NIHONRON AND JAPANESE COUNTRY IMAGE COMMUNICATION: THE ASPECT OF ‘ARTICULATION’ OF NATIONAL IDENTITY

Aurelijus Zykas
Junior research fellow of Japanese Studies Centre, Vytautas Magnus University (Lithuania)

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Introduction

Country image communication, and especially its newest paradigm, the country branding, which is mainly based on marketing and branding theories, is gaining more and more popularity worldwide. Many countries recently use different tools for their branding and re-branding campaigns. Although these activities usually are associated with plain promotion and advertisement techniques, country branding discussed by researchers and specialists is much deeper phenomenon, which is interrelated with many different disciplines and research fields.

As it was shown in previous research (Zykas 2008), in spite of its empirically evaluable positive and strong image in the majority of the countries of the world, the scales of Japan’s promotional country branding activities (namely the fields of public diplomacy, tourism and exports promotion, and FDI attraction) are usually inferior to those of other developed countries (Germany, UK, France) and quantitatively do not differ much from the neighbouring countries, which do not enjoy the exceptionally positive international image.
This article tries to find a reason of the positivity and strength of brand Japan, by highlighting the factor of national identity in the theoretical framework of country branding.

As it will be seen, the term of identity is broadly used by place branding researchers, but, in fact, it is very hard to draw the particular links between the national identity and country image communication. Although there obviously are several ways of linking them, this paper researches only one issue, looking from the process perspective, proposing the term of “articulation”, and analyses how the intangible content of national identity is utilised for making more tangible place identity, which can be used for branding the country.

*Nihon(jin)ron*, being at the core of discussions on Japanese identity and a clear “articulation” of national identity, provides wide space for such research. Indeed, there is a bulk of literature on *Nihon(jin)ron*, but usually it is researched from a critical perspective, as an expression of Japanese nationalism (Dale 1986; Aoki 1990; Yoshino 1992; Befu 2001, etc.). This article will focus on a slightly different perspective, i.e. how the “articulation” process is managed and controlled by the Japanese government. Although some authors have touched the question of the role of Japanese government for conducting and exploiting *Nihon(jin)ron* for the image of Japan (for instance Mouer 1990: 177-181), it is worth to look at the problem from the perspective of country branding.

As the empirical research on this topic is still in the very initial stage, this paper attempts to raise a hypothesis and to draw the sketches for the further research.

**National identity as the basis for place identity**

Country branding has become an important paradigm in the field of country image communication since the 1990’s, and nowadays its practices and theories are applied worldwide by different countries. Therefore, we will try to analyse the links between country image communication and national identity from the country branding perspective.

As it can be seen from the name, coined in the very beginning of the 21st century, one of the main peculiarities of country branding, which distinguishes it from the previous paradigm of public diplomacy, is the application of marketing theory as opposed to public relations theory, applied
by the later (Dagytė et al. 2008). Marketing and branding concepts, take
the main part in this paradigm, and the countries are understood as a kind
of products (or brands), that can be sold to investors, tourists, importers
or even to the citizens of the country. Although there are some attempts to
theorize the country branding and to distinguish it from the general marke-
ting, while inventing the constructs of place marketing mix and etc., it can
be said, that there is no well unified idea of the issue, and there are different
researchers, who understand the notions of country branding and country
image in quite different ways.

Without any doubt, the majority of authors who research country bran-
ding, emphasise the importance of identity. As S. Rainisto states, “It is not
possible to create any image for a place without a strategic decision on the
contents of the place’s identity. When the place has created a clear concept
of its desired identity, the foundations of its image have been established”
(Rainisto 2003: 73).

Indeed, identity is one of the most popular terms in marketing and
branding theory, because there are many attempts to use psychological and
sociological terms to describe brand and image, as it would be living person-
ality. Therefore, talking about the notion of identity, it is very important to
mention firstly the terms of brand identity, corporate identity and, finally,
place identity that are widely used by country branding researchers.

