



Tian Qingli, *The Construction of Post-War Japanese National Identity* (田庆立:《战后日本国家认同建构》), Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press (China), 2021, ISBN: 9787520175838.

Japan's national identity has always been one of the focus issues of research circles. As a metaphysical factor, it is difficult to have a unified view of identity. And as a defeated country, Japan has experienced an occupation period. Its national identity is inevitably affected by external factors. The chemical reactions generated by internal and external factors formed the current Japanese national identity structure. The research on the post-war Japanese national identity mainly carried out micro-empirical research from the perspective of nationalism, paying more attention to the important role played by domestic political and ideological sources in Japan, but lacked a unified and macro-level review of internal and external factors. Chinese academic circles mainly conduct research from the perspectives of traditional cultural symbols, social foundations and educational trends. Judging from the related research results of the academic circles of both China and Japan, there are few macroscopic, general and thematic writings on the national identity of Japan after the war.

The book *"The Construction of Post-War Japanese National Identity"* written by Tian Qingli systematically explained the process of Japan's construction of national identity after World War II (mainly during the period of American occupation of Japan). Focusing on how to absorb, integrate and utilize the internal and external factors, this book does not analyze "what is national identity" in detail, but discussed "how to construct national identity" in the special historical period after the war from the perspective of political history. In the existing archives on the period of occupation of Japan, most studies focus on the US policy toward Japan and the response of the Japanese government. What is relatively lacking is the research on the mechanism of the formation of Japanese national identity during this period. Relying on the analytical framework of the cognitive model of "self-other", this work selects the symbolic emperor system as the entry point for shaping the "self". From the perspective of the "other", it takes the United States and China as two important reference objects. Combining the diachronique and synchronicity, the book combed the development process of the construction of Japanese national identity after the war through the alternating parallel of macro-discourse and micro-experience, which is truly a novel academic work.

From the perspective of research methods, this book uses comprehensive analysis methods such as history, international relations, and political psychology to restore the





process of Japan's construction of national identity after the war. To understand the metaphysical national identity, many factors need to be analyzed. This book simplified all of them to two main factors, the internal and external one. There is no doubt that internal factors shaping a very important weight, and the external reaction also cannot be ignored. The United States and China have been demonstrated comparatively in detail as external factors. Therefore, the framework of this book is simple and clear: the introduction declares the research goal of this book, and analyzes the construction of Japanese national identity based on the cognitive model of "self-other". The first chapter focuses on Japan's "self" positioning, and the second and third chapters map the United States and China as the "other", which are two important external resources in the construction of Japan's national identity. The fourth chapter is related to the current Japan's national identity crisis, and discusses the future direction of Japan's national strategy and national positioning.

This book extracted the Japan's national identity positioning as "the unity of the nation under the symbolic emperor system". The legal basis for the "symbolic emperor system" comes from Article 1 of the Constitution of Japan that was implemented on May 3, 1947. "The emperor is the symbol of Japan and the symbol of the entire Japanese nation. Its status is based on the sovereignty of all Japan and the will of the people."

The crux of the problem lies in how the Japanese people accepted and embraced the symbolic emperor system during the transition from the pre-war autocratic emperor system to the postwar system. In addition to the operation of the Japanese government, there were also other external factors. The development process of the symbolic emperor system to the so-called "national polity" is not a natural one. Just like Ito Hirofumi and others wrote "the sanctity of the Tenno" as Japan's "national polity" into the Constitution after the Meiji Restoration. Likewise, the construction of this national identity requires the promotion of the government itself and other forces, and then a process of acceptance by Japanese citizens. As this book says, "The sources on which Japan builds its national identity after the war are mainly composed of local sources and foreign sources. On the one hand, it is keen to extract nutrients from local cultural sources and aims to highlight and strengthen its 'self'; on the other hand, it pays attention to the comparison and interaction with the external 'other' in order to form an identity with its own characteristics".

Since entering the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Japan has fallen into a crisis of national identity. This crisis is embodied in the three reference variables listed in this book, namely, the Tenno system, the United States, and China. The problem of the Tenno system is reflected in two points. First, the emperor himself may not be able to become an important carrier for the Japanese government to seek a new national identity actively.





After the Second World War, Japan put forward the concept of building a “culturally peaceful country”. The emperor played an important role in this concept. During the second half of Showa’s life and throughout the Heisei era, Tenno’s devotion and respect for the peaceful constitution was overwhelming. For the Japanese government that is committed to amending the constitution, how could the emperor stand for it? Second, after entering the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the royal family has begun to face an unprecedented crisis. The survival of the symbolic emperor system relies on the respect of the conservatives towards the authority of the royal family. As the male heirs became fewer and fewer, there is endless discussion about the female emperor. The imperial system will become the biggest variable in the issue of the Tenno system.

The author points out that internal and external ideological sources jointly shape the post-war Japan’s national identity. In my opinion, the “approach” of shaping national identity may be more appropriate than the term “source”. It fits well with the so-called constructivism research method of this book. Because ideological sources will not change. If there is a change, it can only be the addition and accumulation of new sources. What changes is how the government uses these sources. Therefore, the process of using ideological sources to shape national identity becomes particularly important. The author emphasizes the importance of “path”. Of course, the excavation of the intellectual resources of the post-war Japanese state construction in this book is also a highlight that cannot be ignored, specifically involving intellectual histories such as the constitution, the Tenno system, democracy, and pacifism. From the perspective of the path, through horizontal comparison and related activities with the two “others” of the United States and China, Japan confirmed the universality and particularity of the national identity of the “self” and the existence of other nations, and constructed a unique national identity. Therefore, “self” and “other” constituted two major paths for Japan to construct national identity after the war. The slight difference is that this book makes a clear distinction between the United States and China.

