourses. For the purposes of the present study, I opt for the second model that goes beyond the level of top foreign policy makers and incorporates a broader pool of actors that are concerned with foreign policy. There are two rationales behind my choice, which both rely on Aliaksei Khazarski's (2020) approach to discourse analysis. First, investigating official foreign policy discourse (that of top policymakers) is most relevant due to the nature of Russian politics which is highly centralised and concentrated, which means that "the speech acts of top officials will be particularly influential in shaping social reality" (Khazarski 2020, 27). It is also because as Dunn and Neumann (2016, 97) argue, "policymakers are situated within the larger political and public sphere, which means that their representations draw upon and are formed by the representations articulated by a large number of individuals, institutions, and media outlets" And second, inclusion of think-tanks stems from their increasing role of ideological producers, which makes them important partners to the centre in the constructions of social reality (Khazarski 2020, 27). These sources also satisfy all criteria brought out by Hansen (2006, 85) as they "set out clear constructions of identity and policy; they are widely attended to by other politicians, the public and by governments throughout the world; and they are articulated by a formal political authority". Relying on these choices, the texts analysed are originating from such top foreign policy officials such as the President and the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Defence as well as other lower-ranking foreign policymakers as the official spokesperson for the MFA or Deputies of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Other analysed texts

include articles from Russian International Affairs Council and Valdai Club think tanks, two major Russian think tanks that are closely affiliated with the government.

The analysed texts are from the period of 2011 to 2019, which has been regarded as the period of the limited rapprochement between Russia and Japan. The period is divided into three phases of 2011-13, 2014-15 and 2016-19, which are mirroring the dynamic of the rapprochement. The first marks the beginning of the closer relationship, starting from the low point after Medvedev's visit; the second marks the breakdown and freeze in the relations that originates from Russia's actions in Ukraine, and the third marks the "restart" and development of a more intimate relationship as well as its gradual decline. This division allows us to track the changes in the discursive structure (if there are any) that enabled and constrained Russia's policy towards Japan, i.e., which representations of Japan initially allowed the rapprochement, what kind of influence had Japanese reaction to the events of 2014, if those representations were in any way modified, as well as what kind of representations allowed for the restart of the rapprochement, despite Russia's much more radical discourse on the West.

The exact texts were selected from such sources as the website of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the President of Russia, the Ministry of Defence, as well as such as Russian International Affairs Council and Valdai Discussion Club. The texts were chosen based on a specific keyword search for "Japan" and "Japanese". The found texts were further narrowed down to the ones that specifically addressed the substance of Russo-Japanese relations or had sections dedicated to the problem of such, or in the case of think tanks, also to texts that discussed the implication of developments in Japan-US relations.

The final selection comprised of A total of 174 texts, with 125 from official discourse and 49 from think tank discourse. Of the official discourse texts, 61 were from the Minister of Foreign Affairs and his Deputies, 34 were the Ministry's official comments and statements from the Ministry's spokesperson (including briefings), 17 were statements from the President, 10 were from Russia's ambassadors to Japan, and 2 were from the Ministry of Defence The think tank discourse texts comprised of 30 from Russian International Affairs Council and 19 from Valdai Discussion Club. These include not only articles by the experts affiliated with the think tanks but also their interviews published in other media outlets. The number of analysed texts by period also broadly reflects the timeframe of rapprochement as outlined above. The number of texts gradually increased as the relationship developed and intensified. From 2011-13, there were 29 analysed texts (26 from official discourse and 3 from think tank discourse), 33 texts

from 2014-15 (24 from official discourse and 9 from think tank discourse), and 112 texts from 2016-19 (75 from official discourse and 37 from think tank discourse).

5. Russia's representations of Japan

In what follows I will examine the primary representations of Japan that emerged in official and think tank discourses between 2011 and 2019. The main representations found in the discourse are concerned with Japan's autonomy in the context of its alliance with the US, Japan's orientation as a Western country as well as a key player in the Asia-Pacific region. In addition, I reveal the ways Japan was positioned vis-à-vis Russia in the categories of inferiority, equality and superiority, as well as display the factors of Japan's emotionality and artificial obstacles in the Russo-Japanese relationship. It is worth noting that the representations identified in this analysis remained relatively consistent throughout the examined period, with any temporal differences being noted where relevant. The analysis below is based on the pool of sources described in Chapter 4, and the references provided are illustrative or provide the most articulate examples of the representations.

5.1. Autonomous Japan and US-Japan alliance

Both in official and think tank discourses Japan was represented in a dual way as an autonomous, sovereign and independent country, but at the same time dependent on the US to a certain degree, albeit progressively in a rather limited sense. Foreign Minister Lavrov, for example, while admitting that "undoubtedly Japan is a sovereign state that makes its own decisions based on its foreign and defence policy" (MOFA 2018a), and conversely calling it a "country that is not entirely independent in its foreign policy decisions" (MOFA 2016a). The role of Japan as a rising independent power in world affairs was constantly emphasised and even welcomed. Japan was also characterised as a country that, similarly to Russia, considers foremost its national interest when conducting foreign policy, regardless of the pressure from the US or the West more broadly (Trenin 2017; Lukyanov 2016). Its relations with Russia, but also, for instance, with Iran were brought as an example of the primacy of national interest and, thus, independence and pragmatism of Japanese foreign policy (Timofeev 2019).