*Brand identity* is an important part in the branding theory. Accor-
ding to S. Anholt, brand identity is considered as one of four aspects of
brand, together with brand image, brand purpose and brand equity (Anholt
2007: 5). The newest book of S. Anholt is called “Competitive identity”, and
this notion becomes central in his theoretical framework, emphasising the
competitiveness among the countries by using the symbols and fragments
of their national identities.

The notion of *corporate identity* is used mainly in corporate image and
corporate brand theoretical frameworks, applied for organization’s image
communication. It is defined as a kind of articulation of the corporate et-
hos, aims and values, consisting of strategic, structural, cultural and com-
munication elements. These elements help to differentiate the organisation
within the competitive environment (Kavaratzis 2002: 64). Usually, the cor-
porate identity is expressed by an organization’s logo, motto, vision, uni-
forms, inner relationships, and it helps to create a common spirit among
the staff.

And finally, the term most widely used in country branding theory, is
the place identity. The majority of authors do not make a big difference with the corporate identity. Actually, the ideas of place branding derived from the ideas of corporate branding, and in the initial stage of its development, the country was regarded as a big corporation. S. Rainisto notes, “A place’s identity, as with corporate identity, is a sum of characteristics that differentiate the place from other places. Therefore, the identity is a result of planned activities within the place marketing project and is the objective state, the image being the subjective” (Rainisto 2003: 73).

It would be a mistake to equalize all the kinds of identities mentioned above to the notion of national identity. As S. Anholt argues, “Brand identity has some parallels with the idea of national identity, but the comparison is the tricky one” (Anholt 2007: 5).

It becomes obvious, that the marketing theory “identities” are very rationally and clearly verbalised, articulated and planned for the purpose to use it in very pragmatic way in the positioning process. On the contrary, even if to accept the notion of rationally imagined communities of B. Anderson (1999), the national identity always lacks the tangibility and clarity. “A national identity is fundamentally multi-dimensional; it can never be reduced to a single element. The formation of national identity is by nature a subjective process and submits to changes along with the progression of time” (Georgescu 2004: 6).

Here we would like to refer to the place branding scheme of Fiona Gilmore (2002), who introduces one more term in the place branding paradigm. She also talks much about the positioning, and in her positioning diamond scheme, one of the four essential factors is that of core competencies of the place, which, actually, resembles much the notion of place identity.

However, F. Gilmore also notices, that the positioning process makes a second layer in a framework of country branding, and goes next to “the spirit of the people”, i.e. the “values that endure no matter what the times because they represent what the nation’s citizens believe in and believe about themselves” (Gilmore 2002), that have been influenced by the country’s environment, resources, culture, history, economy, and other factors. This notion has wide connotations with the classical notion of the national identity, as A. Smith describes it, emphasising the factors of historic territory or homeland, common myths and historical memories, a common or mass culture, common legal rights and duties, and a common economy.

Although F. Gilmore does not draw the exact link between the two layers of her scheme, it can be understood, that the core competencies of
positioning are very concrete and managed “articulations” (or “encapsulations”, according to Dinnie (2008: 43)) of the spirit of the people, embodied in different narratives and symbols that are used for delivering the message. In this “articulation” process the chaotic and intangible national identity is turned to a very systematic set of symbols and ideas. As A. Georgescu notes, one of the new forms of defining and emphasizing the national identity is to encompass some of the great historical, cultural or technological achievements into a set of representative symbols capable to communicate a positive national image in the dynamic global arena. (Georgescu et al. 2004: 20).

Therefore, this articulation process can be metaphorically called a factory of cultural symbols, as it creates, manages and restricts the national culture, extracting (or digging) the ideas from bottomless intangible chaos of nation’s history, values and overall “spirit”. As S. Anholt argues, “nation brand is national identity made tangible, robust, communicable, and above all useful” (Anholt 2007: 75).

Returning back to F. Gilmore’s scheme, this articulation process becomes the first step and important basis in a long process of country image communication, as it is shown in the very simplified four step scheme (figure 1). It connects the national identity and the place identity, which, in turn is later used in positioning process to create messages.

