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What is This?

Culture and Collective Action

Japan, Germany and the United States after 11 September 2001

DIRK NABERS

——————— ABSTRACT ———————

In order to put a lens on the issue of international security cooperation after 11 September 2001, this article examines the question of how collective action in International Relations becomes possible. The author maintains that a fair amount of inter-state collective action can be understood, even explained, by analysing the culture of the international system. Using discourse analysis as a tool, the analysis addresses the underlying ideas, norms and identities that constitute the relationship between the United States and Japan, on the one hand, and Germany and the United States, on the other, as it has evolved since September 2001. The method exposes how some ideas are privileged over others, how norms are maintained, reformulated and abandoned, how identity is constructed and how power is legitimized in the 'war on terror'.

Keywords: culture; discourse; Germany; ideas; identity; Japan; norms; United States

Introduction

Even before the guerrilla fighting in Iraq has died out, ever more academics and journalists are rushing into print to tell us what has really happened in the Afghanistan and Iraq wars, how international politics changed after 11 September 2001. But just how valid are their conclusions? What were and are the warring sides' 'real' objectives? Are the sources of information they are citing reliable? Or do they present only a narrow approach that shuts out some interpretations from the outset as illegitimate? This article has a simple purpose: to search for theses and antitheses in official governmental explanations.

The basic theoretical question to be answered in the analysis is the following: How was collective action between the United States, Japan and Germany possible in Afghanistan and Iraq, and what were the difficulties that — in some cases — prevented collective action? Collective action is understood as the joint actions of a number of states. It is based on inter-

subjective understandings about self and other. The totality of intersubjective structures in the international system is understood as its culture. I assume that the culture of the international system is responsible for the prospect and the degree of collective action.

In detail, culture comprises ideas, norms and identities of a group of social actors in a particular place and time (Crawford, 2002: 6, 59; Wendt, 1999: 140–2). A culture makes certain things possible, and others desirable or unimaginable, because it serves as the background of shared interpretations, so-called intersubjective understandings. Cultural structures rest on their permanent instantiation through social practices, thereby making them coterminous with process (Herborth, 2004). Process, in turn, is constituted by meaningful acts of social agents, and can thus only be grasped by analysing meaning. Taking this finding as a starting point, postmodern and critical strands of International Relations have successfully established the study of identities and culture through discourse analysis within the discipline (e.g. Doty, 1996; Larsen, 1997; Waever, 1998a; Diez, 1999; Milliken, 1999; Crawford, 2002; Jackson, 2005; Nabers, 2005). I turn to the relevance of speech and discourse in the next section, developing an analytical framework that allows for a proper conceptualization of the international system from a constructivist perspective. On that basis, I analyse post-September 11 security cooperation between Germany and the United States as well as Japan and the United States. As a result of the analysis, I expect to detect an irrefutable link between the cultural structure of the international system and the degree of collective international action.

Culture and Discourse

A wide range of definitions of discourse consider communication as the production and exchange of meanings; discourses constitute and construct the world in meaning (Jaworski and Coupland, 1999). Van Dijk, one of the leading modern discourse theorists, points out that discourse should also be understood as an act of communication (1977). There can in principle be no objective starting point and no conclusion of a discourse, since every speech act is connected with many others and can only be understood on the basis of others. As an act of communication,

> [...] discourse is socially constituted as well as socially conditioned — it constitutes situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of and relationships between people and groups of people. It is constitutive both in the sense that it helps sustain and reproduce the social status quo, and in the sense that it contributes to transforming it. (Wodak, 1996: 15)

Following the work of Norman Fairclough (esp. his 1992 work), political communication is conceptualized as a type of *social practice*. Discourse is understood as actually constituting the social, which has three dimensions: knowledge, social relations and social identity (Fairclough, 1992: 8). While knowledge consists of private or socially shared *ideas* (see also Wendt, 1999:

140), social relations are constituted by *norms* and *identities*, which make up the *culture* of the system. Therefore, changing discourses always have transformative effects on culture. When people communicate with each other, they negotiate about meanings. Once a discourse reaches the stage of establishing a dominant perception of reality for all those participating in the communicative process, all dimensions of the social are affected by this transformation. In that sense, texts are, according to Fairclough, 'sensitive barometers of social processes, movement and diversity, and textual analysis can provide particularly good indicators of social change' (1999: 204).

Referring to Ernesto Laclau, I assume that particularly in so-called 'organic crises' (1977: 103), existing cultures are apt to transform or even collapse and new dominant discourses can evolve. In such a crisis, more and more actors open themselves up for innovative discourses, and hegemonic strategies can be successful. The network of existing social structures is increasingly considered an obstacle on the path to one's 'true self'; the evolving hegemonic discourse, on the other hand, reinforces a specific actor's identity crisis by offering alternative identity concepts (Laclau, 1977: 103). However, we cannot expect with absolute certainty that a dominant discourse will evolve. The battle between discourses to become the leading interpretative structure actually tends to reveal the configuration of power relations in a given historical moment, but they are so multifaceted that we cannot foresee their exact outcomes (Smith, 1998: 57). However, once a discourse reaches the stage of establishing a dominant perception of reality for all those participating in the communicative process, it reveals much about the course of action in collective identity formation. If the same 'reality' is reflected in the speech acts of all interacting agents, one can speak of collective identity.

