

‘NUCLEAR’ CITIZENS AND THE STATE:

TRAUMA AND NATIONAL IDENTITY AFTER HIROSHIMA AND CHERNOBYL

By

Ekatherina Zhukova

Submitted to

Central European University
Department of Political Science

In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts

Supervisor: Professor Lea Sgier

Budapest, Hungary

2012

ABSTRACT

Remembering wars has been for a long time a very developed topic in different fields of study. However, other types of traumatic events, like man-made catastrophes or natural disasters, have recently gained scholarly attention. The present research looks at traumas caused by nuclear power – Hiroshima and Chernobyl. It shows how national identities in Japan and Belarus are constructed on the basis of collective memory of these tragedies. The research demonstrates that the state creates, updates and transforms memory of a traumatic event depending on the developments that occur in the country's economy.

To study memory the research looks at victims of Hiroshima and Chernobyl. It argues that the state frames sufferers of a trauma according to the economic plans. In other words, the study argues that victims of a trauma are 'treated' by the state not on the basis of their objective sense of victimhood, but according to the political, economic or social goals of the state. The research presents that in Japan these goals are technological superiority and nuclear power usage, while in Belarus they are economic development and involvement of the contaminated lands in the production processes.

The research refers to primary archival sources (OSA textual and audio-visual records, including interviews, public speeches, expert opinions, documentaries) and secondary data sources (documentaries, official publications, public speeches and discussions, articles and books). Discourse analysis is used as a theory of power relations to study state's ideology. The theory of critical discourse analysis of Fairclough is applied. Ideology is understood in Althusser's terms of a constructed human nature and Gramsci's lines of changing nature of hegemonic discourses. The research concludes that Japan and Belarus construct national identity for their citizens on the basis of forgetting Hiroshima and Chernobyl. The states either silence their victims, or use them to present dominant discourse of economic development.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express frank gratitude to my supervisor Professor Lea Sgier who was guiding me academically not only during the thesis writing process, but throughout the whole year of my master program. Professor Sgier's input in my professional and personal development is indispensable! I am sincerely grateful for her precious support and energy she invested into me to share her rich theoretical and methodological experience. Professor Sgier's advices helped me to build necessary academic skills and scholarly-based ground to conduct individual research, and prepared me for my future career in academia.

Special thanks are expressed to my academic writing instructor Mr. Robin Bellers whose experience in linguistics allowed me to improve my English language writing abilities. I am grateful for his patience to deal with piles of paper I was bringing to read, for his support and care.

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Introduction

Memory politics has become one of the most developing fields of study in history and social sciences since the 1950s. Most of the scholarly work (Mosse, 1990; Winter, 1995; Wertsch, 2002; Confino, 2005) deals with remembering such historical events as wars (e.g. WWI, WWII, Vietnam War). The memory of the *Holocaust* has been the most researched in the academic literature (Bosworth, 1993; Olick and Levy, 1997; Wieviorka, 1998; Dejung, 2007). However in the recent past, another type of events in addition to wars has started to attract scholars' attention – traumatic events.

It has been argued that traumatic events play an important role in constructing national narratives of a country's past, present and future (LaCarpa, 2001; Edkins, 2003; Saito, 2006; Miladinovic, 2011). Traumatic events can include terrorist attacks, technological catastrophes (nuclear disasters, explosions, etc.), and natural disasters (hurricanes, floods, earthquakes, tsunamis, etc.). Dixon (2009) states that most research on memory politics focuses either on ways a particular traumatic event is remembered (museums, speeches, ceremonies, etc.) domestically or internationally, or on types of national narratives (apologies for the past, remembering heroism of ancestors or victims, blaming enemies, etc.). However, there are gaps in the academic literature on how states use certain traumatic events for the purpose of construction of national identity. Particularly, not many elaborative studies exist on how states may change their existing official narratives of traumatic events over time and what reasons may lead to these changes. In addition, less focus has been put on how particular traumatic events of local scale may be transformed to the national level.

The present research aims to begin dealing with these gaps. It looks at two types of traumatic events – intentional (bombing) and semi-intentional (explosion) based on the use of nuclear power. Hiroshima remains the most investigated nuclear bombing in the history of

mankind, while Chernobyl is viewed as the most dramatic explosion of a nuclear power plant¹. Up till now the comparison of these events has been neglected due to the different origin of the disasters. I believe that the two traumatic events are comparable in numerous dimensions. Hiroshima and Chernobyl were the first large-scale catastrophes involving nuclear power's destructive capacity and both events were the cornerstones of significant changes in international relations: Hiroshima was a reason to end WWII, while Chernobyl was a platform for the Soviet Union to collapse. When the catastrophes happened, both countries were not completely independent and remained so for a similar period of time: Japan was under American Occupation (1945-1951), while Belarus was a part of the Soviet Union (1986-1991). In addition, both countries came under conditions of uncertainty and had to redefine their national identity: Japan had to reformulate its place in the world from a militarist to peace-loving country, while Belarus had to build its nationhood for the first time in its history and go through the process of transition from communism.

A further similarity is that both states 'nationalized' nuclear traumatic events: Japan shifted commemoration of Hiroshima from the regional to national level, while Belarus 'nationalized' the event from another country – Ukraine. Both traumatic events based on the atom brought to the table the realities of the nuclear age and affected policies towards nuclear energy consumption: Japanese possession and usage of its nuclear assets and Belarusian building of its own nuclear power plant. Both Japan and Belarus emphasize sufferings of their own nationals, even though different nationalities got affected: in the case of Hiroshima, in addition to the Japanese there were Americans and East Asians exposed to radiation; in the case of Chernobyl, those that suffered, besides Belarusians, were also Ukrainians, Russians,

¹ As Hiroshima was the first city to be attacked by the atomic bomb, I use it as a representation of both bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Every major argument stated about Hiroshima is true for Nagasaki in this research. As the literature and documentaries on memory politics of Japan mainly refer to Hiroshima in their studies, I decided to follow this tradition.

and Europeans. Lastly, both countries underwent a process of reformulation of the category of who was recognized as a victim over time.

The research therefore looks at how these traumatic events have become elements of national identity projects in Japan and Belarus. The study aims to show how the national narratives of traumatic events have changed over time: in Japan – since 1945, and in Belarus – since 1986. The research argues that the two catastrophes, one being a military attack, and the other – an accident, are used by their states to construct national narratives on the basis of economic factors. In other words, the study demonstrates that reconstruction of the state memory of traumatic events depends on a country's economy. Thus, the research addresses how Japan and Belarus redefine the category of Hiroshima and Chernobyl victims in order to justify its economic projects. It analyses how scientific and technological arguments about nuclear power consumption and effects are used by the two states to push forward the idea of economic prosperity at the expense of human and ethical considerations towards victims. In addition, the research shows how Hiroshima and Chernobyl victims are used by the states to strengthen the political and economic course of the country. In other words, the study stresses that victims are framed and reframed by the state according to the political and economic needs regardless of their actual objective state of victimhood.

To address these issues the research refers to written and audio-visual data from primary archival sources (newspaper clippings and periodicals, public speeches, interviews, expert opinions, and documentaries) and secondary data sources (panel discussions, official publications, articles, books and documentary films). Critical discourse analysis of Norman Fairclough is applied to analyze the data. His idea of discourse is useful to study social practices of memory politics through the prism of ideology to show how the dominant discourse about Hiroshima and Japan sustains itself. The concept of ideology is built on the basis of Marxist theories of Louis Althusser and Antonio Gramsci. Althusser's idea of

constructed subjects and Gramsci's idea of change in dominant discourse are developed. The relations of power are viewed not as a struggle or equal interaction between discourses, but as unequal relations of subordination of the powerless to the powerful. Hiroshima and Chernobyl are viewed as hegemonic discourses in the national narratives of Japan and Belarus. These hegemonic discourses are compared to show how similarities and differences in ideology shape state formation and the path of transition: from militarism – in Japan and from communism – in Belarus.

Based on this, the research finds that both in Japan and Belarus memory politics is driven by the economic factors. In Japan the aim is to become a peace-promoter, a world economic leader, and an exemplar in technology and nuclear power usage. In Belarus the idea is to boost economic development in industry and agriculture through involvement of the lands contaminated by Chernobyl. These policies affect the process and stages of framing the 'nuclear' victims in both states. In Japan the category of who are recognised as Hiroshima victims has been stretched from the narrowest sense of the dead to the broadest phase of the whole Japanese nation including affected foreigners. The economic growth of Japan allows the state to stretch the category of victims and provide them with compensation to make them calm. In contrast, in Belarus, the concept of victims has been shrunk from an all inclusive category of direct victims to the vague concept of indirect sufferers.

