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Influencing the imagined 'polar regions': The politics of Japan's Arctic and Antarctic policies

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Abstract

How does a state that is not a ‘natural' Arctic or Antarctic state imagine the polar regions, interpret their roles in its foreign policy and translate them into an actual polar policy? The paper seeks to answer by comparing the Arctic and Antarctic policies of Japan. It shows Japan’s national imagination of the polar regions as a combined region began before World War II due to its imperial past of joining the race to the Antarctic and the Arctic. However, in terms of policy, the polar regions long meant primarily Antarctica. Japan as a defeated power and a late-comer to the international system takes a liberal position in the governance of the Antarctica. Having and maintaining a capability to conduct scientific research in the Antarctic via the international decision-making institutions has been considered an important status marker associated with great power identity. Regarding the Arctic, Japan attempts to replicate the success of its Antarctic policy, backed by tools of science and technology diplomacy whose purpose is to revive its domestic economy. Japan’s scientific whaling in the Antarctic is primarily a domestic, identity-based political conflict between a nostalgia for Japan’s imperial past and its more modern, liberal identity of today.

Introduction

'I believe the Arctic should have an international agreement like the Antarctic Treaty. It is unwise of them [the Arctic coastal states] to think only they have the sovereign rights in the Arctic.' That was a comment from a retired Japanese Antarctic explorer who was then overseeing a polar museum in the Tokyo suburbs. Although this was before Japan's application for observer status at the Arctic Council, the most influential inter-governmental forum on the Arctic, was accepted in 2013, I was surprised to hear the argument of an 'Arctic Treaty', which is now largely considered unrealistic, come from a relatively well-informed polar scholar. This conversation made me rethink whether Japan had a comprehensive polar policy as it claimed.

Indeed, according to conventional wisdom (shared at least in materials written in English), the Arctic and the Antarctic are categorised to be unique regions in that they are "poles apart" from the rest of rest of the world (Chaturvedi, 1996 iv). The two polar regions are characterised by cold conditions and the presence of ice, snow, and water and they exert influence on climate of a significant part of the globe (Anisimov et al., 2007, p. 807). While there are various differences between them, the most significant is that the Arctic is a "frozen ocean surrounded by continental landmasses and open oceans", while the Antarctica is a "frozen continent surrounded solely by oceans" (Anisimov et al., 2007, p. 807). Nonetheless, some argue that this geographical notion of the Arctic and the Antarctic as a unit should not be simply regarded as a *fait accompli*. Geography is the study of places transformed by human intervention (Livingstone, 1992) and defining a region affects perceptions and understandings of its geographic, social, and political shape (Bennett, Greaves, Riedlsperger, & Botella, 2016). Some might also add that in the Arctic there is human settlement "where people must adapt to harsh, cold regimes", while the Antarctic is uninhabited apart from research bases (Anisimov et al., 2007, p. 807).

The signature or membership of international institutions related to the two polar regions will give us a rudimentary picture of various states' attitude towards those regions. International

organisations influence state behaviour through mechanisms such as membership conditionality, whereby institutions link admissions directly to behaviour, and socialisation-based methods that solely use norms to either persuade, shame, or praise actors into changing their policies (Kelley, 2004). I referred to 29 Antarctic Treaty signatories as well as 8 Member states and 13 Observer states of the Arctic Council. I also paid attention to the membership status of the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR) and the International Arctic Science Committee (IASC), both most significant international non-governmental organisations for scientific research in the Antarctic or the Arctic.

Table 1 shows that, of those countries, only 16 states are signatories of the Antarctic Treaty and Members/Observers of the Arctic Council. In other words, there are only 16 states that place sufficient amount of priority on joining international institutions related to both the Arctic and the Antarctic. Moreover, of the 16 states, many are also members of hegemonic organisations such as the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), G8 or G20. Membership in the UNSC, in particular permanent membership, is considered a requirement to achieve "legitimate great-power" status (Suzuki, 2008). In other words, only states that are significantly powerful to be the members of other hegemonic organisations, especially if the state does not have a natural 'polar identity' due to its geographical location or history, can afford to pay attention to the polar regions. Thus, having a comprehensive bi-polar policy is a reflection of both symbolic and actual power that a state wishes to exert.