Specific cultural forms like norms, rules, (political) institutions, conventions, ideologies, customs and laws are all influenced by this process. It ends up in transforming actors' ideas about each other's rationality, strategies and preferences. Different actors compete for hegemony in this process by offering their specific 'systems of narration' as a compensatory framework, and they will represent that framework as the only one that can resolve an identity crisis (Laclau, 1977: 103).

The concept of 'crisis' is most welcome in this sense because it represents a situation in which our everyday beliefs of how the world works are rigorously disrupted by an event that is out of our control. In that sense, it can be compared to trauma, i.e. a situation that is hard to describe and yet demands to be communicated: '[...] it is outside the frameworks of normal social reality and thus outside the linguistic and other symbolic tools we have at our disposal for making sense of the world' (Edkins, 2002: 246). A likely result of this process is community-building and the construction of a collective identity.

I consider 11 September 2001 as a traumatic event and ask how the incidents of that day influenced security discourses between states in the international system. There is no standard method by which to analyse a discourse. Since our units of analysis are states, the first aspect that is of relevance for the following analysis is the exploration of repetitive

statements in major speeches of government representatives, because those speech acts 'convey the logic of the government as they wish to express it' (Hoffmann and Knowles, 1999: 17). In the first major investigative step that follows, I analyse various *discursive practices*, on the basis of which I try to evaluate the dominant culture of the international system after September 2001. I ask how particular ideas are represented and whether others are exluded, how complexities are reduced and what other ways of representing them are available (Fairclough, 2005). As has been pointed out earlier, culture comprises *ideas* about the world (e.g. the nature of world security), *norms of proper behaviour* (e.g. questions of international law and the appropriateness of the use of force) and *identities* (i.e. representations of self and other). Discursive practices revolve around these three concepts. Without being subjected to detailed analysis of the inherent structure of texts, the textual samples used in the following are mainly introduced to illustrate the different dimensions of the international system after 11 September 2001. The focus is thus on the discourse strategies in dialogue between the three countries under investigation. In the last section, I briefly try to answer the overall question of this article, how collective action becomes possible in international politics and why it so often fails.

Systemic Culture after 11 September 2001

The main argument of the following analysis is that it is not the terrorist attacks as such that shaped world politics in the years that followed, as some observers would have it. If we watch the twin towers' fall from the perspective of a constructivist social scientist, we are not interested in the material process of two skyscrapers and a government building being hit by aircraft, but in the interpretational process that is mobilized by this event. What follows is a complex struggle between different interpretations of the situation, in which different state actors not only participate to achieve their individual or collective goals, but — more importantly — try to determine who they are, what their position is vis-à-vis the United States, and what their place in the international system should be.

It would be wrong to stereotype the positions of the 'Americans', the 'Germans' and the 'Japanese' in the debate following 11 September 2001. It is possible, however, to discover predominant views that shape the thoughts of the respective other.

Ideas of World Security

As Laclau has pointed out, a discourse can only generate a dominant interpretative framework if its 'system of narration' operates as a surface of inscription for a wide variety of demands. Its success is due to its abstract form, which in turn makes it possible for more identifications to become possible (Laclau, 1990: 64). In the case of the discourse starting with 11 September 2001, the concepts of liberty and freedom — encompassing

ideas such as legitimacy and democracy, and ruling out force and egoism as tolerable means of human association — structure the field and signify the only possible alternative to absolute chaos in world politics. The terms occur in most of the speeches given by American government officials in the days after the terrorist attacks, and they are mirrored in speeches held by the German and Japanese heads of governments. By using the concepts as a 'horizon', it becomes possible to create a dominant discourse in the early phase of the war against terror. They also serve political purposes by making it possible to differentiate between countries that enjoy freedom and those that do not:

> Germany, Indonesia, Japan, the Philippines, South Africa, South Korea, Poland, Taiwan and Turkey show that freedom manifests itself differently around the globe — and that new liberties can find an honoured place amidst ancient traditions. In countries such as Bahrain, Jordan, Morocco and Qatar, reform is underway, taking shape according to different local circumstances. (Rice, 2002)

The international discourse after 11 September 2001 can be characterized as a continuous process of re-imagining international security. In this game, the United States represents itself as the archetype of freedom and justice. As Bush emphasizes, '[we] must stop the evil ones, so our children and grandchildren can know peace and security and freedom in the greatest nation on the face of the Earth' (The White House, 2001a). In this example, American ideas are purposely shaped by the nation's differential relationship to the rest of the world, especially those countries that are characterized by a lack of freedom. The freedom metaphor is frequently employed by the German and Japanese governments as well. As the German Chancellor put it on the day after the attacks: 'This is a threat to the basic principles of human freedom and security [...]' (Bundesregierung, 2001e). And the Japanese Prime Minister declares on 27 September 2001: 'Now is the time for our nation to confront the present difficulties with its full power in a spirit of international cooperation in order to defend peace and freedom for all humankind' (Prime Minister's Office, 2001g).