Also, in the context of the Japan-US Alliance, especially after the beginning of Trump's presidency when American foreign policy was described to have become more isolationist, Japan was represented as, having understood the limitations and uncertainties that this change implied, being in the process of embarking on a more independent foreign policy course. For instance, Streltsov (2019), expressing this understanding ubiquitous in the think tank discourse writes: "In the context of the gradual reduction of the economic and military-political presence

of the United States in East Asia and the emergence of doubts about the reliability of American security guarantees in Japan, more and more people are thinking about the need to be able to defend themselves on their own". The unpredictability and increasing disengagement of the US were being said to raise concerns about the state of alliance and distrust towards the ally, encouraging Japan to pursue foreign policy that would reflect its national interest, which is also implied to be at least to a degree incompatible to that of the US.

And even though the role of the US was still represented to be significant in the context of Japanese foreign policy behaviour, with officials questioning the degree of autonomy Japan has when formulating policy, citing the apparent pressure the American ally exerts on Japan (e.g., by naming the US Japan's "senior partner", "guardian", and Japan as having "strongest dependence" on the US), the alliance was represented, especially by think tankers, as equal and Japan being able to withstand pressure, or as acting in line with the US due to converging concerns or out of national interest, i.e., independently, voluntarily, not because of the pressure the US applies. So, the Japan-US relationship was described as symbiotic and Japan being the US's junior partner as just a stereotype (Panov 2015; Streltsov 2016).

One peculiar positioning of Japan vis-à-vis the US comes in relation of the installation of the US's missile defence system (MDS) Aegis Ashore in Japan. Beginning in 2013, it has been the main point of concern in relation to Japan-US relations in the official discourse. The prospective instalment, regarded as jeopardising the security architecture in the Asia-Pacific region (APAC), was represented as being led solely by the US with Japan having apparently to say of role in the process – in a way, Japan was described as having no real subjectivity in the matter, with Lavrov (MOFA 2018) stating that Japan is "hardly able to decide for the US" in the matter of MSD.

This representation has two implications. On the one hand, it emphasises the dependency of Japan on the US and its role as a junior partner in the alliance, a rule-taker – it is being "involved" into the installation. On the other hand, this representation denied Japan the responsibility for the virtually anti-Russian (and anti-Chinese) moves, meaning that it was not Japan but the US who threatened Russian security. This was implied by the constant naming of the MDS as "US MDS" (PRO SShA) which was being deployed not by Japan, but by the US (or just deployed) on Japanese territories, Japanese islands or "in Japan". A typical, very illustrative statement came in 2013 from Defence Minister Shoigu who was concerned with "creation of a global MDS by the US", which was additionally described as "the problem of

deploying an element of the US missile defence system on the territory of Japan" (MOD 2013). Even though it might seem as use of synonyms etc., language is much more implicit comparing with much more later and rare utterances (MOFA 2019a) where Japan is said to be participating in the development of global US MDS and supporting thus "American violating the IRNF Treaty" (MOFA 2017). This kind of simultaneous denying of Japanese responsibility and emphasis on the role of the US was also evident in the issue of Japanese sanctions against Russia. Japan, in this case, was represented as being pressured into adopting sanctions, and it was emphasised that Japan was not among the initiators but rather has joined them almost unwillingly.

5.2. Japan – a Western country

Another relevant representation concerns the positioning of Japan vis-à-vis the broader West, or more broadly representation of its general foreign political "orientation". However largely absent from the official discourse, in the think tank discourse Japan was explicitly represented as a Western country, or at least a part of the West. It was both described as being a part of "NATO in the East" with respect to the Japan-US alliance or a prospective "Germany in the East" (Kistanov 2017; Trenin 2012). Other references to Japan's Westness are even more explicit: it was represented as being a part of the" collective West", "being among Western states", "in the Western ranks" or "Western community". Even in more implicit statements, Japan was still staunchly Western. For instance, describing Japanese threat perception, Streltsov (2016b) argued that Japan is afraid of the "perspective of formation of anti-Western Moscow-Beijing axis". And even though he further adds that the axis might also have an anti-Japanese element, the emphasis on the anti-Western nature of the partnership implies the inclusion of Japan into the West.

Another, more frequent occasion is representation of Japan as the friendliest (or least anti-Russian) member of the G7 and could be viewed as Russia's intermediary or agent in the West. Being described as a "bridge into the West", Japan is also seen as the most pragmatic, constructive and non-militant member of the West which is key for communication with G7 and the collective West more broadly (Streltsov 2016, Trenin 2019). In this vein, Japan is not only seen as a pacifying force in the West when it comes to Russo-Western relations but, for instance, is also ascribed the role of a "peacekeeper" in the context of Irano-Western relations, which in turn again reinforces the representation of Japan as an autonomous, full-fledged actor

in world affairs (Streltsov 2019b; 2019c). The representation of intermediary was also present in the official discourse, illustrated by FM Lavrov's statement where he expressed hope that Japan will be able to explain Russian position on the Skripal poisoning case to the United Kingdom (MOFA 2016).

In the official discourse, there were scarce as well as rather incidental, inconsistent and implicit indications of Japan's position vis-à-vis the West which, however, differed from those in the think tank discourse . The only explicit reference was the explanation of the nuanced character of Japanese sanctions against Russia when compared to the Westerners, suggesting that Japan was not included in that category (MOFA 2015a). Other references included the juxtaposition of "Chinese and Japanese colleagues" to "Western colleagues", which was a category given by the interviewer, and the distinction being seemingly rather cultural or geographical (MOFA 2016b). On the other hand, the prospective visit of the Japanese prime minister was, for instance, directly compared to Western leader's visits to Russia, in which way Japan was assigned into the same category of Western states.