In the country image communication, both communication and positioning processes are always emphasised and much researched, because they have very firm theoretical background of marketing theory and communication science. However, the factor of national identity and its “articulation” process is mentioned and researched only sporadically. Usually, the majority of the process schemes of country branding have a starting point at the place identity and begin from the question of positioning.

Nevertheless, the factor of national identity and its articulation activities is extremely important for country branding, and usually causes the

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![Figure 1: Country branding process scheme](image-url)
biggest problems for marketing specialists. For instance, Wallie Olins, a country branding specialist implicated in an attempt of improving images of many countries (including Lithuania), always finds very hard to synthesize (or articulate) common peculiarities of the nations, because they propose a chaotic set of usually very contradictory information.

Some country branding authors (Olins (2006: 167), Anholt (2007: 73), Dinnie (2008: 73), etc.), who mention this question, propose to solve it by the temporary work teams, consisted of the representatives from government, industry, arts, education, sports, media, and other fields. In the worst case, this process is conducted by several personalities, who think, that they do know, what the country is, and they can articulate the ideas of its nation and culture.

Several controversial issues should be also mentioned regarding the exploiting of national identity for the pragmatic purposes of country branding. Undoubtedly, the national identity articulation process is very closely interrelated with the process of self-stereotyping. As a famous anti-globalist N. Klein argues, “The task (nation projected as brand) is not only futile but also dangerous: brand consistency and true human diversity are antithetical, one seeks similarity, the other celebrates difference, one fears all unscripted messages, the other embraces debate and dissent.” (Naomi Responds to the Economist Cover by N. Klein, Sept. 7/2001, recited from Georgescu et al 2004: 35).

An even more controversial issue is the desacralization of the primordial notion of the nation. In spite of influential works of B. Anderson (1999) or Roland Barthes (1975), nation members still tend to look at their nation as sacred phenomena, having deep roots in its sacred history, with sacred symbols and heroes. Country branding specialists, who work with very sensible issues of national identity, are regarded as intruders, and accused for “social engineering”, or the “rewriting of history” (Anholt 2003).

In spite of the controversial evaluation, every country, intentionally or not, utilises its national identity for building its image. As it will be seen later in this article, Japan is not expection.

Definition and development of Nihon(jin)ron

*Nihonron* (theory/discourse on Japan) – is a field of research and a genre of texts, that focus on Japan, usually trying to find the unique peculiari-
ties of this country in comparison with other foreign countries, i.e. the Other. This field consists of a set of subfields, which research different aspects, usually varying in the fields of social sciences and humanities. For instance, there are Nihon bunkaron (theory on Japanese culture), Nihon keizairon (theory on Japanese economy), Nihon seisairon (theory on Japanese politics), Nihon shakairon (theory on Japanese society) as important subfields.

The most developed and the most controversial subfield is the Nihonjinron (theory on Japanese character), which researches Japanese national identity. Occasionally, the translation of this term into English is “discussions on Japanese identity” (Dale 1986: 119). As Nihonjinron usually refers to other subfields, it can be viewed as a central subfield of Nihonron, and by many authors the two terms are treated and used synonymously. Indeed, as these terms are closely interrelated, in this paper we also use them synonymously.

The roots of Nihonron usually can be found in different historical periods, including Meiji, Tokugawa and earlier ones (Kubota 1999: 19, Burger 2004), tracing back even to Nichiren or to Heian period. As in different times this theory on “Japaneseness” and on cultural identity was constructed in different ways and against a different Other, in this paper we tend to confine ourselves defining the Nihonron as a post-war phenomena, which took its shape mainly in the 1960's. This definition of Nihonron is used by K.Yoshino (1992) and other authors.

If to compare to identity construction in post-war South Korea (Yim 2002) or other neighbouring Asian countries, Japanese post-war identity construction has different tasks and developed in a different context.