The economic hardship is the reason for shrinking the category of victims in Belarus preventing them from compensation provision. In addition, in Belarus the stages of reconstruction of Chernobyl memory and victims are gradual, flowing from one to the other, without much influence of any external events on it. The dominant discourse seems stronger and more affirmative in Belarus. In contrast, Japan's phases of reformulation of Hiroshima meaning with its sufferers follows the external changes and challenges. The hegemonic

discourse in Japan is more affected by alternative discourses, domestic and international changes.

Broadly speaking, the research aims to provide social science with better understanding of the nation-building phenomenon based on certain elements of cultural trauma. It reveals particular reasons and conditions under which a certain catastrophic event can be chosen, manipulated and used by elites for a nation-construction project. The study shows what elements of cultural trauma can be emphasized for nation-building, and which of them can be avoided. In general, it brings a better vision on contemporary social change and a way of looking at the relationship between state and society.

The present work is divided into three chapters. The first chapter analyses the literature and consists of a subchapter on relevant theories and concepts followed by a subchapter on studying cases. The subchapter on ‘Theories and Concepts’ provides the theoretical background of the problem studied covering the notions on national identity, memory, national narrative, and cultural trauma. The subchapter on ‘Chernobyl and Hiroshima as Cultural Traumas’ presents the peculiarities of each case and reveals the gap in the literature. The second chapter belongs to data analysis and collection discussing the appropriateness of discourse analysis as a method, data to be analyzed and limitations of the study. The last chapter is dedicated to the presentation of findings and consists of two subchapters – ‘Narrating Hiroshima’ and ‘Narrating Chernobyl’.

Chapter 1: Nation, Memory, and Trauma

The present chapter defines the concepts of national identity, collective memory, national narrative and cultural trauma, and presents the current state of research on Hiroshima and Chernobyl as national narratives in Japan and Belarus.

1.1 Theories and Concepts

National narratives of traumatic events are based on the collective memory of a community and become necessary preconditions for the construction of its national identity. National identity is broadly defined as “a sense of unity with others belonging to the same nation” (Bell, 2003:69). This unity may be based on common belief, psychology, character, distinct traits, culture, language, history, territory and political dimensions (Miller, 1995:28-30; Guibernau, 2004:135-8). However, scholars in memory studies reject the idea of a nation to be based on certain objective features (Edkins, 2003; Brand, 2010). They argue that there is nothing natural or primordial about the existence of a modern nation: it is constructed by the means of ideas and stories of the ruling class and is always an ongoing process. As Edkins points out, “who we think we are is shifting and fluid, until fixed by the social context or the dominant group” (2003:8). In this vein, other features of a community should be present for a nation to be constructed. Subjective characteristics of a society, such as collective memories and national narratives, become these features.

One of the defenders of the idea of collective memory as a precondition for national identity construction is Milton Takej. Similarly to Brand and Edkins, he rejects the centrality of culture and common ancestry in the process of uniting people under common identity. Takej believes that “[p]eople can fail to speak the language of their ancestors; they can change their religion; they can adopt the way of life of a dominant group; but if they retain

the distinctive collective memory that sets them apart, they remain members of the social group” (1998:59-60). For this reason collective memory becomes the most powerful way to understand why certain groups of people are capable of preserving their collective identity.

Hiro Saito, while studying Japanese national identity and the historical role of the Japanese as a ‘chosen’ people, comes to the conclusion that a nation defines its collective identity according to knowledge about its past (2006:354). Based on this, if there is no past, there is no background to build a nation on. However, Pierre Nora in his studies of France and the emerged shift from its traditional society and culture to a more global direction during the 1980s and 1990s points out that “memories are not a direct continuity of the past, but are reconstructions of the past in the present and are therefore influenced and shaped by current debates” (in Dejung, 2007:61). This means that there may be the past, but our knowledge about it depends on the present challenges. In this vein, national identity may be constructed not on the basis of the past, but on the basis of the present knowledge that is formed about the past.

In a similar manner, Maurice Halbwachs, viewing memory as a social phenomenon, concludes that “changes in our knowledge of the past correspond to changing organization needs and to transformations in the structure of society” (in Schwartz, 1982:375). He believes that individual’s comprehension (personal experiences or narratives) of the traumatic event adjusts itself to the “grand hegemonic narrative” (public presentation through institutions, education, academia, and media that goes ‘beyond the individual’s grasp’) (Wodak *et al.*, 2007:323). In this vein, the institutionalization of memory takes place: it dictates how the event should be remembered (Miladinovic, 2011). It may influence individual memories and reshape them according to a state’s ideology. Therefore, collective memory is not constant, but fluid: it is “alive, evolving, negotiated and belongs to the present and to particular groups” (Edkins, 2003:31).

Another subjective feature of national identity is national narratives. National narratives are stories presented to people that are built on collective memory. James V. Wertsch (2002) presents narratives as a particular type of collective remembering. He argues that a national narrative is “a cultural tool for national identity project” which tells us who we are by explaining us our past (2002:6). In other words, a national narrative is a story of a nation told to both its own members and foreign nations that differentiates it from the whole world based on its unique collective memory. According to Yadgar,

In its simplest sense, the national narrative is the story that a (national) collective tells about itself. It tells the individuals constituting the nation (and anybody else who is interested) who they are, what comprises their past (the national, common one), the structure of their characteristics as a collective and where they are heading – that is, how they should act in the political realm (2002:58-59).

In a narrower and more concrete sense a national narrative may be “the story that the state (or a particular regime) propagates about the nation’s history, struggles, and mission” (Brand, 2010:79). In this vein, a national narrative becomes one grand story about the nation told only by one dominant group. However, Bell shows that one single national narrative simply does not exist. He believes that a governing or official story of the ruling elites may prevail, but there may be other different narratives that are just silenced (2003:74). Nevertheless, the dominant group takes its opportunity and may control silenced stories either by discrediting them publicly, or by influencing them and making them accept the official narrative. At the same time, the alternative stories may be used by the dominant group for the purpose of developing the official narrative. In this manner, similarly to Halbwach’s idea of individual memories being placed within the collective memory, alternative stories are adjusted to one dominant national narrative. They still exist, but are powerless and open to subordination.

National narratives may include many experiences from collective memory of a community in its plot. It can be historical events, current developments, and future plans. One of the aspects of national narratives may be cultural trauma. The term cultural trauma was

introduced by Jeffrey Alexander (2004). He shows that cultural trauma occurs “when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways” (2004:89). Cultural trauma may include wars, genocides, bombing, technological disasters, famines, persecutions, etc. (Edkins, 2003:42). Based on Alexander, Saito points out that “cultural trauma ... rattles default notions of what it means to be a member of a certain community and calls for their rearticulation” (2006:356). Bell goes forward and stresses that when cultural trauma is related to nation-building, it “simplifies, dramatizes and selectively narrates the story of a nation’s past and its place in the world, its historical eschatology” (2003:75). In this vein, inclusion of a cultural trauma that is common to the whole community may reinforce the sense of unity within the nation.

This link between cultural trauma and national identity is especially relevant when cultural trauma is created by ‘the Other’ (Edkins, 2003:42). In this perspective, the production of a nation based on the past traumatic event is obtained on the basis of victimhood emphasizing ‘Us’ as victims and ‘Them’ as aggressors. Victims’ testimonies may be used as a proof of miseries and damage caused by another state. However, when a cultural trauma is initiated by its own state itself, it tries to mask this traumatic event, its consequences and sufferers afterwards (*Ibid*). In this situation national identity is constructed using the politics of forgetting. It is implemented in order to make sure that victims do not have ‘voice’. As Edkins points out, in order to forget “survivors are helped to verbalize and narrate what has happened to them ... [to] accommodate once more to the social order and to re-form the relationship of trust” (2003:9). The reality of trauma is put on the backstage and aims to be forgotten. In this vein, victims become ‘tools’ in the hands of the dominant groups: they may be either silenced by the state, or their testimonies may be adjusted and used by the

state for its own purposes. Their individual memories are placed within the official collective memory and national narrative. Whether they participate in a creation of a national narrative or not, their ‘voices’ are used not for the sake of their own objective victimhood, but for the purpose of strengthening the official collective memory and ‘narrativation’ of the traumatic event.² This ‘usage’ of victims as ‘objects’ for building a national narrative by the state influences the construction of national identity of the whole community.