Other concepts regularly used by the Bush administration — in particular 'peace' and 'security' — serve the same function. As Condoleezza Rice once explained, both refer to the prevention of violence by terrorists, and to the extension of the benefits of freedom across the globe (2002). They are set in direct contrast to the threat of terrorism. Accordingly, President Bush declared terrorism as the 'mother of all threats', asserting that modern terrorists were 'the heirs of all the murderous ideologies of the twentieth century' (The White House, 2002a), omnipresent in the world and always prepared to attack 'our civilization'. Textual analysis (see Fairclough, 2005) unveils a bifurcation of the world into protagonists and antagonists in Bush's speeches, representing the latter as malign and evil. Critical linguists call this mechanism 'overlexicalization', meaning that antagonists are lexicalized in various ways. The language thereby tries to naturalize a binary opposition (Jackson, 2005: 62), as shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1
Overlexicalization in the 'War on Terror'

United States	Rest of the world
Peace	War
Security	Insecurity
Freedom	Tyranny
Order	Instability
Civilization	Barbarism
Western	Non-Western
Good	Evil
etc.	etc.

Relations of equivalence are textured between the United States, freedom and civilization, on the one hand, and the rest of the world, tyranny and barbarism, on the other. Opposition in other countries is amplified by the American self-image of cultural superiority over the rest of the world. President Bush undyingly uses Manichean discourse to construct the 'evil Other', at the same time stressing the goodness of the United States. The more a construction of an idea is specified, the more conflict arises and hegemonization of a discourse becomes unlikely (see Table 2).

Conflict between Washington and Berlin first arose when the discourse involved more specific terms. 'The phrase "axis of evil" leads nowhere', German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer balked.[2] While Bush notoriously uses binary discourse to communicate with his Christian conservative supporters at home, the sometimes 'hyperbolic rhetoric' (Kellner, 2004: 47) does not attract the more secular audiences in Berlin and Tokyo. While

TABLE 2
Discursive Construction and Potential for Conflict

Low	→	Specification	→	High
	Freedom	Security	War	
	Peace	Welfare	Threat	
	Order	Civilization	Terrorism	
			Axis of Evil	
Low	→	Potential for conflict	→	High

German Chancellor Schröder cautiously enunciates his opposition to all kinds of religious metaphor in political speeches in an interview with a weekly newspaper (Bundesregierung, 2001d), Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi avoids spiritual language at all times.

Diverging views openly manifested themselves with regard to the quality of terrorism and the far-reaching threat creation by the Bush administration. In the United States, threat creation became functional to political purposes (see Jackson (2005) for a detailed account). This idea is then related to the second dimension of the war on terror: the 'new kind of terrorism' that is now also threatening American allies and draws a line between the Western, peace-loving world and some radical Islamic societies.

The Japanese world-view seems to be entirely harmonious with the American one when it comes to threat perceptions. Prime Minister Koizumi constructed terrorism as 'a despicable act that threatens the lives and lifestyles of the people all over the world and the peace and security of all the countries in the world' (Prime Minister's Office, 2001e). This is an imaginary of one single international community with the same values, mystifying actual diversity and noticeably disregarding the roots of terrorism. Therefore, the new Japanese National Defense Program Outline (NDPO) focuses on terrorism as the most imminent threat to the country's security, stipulating the establishment of a special force aimed at responding promptly to terrorism and guerrilla warfare.[3]

Interestingly, after 11 September 2001 Germany did not feel threatened by insecure surroundings in Europe, as did Japan in regard to East Asia. While Tokyo time and again pointed in the direction of North Korea as its principal threat,[4] and the Japanese government drew a direct line from North Korea to global terrorism and weapons of mass destruction (WMD),[5] the German defence policy guidelines, describing the European security environment, speak of 'politically advantageous changes in the last years' (Bundesministerium der Verteidigung, 2003). Moreover, while the German government conceded that the terrorist threat has aggravated in recent years,[6] the constitution of a relation of equivalence between Iraq, terrorism and weapons of mass destruction has not become accepted by the German government. This was pronounced in a very clear manner by Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer during the German election campaign in August 2002:

> Our deep scepticism and thus our rejection [of an invasion into Iraq] stem from our belief that the wrong priority has been set here. Our analysis shows that the threat comes primarily from Islamic terrorism. To date no-one can rule out another major attack. Nor, however, has anyone proved so far that Saddam Hussein has any links with organizations such as al Qaida. [...] I do not believe that the threat from Iraq has changed so much that military intervention has now become necessary. Incidentally, you can be certain that if the situation were different then the election campaign would be of secondary importance. If there was a growing or immediate threat to Germany and its population I would devote all my attention to my duties as Federal Foreign Minister. (Iraqwatch, 2002a)

The problem of deviating ideas of international security could be bridged by adhering to the same existing norms of appropriate behaviour in international security policy. In this regard, however, the gap between the transatlantic and the transpacific relationships has also been widening since 2002. This is an interesting finding, since Japan and Germany have traditionally adhered to the same standard norms of appropriate behaviour, hence being labelled 'civilian powers' (Maull, 1990, 2000, 2004; Aoi, 2004; Nabers, 2004) or 'cultures of antimilitarism' (Berger, 1998), respectively. I turn to the discourse about norms in the next section.