The question arises then, how does a state that is not a 'natural' Arctic or Antarctic state—in the sense that it does not have any sovereign territories thereby has to act in accord with accepted practices as an "endless strategies of *legitimation*"(Clark, 2007) to be a legitimate member of the club—imagine the polar regions? How does it interpret these roles in its foreign policy and translate them into an actual polar policy? These questions are essential to further understand how the polar regions are being (re)defined in today's context. In the rest of the paper, I will try to answer these questions in four parts. First, I will define concepts such as 'images', 'perceptions' or 'state

identity' for this paper and their functions in a state's polar policy. Second, Arctic and Antarctic policies of Japan, one of the most prominent non-natural polar states, will be outlined. Third, I will compare the Arctic and Antarctic policies of Japan and analyse how Japan self-identifies in relation to the polar region. Finally, implications based on Japan's experience will be discussed.

This paper shows that Japan's national imagination of the polar regions as one entity began before World War II, primarily due to its imperial past and joining the race to the Antarctic and the Arctic alongside other imperial powers. However, from a policy point of view, for much of the last century the polar regions for Japan meant the Antarctica. Japan as a defeated power and a later-comer to the international system established after World War II, takes a liberal position in the governance of the Antarctica. Having and maintaining a capability to travel to and conduct scientific research in the Antarctic via the international decision-making institutions has been considered to be an important status marker associated with great power identity. Regarding the Arctic, Japan attempts to replicate the general success of its Antarctic policy, backed by tools of science and technology diplomacy, with the aim of reviving Japan's domestic economy. Japan's scientific whaling in the Antarctic is primarily a domestic, identity-based political conflict between a nostalgia for Japan's imperial past and its more modern, liberal identity of today.

Definition of concepts

In the studies of international relations, the concept of identity is central to the constructivist paradigm in a similar manner that power is to realism and wealth to liberalism (Lebow, 2016, p. 1). It is considered that states can possess identities just as an individual can. State identities are based on the descriptions of states and their peoples generated by leaders and citizens alike (Lebow, 2016, p. 1). Although sometimes at odds, identifications can be used to explain a person's behaviour or a state's policy. Self-identification helps shape behaviour, and behaviour in turn helps shape self-identification (Lebow, 2016, p. 3). States' identities comprise several dimensions (subjective as well as intersubjective, cultural and historical), therefore they act like an "analytical prism", through

which different spectral dimensions converge into one ray of light, in understanding foreign policy (Urrestarazu, 2015, p. 136). Indeed, state identity is a lens "through which citizens determine a framework for a state's appropriate response to the demands and challenges of the international environment" (Oros, 2008, p. 28).

A state's national self-identification is derived largely from roles (functions), affiliations and relationships to bodies and territories, with roles being the most significant source (Lebow, 2016, p. 73). In international society, roles are closely linked with a state's (self- and externally recognised) power and responsibilities. For example, the United States has enjoyed the role and recognition as superpower and states such as Switzerland and Sweden have succeeded in changing their role from a low-status role of neutrality to a high-status roles as regional and middle powers (Lebow, 2016, p.4). To become a great power, a state is required to obtain the "status markers" linked to great power identity and convince existing great powers that it merits the status and legitimacy (Lebow, 2010, p.487). Today, indicators such as national wealth, nuclear weapons, space exploration, Nobel prizes, and Olympic medals are considered as typical markers of a great power (Lebow, 2016, p.85). Therefore, for the purpose of this paper, it is assumed that an element of Japan's self-identification springs from the roles it regards itself as having towards the polar regions and their peoples, and this self-identification can be used to explain Japan's policies towards the two regions. Moreover, Japan's self-identifications have to be acknowledged as legitimate by existing powers in order for Japan to exercise its power influence.

In analysing Japan's roles towards the polar regions, images and perceptions that its leaders and people have towards those regions strengthen our understanding of the link between Japan's self-identifications and its foreign policy towards the polar regions. In the studies of international relations, neorealists advocate the idea that perceptions of security that rested on estimates of relative power and assumptions about the intentions of other countries were important in understanding international relations (Herrmann, 2013, p. 4). Specifically, when states imagine self and other, they also imagine whether the relationship between them warrants accepting the lead of

the other (authority ranking), taking care of the other (communal sharing), or simply trading goods of equal amount of comparable market value (Herrmann, 2013, p. 9). Alternatively, a self can perceive the other as representing a perceived opportunity, and as inferior in capability and lower in cultural status (Herrmann, 2013, p. 10). An example of this image can be the perception imperial leaders had of their colonies. A collection of such images and perceptions of a territory or people leads to a behavioral inclination to intervene and to impose control over it (Herrmann, 2013, p. 10).