Its largest peculiarity is that the similar activities in Japan already had had a long and not such glorious history, with a culmination in the form of Japanese nationalism during the WWII. This fact caused the temporary abolishment of the national symbols, the great neglect of Japaneseness, and understanding it in very negative light in the period of US occupation immediately after the War. This reason is a handicap for developing Nihonron up to now, causing its criticism and suspicion. As Katzenstein (2002) notes, even the notion of culture is being used very carefully in official activities, as it still has negative associations of the pre-war usage of the notion of culture.

On the contrary, in South Korea, “since the establishment of the first Republic of 1948, the foremost challenge of Korean cultural policy has been to resolve the issue of cultural identity” (Yim 2002: 37), which was understood as retaining, constructing and developing it. The policies with such
purposes were openly expressed by the Ministers, and absolutely publicly
discussed, without any doubt of its need.

Although several authors, including P. Dale, see post-war Nihonron as a
new cycle of Japanese nationalism, there are several peculiarities that qualita-
tively distinguish it from the pre-war nationalism. According to H. Befu,
(2001: chapter 5), Nihonron is the “pre-war discourses of identity shorn of
their imperialistic and war-time symbolism”, as for a long time it tended
not to use them (the national flag, anthem and imperial emblem) due to
wartime nationalism associations.

Moreover, as Nihonron can be researched in the frames of cultural na-
tionalism (Befu 2001: 14), according to K. Yoshino, it has all the peculiar-
ities of secondary nationalism which differ much from these of the „true“, or
primary one (Yoshino 1992: 11).

Firstly, on the contrary to the primordialism and historical concern,
widely used in the primary nationalism, K.Yoshino proposes the symbolic
boundary concern (Yoshino 1992: 71), which doesn’t search for the Volk-
geist, but constructs the worldview in the frames of self/other dichotomy,
almost neglecting the importance of history, but concentrating on the pre-
sent moment. In this context, Japanese uniqueness is researched in compa-
rison to other nations, and in the post-war case the main Other is the West,
or to be more precise, America. R. Benedict was one of the first persons,
who used this symbolic boundary concern in Nihonjinron, in her Chrysant-
hemum and the Sword, while constructing opposite pairs and comparing
Japanese and Western cultures. This inspired the present Japan-West dyads
of Japanese groupism (shūdanshugi) vs. Western individualism (kojinshu-
ugi), sense of duty (gimu) vs. sense of rights (kenri), or hierarchy (kaikyūsei)
vs. egalitarianism (byōdōshugi), etc. (Goodman 2006: 72).

Secondly, while the primordial notion, time dimension and historic
mythology of the nation lose their influence, history and poetry doesn’t
act much anymore in formation of the national ideas and identity manage-
ment, as it was in the case of primary nationalism. Instead, the main actors
in developing the national identity are so called lay sociologists, the term
coined in 1982 by Bert van Heerikhuizen. They conduct sociological and
psychological research, constructing them in the frame of symbolic bound-
dary. The main examples of such lay sociologists could be the journalists,
essayists, writers, travellers, who describe cultural differences and research
the peculiarities (Yoshino 1992).

Talking about the development of post-war Nihonjinron, two main
schemes of two authors are mainly referred. P. Dale (1986: 213) proposed three stages of development till 1986. Moreover, four years later, T. Aoki (1990: 29) reconsidered the dates and proposed the fourth stage (Table 1).

Table 1: Stages of post-war Nihonjinron

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<td>IV</td>
<td>Shift of emphasis from uniqueness to universality (1984-onward).</td>
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The time when Nihonron took its final shape and become influential in Japan were the late 1960’s (third stage). T. Aoki indicates year 1964 for this shift, wisely emphasising the symbolic importance of the Tokyo Olympic Games, which took part in this year. Then Japan began to feel itself like joining the family of nations as a new member after recovering the post-war self-blaming period. We can draw the parallels, as it is also obvious, that the years 1988 and 2008 had the same importance for South Korea and PRC as well.

