

German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ)
DIJ Social Science Study Group



December 3, 2014, 18:30

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***North Korea and the Evolution of Japan's
Post-Cold War National Security Policy***

Focusing on the changes in Japan's post-cold war foreign and defense policy, the robustness and trajectory of Japan's national security institutions have triggered a broad debate along the realist/constructivist divide in the study of East Asian security affairs. Building on the notion of a 'normalizing' Japan which discerns an incremental change towards a proactive military and foreign policy posture, my study demonstrates how external security challenges in relation to North Korea have been effective in diffusing new policy ideas which have propelled institutional change in Japan's defense and security policy domains. While North Korea's nuclear and missile programs in the 1990s and the North's cold war kidnapping campaign of Japanese citizens have been identified as central causes behind the change in Japan's security policy, few studies have demonstrated the causal pathways which link North Korea-related security events with change in Japanese security institutions.

By drawing on comparative political economy and public policy scholarship on institutional change, agenda setting and the role of ideas in explaining institutional change, I apply concepts such as 'focusing event' and 'causal story' to the case of Japan's post-cold war security policy. Thus, I illustrate how North Korea has been instrumental to policy coalitions in order to diffuse new policy ideas including ballistic missile defense, preemptive strike capabilities and collective self-defense which challenge Japan's post-war pacifist institutions. In this vein, my study provides new insights into the causal mechanisms by which institutional change evolves and assigns critical agency to domestic policy coalitions in determining the trajectory of Japan's security regime.

Sebastian Maslow is a doctoral research fellow at the German Institute for Japanese Studies Tokyo (DIJ) and PhD Candidate at the Graduate School of Law, Tohoku University. His recent publications include *Risk State: Japan's Foreign Policy in Age of Uncertainty*, which he co-edited with Ra Mason and Paul O'Shea, published by Ashgate (March 2015).

The DIJ Social Science Study Group is organized by S. Heinrich, P. Holdgrün and C. Hommerich.
All are welcome to attend, but registration (hommerich@dijtokyo.org) is appreciated.

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