Japan and the polar regions

Japan has been one of few non-Western states to conduct polar research, doing so since 1957, but has mainly focused on Antarctica (Tonami & Watters, 2012). This is not unrelated to the fact that the first Japanese Antarctic expedition during 1911-1912, in which Nobu Shirase landed on Antarctica on 16 January 1912, is commemorated as the burgeoning of Japan's polar engagement. Although Japan's polar research has consistently been conducted both in the Arctic and the Antarctic, the Arctic research community had been smaller by comparison and researchers dispersed among various institutions, consequently allowing the Antarctic voice to be stronger and more influential than that of the Arctic in polar policy-making.

In 2009, however, the Arctic issue finally began to attract significant public attention in Japan. In April, the Japanese Vice Foreign Minister released an official statement on the 50th anniversary of the Antarctic Treaty and announced Japan's intention to apply for observer status at the Arctic Council (Hashimoto, 2009). In July of the same year, the Japanese government officially submitted an application to the Arctic Council. This formal self-recognition of Japan's desire to be acknowledged in an intergovernmental body of Arctic governance sped up the policy-making processes with regards to the Arctic within the government. For the time-being, however, there is no unified polar policy that encompasses both polar regions.

Japan's Antarctic Policy

Despite Japan's long history of Antarctic engagement, there is only a small volume of published studies describing the role of Japan and the governance of Antarctica. However, they do not necessarily reflect the latest state of Japan's Antarctic policy and its character. For instance, Joyner (1989) described the history of the Antarctic Treaty System and Japan's national interests in the Antarctic. They were regarded as: more cooperation with the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Party (ATCP), economic interests and preservation of access for Japanese nationals to exploit living marine resources and minerals, scientific interests and preservation of the resources of the Antarctic for future exploitation. Japan's economic interests in the Antarctic and subsequent reluctance to ratify the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty was criticized before Japan finally ratified in 1997 (Blay, 1992).

Others explored the politics and legal implications around Japan's renunciation of territorial rights in Antarctica in the San Francisco Peace Treaty of 1951 after the defeat of World War II (Hara, 1999; 2006; Scott, 1999). Recent studies of Japan and the Antarctic revolve around the controversial research whaling that Japan conducts in the Antarctic (Anton, 2009) and so-called 'eco-terrorism' committed by an anti-whaling NGO against Japanese research whaling vessels (Roeschke, 2009). The Antarctic Treaty is the centrepiece of the legal regime and governance of the Antarctic. The Treaty was signed in Washington on 1 December 1959 by the twelve countries whose scientists had been active in and around Antarctica during the International Geophysical Year (IGY) of 1957-58 (Secretariat of the Antarctic Treaty, 2014). It entered into force in 1961 and currently the total number of Parties to the Treaty is 50. The Antarctic Treaty and related agreements are called the Antarctic Treaty System (ATS) and within the ATS, international relations with regards to Antarctica are regulated. Japan was one of the twelve original contracting states of the Antarctic Treaty and one of the twelve governments that had participated in the Washington Conference Treaty negotiations and ratified it, which brought the Treaty into force on 23 June 1961 (Joyner, 1989).

Japan does not claim territorial rights in Antarctica and does not recognize other nations' claims either. This is because Japan was forced to renounce its claim to Antarctica, together with a number of territories in the Asia-Pacific, in the San Francisco Peace Treaty of 1951 after defeat in World War II (Hara, 2006). Shinsuke Tomotsugu, however, pointed out that the Japanese government has consistently been opposed to the idea of a territorial claim even before World War II as the Antarctica offered little to no returns on resources and trade. For Japan, therefore, limiting other nations' claims and maintaining accessibility were of utmost priority (Tomotsugu, 2013).

In order to understand Japan's position on the Antarctic today, it is noteworthy to mention the five most important provisions of The Antarctic Treaty, which are (Secretariat of the Antarctic Treaty, 2014):

1. Antarctica shall be used for peaceful purposes only (Art. I);
2. Freedom of scientific investigation in Antarctica and cooperation toward that end … shall continue (Art. II);
3. Scientific observations and results from Antarctica shall be exchanged and made freely available (Art. III);
4. Among the signatories of the Treaty were seven countries - Argentina, Australia, Chile, France, New Zealand, Norway and the United Kingdom - with territorial claims, sometimes overlapping. Other countries do not recognize any claims. The US and Russia maintain a "basis of claim". All positions are explicitly protected in Article IV, which preserves the status quo;
5. To promote the objectives and ensure the observance of the provisions of the Treaty, "All areas of Antarctica, including all stations, installations and equipment within those areas … shall be open at all times to inspection " (Art. VII).