Norms

Ideas and norms cannot be treated separately. While norms are commonly defined as 'collective expectations about proper behaviour for a given identity' (Jepperson et al., 1996: 54), their strength is a function of the extent to which they are shared by the units in a social system (Boekle et al., 1999), that is, intersubjective ideas. Norms constitute actors' identities and interests, delineate collective goals and prescribe or proscribe behaviour. Both Japan's and Germany's foreign policies adhered to the norms of what has been dubbed a 'civilian power' after the Second World War, promoting multilateralism and institution-building, and trying to restrict the use of force in international relations by reinforcing national and international norms.
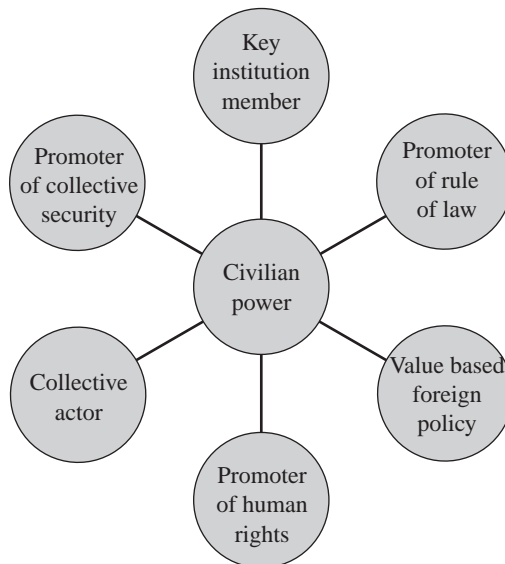

FIGURE 1
Civilian Powers in International Politics

As central players in international institutions, both Germany and Japan strongly supported the United Nations; as collective actors they were generally opposed to unilateral action in the past. This foreign policy role identity was particularly visible in Japan's adherence to its pacifist constitution and policy of UN centrism, but also in Germany's integration into the transatlantic alliance and the European Union (for a historical view, see Berger (1998)). In the 'war against terror', central norms constituting the civilian power role identity were put to the test.

The first challenge to standard international law came with Washington's interpretation of the 11 September 2001 attacks as an act of 'war'. The United States constructed the struggle against terror on the basis of the right to self-defence as put forward in Article 51 of the UN Charter. Marc Grossman, Assistant Secretary of State, advocated in October 2001 at the height of the Afghanistan war:

> I believe that Security Council resolution 1368 that was passed on the 12th of September, offers all of the legal basis and requirement that we need, in addition to Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, which is the right of self-defense. And we believe the United States was attacked on the 11th of September and that we have a right of self-defense in this regard. (United States Department of State, 2001)

Given the traumatic impact of 11 September 2001 and the evocative language of members of the Bush administration, it comes as no surprise that no sign of criticism was audible from Japan or Germany in the first weeks after the attacks. Prime Minister Koizumi declared on 7 October, at the start of the Afghanistan war: 'Japan strongly supports these actions to fight against terrorism' (Prime Minister's Office, 2001b), and German Chancellor Schröder went even further in acknowledging the right of self-defence on the basis of Article 51 of the UN Charter. On 19 September he said:

> On the basis of the decisions of the Security Council, the United States can take measures against instigators and brains behind them [...]. These are consistent with international law. On the basis of this reinterpretation of international law, [the American government] can also take measures against states that give shelter to those criminals. (Bundesregierung, 2001a)

Widely overlooked at that time, the German stance corresponded with the traditional role concept of a civilian power. This is emphasized by Foreign Minister Fischer: 'The position of the Federal Government is clear: We want the United Nations resolutions to be implemented promptly with no ifs or buts' (Iraqwatch, 2002b). The German government emphasized that Afghanistan was made possible by a UN mandate. The ensuing bill to make a dispatch of German forces to Afghanistan possible included a clear restriction of the geographic scope of the mandate for German forces in *Operation Enduring Freedom*: 'German forces will participate in missions against international terrorism outside Afghanistan only with the consent of the governments concerned' (Deutscher Bundestag, 2001).

Diverging norm constructions, especially on the transatlantic axis, became apparent when the Bush administration shifted its attention towards Saddam Hussein in 2002. The potential means to deal with Iraq favoured by the Bush administration differed from those preferred by the Germans. The alliance started to crumble when the United States constructed the war as a more general attack on terrorism and states supporting terrorists. In his 29 January 2002 State of the Union Address, President Bush explicitly identified Iran, Iraq and North Korea as constituting 'an axis of evil' (The White House, 2002c). After that, the differences went beyond bad word choice. They concerned different opinions with regard to the right to pre-emptive military action in international affairs. Already at the German–French summit meeting in the northern German city of Schwerin, both Chancellor Schröder and French President Jacques Chirac announced that any military action in Iraq would require previous UN Security Council legitimization.[7] According to Foreign Minister Fischer, the containment policy pursued by the United Nations had been on the whole successful. Hence, no immediate action was needed (Iraqwatch, 2002a).