1.2 Chernobyl and Hiroshima as Cultural Traumas

1.2.1 Belarus and Chernobyl

The Chernobyl catastrophe happened on 27 April 1986 in the still existent Soviet Union. It is considered to be one of the reasons that pushed the Soviet system to collapse, revealed its weakness and demonstrated the inability of the authorities to cope with it. Chernobyl caused enormous political, economic, health, radiation, and socio-psychological problems. Belarus was most affected (Berkowitz, 2006:274): it alone received 60 percent of all the Chernobyl radiation (Marples, 2006:59). As a result 23.5 percent of Belarusian territory got contaminated compared to Ukraine (7 percent) and Russia (1.5 percent) (MFA of Belarus, 2009). After the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991 Belarus had to build the nation and deal with the Chernobyl problems on its own.

Belarus came out of the Soviet Union as a new state with the weakest national identity (Marples 1999; Ioffe 2003; Titarenko 2007; Bekus 2008, 2010). Up till the 20th century Belarusians were assimilated by the ruling power’s ethnicities (Lithuanian, Polish or

² Annette Wieviorka, a French historian, in her book ‘The Era of the Witness’ makes the study on victims of *the Holocaust*. She argues that the state ‘picks’ those categories of people whom it aims ‘to assign the role’ of victims. Wieviorka states that those people that participate in public events, TV programs, write books and memoirs do it more for the state rather than for the idea of presenting their true sense of victimhood. The true sense of victimhood and the reality of trauma remain with those who either died during trauma, or remain silent. She demonstrates that “the reaction of ‘ordinary’ survivors – those who had not written their memoirs, who did not enjoy celebrity, who did not speak out in newspapers or on television” is shock. Silenced victims call these public testimonies as transformation of trauma to “soap-opera” and not at all “what happened *there*”. They call these ‘stories’ a “lump in throat” or “unbearable things” (Wieviorka, 1998:100).

Russian), spoke their language and inherited their traditions (Chinn and Kaiser, 1996:133). Kotljarchuk calls Belarus “a non-historical nation” that identified itself as a local community regardless of territory, religion, language, culture and traditions (2004:41). The first time the Belarusian people acquired their own territory, as the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic, was during the communist era.

There were only two events fresh enough in people’s memory that affected Belarus greatly: WWII and Chernobyl. While WWII has been widely researched and shown as “a culminating event in Belarusian history” and as an official national narrative (Goujon, 2010:10), none of the scholars has made an attempt to study the Chernobyl catastrophe as an element of Belarusian national identity. It is recognized that the Chernobyl catastrophe has had an effect on Belarusian national identity (Zaprudnik, 1994; Marples, 1999; Brzozovska, 2003), but it is not explained how and in what way. Chernobyl is mentioned either as one of the numerous reasons of the collapse of the Soviet Union, or as legacy of the communist regime and proof of the inability of the authorities to cope with it. Most of the studies (Williams, 2001; Abbott *et al.*, 2006; Svalb, 2006; Tykhyy, 2006) focus mainly on political, economic, health, radiation, socio-psychological problems caused by Chernobyl, rather than on the hidden issue of national identity. Hence Chernobyl as a cultural trauma in a national narrative of Belarus has not yet been researched.

1.2.2 Japan and Hiroshima

The first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima by the USA on 6 August 1945, the second one destroyed Nagasaki on 9 August 1945. The first bomb killed 90 000 people, the second one – 70 000 more. This led to the end of WWII (Blackett, 1964:102). The effect of the atomic bombing heavily undermined the socio-economic conditions of Japan after the war (Saito, 2006:362) and made it lose its regional power.

After the end of WWII the Japanese task in nation-building was to reformulate its place in the world from an imperialist, militarist aggressor state towards a peace-loving ‘ban-the-bomb’ country. Before WWII Japanese people had a rich experience in building national consciousness during Edo (1600-1868) and Meiji (1868-1912) periods focusing on elitist patriotism (Eckstein, 1999:3). Starting from the 19th century the Japanese opened themselves to the outside world. Despite emphasizing its own uniqueness, Japanese national identity was always “turbulent and discontinuous” (Tamamoto, 1994:89). After WWII Japan aimed to forget the past, reestablish its relations with suppressed Manchurians, Koreans and Chinese, and to build a new Japanese nation based on the present and future.

In comparison to the lack of study of Chernobyl as a national narrative of Belarus, national commemoration of Hiroshima in Japan has been much better researched (Orr, 2001; Saito, 2006). Saito conducted a study of Hiroshima as a national narrative in Japan during 1945-1957, while Orr looks at Hiroshima narration till the 1990s. However, starting from the 1990s till the present day, the study of the reconstruction of memory of Hiroshima was neglected (Saito, 2006:373). The present research aims to go toward filling this gap. It is also important to look at the shift in the Japanese national narrative especially in the context of the recent explosion in the Fukushima power plant in 2011.

Chapter 2: Methodological Approaches in Studying National Narratives

This chapter discusses discourse analysis as the appropriate method to study ideology in construction of national narratives. It also explains the kind of data collected for examination and the limitations of the research.

2.1 Methodology

The best way to study the phenomena of national narrative, collective memory and cultural trauma is through the application of discourse analysis. Discourse analysis is understood as a theory of power relations linked to ideology. The central concepts of this study – narrative, memory, identity and trauma – lie within the heart of power relations. They form a part of the ideological arena where different opinions and world views meet but only one view becomes dominant.

As a critical discourse analyst Teun van Dijk argues, ideologies are involved in the production and reproduction of social practices. Narrative, memory and trauma like power are embedded in social practices and are produced and reshaped with these social practices. This means that ideology constructs and reconstructs the practices of narrative, memory and trauma. These practices exist and are used by the state to develop and sustain its dominance or power. Moreover, Van Dijk states that social practices “make ideologies observable in the sense that it is only in discourse that they may be explicitly expressed and formulated” (2006:732). Thus the practices of memory, narrative and trauma help better understand a state’s ideology through discourse.

Similarly, the theory of critical discourse analysis of Norman Fairclough draws on discourse as a form of social practice through the prism of ideology and power.³ Fairclough argues that discourse is “a practice of not just representing the world, but of signifying the world, constituting and constructing the world in the meaning” (1992:64). The scholar understands discourse as constructive phenomenon as it creates identities, assigns positions, establishes social relations, and constructs a system of knowledge and belief. According to Fairclough, discourse is a way how political and ideological practices create, update and transform power relations between communities, change communities themselves, and establish certain worldviews (*Ibid*:65).

Hence discourse analysis implies the study of how the dominant group constructs social identities, assigns positions to subjects, establishes social relations, and creates the system of knowledge and mode of beliefs that should be universal for all. The practices of narrative, memory and trauma become one of the examples of demonstration of how the dominant group (e.g. state) accomplished these tasks of constructing identities, relations, and beliefs. In the present research discourse analysis demonstrates how the state in Japan and Belarus through creation of memory about Hiroshima and Chernobyl constructs identities and assigns positions to victims and citizens; establishes social relations between victims, citizens and the state; creates the system of knowledge about the past, present and future focusing on the nuclear power and economic development discourse.

To understand the constructive nature of discourse, the concept of ideology should be defined. Fairclough places his understanding of discourse within the Marxist theories of Althusser⁴ and Gramsci⁵. Based on the theories of the two scholars, Fairclough, on the one

³ Fairclough has a three-dimensional conception of discourse that includes text, discursive practices and social practices (1992:73). However, this research will refer only to the all-inclusive dimension of discourse – social practices – that allows studying ideology.

⁴ Structuralist Marxist scholar Louis Althusser believes that ideology has material component within the state institutions that he calls “ideological state apparatuses”. He views ideology as an autonomous force to affect

hand, accepts Gramsci's idea of ideology as hegemony or struggle over power, but, on the one hand, agrees with the constructed nature of reality which is closer to Althusser's concept of ideology. Hence Fairclough defines ideology as a system of beliefs that is created within power relations through the practice of power and struggle over it (1992:65). This research slightly modifies the theory of Fairclough. It adopts Althusser's constructed nature of human beings: the initial human nature exists, but its essence changes because of the influence of the state's ideology. Moreover, the research applies Althusser's rejection of ideology as a struggle for power. However, this rejection no longer presents the dominant force as monolithic. Here Gramsci's change in the hegemonic discourse is used not as a reason of struggle over power, but as a reason of sustainability and strengthening of the dominant view. This means that the dominant group does not reject the idea of the existence of other

consciousness. Moreover, Althusser introduces the concept of "interpellates subjects" that holds that human beings are positioned in a certain way in a society through ideology (1971:161). Ideology changes their perceptions about themselves and shapes their consciousness through the means of the "ideological state apparatuses". In this vein, the dominant ideology becomes a means to construct social identities of the ruled. As Althusser points out, ideology "represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence" (in Stevenson 1995:37). In addition, Althusser rejects the idea of ideology as struggle for power and views it as "the route through which struggle is obliterated rather than the site of struggle" (Curran *et al.*, 1982:26). For his ideas Althusser has become "the central conduit through which developments in structuralism and semiotics have both entered into and lastingly altered Marxist approaches" to study different social phenomena (Bennett 1982:53). However, the culturalist Marxist Stuart Hall believes that Althusser's understanding of ideology is too monolithic, it fails "to discern how anything but the 'dominant ideology' could ever be reproduced in discourse" (1982:78). Similarly, Fairclough argues that Althusser presents domination "as the one-sided imposition" and ideology "as a universal social cement" (1992:87). Hence it is difficult to explain in Althusserian lines how the dominant ideology or discourse can change over time. This drawback is eliminated by Antonio Gramsci.