Japan's position is that: a) the basic goal is to place the Antarctic under international management, b) Japan recognizes the importance of continuing the system into the future based on the Antarctic Treaty, and c) it is important to actively support the planning and the implementation of measures to promote the aims and principles of the Antarctic Treaty (National Institute of Polar Research (NIPR),, 2003). Japan is one of 27 members of the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting, alongside other nations that have been active in scientific research in Antarctica. Japan has dispatched a regular scientific research expedition every year since 1956 (the Japanese Antarctic Research Expedition (JARE)). The first expedition reached East Ongul Island in Queen Maud Land in January 1957, and opened the Showa Station, which is now the mother station of the JARE (National Institute of Polar Research (NIPR),, 2014). The expedition has been sent every year since, the latest being the 58th at the time of writing (National Institute of Polar Research (NIPR), 2016).

Japan is one of the nations that does not support any mining activities in Antarctica, based on the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty that Japan ratified in 1997 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2013a). For the time-being, it appears a major part of Japanese Antarctic policy is related to the Antarctic Research Expedition. There is a cross-ministerial, unified organization, called "Integration Promotion Headquarter of the Antarctic Region Observation (nankyoku chiiki kansoku tōgō suisin honbu)" headed by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). The Headquarter consists of 10 ministries and a panel of academic experts, but the most relevant ministerial bodies are: MEXT (and National Institute of Polar Research (NIPR) under MEXT); Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications; Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (MLIT) (as well as Geospatial Information Authority of Japan, Japan Meteorological Agency and Japan Coast Guard under MLIT); Ministry of Defense (MoD); Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA); and Ministry of Environment (MoE).

Under the auspices of MEXT, NIPR conducts Antarctic research and observation as the central agency of the Antarctic observation program. Geospatial Information Authority of Japan is

responsible for the observation of the ionosphere and auroras. Japan Meteorological Agency administers the surveying and mapping of Antarctica and Japan Meteorological Agency observes the ozone layer and the upper-air. Japan Coast Guard oversees affairs related to marine physics, marine chemistry and tidal fluctuation. In terms of capacity to conduct maritime activities in the Polar regions, there are three icebreakers owned by Japan; the *Shirase*, *Soya* and *Teshio*. The *Shirase* is under the auspices of the Japan Maritime Self Defense Force (SDF). For this reason, there are legal restrictions on the scope of usage for the *Shirase*, based on the SDF Act. At present, the Shirase may only be used as a supply vessel for the Japanese Antarctic Research Expedition (JARE) under NIPR. The *Soya* and *Teshio* are owned by the Japan Coast Guard and only used as patrol boats, operating from Hokkaido in northern Japan. MoD engages in the transportation of the members of the Expedition and necessary supplies by sea and air. MoFA represents the Japanese government in the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meetings. MoE is responsible for the Act on Protection of the Environment in Antarctica, which is a domestic legislation that corresponds to the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty, and administers procedures required for Antarctic tourism and visits.

Scientific Whaling

The most controversial aspect of Japan's Antarctic policy is that Japan conducts research whaling in the Antarctic. Whaling, or fisheries in general was once a major industry in Japan, but today revenues from fisheries contribute less than 1% of Japan's GDP. The number of workers in fisheries boasted more than 700,000 in 1960 but decreased dramatically to 180,000 in 2013, and more than half of these workers are reported to be older than 60-years-old (The Mainichi Shimbun, 2015). It is "puzzling" that Japan’s whaling policy is at odds with its overall approach to environmental diplomacy, let alone foreign policy in general (Strausz, 2014). I argue that whaling is emotionally rather important for Japan, also influencing its self-identification towards the Antarctic.

Japan joined the International Whaling Commission (IWC) in 1951 and under the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (ICRW), Japan implemented a commercial whaling moratorium in 1986. In 1987, Japan started its first research whaling program in the Antarctic called JAPRA (The Institute of Cetacean Research,, 2013). The program ended in 2004 but was immediately succeeded by JARPA II. Japan's continuation of whaling has received much criticism, especially from abroad, examples being direct anti-whaling actions against Japan's Antarctic whaling expedition by the anti-whaling NGO Sea Shepard since 2007 (Sea Shepherd, 2008). Furthermore, a legal case regarding Japanese whaling in the Antarctic was brought to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) by Australia (with New Zealand intervening), which Japan subsequently lost (International Court of Justice, 2014).