On the American side, although President Bush implied in his 12 September 2002 United Nations speech that the United States might forgo an invasion of Iraq if the regime noticeably gave up its WMD programmes, Vice-President Cheney and Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld have always shown great doubt that weapons inspections could ever provide enough assurance of Iraqi disarmament to make an invasion unnecessary. On 26 August 2002, Cheney for example maintained that: 'A return of inspectors would provide no assurance whatsoever of [Saddam's] compliance with UN resolutions. On the contrary, there is a great danger that it would provide false comfort that Saddam was somehow back in the box.'[8] The United States finally started the invasion of Iraq on 19 March 2003, constructing it as a pre-emptive strike against an enemy state. President Bush explains how his administration defines pre-emption:

> We are now acting because the risks of inaction would be far greater. In one year or five years the power of Iraq to inflict harm on all free nations would be multiplied many times over. With these capabilities, Saddam Hussein and his terrorist allies could choose the moment of deadly conflict when they are strongest. We choose to meet that threat now where it arises before it can appear suddenly in our skies and cities. (The White House, 2003a)

This definition implies a reformulation of traditional *ius ad bellum* in two ways: first, it reserves the right for the United States to intervene in any country that is judged to be a threat at any time in the future; second, it leads to a new concept of sovereignty. On the one hand, governments are held responsible for what goes on within the borders of their states; on the other hand, those who fail to act in accordance with the norms set by the United States will lose their sovereignty (cf. Ikenberry, 2002: 53).

At the moment the invasion started, Bush regarded his government as the highest legal authority in the world, which the President put in plain words in a global message on 17 March 2003:

> Some permanent members of the Security Council announced they will veto any resolution that compels disarmament. The Security Council has not lived up to its responsibilities — so we will rise to ours. (The White House, 2003a)

While this view is perfectly mirrored by Japan,[9] the German government has been suspicious from the beginning that the United States would seek to take the slightest sign of Iraqi non-compliance as a pretext for using force. In spite of declaring his 'unconditional solidarity' in the immediate aftermath of 11 September 2001, the German Chancellor had already at that point made clear that there would be no participation in any foreign 'adventures' (Bundesregierung, 2001c). Pre-emption as defined by the Bush administration is widely seen as illegal under international law. While Washington's justification for pre-emptive war refers to the dangers and costs of inaction, current international law requires showing that the threat to be pre-empted is: (a) clear and imminent, such that immediate action is required to meet it; (b) direct, that is, threatening the party initiating the conflict in specific concrete ways, thus entitling that party to act pre-emptively; (c) critical, in the sense that the vital interests of the initiating party face unacceptable harm and danger; and (d) unmanageable, that is, not capable of being deterred or dealt with by other peaceful means (Falk, 2002; Schröder, 2003). In view of that, German Foreign Minister Fischer reiterated that 'our fight must always be legitimized under international law. It must respect national and international law, human rights and the UN Charter. Human rights in particular should not be suspended under the pretext of combating terrorism' (Iraqwatch, 2003).

Moreover, Fischer emphasized that a requirement for functioning alliances was prior consultation (2003).[10] The rhetoric of 'not only but also' (Fairclough, 2005), textured together with conjunctions such as 'as well as' or 'yet', conveyed a strong message of distrust from Berlin to Washington. Where the German government openly demonstrated its concern that the Bush administration was seeking a pretext for war even if Saddam did give up his WMD programme, Japan candidly showed its support for the United States. Whereas Tokyo clarified that it favoured the alliance, Berlin made clear it would work to maintain international law. Moreover, the Koizumi government showed trust in the Bush administration although multilateralism was dismissed by Washington, while Berlin repeatedly pointed to its standard option of diplomacy as a tool to resolve the crisis.

During the course of the year 2002, Germany once again had to choose between long-held foreign policy principles. Certain interest-shaping norms, such as the renunciation of the use of force and the protection of human rights, as well as the legality of the operation and the commitment to multilateralism, contradicted each other when Germany tried to take an active stance on the Iraq issue. Germany opted for the rejection of force by all means. Peter Struck, Schröder's defence minister, was quoted with the following words in the *International Herald Tribune*: 'As long as I am defense minister, the Bundeswehr will not be deployed in Iraq.'[11]

In East Asia, Japan underlined its basic commitment to the alliance with the United States several times. The Japanese government officially

informed the United States in December 2002 that it would back the United States if it launched military operations against Iraq (MOFA, 2003a). Tokyo also urged the United States to create an environment in which the international community could jointly back the United States if it commenced an attack against Iraq, but eventually the failure to achieve a multilateral solution under the heading of the United Nations was no obstacle for Japan to support the United States.