⁵ Gramsci introduces the term 'hegemony' that implies predominance of one class over the other in the society. Gramsci's hegemony does not reject the idea of the pre-existent human nature as opposed to Althusser. The dominant class obtains the ability to control political, economic and social life in the community, as well as establishing its own worldview that should be perceived by the ruled as a commonsense. Commonsense is "the way a subordinate class lives its subordination" (Nowell-Smith, in Alvarado & Boyd-Barrett 1992:51). The ruled are not seen as unconscious beings with no alternative opinion. Hence the task of the dominant group becomes achieving consent of the ruled concerning the established worldview. However, as opposed to Althusser who did not recognize struggle, Gramsci presents struggle as a means to reach commonsense. He argues that "common sense is not something rigid and immobile, but is continually transforming itself" (Gramsci, in Hall 1982:73). According to Fiske, "[c]onsent must be constantly won and rewon, for people's material social experience constantly reminds them of the disadvantages of subordination and thus poses a threat to the dominant class... [h]egemony... posits a constant contradiction between ideology and the social experience of the subordinate that makes this interface into an inevitable site of ideological struggle" (Fiske, 1992:291). In this vein, compared to Althusser, Gramsci adopts the idea of production, reproduction, and transformation of the domination status through ideology as a struggle for power.

alternative discourses. However, the dominant discourse either suppresses the alternative views, or uses them to sustain its own discourse, rather than compete with them equally. Hence the relationship between discourses exists, but it is not about struggle: it is unequal relationship of subordination of the powerless to the powerful. Althusser's idea of constructed subjects and Gramsci's idea of change are especially important: they help to understand how individual memories of a traumatic event are placed within the collective memory of the state, how personal life-stories are adjusted to the state's grand narratives, how sufferers' identities are constructed and changed by the state, how state-victims relations are formed and transformed, how the system of beliefs is created by the state and affects perceptions and lives of victims and citizens in general, and how the dominant national narrative updates and sustains itself over time.

Hence the research defines ideology, as an object of discourse analysis through social practices of narrative, memory and trauma, as a system of beliefs of the dominant group projected to the rest of the society to establish the powerful-powerless relations through either suppression of the alternative beliefs, or their usage (employment) to sustain the dominant power. Discourse analysis therefore is a study on how social and political domination of the state is produced and reproduced by the social practices of collective memory of traumatic events and national narrative. The state may use ideas of alternative discourses to support its own hegemonic discourse, or the state may present its own hegemonic discourse as if it comes from alternative ones. In this vein, there is an unequal relationship between the dominant state discourse about Hiroshima and Chernobyl traumatic events and alternative victims' discourse. Victims, on the one hand, are made to accept the hegemonic discourse and change their opinions about the social reality, and on the other hand, are used by the state to present the hegemonic discourse to the public. At the same time, victims' discourse may be used for state purposes to justify certain policies.

2.2 Data Collection

To present how the state instrumentalizes memory through application of discourse analysis, the research refers to written and audio-visual data from primary archival resources and secondary data sources. Primary archival resources are mainly used to study Chernobyl, while secondary data sources are applied to study both Hiroshima and Chernobyl. These data are collected in the Open Society Archives (OSA), CEU Library, and on-line.

Archival data is “unique, irreplaceable, one-of-a-kind items that cannot be obtained elsewhere” (Calantone, Vickery, 2010).⁶ Its advantage lies in reliability as the source is first-hand. From OSA I use textual records in Russian of the *Open Media Research Institute (OMRI)* that contain abstracts of media reports, news agencies releases, scientific articles, and transcripts of monitoring of the national television and radio broadcasts in Belarus during 1992-1997. This period is particularly important as it shows the development of the Chernobyl national narrative in Belarus when it became independent after the Soviet Union collapsed. Particularly, I use 6 documents from *Environmental Files* of the OMRI Records of Information Services Department and 5 documents from *Belarus Monitoring Archives*.⁷

In addition to written data, audio-visual data in the form of documentary films is used from OSA. Documentary films are useful for academic purposes as they contain lots of facts, interviews and opinions of experts and sufferers, discussions of the events that could have been missed elsewhere in the literature. OSA possesses 8 documentaries on Chernobyl. *La*

⁶ <http://www.freepatentsonline.com/article/Journal-Supply-Chain-Management/242017417.html>

⁷ They contain public speeches, interviews, opinions of experts and articles that discuss Chernobyl legislation, science, health and environmental effects, and the psycho-social impact of the Chernobyl disaster: 1 public speech (of the President A. Lukashenko in *Znamiya Yunosti*), 1 interview (with Prof. I.V. Rolevitch by N. Bricks in *Tsentrlnaya Gazeta*), 2 opinions of officials in media (I.Kenik’s opinion in TV News ‘Panorama’; S. Posokhov’s opinion in TV News ‘Naviny’), and 7 articles in newspapers (by M. Gessen in *Segodnya*; by G. Lepin in *Narodnaya Volya* and *Narodnaya Gazeta*; by I. Pliusnin in *Belarusskaya Delovaya Gazeta*; by S. Skoroparov; Yurkevitch and Malinovsky in *Sovietskaya Bielorrussia*; by Y. Voloshin in *Vseukrainskie Vedomosti*). More detailed information on the primary sources is presented in the bibliography. The headings of the articles are translated from Russian into English.

Vie Contaminee/Contaminated Life by David Desrame and Dominique Maestralli (France, 2001) is chosen for analysis as it shows the lives of the local population of Belarus in the contaminated areas, presents opinions of experts and officials to study the hegemonic discourse during the 1990s.⁸

The advantage of the secondary research data lies in the quality of study and arguments of the key researchers in the field.⁹ The Soviet period after the Chernobyl disaster (1986-1991) and the period of development (2000-2011, including plans till 2015) are studied using mainly secondary data sources. For the Soviet times the works of the key researchers on Chernobyl accessed from the CEU Library and on-line are referred to (e.g. Timothy W. Luke 1989; David Marples, 1988; Alla Yaroshnitskaya, 1995; Sergii Mirnyi, 2001; Adryana Petryna, 2002). In order to look at Chernobyl and its victims' presentation in the Soviet media, the research refers to the work of Sonja D. Schmid (2004), who did her study on articles from the weekly Russian journal *Ogoniok* published during the 1980s.¹⁰ The data from the documentary produced by Thomas Johnson (USA, 2006) *'The Battle of Chernobyl'* is used to show how the catastrophe and its victims were framed during Gorbachev times.¹¹

Another documentary *Moya Bol' – Chernobyl/My Pain – Chernobyl'*, produced by the Belarusian TV and Radio Company to commemorate the 25th Anniversary of the disaster, is analyzed to study the gradual shift in the hegemonic discourse of the state since 1986 till 2011. For the current developments since 2000, 3 official publications by the governmental institutions of Belarus accessed on-line (e.g. by the Administration of the President, Ministry

⁸ As the film was watched in OSA on a TV set, rather than on a PC, the precise time with minutes and seconds is not indicated when citing it as a data source.

⁹ <http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/research/survey/com4c2a.cfm>

¹⁰ This particular journal was chosen by Schmid as “the flagship of perestroika”, the first printed media outlet to cover the processes of transformation and openness of the Soviet society during the Gorbachev years (2004:354).

¹¹ The film is recognised as one of the best in Chernobyl field: <http://icarusfilms.com/new2007/batt.html>.

of the Emergency Situations, and the Institute for Radiology) are examined. They depict very clearly the official position towards framing Chernobyl and its victims by the state nowadays.