Indeed, Tokyo Olympic Games could be considered as very symbolic issue for the turning point of the development of Nihonron, but the other important reason was the increasing economic prosperity and success, which caused the questions of the cultural preconditions for Japanese economic miracle, especially when compared to the neighbouring countries.

These questions were developed by many researchers in Japan and abroad, who tried “to explore this topic, making prevalent the notion that the Japanese people and culture exhibit unique interpersonal relationships, group psychology, social behaviours, lifestyles, language use, business management, and even biological brain functions” (Kubota 1999). Among them were psychiatrists, such as Takeo Doi (1971, Amae-no kōzō); anthropologists, such as Chie Nakane (1967, Tate-shakai no Ningen Kankei: Tan’itsu-shakai no Riron); sociologists, such as Robert Bellah, James Abegglen (1985, Kaisha, the Japanese Corporation), Ezra Vogel (1979, Japan as
This golden age of Nihonron in the 1960’s had some resemblances to the Asian values discourse which arose in all East and Southeast Asian societies in the 1990’s, and is playing a role of self-assertion or reverse Orientalism, which have the potential to criticize and modify “universal” theories (Wolffmer 2002).

It is hard to describe the development of Nihonron after the end of Cold War, but there are several trends that can be noticed.

The decade of the 1990’s was called the “lost decade” due to the post-bubble economical crisis. This crisis was marked not only by weakening economic power, but also by natural disasters (Kobe and Awaji earthquakes) and deepening social problems, such as the Aum Shinrikyo sarin gas attack in Tokyo metro, the frequent news about ijime at schools and about perverse murders. These factors eliminated the primary reason of search for Japanese uniqueness, badly affected Japan’s image abroad and had very negative influence towards the national pride. In this context Nihonjinron also got more and more critics.

In spite of this, due to the worldwide influence of globalization, new processes arose. According to K. Iwabuchi (1994: 318), this is the increasing importance of “national”, which is becoming a valuable asset, and is transformed into the brand of the nation. The national identity therefore is “spectaclicided” (spekutakuruka) and consumed.

From the “lost decade” up to now, the majority of Nihonron is being created not by the researchers or lay sociologists anymore, but mainly by media. K. Iwabuchi (1994) presents very interesting case studies of different TV programs (Koko-ga hen da yo, Nihonjin; Futsū-no gaikokujin-tono zessen), where the “Japaneseness” and peculiarities of Japan are popularly discussed in the form of a show. It is usually made through the eyes of foreigners, who discuss in talk shows, trying to find what is unique or “strange” in Japan. Another program, Cool Japan, as for 2009 conducted by NHK (access via internet: http://www.nhk.or.jp/cooljapan/about/index.html), is a similar program, shown weekly on Wednesdays 7:00-7:44 pm. The recent editions discussed the issues of engi, idols, hot pots, sake, Japanese women, father, underground, etc.

It must be noted, that in many cases, the post-war Nihonron usually have a bottom-up form, and are inspired by the grass root activities, by very different actors, usually intellectuals who write books, publish articles, deli-
ver lectures, participate in TV programs. The research of K. Yoshino shows very well, how this process is conducted by different (academic, business and other) elites, who systematize, endorse, and diffuse the ideas of identity to the mass audiences (Yoshino 1992).

However, the government takes its part in management of Nihonron as well. Although, according to H. Befu (2001: 140), the level of state involvement is less overt and more subtle and indirect than in pre-war times (for instance, there is no secret police or Imperial Rescript on Education), “occasionally, the government takes a direct role in deliberately introducing and officially sanctioning Nihonjinron as an ideology” (Burgess 2004).

Katzenstein (2002) mentions two turning chronological points of Japan’s approach to domestic and foreign cultural policies, which have very direct connections to Nihonjinron. The first turning point of the late 1960’s coincides with the third phase of development of Nihonjinron, when the Japanese government began exploiting Nihonron for different pragmatic purposes. The second turning point in the mid 1990’s marked the peak of the “lost decade” and was the trial to re-strengthen the Japanese national pride.