5.3. Japan as a key partner in Asia-Pacific

In a more geopolitical sense, Japan was routinely referred to as a key power in APAC, indispensable for achieving stability and security in the region. In this sense, Japan was represented as a country with its own interests and distinct modus operandi, both of which are not necessarily tied to or imposed by the US or West more broadly. In the official discourse, the scope of Japanese foreign policy was largely limited to APAC as the recurring topic of the significance of Japan was in relation to the North Korean (DPRK) nuclear issue. On this issue, acknowledging a certain degree of divergence of desirable course of action towards DPRK, Japan was represented as being a constructive partner moving towards the same goal as Russia. So, Russia's ambassador to Japan Mikhail Galuzin (MOFA 2018c) stated in an interview with TASS that while Russia's and Japan's positions on the issue of conflict management on the Korean peninsula diverge when it comes to the question of unilateral sanctions and the amount of pressure that should be applied to Pyongyang, in fact, diverge, "[a]t the same time, our [Russia's and Japan's] approaches are close in terms of the need to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula and create mechanisms to ensure lasting peace and security in Northeast Asia". Or, as FM Lavrov mentioned, referring countries' cooperation in UNSC, even though Russia and Japan did not always vote in the same way, there is a consultation mechanism in place, and

Japanese “always explain their approaches, listen attentively and try to take into account our [Russian] positions” (MOFA 2016c). Overall, the official representation of Japan as a key political player in APAC was quite general and relied on the notion of Japan’s cruciality for the regional security architecture, with the only more specific aspects emphasised being, besides the DPRK issue, related to less sensitive fields like anti-terrorism and drug control efforts, particularly in Afghanistan.

In the think tank discourse, however, the role of Japan was described in more detail and considered as more significant, most notably in relation to its effort of counterbalancing rising Chinese influence in the region. So, Streltsov (2019c) and Murashkin (2018), among others, admit that Russia’s extensive reliance or even developing dependence on China is undesirable and even dangerous, and Japan, being a weighty actor in the APAC is worth developing a more comprehensive relationship with so that Russia would not become a Chinese satellite. Japan was represented as taking on a greater role as a leader of democratically and liberally oriented countries in APAC, caused by the growing disengagement of the US. The increasingly isolationist and uncertain stance of the US was said, as mentioned previously, to push Japan to develop more independent capabilities as well as take the initiative to form partnerships with key regional actors, making it an individually valuable partner in the region and, by extension, globally as well (Trenin 2017). For instance, Torkunov (2015) states that Japan is a crucial partner in the issues of “in strengthening the system of international security both in the Asia-Pacific region and in the world as a whole”, again adding that while Russia’s and Japan’s approaches to achieving security might differ, they still share the ultimate goal of “creating strong, reliable and effective mechanisms for ensuring international security, which would not infringe on anyone's interests”. That somewhat stands in contrast with the official discourse, where while the global role of Japan was unquestionably acknowledged and valued, it was nevertheless moderately diminished. For instance, Japan was in a way depicted as having little significance in such issues as the Syrian civil war or Russo-Ukrainian crisis, which were clearly decoupled from the issues of Russia-Japan relations, with Japan described as either unrelated to or even to an extent ignorant of what is going on regarding these crises (Kremlin 2016; MOFA 2014a).

5.4. Japan *versus* Russia: inferiority, equality, superiority

5.4.1. Moral inferiority?

Inferiority of Japan was mostly articulated in the official discourse in connection with the results of WWII, where Japan was clearly depicted as being morally inferior by the nature of it not recognising the results of the war and, consequently, not fulfilling the provisions of the Charter of the UN and being, thus, the only state in the world declining to do so (MOFA 2011; MOFA 2019b). Most of the time references to the results of WWII were rather legalistic and referred to Russia's sovereignty over the Southern Kurile islands, nevertheless reinforcing the victor-loser relationship between Russia and Japan. But, in 2011-15 Russia was also regularly emphasising the inability of Japan to take responsibility for the atrocities committed during WWII and attributing, therefore, at least partially Imperial Japan's militarist identity to contemporary Japan. In this vain, the MOFA (2015b) commenting on Japan's Foreign minister's statements wrote in 2015 that they "have to admit that Tokyo, unfortunately, still does not want to learn the lessons of history" and "such gaps in historical memory are unacceptable […]".

5.4.2. Equality as world powers

When considering Japan's position in the world or international politics, it is evident that is rather as an equal partner of Russia, and progressively so as its dependence on the US would be continuously decreasing. In the case of official discourse, even though it was repeatedly indicated that Japan could not be considered fully autonomous or independent and, thus, its position vis-à-vis Russia lessened, the potential of genuine Russo-Japanese equal partnership was not dismissed. This was done by the means of comparison of prospective Russia-Japan relationship to the one Russia had been building with China – described as strategic and based on the principle of equality (e.g., Kremlin 2016). Moreover, equality was emphasised through representations of Japan as having a similar general approach to the matters of foreign policy – the principles of mutual respect and non-interference in partner's domestic affairs – suggesting thus the absence of a hierarchical relationship between the two. Expressing that point, for example, Lavrov (MOFA 2018) stated that "Russia and Japan […] act based on the principles of non-interference in internal affairs, respect for the choice of development paths and the legitimate interests of each other". In the think tanks discourse, equality was expressed in relation to the transformation of Japan from an abnormal country relying extensively on the

US's military might for its protection into a more militarised, normal country capable of entering into partnerships based on equality and, similarly to Russia, conducting balanced and deliberate foreign policy. So, according to Andrey Gubin (RSMD 2014) there is a clear tendency of Japan to move exactly in this direction, based on the development of its Self-Defence Forces as well as the constitutional reinterpretation of Article 9.