This is an interesting case of norm reformulation on the Japanese side. Müller explained that constitutive norms — such as those inherent in the civilian power model — were hard but not impossible to change (2004: 418). Constitutive as well as regulative norms may change as a result of a reflective process of 'assessing' the value of a norm with regard to its utility or appropriateness, or when certain norms contradict each other. Then actors have to judge these norms in terms of their relative weight, as was the case with the Japanese decision against international law and for solidarity with the United States. However, as norm change is difficult and slow in most cases, not all norms constituting the role concept of a civilian power were abandoned at the same time. When it came to the war in Iraq, Tokyo again made it clear that no military role could be expected of Japan (Hughes, 2004: 130–1). However, soon after the initial fighting in Iraq was over, the dispatch of troops — which would come under the special measures bill for providing support to Iraq's reconstruction implemented in the Summer of 2003 — was taken into consideration by the Koizumi government. In the political debate over the bill, the Japanese government indicated that troops would not be sent to 'combat areas' (XNA, 27 March 2003); and the United States had to wait until December for a final decision over the dispatch. The activities of the Japanese forces, which started in January 2004, do not involve the use of force, but are limited to humanitarian and reconstruction activities, such as the provision of medical services and drinking water, repairing of public buildings, and transport of humanitarian supplies, as well as support activities for other countries' efforts in the restoration of security.

In the German case, the basic stance towards the use of military force remained unchanged. The traditional 'culture of restraint' dominated the foreign policy agenda and shaped the German–American relations in the months to come. Schröder would not go further than to offer to help train Iraqi police and security forces in the neighbouring United Arab Emirates. There was no indication Germany would contribute peacekeeping troops. To try to accommodate the German wish for multilateralism on the basis of international law, Bush reassured Schröder — when they met in Berlin in September 2003 — that the United Nations would play a larger role in Iraq's reconstruction (The White House, 2003b), but Berlin and Washington remained split on key normative issues.

All in all, the discourse about central norms in international security did not lead to the establishment of a dominant interpretational framework as the basis of collective action between Germany and the United States, determining what action was appropriate and what action was inappropriate in the war against terror. This leads us to ask for more general dif-

ferences in intersubjective understandings of states, because it is assumed here that collective action is not only constituted by ideas about the world and expectations of appropriate behaviour, but also by certain understandings about self and other, i.e. identities. In the next section, especially, two kinds of identities are of interest for the analysis, one emphasizing the differences between various actors, called 'role identity', the other accentuating identification, labelled 'collective identity'.

Identities

Given the far-reaching agreement on fundamental pillars of world security in the weeks after the attacks on New York and Washington, the formation of a 'western' collective identity in security affairs looked possible. As Jenny Edkins has convincingly shown, trauma is directly related to political community and political power (2002). It triggers a sense of collective identity. Accordingly, the German, Japanese and world-wide support, and the open demonstration of solidarity with the United States in the days after 11 September, were overwhelming. On the day after the attacks, Japanese Prime Minister Jun'ichirô Koizumi pledged that his government would 'spare no effort in providing the necessary assistance and cooperation' (Prime Minister's Office, 2001c). One week later, Koizumi promised that 'Japan [would] take its own initiative towards the eradication of terrorism, in cooperation with the United States', and committed his government to taking the necessary measures for the eventual dispatch of the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) to support the United States (Prime Minister's Office, 2001d).

However, it soon became apparent that there would be first and second class friends of the United States, depending on the extent of support an ally was willing to provide. While the President asserts that 'America has no truer friend than Great Britain' (The White House, 2001b), and emphasizes that 'Japan is one of America's greatest and truest friends' (Prime Minister's Office, 2002), there is no such word in President Bush's speech to the German Bundestag in May 2002. Instead, he challenges the growing scepticism in Germany towards the American-led war on terror: 'Our histories have diverged, yet we seek to live by the same ideals. We believe in free markets, tempered by compassion. We believe in open societies that reflect unchanging truths. We believe in the value and dignity of every life' (Deutscher Bundestag, 2002). In a clear indication of America's intentions to build 'coalitions of the willing', Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld dispatched his deputy, Paul Wolfowitz, to politely decline the NATO offer of sending troops to Afghanistan, stating that 'the mission would define the coalition'.[12] Washington announced its interest in military cooperation only for the time after the removal of the Taliban from power.

In terms of self-esteem, the United States simply pulled away from its own allies. The United States administration left no doubt that future world security would lie in the hands of Washington, and that it was America that would take the lead both politically and militarily. As the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs put it: 'To support all these means of defending the peace, the United States will build and maintain 21st century

military forces that are beyond challenge' (Rice, 2002). This kind of military dominance naturally excludes the rest of the world. Hence, the construction of collective identities in the 'Western world' was not an easy enterprise in the months that followed. Attempts by Bush moderates such as Powell to push a more all-embracing global agenda and construct a wider collective identity faltered. Problems evolving from different representations of 'Self' and 'Other' arose when Iraq was put on the agenda by the United States. By going to the United Nations on 12 September 2002 to demand fulfilment of UN Security Council resolutions, President Bush deliberately tried to show the importance the United States attached to winning allied support. Yet, this strategy was only partly successful. In Europe, the new American understanding of NATO's strategic doctrine — defence of common interests, reaching beyond collective defence of members' territories — was not backed by all allies. This became more evident after the first phase of the fight against terrorism — the removal of the Taliban from power in Afghanistan — was over. French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine said that Europe was 'threatened by a new simplistic approach that reduces all the problems in the world to the struggle against terrorism', and when President Bush came up with his notion of an 'axis of evil', German Defence Minister Rudolf Scharping said he favoured a political strategy for dealing with Iraq rather than a military one.[13] American Secretary of State Colin Powell reiterated that Europe still played an important role in the United States strategic considerations, but on the other hand indicated that Washington would not sacrifice its interests in the pursuit of multilateralism (US Department of State, 2002). In other words: The United States was willing to act unilaterally in the event the alliance partners did not agree.