The Japanese government's official position regarding research whaling prior to the ICJ's ruling was that: "as with any other marine life, whales are a natural resource and can be utilized as such, so long as this is done in a manner that is supported by the best scientific evidence available to be sustainable" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2013b). Three entities are relevant to Japan's whaling policy in the Antarctic: The Japan Fisheries Agency (JFA) under the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF), the ICR, MoFA. In November 2014, the Japanese government announced a new scientific whaling program called 'New Scientific Whale Research Program in the Antarctic Ocean (NEWREP-A)'. On 6 October 2015, Japan made a new declaration related to the ICJ. Japan declared "considering that, as Japan is a State Party to the UNCLOS and continues to observe its obligations, it is more appropriate, as long as there is no special agreement, to apply dispute settlement procedure under the UNCLOS that establishes provisions regarding living resources of the sea as well as the involvement of experts from the scientific or technical perspective when an international dispute arises with respect to research on, or conservation, management or exploitation of, living resources of the sea," in relation to the ICJ judgement on Japan's scientific whaling (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2015).

Existing research has tried to explain why Japan continues its scientific whaling while economic and political benefits of doing so are so marginal (if not negative). Catalinac & Chan (2005) asserted that Japan's persistence in its right to whale is because the Japanese government regards the whaling dispute as "a threat to resource security and also a danger to inter-state respect for differences in custom and cuisine". Ishii and Okubo (2007) argued Japanese policymakers regard non-issues like whaling as one of the few issues where they can relieve "diplomatic stress" caused by the perception that Japan always has a weaker hand against Western powers such as the United States (p.85). Morikawa (2009, p. 1) pointed out that the Japanese government allowed the whaling issue to "take on a magnitude and significance far beyond its actual importance" and "has made the continuation of whaling a national goal and a matter of national pride" (Morikawa, 2009, p. 19) . Blok (2008; 2011) investigated the issue of identity-based politics of whaling and said what whaling conflicts are "really" about is "an essentially contested normative question" and "national sentiments of pride and humiliation are clearly at stake for pro-whaling elites" of Japan (Blok, 2011, p. 74).

It can be said that Japan imagines the Antarctic as a region in need of being taken care of (communal sharing) but also as a region representing a perceived opportunity, and as inferior in capability and lower in cultural status. Especially amongst pro-whaling elites, scientific whaling adds an element of both national pride and humiliation to the Japanese image of Antarctica. Based on these perceptions of Antarctica, Japan self-identifies as a law-abiding, liberal actor holding a legitimate power as a member of a select "club" of nations with the right to intervene and impose some level of control over Antarctica.

Japan's Arctic Policy

Although comparatively smaller in scale than that of the Antarctic, Japan has a history of Arctic engagement that dates back to World War II (Naganobu, 2012a). In June 1941, a Japanese ship sailed towards what is now known as the Northern Sea Route (NSR). The fishing vessel *Kaiho* of

the Japanese Fisheries Agency had an ambitious plan to sail through the NSR and onwards to Europe, Africa, the Indian Ocean, and eventually to the Antarctic. This ambition was ultimately overblown and did not succeed; after the *Kaiho* reached the Bering Strait, it had to change its route and return to Japan as Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union on 22 June and the course of the war in the Arctic changed (Naganobu, 2012b). The legend of *Kaiho* and its shattered dreams lives on among Japanese polar scientists today (Tonami, 2016, p. 48).

After a long hiatus following the end of World War II and during the Cold War period, Japan's general interest in the Arctic became more widely apparent in the beginning of 1990s. In accordance with the general trend of Japan's environmental diplomacy of that period, Japan has taken a liberal position in the Arctic and tries to promote multilateral solutions (Hook, Gibson, Hughes, & Dobson, 2012, p. 320). One of the most evident signs of this liberal position is Japan's decision to join the International Arctic Science Committee (IASC) as a non-Arctic state in 1992. Japan was the first Asian state to do so, only two years after the Committee was established. In 1993, the Ship & Ocean Foundation (now Ocean Policy Research Institute, the Sasakawa Peace Foundation) began a six-year research project "International Northern Sea Route Programme (INSROP)", which became the first international research project to prove the technical feasibility of the NSR as an international commercial sea lane(Liu & Kronbak, 2010). This is backed by Japan's formal recognition of the role of science and technology in its economic development and diplomacy during that period. A symbolic example is the Science and Technology Basic Law that was enacted in November 1995. The law claimed that its objective was "to achieve a higher standard of science and technology, to contribute to the development of the economy and society of Japan..." (Cabinet Office of Japan, 2015). In other words, the Law gave clarity on the shared understanding of the Japanese decision-makers that, in order to shake off the long recession and the end of the era of Japan as a 'catching-up nation' to the Western developed economies, it was indispensable to create new industries by developing creative and high-tech scientific technologies (Akashi, 2011).