5.4.3. Economic superiority

Japan's representation as superior to Russia was mostly expressed in economic terms: Japan was labelled as a technologically advanced country with economic potential that is necessary not only for the development of RFE but Russia as a whole. This implies to an extent, that Russia is not able, although actively striving, to develop its Far Eastern regions on its own. Expression of Japan's economic superiority was even more visibly present in the think tank discourse. It not only portrayed Japan as being an economic powerhouse that was helping Russia in times of need when no one else would, with Alexander Panov (2012) praising Japan for „saving the [Russian] budget" in 1999. But it also admitted its superior economic position vis-à-vis Russia by comparing the trade structure of Japan and Russia in present day and emphasising Japan's level of technological development (Torkunov 2015). Think tank discourse, and to a lesser extent official one also pointed out to the superiority of Japanese business ethics, where Japanese negotiators are extremely thorough but stick to the deal (MOFA 2015c) as well as regulations and overall business climate when compared to those of Russia, which were deficient and in need of "fundamental revitalisation" (Kistanov 2016; Shvydko 2017).

5.5. Irrationality in Russo-Japanese relations

One of the few representations of Japan that have been changing in the course of the rapprochement was the theme of what I would call irrationality. The representation of Japan as a rather emotional, irrational subject was most prominent directly before the beginning of the rapprochement as well as in its starting years up until around the beginning of 2016. Both in the official and think tank discourse, Japan was said to rely too much on emotions when dealing with Russia, referencing mostly the territorial question, but also its foreign policy more generally, not only with Russia (MOFA 2012a; MOFA 2014b). This was expressed through frequent insistence that Russo-Japanese dialogue should be had in a calm and unemotional

manner, and that being emotional about the territorial issue is not productive. A typical example of such insistence came from Lavrov in 2011, when he stated that "the dialogue should be conducted calmly, without emotions, not allowing ultimatum demands, because, as you know, radical demands are often heard in Japan from various organizations, including those funded by the Japanese government" (MOFA 2011). As evident from this quote, however, the representation did not fully suggest the inherent nature of Japan's emotionality but rather ascribed it to various societal/political groups influencing Japanese policymaking. While the official discourse mostly focused on several "extremist" or "radical" political associations financed by the government for the sake of domestic political gain the think tank discourse was rather blaming the (previous) government itself (MOFA 2012b; MOFA 2011, Panov 2014). In the case of think tanks, however, references to Japan's emotionality were much more less frequent. They were also different in the sense that they clearly indicated that emotionality, irrationality and overall incompetence were characteristic of the Democratic Party of Japan (as opposed to the politically experienced Liberal Democrats), which was voted out of power in late 2012 (Lukyanov 2012). Or, as the Russian MOFA (2014) From both cases it could be seen that irrationality was treated as a temporary drawback that could be remedied or dropped, not characteristic of Japan as such.

Another, closely associated representation concerns of viewing Japan as being artificially drawn back from developing more cordial, comprehensive relations with Russia. The irrationality and emotionality of Japan were described as artificial, brought about not only by previously described groups but also instigated by the US, not least in the form of forced Ukraine-related sanctions (RSMD 2014). Also, constant references to the need for the development of bilateral relations without "artificial limitations or "artificially introduced external factors" suggested that such obstacles in fact exist and should as well as could be overcome (MOFA 2012a; MOFA 2014b). Or, even when not explicitly mentioning the artificial character of the obstacles, it was nevertheless strongly implied. For instance, as it was emphasised in MOFA's (2014) statement on Japan's expansion of the scope of sanctions, its actions were "illogical", "harming its geopolitical positions" and "sending wrong signals to its [Japanese] business community". Clearly, as Japan's actions were deemed opposite to its genuine interest and having origins outside of Japan, i.e., with them being taken "under external pressure", they were seen as artificially hindering Russo-Japanese cooperation and realisation of common goals. Moreover, the emphasis on the artificial character of the obstacles to meaningful partnership again showcases how Japan was not assigned full responsibility for its

unfriendly actions. The artificiality of the obstacles was further reinforced with constant references to the "natural" character of the Russo-Japanese partnership as well as their totally compatible national interests and broader foreign policy goals (Kremlin 2016; MOFA 2018c).

6. Discussion

The main representations of Japan in Russian official and semi-official foreign policy discourse could be said to further form two basic discourses of Japan that I call Future Independent Japan (FIJ) and Japan the Friendly West (JFW). In this chapter, I first expand on both discourses by presenting the main articulations. Further, I explain how these two basic discourses although being remarkably different but not necessarily mutually exclusive or contradictory, enabled the limited rapprochement of 2012-2019. The two basic discourses, I argue, play their own complementary role in having enabled the rapprochement by the nature of being a part of Russia's broader foreign policy discourse and orientation, stemming from Russia's great power identity. In the following sections, I locate the two basic discourses and two individual representations in two foreign policy/identity discourses which have been central to Russian foreign policy making as illustrated in Chapter 3.3 – multipolarity and greatpowerness/recognition – and argue that the rapprochement of 2012-19 and Russia's Japan policy could be viewed through the prism of these broader discourses.