Bush himself explicated before the German Bundestag that collective identity did not imply sameness as a precondition: 'Different as we are, we are building and defending the same house of freedom — its doors open to all of Europe's people' (The White House, 2002b). In this context, the *freedom* metaphor was again deliberately employed to unite different countries behind the same objective. As one can see from the discourse over the intervention in Iraq, the metaphor still did not serve this task appropriately; it did not lead to bridging identity gaps between Europe and the United States, while identification with Washington obviously occurred in Tokyo. Collective identity involves shared characteristics, it even induces actors to be altruistic in some cases. Altruism, though, did not play a noticeable role in the German–American relationship after 11 September 2001.

As we have heard from Wendt, a culture is internalized and we can speak of a collective identity when actors include the wishes, ideas and intentions of others within their own ideas (Wendt, 1999: 304–6). This process undoubtedly worked better on the Japanese–American than on the German–American axis. What is remarkable is the incremental reversal of long-held principles by Japan, again visible at the height of the Iraq debate. To quote just one very significant example, in late January 2003 the Cabinet Legislative Bureau (CLB) announced that pre-emptive strikes against North Korean missile bases by the Japanese military would be legal and that the refuelling of American warplanes, as they prepared to attack Iraqi

targets, would not 'correspond to our country's use of force or exercising of the right to collective defense', as Osamu Akiyama, cabinet Legislation Bureau director general, put it (*Japan Times*, 31 January 2003). Keeping in mind the government's interpretation of Article 9 of the Constitution, that all sovereign nations have a right to collective self-defence, but, in Japan the exercise of that right is prohibited by the Constitution, this policy turn represents a remarkable shift that could be interpreted as a new identity of Japan in international security. In this context, altruism definitely plays a role. This does not exclude rationality, but the basis on which interests are calculated is the alliance with the United States — a factor that seems to be weaker on the German–American link.

In fact, Prime Minister Jun'ichirô Koizumi reiterated his support for the US-led attack on the day after the war had begun in Iraq, saying it was 'natural' for Japan to back Washington as an ally, even if public sentiment tended in another direction, as Koizumi put it in plain words: 'My actions are based on careful consideration of the importance of the Japan–U.S. alliance and the international cooperative situation' (*Japan Times*, 24 March 2003). 'Interest', 'alliance' and 'partnership' are textured as equivalent in Japanese speech acts. While Japan institutes its policy towards the United States on an alliance logic, it is the role concept of a 'civilian power' that guides Germany's stance. Amid growing world-wide criticism, and even though Washington acted without the approval of the UN Security Council and put Japan's long-held policy of UN centrism to a ruthless test, Japan conveyed the strongest possible symbolic message of brotherhood to the United States.

Some authors would certainly call this conclusion into question. They would contend that identity can be 'a function of whichever institution and set of social practices best obtains a set of exogenous interests in the given systemic circumstances' (Sterling-Folker, 2000: 106). This institutionalist inspired statement contradicts the constructivist world-view insofar as constructivism maintains that identities set the norm for what is ultimately considered 'rational' in foreign policy. It should be reiterated here that the social itself is always constituted by certain ideas and self-representations. It must be conceded that in the Japanese case it is the idea of insecurity in a hostile environment with North Korea as a major threat which strengthens its identity as a partner of the United States. Peter Katzenstein has rightly pointed out that identities are always part of threat perceptions (2003: 736). The Japanese case is an intriguing example of the opposite mechanism: threat perceptions shape identities, and these identities serve the task of orientation for self-reference and action.

Culture and Collective Action

The analysis of discourses between states can reveal when cooperation in international politics occurs and the circumstances under which it is difficult to achieve. The method exposes how some ideas are privileged over

others, how norms are maintained, reformulated and abandoned, how iden-
tity is constructed and how power is legitimized. Ideas, norms, identity and
culture play an important role in the construction and reconstruction of
the international system. Although it is difficult to actually measure the
strength of 'identity', the salience of the distinction between 'self' and
'other' and the price governments are actually willing to pay for the group
that they identify with make it possible to grasp the meaning of collective
identities in world politics (Risse, 2003).