While it is debatable when and how Japan began to recognize science and technology as an important tool to facilitate its economic growth and its national wealth, it is imperative to understand the Japanese interpretation of the role of science and technology in linking its domestic industrial policy and foreign policy. In the beginning of the 2000s, the Japanese government became aware of the need of supporting polar research. In December 2004, the Council for Science and Technology Policy, which is under the Cabinet Office, agreed on the Promotion Strategy of Earth Observation. This Strategy included Japan's aim to realize a long-term, continuous observation of the Polar regions and cryosphere (MEXT, 2010). From 2009, Japan's Arctic policy began to be set forth. As previously mentioned, in July 2009 Japan submitted its application for Observer status at the Arctic Council. This came at a time when the Council was beginning to take on new responsibilities related to safety of navigation and search and rescue and it was viewed as an indication that the council itself was changing and that the positions of member states were shifting (Tonami, 2016, p. 60).

In part to impress the Arctic coastal states who had a say in Japan's application to the Arctic Council, and in other part to prepare the ground for when/if Japan became Observer at the Council, the government followed up the application with several domestic initiatives. These included the establishment an Arctic Task Force at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (MoFA), a special public-private joint committee on the NSR organized by the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (MLIT), the addition of the word 'Arctic' 18 times to the renewed Basic Plan on Ocean Policy, setting up of an inter-ministerial committee on the Arctic (Liaison Committee among Ministries and Agencies on Various Issues Related to the Arctic), and the appointment of Japan's own Arctic Ambassador. Nonetheless, the flagship of Japan's Arctic engagement has been considered to be, at least by the Japanese stakeholders, its scientific research.

Therefore, these government initiatives became 'complete' when they were complemented by nation-wide, large-scale, government-funded scientific research projects that aimed to protect and understand the Arctic environment. In terms of ministerial bodies related to the Arctic, at

present there is no cross-ministerial, unified organization to deal with Arctic issues except for the aforementioned inter-ministerial committee on the Arctic. Amongst various ministries, business sectors and research institutes, the most relevant are: Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) and the National Institute of Polar Research (NIPR) under MEXT; Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA); Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (MLIT); The Headquarters for Ocean Policy under the Cabinet Office; The Ocean Policy Research Institute (OPRI) under the Sasakawa Peace Foundation; the shipping sector; Ports & infrastructure industry; and the energy sector.

Two years after Japan was accepted to be Observer at the Arctic Council and became a full-fledged non-Arctic-Arctic stakeholder, Japan announced its first official Arctic policy. At the Arctic Circle Assembly held in Reykjavik, Iceland in October 2015, the Japanese Arctic Ambassador Kazuko Shiraishi excitedly introduced the policy, prefacing: "[Today is] the most important day ever for Japan's Arctic policy. Just 6 hours ago, Prime Minister [Shinzo] Abe adopted a comprehensive Arctic policy for the first time in history…What is the key element of our new Arctic policy? Research and development."

The official Arctic policy lists global environment, indigenous peoples, science and technology, the rule of law and international cooperation, sea routes, natural resources, and national security as areas of priority, and research and development, international cooperation and sustainable use (of natural resources) as specific initiatives (The Headquarters for Ocean Policy, 2015). This rather all-embracing Arctic policy is due to a policy-making process of an iron triangle comprised of bureaucracy, politicians and business groups, each of which hold varying interests (Tonami, 2016). Moreover, Tokyo recognises that Japan does not have a legal basis to participate in formal discussions regarding the Arctic other than through the UNCLOS or IMO, of which Japan is a member. Seen from this perspective, Japan's perception of the Arctic is as a region too difficult to generate any financial benefits in the short-term, but sufficiently important to continue planting flags to be used in the future. In other words, the Arctic represents opportunity, but somewhat

inferior in capability and lower in cultural status and a region in need of being taken care of. A collection of such images and perceptions of a territory or people allows Japan to have a behavioral inclination to intervene and to impose control over it. In doing so, science and technology, including scientific research, is considered a useful tool.