6.1. Future Independent Japan

Future Independent Japan discourse focuses on Japan's increasing level of autonomy and independence, primarily in relation to the US. The discourse contains representations of Japan that emphasise its equality with Russia in the sense of both of them being rising world powers, which have the potential of becoming the main poles in the future multipolar world. It is achieved by representing Japan as superior economic power as well as having a crucial role in the increasingly significant APAC, where Japan is relatively at par with Russia when it comes to political weight. With APAC becoming the centre of gravity of international politics (e.g., MOFA 2015d), Japan's influence in the region further translates into broader, global influence. However, it is important to note that there is a strong temporal dimension present in this discourse: Japan's full independence and "world-powerness" is clearly only a potential or a future possibility. It is clear, from both official and think tank discourses that Japan's current reliance on the US is an undeniable reality and there might be a degree of subordination present in the Japan-US relations. At the same time, it is clearly indicated that there is a possibility of change, i.e., Japan is represented as being on the course of becoming a "normal" country that executes independent foreign and security policy without any reliance on outside partners – and there are some signs that suggest the change is already happening. The representation of

Japan as doubting the loyalty of the US and its readiness and determination to protect Japan no matter what also contributes to "making" Japan progressively more independent, suggesting that the decreasing level of trust between the two partners will ultimately contribute to a degree of dealignment from the US. The suggestions that Japan's and the US's interests in the region are divergent also imply Japan might be willing to, or even actually distancing itself from the US.

The FIJ discourse also emphasises Japan's independence by the means of referencing the increasing ability of Japan to act on behalf of its national interest. An example of such behaviour is the very Japan-Russia relationship, Japan's policy towards deepening of this relationship despite the great pressure and opposition from Japan's ally the US, and to a lesser degree other like-minded Western states. In this way, by side-lining the US in the questions concerning Russia, Japan is ascribed the ability to choose and implement its foreign policy options independently, without looking back at what its main ally might think or desire. Japan is thus seen as a flexible partner, which is able to adapt to the rapidly changing international environment and conduct multi-vectored foreign policy, not necessarily aligning itself fully with US's foreign policy line. And even in cases when Japan's policy thwarted its relations with Russia, most notably in the contexts of sanctions against Russia in relation to its actions in Ukraine, Japan was still represented as considering its national interest and not being blindly led by the US or the West in a broader sense. This consideration was present in the think tank discourse, where the sanctions were represented as being directed towards Russia not only as a result of US pressure, but also as an independent pragmatic move that is rather connected to Japan's China policy and their Senkaku/Diaoyu islands territorial dispute.

However, while representing Japan as moving towards greater independence and higher status in world affairs and the APAC region it is impossible to ignore its still significant degree of reliance on the US, especially in matters of security. This reliance is, however, also diluted by means other than the representation of Japan having and even realising a potential of becoming more independent as described above. Because the US and its foreign policy is still viewed as hostile towards Russia, some Japanese policies closely connected with the US's actions and viewed as unfriendly and damaging to Russo-Japanese relations such as the development of MSD on Japanese soil or, again, Japan's sanctions against Russia are framed not as coming from inside Japan, or being considered Japan's national interest, but rather as being imposed on Japan from outside. Thus, describing Japan's anti-Russian actions employing the notion of involuntarity and artificiality serves the purpose of transferring the responsibility to actors other

than Japan and allowing Russia if not to completely ignore but at least drastically diminish the salience of these issues. In this way, Japan's situational unfriendliness was not considered an inherent Japanese disposition which is deeply rooted in Japanese identity or worldview but rather as something that can fundamentally be overcome, even temporary.

Representing Japan according to FIJ discourse, as a rising independent world power is, I would argue, one of the factors that contributed to enabling the rapprochement that took place in 2012-2019. This vision of Japan's position in the world is compatible with Russia's discourse of multipolarity. According to FIJ, the relations were improved with a country that had the potential of and was on the way to becoming a pole in the multipolar world order. Since Japan was represented as becoming an increasingly independent, normal country that was gradually regaining genuine sovereignty, it was, I would argue, also seen as a potential, latent challenger to the unipolar world order. Despite it being viewed as a part of the West, the JFW discourse also emphasised that Japan, similarly to Russia, is a pragmatic actor that values the national interest and not declarative values attempting to pursue a more independent foreign policy based exactly on these grounds, which made it look similar to the kind of international actors Russia is more comfortable dealing with. Japan was thus seen as being a proponent of a more democratic world order where participating actors were free to determine their preferred political arrangements – i.e., where there is a possibility and room for great powers that are not necessarily Western, democratic or liberal. In this sense, the fact that the Japanese Other was not radically different from nor inherently hostile to Russia enabled Russia to conduct a rather conciliatory foreign policy towards Japan. Another significant factor is the clear separation of Japan from the US in the sense that the US's influence on Japan's policymaking was represented as having become limited, or at least rather ambiguous. So, if Japan was no longer, or would no longer be a "puppet" or a junior partner of the US, it would be exactly the kind of country it would be worth for Russia pursuing a partnership with. And although, as brought out earlier, Russia clearly saw that Japan is not yet there to be regarded as a full-fledged, fully sovereign pole, the apparent development and the sheer potentiality of Japan becoming such played a certain role in enabling the rapprochement. The representation of Japan as still not having achieved full independence is also explaining why the rapprochement was rather limited since, the negative representations of the West were still at least partially translated towards Japan. Moreover, as Russia's foreign policy is argued to be centred around its practice of seeking recognition as a great power, Russia's relations with Japan in 2012-2019 are not an exception. Representing Japan as a prospective independent influential actor in a multipolar

world order, as a great power, and pursuing the policy of rapprochement with it could thus be regarded as Russia trying to reinforce its great power identity. This would be in line with Russia's multipolarity discourse that emphasises the existence of non-Western great powers and, most importantly, that recognition could be gained from not only from the US and Europe but also other states. Japan, according to DIJ discourse, could be regarded exactly as a new alternative source of recognition – and improving relations with Japan an example of Russia's quest for reinforcing its great power identity.