Our discourse starts with the catastrophe of 11 September 2001.
Alternative visions soon started to compete in their interpretation of the
events of that day. Especially the American government tried to institute a
'cognitive framework' that would determine what reaction was appropriate
and what reaction was inappropriat to the terrorist attacks. However, the
more specific the discourse gets, the more difficult it becomes to develop
intersubjective understandings of world security. The speech acts emanating
from the United States seem to violate constitutive norms on which espe-
cially the transatlantic community and the German–American relationship
had been based for decades, such as multilateralism and close consultation.
Over time, the more Washington acted unilaterally, the more it encouraged
opposition from Europe (in particular Germany and France) that saw itself
as the warden of the rule of international law. What is even more danger-
ous from a European/German perspective is the prospect that Washington
pursued a course of building 'coalitions of the willing' to deal with interna-
tional   crises,   at   the   same   time   perceptibly   abandoning   its
former alliances like NATO. American 'imperial ambition' (Ikenberry,
2002) embraces temporary alliances, but it rejects stable partnerships, such
as the transatlantic community.

In the second phase of the war against terror, the United States failed to
create what Laclau and Mouffe (1985) call a 'hegemonic discourse'. Key
signifiers in the discourse, such as 'freedom', 'liberty', 'democracy' and
'peace' embodied different meanings in German and American speech acts.
It might be necessary for a hegemonic discourse to be able to include a wide
variety of demands, even if these are antagonistic at the beginning. Then the
discourse must strive to neutralize these demands by representing them as
a bloc that stands opposed to a common enemy.

That was not achieved from 2002 onwards. States did not always define
their interests in terms of the norms set by international law, but followed a
path that was guided by certain role-specific (Germany) or collective iden-
tities (Japan). While Japan defines itself through the alliance with the
United States, Germany relies on a specific role concept that is still largely
framed by the norms of the civilian power model. It has to be reiterated that
this does not exclude interests. Identity operates through a second-order
reflection: 'we agree to assume that we share an identity' (Wæver, 1998b:
77). Identity is therefore not about actual sameness or connectedness but
refers to the self-conscious conception of a community.

Moreover, the meaning of certain identities will often depend on whether
other actors represent an actor in the same way. Actors 'learn' identities as
a result of how they are treated by others. Japan's identity becomes mean-

ingful through its alliance with the United States, and Germany's identity relates to the European Union and its liaison with France. In other words: Whether states consider themselves as enemies, rivals or friends is determined by the quality of the culture they live in.

While collective identity refers to identification, role identities constitute different identities of Self and Other. Collective identity, one has to add, is usually issue-specific and rarely total, which means Japan and the United States can be very close in security affairs but can be antagonists or competitors in other policy fields, for example trade affairs. Analysing the German–American and Japanese–American security relationships after 11 September 2001 admittedly illustrates only a small part of the social structure of the international system which we have called 'culture'. Future research will have to answer the question how states and regions perceive themselves in relation to others in the global security architecture. This, in turn, will determine the decision for or against collective action. The German case is an interesting example of a country refusing to collaborate although this might have led to material gains (oil, resources, veto power in world politics). In the end, it obviously depends on intersubjective representations whether collective action becomes possible or not.

Notes

1. As the American President stated on 11 September: 'America was targeted for attack because we're the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world. And no one will keep that light from shining' (The White House, 2001b).

2. Cited in Hamilton (2002: 8).

3. 'New defense plan urges flexibility for new threats', *The Japan Times*, 6 September 2004.

4. As foreign minister Yoriko Kawaguchi put it on the occasion of Assistant Secretary of State of the United States James Kelly's visit to North Korea in October 2002: 'Japan is very concerned about the issues of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons and missiles.' See MOFA (2002).

5. As Toshimitsu Motegi, Senior Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs, put it on the Munich Conference on Security Policy in March 2003: 'The Iraq problem may have started with a classic war of invasion. However, when it was linked with the "new threats" such as proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) and terrorism, it came to represent the challenges facing the global security order in the post-cold-war era. The problem of North Korea, a country located next to us, has its roots in the cold-war legacy of a divided state, but it does have a similar character in posing the threat of WMDs proliferation' (MOFA, 2003b).

6. 'Subsequent terrorist attacks have heightened the awareness of asymmetric threats that may occur anywhere in the world and may be directed against anyone' (Bundesministerium der Verteidigung, 2003: 6).

7. See 'UN must sanction Iraq strike', *The Guardian*, 31 July 2002.

8. See 'In Cheney's words: The Administration Case for Removing Saddam Hussein', *New York Times*, 27 August 2002.

9. As put forward by Koichi Haraguchi, Permanent Representative of Japan at the Open Meeting of the Security Council on the Situation in Iraq, 26 March 2003: 'Japan has stressed that the United Nations Security Council must act in unity and

fulfil its responsibility for the peace and security of the world. It is regrettable that the Security Council ultimately could not reach a common view and thus failed to stand united' (MOFA, 2003c).

10. See also Schröder's speech on the day after the terrorist attacks: 'Certainly: Every right corresponds with a duty. On the other way round, every alliance duty corresponds with a right, which means information and consultation' (Bundesregierung, 2001b).

11. 'Paris and Berlin remain split on key Iraq issue', *International Herald Tribune,* 9 September 2002.

12. Quoted in Hirsh (2002: 21).

13. Suzanne Daley, 'France Upbraids U.S. as "Simplistic" ', *International Herald Tribune*, 7 February 2002.

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