Arctic & Antarctic policies

In the case of Japan, the nation's imagination of the polar regions began already in the era of the Western powers' race to the South Pole in the early 18th century. It was natural for Japan and its people to regard both 'opposites' of the globe as the polar regions due to this reminiscence of colonial past (or a lost desire to be a powerful imperial power) and the subsequent liberal position the country took with respect to the international order. From a strictly policy point of view, however, for Japan the polar regions long meant Antarctica. Indeed, Japan has historically placed a much higher priority on the Antarctic than on the Arctic. This reflects the fact that Antarctica has a much longer history of being governed through international, multilateral institutions and Japan has been a member of these decision-making processes and bodies from their very early age. In other words, for Japan as a defeated power and a late-comer to the international system established after World War II, having and maintaining a capability to travel to and conduct scientific research in the Antarctic via the international decision-making institutions has been considered an important status marker associated with great power identity.

As previously mentioned, the government's overall position on the Antarctic has been to 1) to become a member of the most relevant governance system of the Region, 2) increase Japan's presence and influence indirectly through achievements of scientific research, and 3) prepare the domestic environment (policy and governmental/non-governmental institutions) to support achieving these goals. The recent announcement of its official Arctic policy indicates Japan is keen to incorporate its science-centric Antarctic approach into the Arctic as well. This partially explains a shortage of consideration to the human element in its Arctic policy, despite the fact that one of the

most significant differences between the Arctic and the Antarctic is the presence of human settlement in the region. For instance, the official Arctic policy contains a paragraph titled "Indigenous Peoples of the Arctic" but there is no specific initiative on this issue. Moreover, it can be said that Japan's application to the Arctic Council and announcement of its Arctic policy is a sign that Japan recognised the membership of the Arctic decision-making club as one status marker of a great power.

While at the same time, there is a distinct difference between Japan's Arctic and Antarctic policies in their content. Under the circumstances, the key provisions of the Antarctic Treaty and the Environmental Protocol regarding issues such as the freezing of jurisdictional claims, the demilitarization and denuclearization of the entire continent and the prohibition on mining activities do not meet the needs of the Arctic states (Young, 2008), hence it is highly unlikely the Arctic states will conclude similar agreements in the near future. On the contrary, non-Arctic states are encouraged to invest in the Arctic Region to fund expensive mining projects and boost somewhat stagnating regional economies. The example being the establishment of the Arctic Economic Council, whose first meeting was held in September 2014 (Arctic Economic Council, 2014). In this regard, as the nation that has pursued a great deal of state-led development, the Japanese government plays an important role in guiding relevant domestic industries to increase their involvement in the Arctic region. Moreover, the government and researcher community broadly recognize that the Japanese Arctic research deserves more assistance from the Japanese government and public in light of current climatic changes and the support that Antarctic research has received over the years. For instance, there is an on-going discussion of building a new icebreaker dedicated to Arctic research. This aspect of economic opportunities (or lack thereof) in the region in question is mirrored in the related institutions; it is noteworthy that even though the protection of the natural environment is an important element of both Arctic and Antarctic policies, only the Antarctic policies are dealt with by the Ministry of Environment.

The discussion above indicates that Japan's Antarctic policy encompasses more diplomatic tools that are more political in their character than its counterpart, the Arctic policy. Japan is an active member of ATS and IWC, two of the most relevant mechanisms for the governance of Antarctica. Japan's Antarctic research expedition has a long history since the beginning of the 20th century and its character is dominantly scientific due to Japan's adherence to the Antarctic Treaty. Different from the Arctic, Japan does not show (or is not allowed to show) any interest in mining activity in Antarctica because of the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty. Research whaling, one of Japan's most controversial external policies, is defined by the Japanese government as a necessary preparatory step to eventually resume commercial whaling. If we accept the Japanese government's position, scientific whaling can be considered as a tool of commercial diplomacy. However, given that whaling is actually not a major economic issue for Japan, it is a diplomatic tool that is used in the international fora but serves as a tool to achieve political goals in domestic identity-based politics surrounding national sentiments of pride and humiliation.