As for Hiroshima, the secondary data comes from the academic work on Hiroshima, Japanese national identity, history and nuclear power in Japan accessed on-line of Rose Caroline (1998), James Joseph Orr (2001), Tom Havens (2002), Stephen Large (2002), Yinan He (2003), Hiro Saito (2006), Akiko Naono (2011), and Matthew Penney (2011). An academic lecture by James Orr from Bucknell University (USA) and his meeting with *hibakusha* (panel discussion) to reveal their testimonies in 2010 is used to study the change in the Japanese national narrative since 1945 and the way it influenced the framing of *hibakusha*.

In addition, the documentary *24 Hours after Hiroshima* (USA, 2010) is analyzed to show what role science played in framing Hiroshima victims and how victims were and are used to strengthen the Japanese hegemonic discourse. Furthermore, *The Fukushima Syndrome* (UK, 2011) documentary demonstrates the Japanese rhetoric of usage of nuclear power and its presentation to people. Lastly, a public speech of the Ambassador, Toshiro Ozawa, to the Permanent Mission of Japan to the International Organization in Vienne, is analyzed to uncover current discourse on Fukushima victims and nuclear power in Japan.

To sum up, the data to be analyzed contains 12 archival units (1 public speech, 1 interview, 1 documentary, 2 opinions of officials, and 7 articles), 4 documentary films, 3 official publications of the state institutions, 1 panel discussion, 1 public speech, as well as books and articles.

2.3 Limitations of the Analysis

There are several limitations of the research to mention. The two catastrophic events have different time lags: Hiroshima happened in 1945 and the process of its inclusion in the

Japanese national narrative has been going on for more than 66 years now. In contrast, Chernobyl happened in 1986 and its incorporation into the Belarusian national narrative has been taking place for 26 years: this is 40 years less than Hiroshima. This is why the comparison of the two cases is done separately from each, rather than based on common themes. This was partially the reason of inability to apply comparative approach to discourse analysis in this research. At the same time, the temporal difference shows that the construction of a national narrative is always in fluid no matter how much time passes. This makes the study of the Chernobyl national narrative even more relevant bearing in mind that it happened only 26 years ago.

As concerns data collection, it is quite diverse in its sources and access when studying Chernobyl for each period time. The archival materials cover only the period for the first 5-6 years of the Belarusian independence, while the Soviet period and the current Belarusian developments are studied using secondary data sources – books of the key authors in the field and documentaries for the 1980s, analytical publications of the official institutions and documentaries for the 2000s. For this reason the period of 1980s talks about general trend in the Soviet Union, not only in Belarus; the 10th Anniversary of Chernobyl in 1996 is mainly covered for the period of 1990s; while the period of 2000s focuses only on victims' involvement before 2010 and memory creation after 2010. There may be other important constructions attached to particular type of victims during smaller periods of several years (e.g. 1991-1993 or 2003-2005) that the data used may not capture taking into account broader periods for analysis.

As for Hiroshima, the materials are mainly from the secondary sources – books, book reviews, articles, panel discussion and documentaries. Only one public speech can be referred to as a primary data source (in English). Due to the authors' inability to speak and read in Japanese and to travel to Japan, it was difficult to access more primary data sources. Due to

space and time limitations the research neglects looking at the place of ‘the Other’ or victimizers of the traumatic events in the national narratives of Japan and Belarus.

As for the methodological part, only qualitative research method is applied – discourse analysis. Due to time constraints and word limit the research was not expanded to include any quantitative research method, like quantitative content analysis, for example, to increase the robustness of the results.

Chapter 3: Hiroshima and Chernobyl in National Narratives

This chapter presents findings of the research based on the data collection mentioned above using discourse analysis. It starts with a discussion of the Hiroshima national narrative and proceeds with the Chernobyl national narrative.

3.1 Narrating Hiroshima and Its Victims

The Japanese state has undergone a long way of redefining its national identity since 1945 from the pre-war militarist state to the post-war pacifist country and the world's economic (including nuclear) leader. Memory of Hiroshima has played a major role in this shift. The concept of its victims¹² has been stretched from a narrow definition, including only dead people of Hiroshima to a broader dimension of all Japanese and foreign survivors of WWII, and the whole Japanese nation. The state constructed, sustained and transformed the concept of Hiroshima victims. The narrow concept of victims was created when the state considered victims to be dangerous and of no use for the official discourse. The broader concept of victims was constructed when the state found them useful for its own purposes and thus modified their personal stories into state version narratives. The concept of technological superiority and nuclear power usage remained important in formulating the hegemonic discourse over victims during the whole studied period.

¹² Hiroshima victims *de-facto* include A-bomb survivors (*hibakusha*) of Japanese, Korean, Taiwanese, Chinese and American origin. Hiroshima A-bomb survivors are "men or women, old or young, suffering from keloid (overgrown scar tissue) and other physical deformations" (Saito, 2006:365). Around 23 000 children were victims of Hiroshima and were evacuated. Some of them later returned. Orphans (2,000 – 6,500 children) lost their parents when the A-bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. 'A-bomb maidens' were young women who lost their ability to have children due to radioactive contamination (Saito, 2006:366). As the presentation of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum states, the bodies of people were burnt, the houses and places of work destroyed. Out of 76 000 houses that existed in the city, 90% were destroyed. The diseases A-bomb survivors experienced were skin depigmentation, facial burns, burn scars, hair loss, mouth inflammation, cataracts, and keloids (<http://www.pcf.city.hiroshima.jp/index.html>).

1945 – 1951: US Occupation Period - Focus on the Dead

The initial definition of Hiroshima and its victims was formed during the USA occupation of Japan (1945-1951) after WWII ended and Japan was defeated. The US presence restricted Japanese actions towards recognition of victims, punishment of the guilty and appropriation of Hiroshima. Thus Hiroshima was framed by the Japanese authorities as a ‘transnational’ traumatic event: it was not Japanese dilemma, but a problem of all mankind. The focus was made on the narrative of recovery (Saito, 2006:363). Victims were portrayed by the state as people who died, rather than sufferers who survived. To acknowledge A-bomb survivors meant to accept Japanese shameful aggression during WWII (*Ibid*:362). Hiroshima and its victims were the legacies of the Japanese militarist state that had to be left in the past.

In addition to the occupation censorship, the Cold War rhetoric and ideology did not allow Japanese society to talk about Hiroshima victims, and victims to talk about themselves (Orr, 2010, 02:10). Moreover, the society was suspicious and scared of A-bomb survivors: they were considered to be contagious with radiation (*Ibid*, 02:44). This attitude made *hibakusha* feel ashamed of themselves and prohibited them from sharing their experience.

However, one of the most important reasons for silencing victims and their psychological and health hardships was the encouragement of cooperation between USA and Japan in studying nuclear bomb effects. As the documentary *24 Hours After Hiroshima* shows, right after the bombing 10 weeks were spent in the ruins by both American and Japanese specialists and scientists to study the effects of the atomic bombing on human and natural state (2010:13:55). Heat ray and shock wave effects on humans, materials and structures, measurements of the bomb distance and yield, were examined. Hence, victims were used here by the state not for the purpose of cure, but for the purpose of study of radiation impact. Recognition of the survivors would mean the creation of obstacles on the way to peaceful nuclear energy promotion and cooperation with the US in this sphere. In

1950, the future prime minister of Japan, Nakasone Yasuhiro, announced that Japan was to join the Western developed countries in nuclear agency research, become a part of the atomic energy progress, undertake quick restoration of the country after the war and boost economic growth (Penney, 2011:4). Japan, on the one hand, was to become a promoter of the anti-nuclear weapons usage, but on the other hand, a defender of the pro-nuclear energy consumption for peaceful purposes. This could allow Japan to leave the brutalities of WWII behind, concentrate on the present and the future through technological development. As Penney argues, right after the war ended “atomic energy was put forward as a marker of Japan's relative national quality” (2011:4).¹³

Hence, during the occupation period A-bomb survivors were interesting for the state only for the purpose of scientific research of radiation effects. Generally, victims were portrayed as those who died when Hiroshima was atom-bombed. The politics of forgetting was needed to the state to leave Japanese aggression in WWII, boost studies of nuclear effects and promote peaceful application of nuclear power.