6.2. Japan the Friendly West

The second basic discourse that can be assembled from the representations of Japan is the one that I call Japan the Friendly West. In the JFW discourse Japan is quite explicitly positioned into the category of Western states but at the same time clearly differentiated from the rest of the "collective West". And end even though the discourse is more explicitly present in the think tank discourse, the official discourse nevertheless positions Japan more in the West than any other category, be it the East or something in between. Although Japan's Westerness is not clearly defined and, in the case of official discourse, even not clearly indicated, the categorisation is rather definitive. Japan was seen as being firmly rooted in the Western G7 and had intimate relations with its members as well as being depicted as being able to influence their decisions. That is, it is not just being a subordinate, inferior Western country but the one that is actively and wilfully participating in the Western international society without voicing any opposition to Western dominance. In addition, Japan's dependence on the US could also be said to reinforce its "Westness", especially so with regard to the alignment being, among others, directed against China, which is seen by Russia as a fellow challenger to the liberal world order and Western hegemony.

The difference between Japan and the other Western countries, however, is that it is clearly seen as the most Russia-friendly and clearly one more rational, pragmatic member of the Western collectivity that, in this regard, is most similar to how Russia self-represents itself – a kind of "good West". In this sense, Japan stands out as a Western country that behaves differently from the rest, while presumably sharing the same fundamental values. The different behaviour that Japan exhibits when compared to other Western states is the ability to conduct a pragmatic foreign policy based on the national interest and not on the blind adherence to some liberal, presumably universal values. That is, just like Russia, Japan was represented as

adhering to the principle of non-interference to other countries' internal affairs, and does not attempt to impose its own understanding on how other states ought to operate, and which values should be determining their behaviour. This again means that Japan is seen as more flexible and cooperative than other Western states when it comes to foreign policy, particularly when Russia-related policy and overall relations with countries outside of the Western club are concerned. The representations of Japan as an intermediary and peacekeeper are especially significant here. It is also telling that there are no representations of Japan as Asian, Eastern or Oriental, except for its positioning in the APAC region, which is purely geographical. Or, representations of its non-Westness were more cultural in nature and, surprisingly, were not unequivocally or explicitly emphasising its Eastness. Japanese culture was thus described more as a synthesis of the West and the East, which was also quite indicative of its Westness.

The JFW discourse, emphasising Japan's Western yet different identity, could be connected to Russia's great power discourse, which is argued to be one most formative factors of Russian foreign policy (Smith 2014, 355; Neumann 2016; Morozov 2013; Zarakol 2011). The one problem here might be that there is no literature that addresses Russo-Japanese relations from the perspective of Japan being regarded as Western, of how Western Japan is positioned in this broader Russian discourse of the West and Western recognition. Since it is a much greater possible project, clearly out of the scope of the present thesis, the following considerations should be regarded as initial, a possible base for future, deeper analysis. Nevertheless, I see that several considerations could be drawn out.

First, the representation of Japan as a Western country that has an intimate relationship with other countries of the West suggests that by building a closer relationship with Japan Russia might be pursuing recognition from the West *through* this very relationship. It might be considered as a form of signalling, making an example of the possibility of an equal Russia-West relationship based on mutual respect. The logic here is, that if it is possible for Russia to have this kind of relationship with one of the Western countries, i.e., Japan, then it might as well be the case with Russia's relations with other Westerners. This in a way shows that a country's Western orientation is not inherently an obstacle for Russia to have a meaningful relationship with it as was exemplified by representations of Russo-Japanese cooperation in the UN or on the issue of denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula (See Chapters 5.3; 5.4.2). That is, a country might still, despite its adherence to liberal democratic norms or other "Western values", be able to consider Russia's legitimate political interests without excessive focus on Russia's internal politics, or international activity that does not fit subjective Western

expectations, largely as emphasised in the FIJ discourse that focuses on Japan's pragmatism. The discursive focus on the different nature of Japan's Westness is key here as it emphasises this possibility, of a pragmatic Western country which is not afraid to pursue closer relations with Russia when its national interest is concerned.

The signalling argument is also supported by Japan's representation as an agent or intermediary that, being a part of the Western club, might serve as an example of potentiality of better Russia-West relations. But even more, the representation as an agent suggests that, in a way, Japan is seen as representative of Russia which translates Russian political positions. The descriptions of Japan as a "bridge into the West" or expressed hopes that Japan could explain Russia's position to the United Kingdom regarding the Skripal case are the prime examples of this (see Chapter 5.2). This, of course, could be said only in a rather limited sense since it would be far-fetched to argue that Russia sees Japan as a serious representative of its interests, and it rather is about explaining Russia's actions and overall posture. This, however, again indicates that Russia is indeed seeking understanding on behalf of and thus recognition from Western states for its status. And Japan, by being the friendliest Western state that values its relationship with Russia, is willing and able to provide it by persuading its fellow Western states into treating Russia as a valuable, equal partner. This repeats the argument of the existing literature that Russia's identity is closely tied to that of the West, with it being the main referent when it comes to seeking recognition. Moreover, as argued in the previous section, this could also be the case of Russia seeking recognition directly from Japan, an alternative source of recognition. As Japan is still represented Western, considering the West's central position in Russia's identity, developing a more intimate relationship with Japan, seeking thus its affirmation of Russia's greatpowerness, might also be considered as Russia seeking alternative *Western* sources of recognition.