Among them, the United States is a cooperative identity, that is to say, whether it is active or passive, the seven-year occupation of Japan by GHQ led by the United States after the war, and the peaceful constitution and democracy brought to Japan have largely affected Japan’s national identity. In this sense, the United States as the “other” is closely related to the “self”, because in the process of identity construction, the establishment of the postwar symbolic emperor system is inseparable from the United States. In other words, without the insistence of MacArthur and GHQ, even the existence of the Tenno system as the spiritual pillar of the Japanese is uncertain, letting alone the so-called “symbolic emperor system” as the center of the national





unity discussed in this book. Therefore, the United States as the “other” allowed Japan’s Tenno system to survive, which was also the prerequisite for Japan to coordinate with the United States after the war. Only after this is the attraction of the superpower of the United States, the security of the Japan-US alliance system, and the psychological foundation of pro-Americanism. Therefore, when discussing the symbolic emperor system of post-war Japan in the first part of this book, it is reasonable that a considerable volume of content involved the movements of the United States.

However, the United States is not a cooperative identity in a full sense as the “other”. As noted in this book, Japan tried to keep a balance between the pursuit of independence and the Japan-US alliance, that is to say, trying to maintain a certain subtlety between “pro-American” and “anti-American”. In fact, the balance of these two has an important referential value for understanding the construction of national identity in post-war Japan. The United States had indeed brought Japan the foundation of a “peace constitution”, “democracy” and “economic prosperity”. At the same time, the U.S. also pushed Japan to the forefront of the Cold War. U.S. military bases in Japan also caused crisis to Japan-U.S. relations and central-regional relations (such as the relationship between the Japanese government and the local people in Okinawa Prefecture). The influence of American soft power and culture on Japan made some loyal conservatives and right-wing forces worry that Japan is losing its tradition and culture, which are the core element of national identity. Especially for traditionalists, the specious “symbolic emperor system” can be described as a great insult to Japan’s “national polity” by the United States. This is also an important reason why some right-wing forces keep advocating the “independence of formulating the constitution” and “restoration of national sovereignty”.

The “anti-American” of the Japanese government is reflected in a series of attempts by Japan to shape its national identity after the war. In the 1980s, Japanese Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone put forward the political proposition of “final settlement of the post-war politics”, so the “final settlement” here are precisely the system given to Japan by the United States. Similarly, Shinzo Abe, who stepped down as prime minister in September 2020, has more anti-American genes in his conservative values. In his political views, he said “break away from the post-war system”. The so-called post-war system is a series of arrangements arranged by the United States. Institutional shackles, and the revision of the “Japanese Constitution” itself is also one of the manifestations of anti-Americanism from a principled point of view. Take the Yasukuni Shrine as an example, most right-wing forces in Japan advocate that the prime minister and even the Tenno should pay homage to the Yasukuni Shrine. In fact, after the Prime Minister’s visit to the Yasukuni Shrine (especially after





Junichiro Koizumi's consecutive visits from 2001 to 2006), it was always followed by the protests (or opposition or regrets) from the US government. The collections of Yasukuni Shrine's Yūshūkan contain a lot of content that suggests anti-Americanism. The famous pro-American diplomat Hisahiko Okazaki once pointed out, "If Yūshūkan continues to display this kind of exhibition, I'm afraid I can't defend the Yasukuni shrine". From this point of view, Japan's "anti-Americanism" is not a goal, but an important way to shape Japan's new national identity after the war.

As another important "other", since when did China play an important role in the process of post-war Japan's construction of national identity? There is still room for discussion on this issue. In my opinion, Japan is the country most deeply influenced by China in history, and the state construction of modern Japan is essentially a process different from China. The 20-odd years from Japan's defeat to the normalization of diplomatic relations between China and Japan was actually the most critical period for Japan to construct its national identity, and China was absent during this period. After the resumption of diplomatic relations between China and Japan, China has substantially entered the field of Japanese national identity construction as the "other", and the development of the relationship between the two countries has multiple implications, even competition or cooperation.

In short, from the perspective of academic innovation, the topics and research perspectives of this book are very novel. The author actively draws on and refers to the theories and methods of history, political science, political psychology, and international politics, etc. His creative applying of the strengths of different disciplines to the field of post-war Japanese history research is a useful attempt to the cross-disciplinary and cross-border integration. The publication of this book will undoubtedly further deepen the research on the history of post-war Japanese political thought in Chinese academic circles. Of course, there are still some shortcomings in this book. For example, the chapter on "Chinese Sources in the Construction of Japanese National Identity" is comparatively weaker than the previous two chapters, and needs to be revised in the future. The construction of Japanese national identity after the war undoubtedly maintained a certain degree of "continuity" with that before the war. Where did the "continuity" and "fracture" in the construction of Japanese national identity before and after the war? These features should be analyzed based on a comparative perspective in the future.

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