1951 – 1954: Independent Japan - Focus on ‘A-bomb Maidens’

When Japan became independent from the US occupation in 1951, it got the possibility to reconstruct the meaning of Hiroshima as its own national tragedy. However, the only dominant type of A-bomb survivors portrayed publicly was ‘A-bomb maidens’. The state targeted this type of victims claiming that young women were not able to have children due to radiation effects (Saito, 2006:366). This frame affected maidens’ ability to get married due to the stigmatization created by the state and society. ‘A-bomb maidens’ were chosen by

¹³ For the purpose of establishment of cooperation in nuclear sphere between the USA and Japan, the US occupants were interested in making the Japanese believe that it was the past militarist state that dragged Japan into WWII, while current civilians and leaders were presented as innocent (Large, 2002:212). In this vein, the USA made Japanese officials ‘a favour’ of presenting Japan’s WWII aggression as violence of the past and forgetting the reality of Hiroshima.

the state as an example of A-bomb survivors to present the horrors of atomic bombing. Here the state started using victims for the purpose of building a picture of what a nuclear bomb can do to human beings. Japan presented visual information of deformations of the human body, emotional and health problems were neglected at this stage. These facts were relevant in strengthening Japan's anti-nuclear weapons rhetoric and fostering WWII amnesia (Large, 2002:212). Maidens together with other sufferers were perceived as 'Them' and not 'Us'. To acknowledge victims by the state, to take their sufferings and feelings into account, to talk about them publicly would mean to take the responsibility of Japan for its actions in WWII and to slow down the spread of the idea of Japan becoming a peaceful user of the atom. Therefore all the other victims except 'maidens' were silenced.

1954 – 1957: Accident in Bikini Atoll – Focus on the Whole Nation

In 1954 the accident in Bikini Atoll¹⁴ allowed Japanese elites to reformulate the essence of the traumatic event in Hiroshima and to appropriate it as a national trauma. Now it was not just a localized spread of radiation like in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but the entire nation was in danger of contamination. There were no more separate groups of people to stigmatize (A-bomb maidens or *hibakusha*) – all the nation was included 'under the umbrella' of victims – including 'A-Bomb Tuna Victims' and 'Crew H-Bomb Survivors. Unlike the victims of Hiroshima who were made silenced by the state during the first years after the atomic bombing, the boat crew victims were discussed publicly and their suffering was spread around the whole Japan. This time it was "A-bomb tuna" even though the bomb exploded in the sea was an H-bomb (Saito, 2006:368). Hence the state was making relational connections between Hiroshima atomic bombing and the H-bomb in Bikini Atoll. It

¹⁴ The Lucky Dragon boat with tuna fish was exposed to radiation in Bikini Atoll due to an H-bomb test (Saito, 2006:368; Penney, 2011:4). This fish was sold in the local Japanese markets. As tuna is a common nutrition to the Japanese people, the state claimed that the whole country was 'attacked' by radiation.

combined victims of Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and Bikini Atoll in one ‘family’ of victims widening its constructed concept of ‘nuclear’ victims overall.

As a result of recognition of atomic victims by the state, in the mid-1950s more than 30 million Japanese joined the anti-nuclear weapons peace movement and signed petitions against usage of A- and H-bombs (Havens, 2002:1208). This put pacifism, including anti-nuclear pacifism, “into a viable conservative, even patriotic position” of Japan (Orr, 2001:70). Anti-nuclear movements were directed against nuclear weapons. However, peaceful consumption of nuclear power was welcomed through technological innovations of Japan. Application of the atom for peaceful purposes was supposed to help Japan to leave the traumatic legacy of Hiroshima and Nagasaki behind and turn it in a positive direction (Penney, 2011:6). Shouriki Matsutarou, Yomiuri media group manager, stated after the accident in Bikini Atoll: “In Japan we have an old saying – ‘eliminate poison with poison’... we can get a lot of use out of the ‘peaceful use of nuclear power’ idea, and give hope for a great industrial revolution of tomorrow” (in Penney, 2011:4).

In order to promote this view in practice, uranium was declared as useful for fertilization of vegetable gardens and hot springs, as well as facial creams, candy and medicines. This idea of ‘useful uranium and radiation’ helped to secure US imports of nuclear energy technologies to Japan. In 1955 the Economy White Paper presented Japan as no longer a postwar country, but a country of technological progress (*Ibid*:5).

As there was no Japanese guilt in Bikini Atoll, to acknowledge victims was even necessary: it could help Japan to forget Hiroshima through switching to Bikini Atoll. It allowed Japan to generalize among all the victims of nuclear weapons. The distinction between application of nuclear power for weapons and for peaceful purposes was drawn: Japan was to ‘eliminate poison with poison’.

1957 – Official Recognition of *Hibakusha*

For the reason of generalization among victims, the accident in Bikini Atoll helped *hibakusha* to get state recognition. A-bomb survivors were no longer ‘hidden’ by the system, but were used by it to build the new Japanese national identity through nuclear trauma. *Hibakusha* became “a particular form of memory – living testimonials – of the atomic bombing” (Saito, 2006:371). In 1956 A-bomb survivors for the first time officially got the possibility to claim medical treatment from the state (*Ibid*:370). In 1957 the A-Bomb Medical Care Bill was passed to provide substantial governmental compensation for Hiroshima survivors (*Ibid*:371).¹⁵ The left-wing authorities supported assistance to *hibakusha* and resisted the spread of benefits for not immediate victims of the war (Large, 2002:213). Anti-nuclear peace movements started to emphasize *hibakusha* with their sufferings and problems as “the movement's unifying symbol, at the expense of analysing Japan's responsibility for a war that had led to the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki” (*Ibid*:212).

Naono states that, even if there was a possibility to listen to *hibakusha* testimonies, they very often presented it in the same manner of master narratives that the audience already knew and understood (2001:2). In other words, *hibakusha* talked the ‘language’ of the state, while the state used *hibakusha* to narrate its dominant views to the public. This was an exercise of victims’ subordination to the state: they could not present themselves the way

¹⁵ Orr points out that the government used an expansive politics of compensation stretching the definition of victims far beyond direct sufferers (2001). Large (2002:212) and Havens (2002:1208) state that right-wing politicians of the state “rewarded” landlords for their loss of land when the land reform was undertaken after WWII. The landlords’ losses were presented “as sacrifices for the nation's economic recovery” (Large, 2002:212). Repatriates who served the empire receiving the bonuses during imperial times, returned from overseas colonies and also got “rewards” from the Japanese state (Large, 2002:213; Havens, 2002:1208). As Havens points out, “each group was judged eligible for extra aid from the social-welfare system, effectively incorporating them into the newly prosperous, centrally administered society of the late 1960s and beyond” (2002:1208). The all inclusive strategy helped to ‘please’ different groups of victims, providing them with compensations, in order to boost further the usage of nuclear energy for economic development.

they really were. Victims opened themselves to the public in the way the state wanted them to.

As Japan shifted from military state to a peace-loving country, *hibakusha* were used by the state to promote peace on Earth and anti-nuclear weapons campaigns. For example, the National Geographic documentary *24 Hours After Hiroshima* presents the lives of three A-bomb survivors. These *hibakusha* all advocate peace and for taking Hiroshima mistakes into consideration for the future. Koko Tonemoto Kondo, 8 months old when Hiroshima happened, says that “[o]nly one bomb changed the whole thing. We have to learn. We can not make the same mistake. No!” (45:00). Similarly, Takashi Tanamori, 8 years old when the A-bomb was dropped, states that “[t]he greatest way to avenge your enemy is by learning to forgive. I hope I am able to give my children a better world than I received...by telling the story of the lessons we have learned. So that’s my desire!” (45:20). Their messages are directed to the whole mankind, not just to certain governments or people. This is the message the Japanese state is using in building its new post-war national narrative. In other words, the hegemonic discourse uses alternative discourses to legitimize itself.

The other need to recognize *hibakusha* was for scientific purposes. Both USA and Japan were interested in studying the effects of radiation on human bodies. As Prof. Rhodes from *24 Hours After Hiroshima* shows, there was no study done before Hiroshima on radiation exposure on human bodies (34:37). Hiroshima became one of the means to get scientific ends in examining the effect of radiation on people. The Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission (ABCC) was created by the US government with the permission of the Japanese authorities to study the effects of radiation on human beings after 2 years since 1945. Treating A-bomb survivors was not the mission of this organization: it was observation and

study of their health and mortality for a long period of time (34:42).¹⁶ Koko Tonemoto Kondo, an A-bomb survivor, was one of the “subjects” of ABCC. Koko says that “the whole world wanted to know how the radiation affects the human body” (37:00). The film demonstrates that the study and understanding that came from the research about radiation effects has a moral cost for A-bomb survivors (38:26). When Koko was 14 years old, ABCC took her for examination. She was put on the stage in front of the audience of international scientists naked.¹⁷ This example of *hibakusha* Koko demonstrates clearly how the state makes ‘tools’ out of victims of traumatic events for its own political, economic and social purposes. The state does not treat victims for their only objective sense of victimhood. It positions victims the way it is suitable for the state purposes at this or that particular moment. Health and psychological conditions of victims is less important. What was important is the state itself.¹⁸

Thus, the state uses its victims to promote its ideology and achieve goals in development of economy and science. Victims, on the one hand, become narrators of the state’s hegemonic discourse, and on the other hand, subjects for medical experiment. Victims should perform the role the state makes them to: their real ‘voice’ is silenced, they are ‘tools’ in the states’ hands to build the official discourse that does not necessarily overlap with victims’ stories.