It must be said, that the Nihonron in the governmental level was inspired by several very pragmatic motives. We would like to define four of them, and then to discuss one of them more precisely, namely, the “articulation” mechanism.

Firstly, the Nihonron can be exploited as ideology for personal or party interests by political and business leaders (Kubota 1999: 20). As Katzenstein (2002: 11) states, “elected officials became increasingly aware that culture was a popular issue in local and regional elections”. Nihonron has been especially used by several parties and neo-conservative movements, becoming a major point of reference in justifying the conservative policies of the LDP (Burgess 2004). Many famous politicians, for instance Y. Nakasone, Sh. Ishihara or J. Koizumi deliberately use the ideas of Nihonjinron in different forms in their speeches to achieve their interests.

Secondly, Nihonron can be used for improving the image of Japan abroad. In the context of the increasing trade friction and trade surplus with the United States in 1970-80’s, Japanese government had a difficult task “to combat both the misunderstandings of Japanese foreign policy and Japanese business practices overseas” (Katzenstein 2002: 14). Therefore, the “unique” culture and national identity used by the means of cultural diplomacy were the lubricant in these activities. The Japan Foundation, established in 1972, was created for this purpose. It is using the symbols of national identity for
“exporting” them abroad through different tools of cultural diplomacy, i.e. speaking in country branding terms, conducts the processes of positioning and communication.

Thirdly, the state uses *Nihonron* for building national pride. Initially, this function was confined to plainly economic interests and attempted to develop the loyalty for Japanese products among Japanese nationals and to protect the inner market. (Kubota 1999: 21), but later, during the third stage of development of *Nihonjinron*, the well defined “concepts of harmony, groupism, and homogeneity promoted loyalty to the nation among citizens, and these beliefs reduced conflicts in the society” (ibid 20).

**The role of the state in Nihonron for articulation of national identity**

The fourth function of *Nihonron*, used by the state, is the articulation of national identity, already defined in the first chapter of this article.

Indeed, recently Japanese government has been using the strategies for articulating its national identity for the purposes of country branding. And these strategies are very similar to that advised by country branding specialists. For instance, one of the most important recent issues was the establishment of the Council on the Promotion of Cultural Diplomacy in 2004, which prepared the report by July, 2005. This report advised to position Japan through the “Japanese” notions of respect for harmony (和 wa) and coexistence (共生 kyôsei), and to use more images of *manga* and *anime* in Japan’s country branding messages (Kondo 2005). Speaking in the terms of country branding, the core identity of Japan was clearly articulated by this Council.

It must be mentioned, that this Council was the continuation of two previous Advisory Groups on International Cultural Exchange (1989 and 1994 respectively), and its activities were continued by the Council on the Movement of People Across Borders in 2007-2008, which, besides the usual issues of cultural diplomacy, also dealt with the “articulation” of national identity process.

However, although having some innovative ideas regarding branding Japan, these short-term government-initiated institutions obviously are not functioning as important “articulators” of Japan’s national identity. It can be presumed, that they are disposing a big set of symbols, which have been
already “articulated” by the Nihonron. It is not occasional, that the head of the Council on the Promotion of Cultural Diplomacy was Prof. Tamotsu Aoki, a famous researcher of Nihonron.

Japan is not somehow different from some other countries, for instance Germany, UK, USA, Lithuania and other, where German studies (Germanistik), British studies, American studies or Lithuanian studies (lituanistika) are being exploited as tools of “articulation” of the national identity. These fields of area studies mainly concentrate on language and literature, but the issues of politics, history, culture, economics, etc. are covered as well.

Japanese studies or Japanology, especially in Japan, are almost inseparable from the notion of Nihonron. Several authors even attempt to translate the term Nihonron as Japanology. The resemblances are very noticeable, and, without any doubt, Nihonron makes a big part of the resources of Japanology. Moreover, Nihonjinron makes the most important and central part of Nihonron, while similar researches on the national character in the fields of German studies or Lithuanian studies are minor and mainly restricted in the nationalistic past.