6.3. The role of individual representations

The two representations of Japan as morally interior and economically superior, which do not entirely correspond to any of the two basic discourses, might be said to play a separate role in having enabled the rapprochement between Russia and Japan. Specifically, I would argue that improving relations with Japan represented as such was conducive to reinforcing Russia's great power identity.

In the case of representing Japan as morally inferior in the sense of it not respecting the post-WWII world order based on the UN charter by not accepting Russian sovereignty over Southern Kurile islands, I would argue, Russia is reinforcing its WWII victor identity. This process is seemingly twofold. First, improving relations with Japan, meaning the continued discussions over the status of the islands, and the improbability of Japan dropping the claims, creates favourable conditions for Russia invoking the WWII discourse, which is one of the cornerstones of its great power (and national) identity. Thus, continued negotiations with Japan over the disputed islands, possible only during the phase of more or less cordial relations between the two countries, allows Russia to regularly articulate its identity of a WWII victor, and UNSC permanent member and, by extension, a great power. This could also be connected to the discourse of Russia as a responsible international actor who respects international law and applies it as it is, unlike Western states which apply the international law according to their own, often hypocritical interpretations (e.g., Reshetnikov 2011, 160). Differentiation of law-respecting Russia from Japan, which is challenging the realities of the post-WWII world order fits with this discourse and articulations of Russia's identity of a great power.

Second, the ultimate goal of the rapprochement was full normalisation or deepening of the relations using signing the absent peace treaty, or a kind of comprehensive cooperation agreement which would presuppose Japan's recognition of Russia's sovereignty over the islands and legality of their annexation. This would, consequently, eradicate a situation where Russia's status is not universally recognised, especially by an emerging world power, one potential pole in the future (or even already present) multipolar world. And although this kind of recognition is unquestionably minor, since in Russian foreign policy discourse this lack of recognition is regarded as quite limited, it still indicates that the rapprochement could be regarded as a component of Russia's general foreign policy line that derives from its great power identity and desire to acquire outside recognition.

Another representation, of Japan as economically superior, could also be regarded as a being in accordance with, or emanating from Russia's identity of a great power, and its quest for recognition as such. Much of the Russo-Japanese relations were looked at through the prism of economic development in both official and think tanks discourses, meaning the economic dimension of the relations was regarded as one of the most prioritised. Much remorse was expressed at the fact that the economic relations were underdeveloped, and much potential is yet to be realised. The main reason behind that was said to be originating from the evident disparity between the countries' desire to deepen those relations, with Japan being less

interested in conducting business with Russia, which was admitted being inferior in an economic sense. Thus, it could be argued that the rapprochement, including the one that was taking place in the economic dimension, was aimed at improving Russia's status as an equally advanced, attractive and weighty world economy. Achieving this status would, consequently, translate into Russia being one step closer to being recognised as an economic great power. Improving relations with Japan was, I would argue, instrumental to this. As Japan is clearly represented as economically superior, building a more equal economic partnership with Japan (i.e., moving beyond energy exports, increasing investment volumes etc.) would mean recognition from an economic great power as a worthy counterpart, which would elevate Russia's own status. The discursive constitution of the Russo-Japanese economic relations as advancing and deepening, especially despite present obstacles, I would argue, creates the same effect.

Conclusion

The objective of this thesis was to expose the conditions of possibility behind the Russo-Japanese rapprochement that took place in 2012-19 by relying on poststructuralist discourse analysis theory. As the existing literature on the subject is deficient in the way that it does not address its discursive dimension, by employing this discourse analytical approach I aimed to provide a deeper, more comprehensive understanding of Russo-Japanese relations. For that, representations of Japan in Russia's official and think tank discourse from the period of the rapprochement were studied and analysed, with the goal of identifying such representations that allowed Russia to pursue the rapprochement despite its worsening relations with Japan's ally the US and the broader Western collectivity, part of which Japan could be regarded as. In this final concluding chapter, I will try to give an answer to the research question based on the findings and analysis brought out in the two previous chapters as well as suggest further research possibilities.

As outlined in the two previous chapters, during the period of Russo-Japanese rapprochement, which largely coincided with the deterioration of Russia-West relations, Japan was represented in a rather dual way in both official and think tank discourses. On the one hand, it was constituted as a key actor in world affairs which, albeit being dependent (or at least extensively reliant) on the US, is progressively moving towards greater independence and autonomy. Japan was said to have doubts about the US's commitment and the compatibility of their foreign policy goals and, as a result, to be distancing itself from the US and strengthening its position in the increasingly important APAC region and, by extension, globally. On the other hand, however, Japan was represented as being a Western country that had intimate relations with the US and Europe and was not trying to align itself with other political communities or become non-aligned. Nonetheless, its "Westness" was constituted as different from the one that was characteristic of other countries of the West – Japan was constituted as pragmatic, not blinded by liberal democratic values, and acting on behalf of its national interest even in times when the Western community did not approve of it.