¹⁶ One day each year thousands of *hibakusha* are still examined by the specialists of ABCC (37:05). As the film admits, it is “one of the longest running medical studies in the world” (37:08). Over 120 000 A-bomb survivors’ data was collected by the ABCC Radiation Effects Research Foundation during the years of its existence. These data are used worldwide among scientists, including those who studied the victims of Chernobyl (40:14).

¹⁷ Koko remembers the following: “[t]he doctor told me to go up the stage, but the spotlight was so strong, I could not see how many people inside. But I could here the different languages. So, I could guess ‘Oh, this must be the doctors meeting’. Then the doctor said ‘Your body changes from childhood to adult woman’. I was just so furious! Yes, August 6, 1945, I was in Hiroshima! But I didn’t start this war! Why do I have to show almost naked body to the people! [crying]...And so I can not tell it to my father or my mother or my friends. It’s something deep inside...for a long time...” (39:15).

¹⁸ At the same time Koko says that she is happy that her data may help in the treatment of other people who were exposed to radiation: “When I heard that, I was pleased that ...[crying] my data is useful for others” (40:19). However, at what moral cost!

1980s – 2000s: Recognition of Victims of Non-Japanese Origin¹⁹

1980s – 1990s: Economic and Technological Superiority

After 35 years Japan officially recognized the existence of A-bomb victims of non-Japanese origin and apologized for the sufferings it caused to these nations by the bombings. One of the reasons of acknowledging non-Japanese sufferers was the Chernobyl nuclear catastrophe of 1986. As Orr states, after Chernobyl people realized that there were more sufferers than Japanese exposed to radiation in this world. There were Marshal islanders, Kazaks, all other people who were exposed to radiation from A- or H-bomb testing (2010, 05:00). This idea made the Japanese look differently at all other victims of nuclear energy and accept the damage of Hiroshima done to their neighbors. In other words, Chernobyl helped the Japanese state to generalize among all the ‘atomic’ victims of the world, not the ones concentrated on Hiroshima and Nagasaki only.

At the same time Chernobyl gave the possibility to Japan to push technological development and safety arguments further. As Penney points out, “Chernobyl was not presented as a warning for Japan, but rather as an unsafe outside point of contrast with Japan's rigorous technology of safety” (2011:7). The official discourse on safety affected the perception of radiation impact on human health: if there was nuclear safety, there could be no danger to health (*Ibid*). The *Genshiryoku Bunka/Nuclear Power Culture* magazine, published in July 1986 three months after Chernobyl happened, presented the official view on Chernobyl. It stated that “[i]t was not necessary to evacuate any civilians from Warsaw”, the

¹⁹ In addition to the differentiation between the types of victims affected by Hiroshima A-bombing (e.g. A-bomb maidens, *hibakusha*, whole nation, etc.), there was a division based on victims’ nationality. Saito demonstrates that more than 50 000 A-bomb victims were of non-Japanese origin including Koreans, Chinese, Manchurians and Americans (2006:372). Regardless of these numbers, identities of victims of non-Japanese origin before 1980s were silenced with little ‘voice’ in collective memory of Hiroshima (Naono, 2012). This practice lies within the broader rhetoric of commemorating WWII victims of Japan: as Japan did not recognize the atrocities it committed during WWII to its East Asian neighbors, it automatically rejected acknowledging the victims of this origin in the Hiroshima tragedy.

land in the Chernobyl proximity was “totally safe” (in Penney, 2011:7). In this vein, Chernobyl encouraged Japanese propaganda of the peaceful consumption of nuclear power with excellent technology, safe and superior to any other in the world.²⁰

The new vision on Japanese national identity was also developed for this reason. In addition to Chernobyl, the Japanese elites had the possibility to strengthen the Japanese position on the international arena due to the weakening of the Soviet power, ending of the Cold War and increasing the Japanese economic achievements (He, 2003:24). In the view of Prime Minister Nakasone “the humiliating defeat in WWII, seven years of foreign occupation, and Japan’s long-time status as a junior partner of the United States stripped the postwar generation of a strong sense of national purpose” (*Ibid*).

Now it was time to transform the Japanese national consciousness, to stop catching up with others, but to make them catch up with Japan. Particularly, as Penney points out “by the time Japan arrived as a gross domestic product champion and leader in atomic energy in the 1980s, the aspirational rhetoric of the 1950s was transformed into an unshakable official confidence in the safety of Japanese nuclear technology” (2011:5). The former Japanese LDP Diet member, Uekusa Yoshiteru, presented Japan as “a country built on science and technology” and the rest of the world was to comply with the idea that Japan was a world leader in the nuclear sphere and wanted to cooperate with it (in Penney, 2011:3).²¹

To convince suspicious Japanese people that nuclear power was a good thing, the rhetoric of the Japanese state was the following: “Japanese nuclear power, supported by the

²⁰ Penney argues that “before the 1990s, it would have been difficult to draw clear distinctions between economic and technological nationalism in Japan as GDP growth and visions of Japan as a technology superpower were inexorably linked” (2011:8).

²¹ Penney demonstrates that technological or nuclear nationalism has become the core of Japanese national narrative. “In this style of rhetoric, atomic energy and related technology is made fundamental to the idea of national community (2011:8)... [and] speaks to questions of national identity. Political rhetoric does not define national identity, but politicians attempt to set the tone for acceptable public expression of what constitutes community, norms, and values (2011:3). It also exploits war traumas, effectively using atomic victimhood as an imperative for making Japan a nuclear energy power. To resist, in effect, would be to go against the attractive nationalist trope of Japan as a peaceful technological leader” (2011:8).

ingenuity of people who need to work hard in order to overcome their country's lack of natural resources, is the safest in the world” (Penney, 2011:11).²² Ishikawa Prefecture Assistant, Governor Sugiyama, stated in 1988 to persuade people:

We cannot see radiation with the naked eye so it is only normal that people will feel uneasy, and if we look back in Japanese history, it is understandable that people are nervous about radiation, however, Japan's scientific technology is at the highest level in the world... we have systems for managing radiation and it is totally safe (in Penney, 2011:5).

In this vein people's consciousness was 'blinded' by the rhetoric of safety and high standard technology. The division of nuclear power on 'bad' (weapons) and 'good' (energy) allowed the state to convince its citizens that nuclear power could and should have been used for peaceful purposes. Economic need and world's status were at the heart of this argument. These arguments in the 1980s helped Japan to construct a narrative of national pride, strength and confidence promoting a new position for Japan on the international stage.

1990s – 2000s: Economic Decline

In the 1990s Japan experienced economic decline. While Japan was going through economic troubles, China started to promote economic growth (Penney, 2011:8). Due to the rising Chinese economic and political power, it started to press Japan to acknowledge its nationals as victims of Hiroshima and WWII. The government of South Korea did the same

²² The places to build nuclear power plants were chosen where there were economic hardships, poverty and unemployment. Penney shows that “regions where the collapse of coal mining put many thousands out of work, and similarly desperate zones were picked by planners as nuclear sites” (2011:5). Poor people were paid for their agreement to have a nuclear power plant as their ‘neighbour’. Penney shares the rhetoric of Kamata Satoshi who states that “The more that a group has been ignored or cast off by the authorities, the more they are forced to rely on those same authorities” (in Penney, 2011:5). Hence people were ‘bought’ by the nuclear companies without taking their opinions into consideration. A similar argument is presented in the documentary *Fukushima Syndrome* (2011, UK). It shows a tuna festival in a village Oma that has a nuclear power plant under construction by J-Power Electric company (00:56). The film states that Oma's future is no longer tuna, but nuclear. Local fishermen were paid 130 000 USD each by the company to give up their tuna fishing activities (01:19). And this is in the country that has gone through Bikini Atoll! The Japanese state's argument of ‘eliminate poison with poison’ works well. Similarly, the Chugodu Power Company in order to build a nuclear plant near an island Iwaishima wants to pay 22 000 000 USD for fisherman to compensate their loss of fish (16:00). Hence, even if people are paid or ‘bought’, they are still ‘caught’ in the nuclear ‘mousetrap’. If the state wants, it acts. No one is able to stop it.

for its victims. This pressure from East Asians put Japanese national identity construction based on national pride and superiority to international judgement (He, 2003:22). This situation made Japan acknowledge Chinese and Korean victims. The Japanese state even permitted to talk about its brutal historical attitude towards Chinese and South Koreans at the educational level in Japan. However, the Japanese authorities managed to interpret this change in Japanese national narrative as a noble act of Japan, rather than as being under pressure from other states. This kind of shift from the Japanese point of view meant “promoting friendship and good will with the nearby countries of Asia” (Caroline, 1998:113). In this vein, Japan used this strategy as a means to reach sustainability of its hegemonic discourse. As it was going through economic recession, it did not want to loose its political influence together with economic power in the world. That is why establishing cooperative political contacts and smothering past disputes was the reason of Japan’s recognition of East Asian victims as victims of Hiroshima, Nagasaki and generally WWII. In other words, there was nothing ‘natural’ from the Japanese side an there was no feeling of guilt to include East Asian victims into its ‘list’ of ‘atomic’ sufferers. It was only a matter of political and economic game.