The most important peculiarity of Japanese studies in Japan is the institutionalization process. The Japanese studies in Japan are centered at one key institution, the International Research Centre for Japanese Studies (aka Nichibunken), establishment of which „marks the hitherto almost obscene climax of such Nihonjinron” (Mishima 2000).

The creation of Nichibunken began in 1982 with the study on methods of comprehensive research on Japanese culture, carried out with a Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research from the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, and the official establishment of the premises in Kyoto under the first director Takeshi Umehara was in 1987.

It must be mentioned here, that since its establishment (and before it) Nichibunken was regarded and criticised as a nationalistic tool. The institution was established with a great assistance by Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone, known as very pro-neo-conservative. The prominent figures that played key roles in the very beginning of the Centre, Takeshi Umehara, Nobuo Umesao and Tetsuo Kuwabara, all famous proponents of the self-assertion of Japanese civilisation, and all from Kyoto, which “has always been a hotbed of essentialist apologists for Japanese culture, so-called, who of course chose to ignore the bloodbath which the imperial army started in Nanking for example” (Mishima 2000).
The first three directors-general of Nichibunken, the already mentioned T. Umehara, also Hayao Kawai (1995-2001) and Tetsuo Yamaori (2001-05), all were prominent specialists of Japanese studies, active in research of Japanese psychology, religion and folklore, the fields so handy for Nihonron. The present director, Inoki Takenori (since 2008) represents a different aspect of Japanese studies, as he is a specialist in Japanese economy and bureaucracy, but he is participating in creation of Nihon keizairon, a part of Nihonron. The only exception was the fourth director, Katakura Motoko (2005-08), the specialist of anthropology of the Middle-East by herself, who was relatively not involved in Japanese studies. Her appointment could be regarded as an attempt to improve the image of the Centre and separate it from the associations with theories of Japanese particularism.

Nichibunken’s activities focus „on Japan’s traditional cultures and values, as well as the role of Japanese culture in the world” (Katzenstein 2002: 19). Its main functions can be distinguished as follows.

**Accumulation of resources.** Nichibunken Library collects and accumulates a huge amount of resources on Japan and on very different fields (politics, law, economics, social affairs, history, philosophy, arts, psychology, etc.), provided for all the researchers in the field of Japanese studies. To say clearly, this function is to accumulate the material form of Nihonron, or the historical documents for its development. As of March 31, 2008, the Library contained c. 288,777 volumes in Japanese and 131,715 volumes in foreign languages. At the same time, it also housed 6,706 titles of periodicals (including c. 1,173 periodicals in foreign languages). The library also holds a big amount of photographs and glass negatives, old maps, Japanese movies, etc. (International…, 2008: 53). Therefore, the Nichibunken performs a role of a resource centre, providing bibliographical assistance.

**Creating the network:** One of the biggest tasks for Nichibunken is the promotion of worldwide research on Japan, which exploits the existing resources and makes an amount of new ones. For this purpose, it thoroughly creates relationships among all, even the smallest, institutions in the world, dealing with Japanology. Therefore, the worldwide Japanese studies become controllable and manageable. Research Exchange symposia, started in 2006, provide regular opportunities for communication among these institutions and individuals, thus strengthening the relationships even more.

**Inspiration for the new resources:** A range of different support, from provision of the research space for visiting individuals to expensive joint research projects, is provided.
Dissemination of the new resources: There are many ways how Nichibunken uses its resources for disseminating the newly created and accumulated knowledge about Japan. This is achieved through International Symposia (since 1988) and Overseas Symposia (since 1995) and a variety of public lectures mainly for Japanese society.

Nichibunken publishes a set of publications for dissemination of the new knowledge, which is distributed worldwide to all the Japanese studies related institutions. Apart from the reports of symposia and team research projects, the Centre also issues the Monograph Series and Japanese Studies Series. The works, written by Nichibunken professors, visiting professors and members of team research groups are published in the biannual journal Nihon Kenkyū (in Japanese) and in the annual journal Japan Review (in English).

