

DIVIDED KOREAN SELF ONTOLOGICAL INSECURITY IN SOUTH KOREA AND ITS RELATIONS WITH JAPAN

Minkyun Park

Doctoral Researcher, RTG 2833 East Asian Futures

minkyun.park@uni-due.de

© Gettyimagesbank

1. PUZZLE

Despite shared economic, security, and values, why are Korea's relations with Japan struggling, oscillating between conflictual and cooperative stances from one government to another?

- ✓ Anticipations from the realist (North Korea and China threat and the US allies) and liberalist perspectives (Economic interdependence and shared norms such as democracy) deviate from the experienced – antagonistic Korea-Japan
- ✓ Taking identity seriously conventional constructivists account for the conflictual dyadic relations but come short in providing answers to recent changes in Korea's Japan policy
- ✓ Thus, the aim of this project is to provide analytical account to the puzzle unsolved by extant literature

2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS & CONTRIBUTIONS

Research Questions

- 1) How has the understanding of Korean Self been constructed, maintained and contested since 1965?
- 2) How did the contested understandings of the Korean Self make possible oscillating Korea's Japan policy in the recent decade?

Potential Contributions

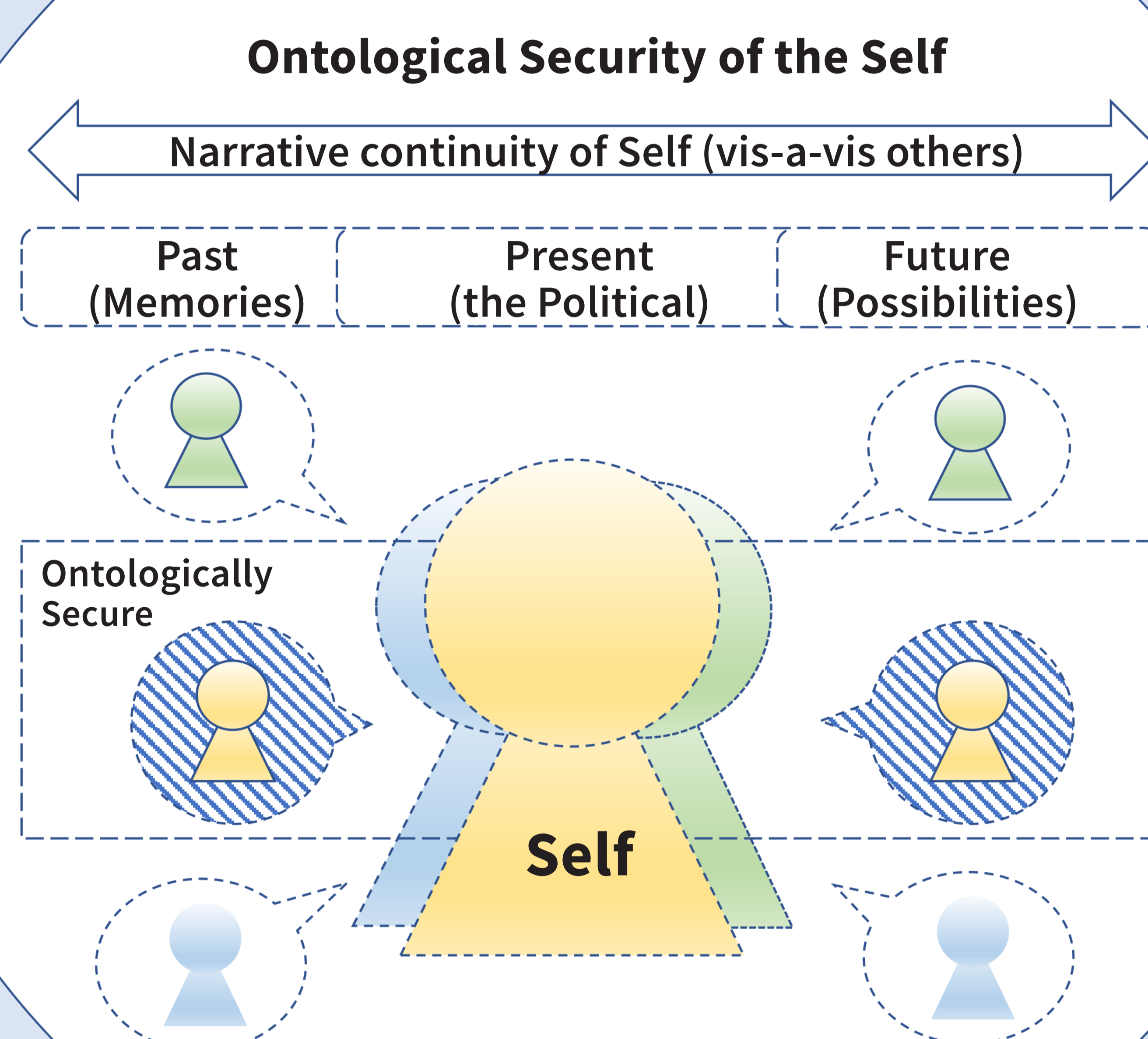
- ✓ Bringing 'the polysemic inner dialogues' of the Korean Self to the academic discourse
- ✓ Constructing a framework to study the politics of temporalities, not only of memories but of the futures
- ✓ Developing methods to study the 'vernacular' politics of the Self

3. THEORY

- Ontological (in)security theory
- Stems from psychology & sociology

Key Concepts

- ✓ Ontological (in)security
 - (dis)continuous and (in)coherent sense of the Self
- ✓ (Dialogical) Self
 - 'Coreless' Self that is continuously in the making through different narratives (Multivoicedness)
- ✓ Critical Situations
 - Situations in which the coherence and continuity of the Self is questioned (Giddens' four fundamental questions)
- ✓ Biographical Narrative(s)
 - The story(ies) through which the Self is understood through linking heterogeneous elements such as the past, the future and the others



4. METHODOLOGY

Interpretive Methodology

- Aim: analytical account of the divided Korean Self vis-à-vis Japan
- Emphasis on context-specific meaning-making processes
 - Bottom-up over Top-down approach
 - Contextuality over Generalizability

Two Cases

1. Historical (contextual) case (1965~2015)
 - ✓ Korea's Self discourse vis-à-vis Japan (1. RQ)
2. Case of divided Korea's Self towards Japan:
 - ✓ Societal Discourse on Korean Self and Japan policy from 2015 to 2024 (2. RQ)

Data Collection

- ✓ Official Statements
- ✓ Ethnographic research (museums, demonstrations)
- ✓ Scraping of posts on online communities
- ✓ Interviews

Data Analysis: Discourse Analysis

1. Identification & Justification process
2. 'Essence' of and 'threats' to the Self

Bibliography (selected)

- Dunn, K.C., & Neumann, I.B. (2016). Undertaking discourse analysis for social research. University of Michigan Press.
- Glosserman, B., & Snyder, S.A. (2015). The Japan-South Korea Identity Clash: East Asian Security and the United States. Columbia University Press.
- Schwartz-Shea, P., & Yanow, D. (2013). Interpretive research design: Concepts and processes. Routledge.
- Steele, B.J. (2008). Ontological security in international relations: Self-identity and the IR state. Routledge.

Funded by

DFG Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft
German Research Foundation



Offen im Denken