In sum, it can be said that the Japanese policies related to both the Arctic Region and the Antarctic Region are primarily tools of diplomacy designed for Japan to obtain a great power status in a "social and socially legitimated hierarchy within international society" (Suzuki, 2008), seen through the prism of both poles. Examples are the Arctic/Antarctic scientific research programs, joining international/multilateral institutions on the Arctic/Antarctic. Promotion of trade and investment for the future, such as the promotion of the NSR, is considered a secondary matter. In fact, the investigation of the feasibility of the NSR for Japanese businesses as well as various investment projects in the natural resources exploration in the Arctic region can be regarded as diplomatic tools that have a more political goal than an economic goal. In Antarctica, Japan's policy on research whaling appears idiosyncratic for a state that otherwise takes a liberal position on environmental governance. The issue of research whaling at present is used as an external tool to play identity-politics based on sentiments of pride and humiliation in the domestic political arena.

Conclusion

How do the Arctic and the Antarctic become 'the polar regions' as a set in a nation's imagination? How does this manifest itself as policy? In this paper, I tried to answer these questions by analysing the Arctic and Antarctic policies of Japan, one of the 'newcomers' to Arctic governance. In the case of Japan, the nation's imagination of the polar regions began already during the era of Western powers racing to the South Pole in the early 18th century. Japan renounced its claim to Antarctica in the San Francisco Peace Treaty after the defeat of World War II, and since then Japan has taken a liberal position on governance of regions that lie beyond its obvious sovereign territories. Therefore, due to this reminiscence of colonial past (or a lost desire to be a powerful imperial power) and the subsequent liberal position the country took with respect to the international order, it was natural for Japan and its people to regard both 'opposites' of the globe as the polar regions. The Arctic and Antarctic regions are considered as a combined region that share geographical and climatic conditions therefore common scientific knowledge can be applied. It is also a region that invites Japan's intervention because it presents opportunities but is inferior in capability and lower in cultural status. Japan's scientific whaling is a lingering ghost of the dilemma of a more imperialist identity from Japan's past and its more liberal identity of today.

In actual policies, the Antarctic has received much greater attention. The Arctic had to wait until the beginning of the 2000s, by which time Japan had experienced the remarkable economic growth after World War II and the subsequent long economic stagnation from the beginning of the 1990s. With the Science and Technology Basic Law (1995), Japan formally recognized that science and technology is the key to reviving its sluggish economy and for it to graduate from being a 'catching-up nation' to the Western developed economies; this Law and the ideas underlying it became the backbone to strengthening the government's support on polar research, including the Arctic. Today, although a state that is not a 'natural' Arctic or Antarctic state in Japan's imagination, the Arctic and the Antarctic are indeed 'polar regions'. In addition, polar regions are regarded as potentially economically and strategically important peripheral regions, and having a say in governance of the two regions is considered as one of the status markers of a great power in

Japan's self-identification. In order to exert influence in these regions, despite its lack of perceived legitimacy, Japan attempts to engage in the polar regions using tools of science and technology diplomacy with primarily political goals.

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Conflict of interest

None.

Table 1 Membership status of Arctic and Antarctic institutions

ATS states party with consultative (voting) status	Member of IASC	Arctic Council	P5/G7/G20
Argentina	No	-	G20
Australia	No	-	G20
Belgium	No	-	-
Brazil	No	-	G20
Bulgraria	No	-	-
Chile	No	-	-
China	Yes	Observer	P5, G20
Czech Republic	Yes	-	-
Ecuador	No	-	-
Finland	Yes	Member	-
France	Yes	Observer	P5, G7, G20
Germany	Yes	Observer	G7, G20
India	Yes	Observer	G20
Italy	Yes	Observer	G7, G20
Japan	Yes	Observer	G7, G20
Korea (ROK)	Yes	Observer	G20
Netherlands	Yes	Observer	-
New Zealand	No	-	-
Norway	Yes	Member	-
Peru	No	-	-
Poland	Yes	Observer	-
Russian Federation	Yes	Member	P5, G20
South Africa	No	-	P20
Spain	Yes	Observer	-
Sweden	Yes	Member	-
Ukraine	No	-	-
United Kingdom	Yes	Observer	P5, G7, G20
United States	Yes	Member	P5, G7, G20
Uruguay			-
Arctic coastal states			
Canada	Yes	Member	G7
Denmark	Yes	Member	-
Iceland	Yes	Member	-
Switzerland	Yes	Observer	-