Evaluation of the activities: evaluation is made not only internally, but also through the Overseas meetings, where the workshops are organised in different countries, for discussion of the results and trends of Japanese studies. In the activities schema, conceptualised by the Centre, there is the fifth research sphere (Cultural information), which stimulates the academic research on Japanese studies.

It is not considered here, how much the new resources produced by Nichibunken and disseminated worldwide affect the international scholarship. In this aspect, obviously, Nichibunken is only one actor, comparable with a majority of other stronger Japanese studies research institutes. The main strength of Nichibunken could be the systematic and centralised management of both the inner and worldwide resources on Japan, what makes Japanese studies not the chaotic set of information (as it is in majority of countries), but a controllable phenomenon. According to Eckstein, Nichibunken participates in the “network of cultural institutions that manage, produce, and restrict Japanese culture” itself (Eckstein 1999: 13). In this aspect the International Research Centre for Japanese Studies could be considered a unique institution.

Returning back to the process of country branding, it could be presumed, that Nichibunken is an important link in this process, controlling the first phase, i.e. the “articulation” of the national and cultural identity. Several authors noticed this participation of Nichibunken in country image communication or nation branding. For instance, during the discussions regarding the establishment of the Centre, the cultural anthropologist Ueno Chizuko (1986) in the article in Asahi Shinbun, ‘Nihongaku’ to NI senryaku, (Japane-
logy and National image strategy), noticed, that the real purpose of International Research Centre for Japanese Studies was not only the support for Japanology, but also the improvement of the worldwide image of Japan.

To prove this, it is necessary to draw the clear links between the activities of Nichibunken and the activities of other institutions, which openly participate in the subsequent processes of Japanese country branding: the aforementioned governmental advisory councils for public diplomacy and the Japan Foundation, which position and communicate the cultural image of Japan using selection, targeting and segmentation processes. Although these links are not openly expressed by the institutional structural schemes, they could be found during the in-depth interviews with the decision makers and experts, working at the institutions.

**Conclusions**

The article has tried to find the links between the national identity and the place identity in the framework of country branding, thus proposing the term of “articulation”, process of which, as the broad international practice of country branding shows, usually causes the majority of problems for branding specialists.

Area studies, concentrating research on the peculiarities of specific regions and countries, provide wide basis for “articulation” of national identity. Japanese studies (Japanology), closely interconnected with Nihon(jin)ron, therefore, participate actively in this process.

As several researchers claim, Japanese government controls and utilises the Nihon(jin)ron for country image communication in several ways. Nihonron is used both in primary communication, where the ideas of Nihonron are embodied in the object of cultural heritage and cities, but also in secondary communication, where these ideas are transmitted through different media in forms of verbal, visual, printed and other expressions. Obviously, the different advisory councils on public diplomacy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, participate much in the rational positioning process, too.

The “articulation” process in Japan is controlled mainly by the International Research Institute for Japanese Studies, which activities make a huge apparatus, managing, producing, and restricting the big part of the contents of Nihonron. The main strength of this institution could be the systematic and centralised management of both the inner and worldwide resources
on Japan, what makes Japanese studies not the chaotic set of information (as it is in majority of countries), but a controllable phenomenon. This kind of institutional “articulation” of national identity could be considered a unique practice.

However, the intentionality and the role of the government in the control of “articulation” process still have to be researched deeper. Moreover, it must be researched, what particular links exist between the activities of Nichibun-ken and the other actors of Japanese country image communication.

References


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**Abstract**

This article tries to highlight the factor of national identity in the theoretical framework of country branding, introducing the term of “articulation”, in process of which the intangible national identity is transformed into the place identity. Japanese *Nihon(jin)ron*, being the integral part of Japanology or Japanese studies, participates as an important part of this process, and is utilised by the Japanese government for the purposes of country branding.
One of the peculiarities and successful aspects of Japanese country branding could be the systematic and centralised management of both the inner and worldwide resources on Japan, what makes Japanese studies not the chaotic set of information (as it is in majority of countries), but a controllable phenomenon.

**Santrauka**