This kind of dual representation, which I previously showed as assembled into two basic discourses – "Future Independent Japan" (FIC) and "Japan the Friendly West" (JFW) – I argue, can be regarded as the enabling discursive structure, the condition of possibility for the rapprochement of 2012-19. In the context of worsening Russia-West relations these discursive constructions of Japan allowed Russia to pursue a policy of conciliation towards Japan. It was

because Japan was constructed as a Russia-friendly and progressively more independent country despite being part of the Western community of states as well as having a considerable degree of dependence on the United States. The dominance of these representations of Japan in the foreign policy discourse overshadowed the discourse of broader Western hostility towards and nonacceptance of Russia.

Moreover, it was the particular representations of Japanese policies that could have been regarded as "anti-Russian" that played a role in enabling the rapprochement. For instance, labelling the development of missile defence systems in Japan mostly as an act of American policy for which Japan was not fully responsible. Or, as in the case of Japanese economic sanctions in relation to Russia's actions against Ukraine, which were either represented as having been forced on Japan, or actually having nothing to do with Russia and rather being a pragmatic measure that is directed towards countering Chinese assertive behaviour. In these cases, the representation of Japan as being to a degree dependent on the US but also having a clear intention to become more independent is key. It was further reinforced by the employment of the idea of artificial obstacles that prevent the development of bilateral relations, which again was a way to construct Japan as being inherently friendly and not responsible for possible perceived hostilities.

The analysis has also shown the near absence of explicit clashes between the Russian Self and the Japanese Other – the Japanese Other was clearly seen as far from radically different. Although the discourse of inequality and Japanese inferiority in the context of WWII was present, it was not dominating and again, represented as not insurmountable. Furthermore, it was mitigated with the discourse of similarity, which was not limited to compatible interests and comparable ways of operating but also, although not very explicitly, claimed that both Russia and Japan were discriminated against, not least by the US.

What also became evident from the analysis is that the Russian discourse of Japan during the rapprochement was largely complementing two other more general discourses of Russian foreign policy, which are emanating from and reinforcing Russia's identity as a great power. As shown in the Discussion chapter, the representations of Japan during the rapprochement indicate that the policy could be regarded as reinforcing Russia's claim of the obsoleteness of the unipolar world order and an instance of promoting its vision of multipolarity, as well as seen as the way to seek recognition of its great power status generally, and in particular from the West. This reconfirms the discourse analytical arguments about the nexus of identity and

foreign policy and, as applied to the study of Russian foreign policy, the role of its great power identity and the discourse on the West. That is, it is evident how rapprochement reflected Russia's great power identity and served as a means to reinforce it. As for the research question of this study, I would cautiously argue that representation of Japan as Western yet progressively independent, and in particular as a friendly intermediary able to explain Russian positions to other Western countries and thus provide Western recognition, is one of the most significant representations that enabled the rapprochement. These findings indicate that Russia's Japan-policy was largely in line with its foreign policy more generally, meaning that the rapprochement with Japan, happening simultaneously with the deterioration of relations with other Western states, should be seen as tied to Russia's identity and its Self-Other relationship with the West.

The findings outlined above, despite their rather preliminary nature due to the near absence of research that approaches Russo-Japanese relations in the broader context of Russia-West relations as well as employs identity-based frameworks, surely demonstrate that the study of Russo-Japanese relations, which has been predominantly approached from various positivist perspectives, is indeed lacking a poststructuralist discourse analytical perspective that could expose new angles at which the relations could be seen from. Having achieved the goal of the present thesis to identify Japan's position in Russia's foreign policy "coordinates", with it being represented as a prospective independent better Western country, the future research could take it as a point of departure. One of the most logical paths would be to explore Russia's representations of Japan's Westernness beyond the timeframe of this study and look at the implications of Japan's positioning for Russia's foreign policy towards it as well as more broadly. Having identified that Russia has been ascribing Japan a Western identity, probably even more explicitly so after Russia invaded Ukraine in February of 2022, future research could focus on the role of Russia's identity in its relations with Japan in a broader sense, for instance, by also incorporating Japanese discourse into the study, or by researching the role of Japan's representation as West on Russia's relations with other states.

However, as with any other study the present thesis has several limitations. First, the analysis of Russian foreign policy discourse was limited to official and think-tank (semi-official) discourses. This means that media and popular discourses were not explored, leaving room for some discourses or representations to be overlooked. And even considering that Russian foreign policy making is regarded as being firmly top-down, popular discourses might

nevertheless be indicative of other, more marginal discourses, which are not only supporting the existing discursive structure but also have the potential to challenge the dominant ones.

Another limitation concerns the very period of analysis, 2011-2019 and the role of Japanese discourse. The first caveat here is that in this thesis does not follow Russian discourse beyond the period of rapprochement, i.e., not analysing the low-point year prior to it except for 2011. This means that the possible change in discursive structure and particular representation could not be tracked down. However, the discourse from 2011 and the secondary literature (see Chapter 1) indicate not only the scarcity of communication between the countries and (and thus the scarcity of analysable material) but also that the discourse was one-sided with most focus being on the territorial dispute. Considering that, the line of argumentation presented previously in the thesis could still be regarded as relevant, although not without some limitations that could be addressed in future research. The second caveat is the possible explanation that the rapprochement could have been influenced more by Japanese side, which was not only eager to pursue closer relations with Russia before 2014 and the imposition of sanctions, but that it was also the moderation with which these sanctions were imposed and the broader friendly discourse on Russia. And while it is hard to disregard this explanation, which is unquestionably valid, I would argue that if there were no suitable discursive structure in place in 2011-13, even Japanese moderation and pursuit of the rapprochement could have been fruitless. Nevertheless, further discourse analytical research that also accounts for the Japanese discourse is definitely needed.

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