In addition to recognition of victims of non-Japanese origin, Japan found one more way to sustain its position as a leader in nuclear world. It started to stress its superiority as a nuclear power compared to China. In 1998 the liberal democrat Ando Tetsuo presented the idea of building nuclear power plants in China as unacceptable due to the fact that China was a country with nuclear weapons (in Penney, 2011:8). The Japanese official discourse framed Japan as a country that was dealing with peaceful atom consumption which was ‘good’, while China was portrayed as the state that was experimenting with nuclear energy for war purposes which was ‘bad’. Similar argument was directed towards Korea and Taiwan. As Terajima Jitsurou, an academic specialist on energy policy, stated in 1998,

... Now that America has basically given up making nuclear reactors, there is not a single country that can match the technical prowess of Japan's power companies. Korea, Taiwan, and China, our neighbouring countries, are making reactors one after another. Now, the sharing of nuclear technology for peaceful use... is a major issue [for Japan] (in Penney, 2011:8).

Hence Japan, on the one hand, acknowledged victims of non-Japanese origin, including Chinese and Koreans, but on the other hand, emphasized inferiority of China, Korea and Taiwan in the technological sphere demonstrating still standing Japanese superiority and peaceful application of atom. This helped Japan to resist economic problems and to strengthen nuclear nationalism.²³

2011 – Fukushima as a New Trauma

The accident in Fukushima in 2011 has become another challenge in sustaining the Japanese strength and stability in economic and energy spheres. It has caused serious debates about the future of nuclear power around the world.²⁴ The Japanese Ambassador, Toshiro Ozawa, made an official speech at the First year Commemoration Ceremony of the Great East Japanese Earthquake in the Permanent Mission of Japan to the International

²³ Japan's actions are explained by the assumption that the more economic problems a state experiences, the more the promotion of nuclear power is relevant. Tokai Kisaburo, LDP Vice-Minister of Education, Science, and Technology, stated in 2007 that nuclear technology was an example of how much humankind could get in terms of economic and technological progress to be the leading prosperous nation of the world (in Penney, 2011:4). Similarly, Naoshima Masayuki, the Economy and Industry Minister, stated in 2009 that "... the [nuclear] technological power and know how, which I feel is at the top level in the world, is a strength that we must put to good use... The safety of Japan's nuclear plants and our ability to build safe plants is valued all over the world and I think that we can continue to hone our nuclear safety while raising the level of our technology" (in Penney, 2011:10).

²⁴ The documentary *Fukushima Syndrome* (2011, UK) demonstrates that Fukushima power plant explosion released radioactive caesium in the quantity equal to 200 Hiroshima atomic bombs (06:40). However, the information about the dangers of radiation was covered-up (sounds familiar with regard to Chernobyl). Hitomi Tamanaka, a Japanese independent filmmaker, deliberates about the state and the nuclear power in Japan. She admits that Japanese people were accepting nuclear power after Hiroshima and Nagasaki as "governments teamed up with power companies and a compliant media to push the nuclear option through" (10:15). In addition, Tamanaka stresses that "[t]hose messages were conveyed by popular talents or famous actors who were loved by the people – so the propaganda was very powerful and effective" (10:32). She points out that "[t]here were stigmas attached to people who opposed nuclear power and people were scared so they kept quiet" (10:55). In this vein, people became 'slaves' of the 'nuclear' system. As Fukushima disaster demonstrates, nuclear safety discourse is just a discourse, and not a practice or reality.

Organization in Vienne.²⁵ This speech reveals several peculiarities of the Japanese nuclear discourse. The commemoration ceremony is called to remember the earthquake and not the explosion of the power plant. The name of the commemoration ceremony is “The First year Commemoration Ceremony of the Great East Japanese Earthquake”. The troubles with Fukushima are named as a consequence of the tsunamis: “[t]he earthquake triggered gigantic and multiple tsunamis, which caused the accident at the TEPCO’s Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power station”. Furthermore, the number of victims of the earthquake and tsunamis are presented, nothing is mentioned about the victims of radiation: “[t]he earthquake and tsunamis claimed the lives of more than 15,000 people, while more than 3,000 people are still missing”. This rhetoric ignores the discussion of Fukushima victims, substituting them with earthquake and tsunami victims.

Instead, Japan emphasizes its efforts in overcoming the Fukushima legacy and presenting the state as still the world leading nuclear business partner. Japan stresses its role in enhancing nuclear safety and sharing its experience with the rest of the world. As the Ambassador states, at Fukushima power plant “... the nuclear reactors have already reached a state of cold shutdown ... Japan will continue sharing with the international community the experiences and lessons learned from the accident, and contribute to enhancing international nuclear safety”. The invitation to the conference on nuclear safety in Japan follows: “[a]s part of these endeavors, Japan will host ‘The Fukushima Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Safety’ in co-sponsorship with the IAEA from 15th to 17th December 2012 in Fukushima”. Hence, the accident is put to the same memory ‘shelf’ of forgetting where Hiroshima and Nagasaki were placed. Even though it was not a war, this trauma may prevent Japan to continue its nuclear power ambitions. That is why Fukushima sufferers (evacuees, resettlers, etc.) are ‘hidden’ under tsunami and earthquake victims. The identity that the state attaches to

²⁵ <http://www.vie-mission.emb-japan.go.jp/Statements/s20120312/s20120312.html>

them is of ‘a ghost’: invisible and with no ‘voice’. The dominant discourse of nuclear superiority ‘hides’ the alternative discourses of human suffering.

Therefore, since 1945 the concept of Hiroshima victims has been changed several times and has been stretched from the narrowest presentation of the dead to the broadest definition of sufferers of the non-Japanese origin and the whole Japanese nation. The redefinition of victims was linked to the Japanese efforts to forget its aggression during WWII, promote peaceful usage of the atom, high technology and nuclear safety. Even though the Japanese state has been carrying the anti-nuclear movements and struggle for peace on Earth, these movements were directed against nuclear weapons, and not nuclear energy. The narrative of a peace-loving country with anti-nuclear weapons rhetoric is followed by the national pride narrative of the most advanced country in the world with pro-nuclear power discourse. Victims are either silenced, or actively used by the state to promote Japan’s hegemonic discourse.

3.2 Narrating Chernobyl and Its Victims

The Belarusian national narrative of Chernobyl and nuclear power has changed since 1986. From communist state it became a transitional independent state in 1992 and socio-economic development has started to play a major role. To enhance economic development it has gone through the stages of combating Chernobyl: firstly, through evacuation and resettlement of sufferers, and deactivation of land; secondly, through rehabilitation and revival of victims and territories; thirdly, through development of agriculture and industry in the contaminated zones and involvement of inhabitants; and fourthly, has reached the phase of constructing memory of Chernobyl and changing people’s perceptions about it. In

comparison with Hiroshima, where the constructed by the state concept of victims²⁶ has stretched from the dead to the whole nation, the concept of Chernobyl victims has shrunk from all the inclusive category of direct and indirect victims (e.g. liquidators, evacuees, resettlers, ill people, all the Soviet people) to the concept of indirect victims (all the Belarusian population and youth). In each of the stages of redefinition of victims economic problems were the core: this made the state adjust compensation strategies, medical treatment and decide on building a nuclear power plant later on.

1980s: Soviet Period – Heroic Victims and Manageable Catastrophe

The initial steps Soviets undertook in facing the Chernobyl catastrophe was to cover it up, not to present the actual facts about the situation that led to misunderstandings and under(over)estimations of the consequences.²⁷ For this reason there were controversies about

²⁶ In contemporary Belarus *de-facto* the category of Chernobyl victims may unite direct, indirect, intergenerational sufferers and foreigners. A special social status has been adopted to differentiate direct victims from Chernobyl areas – *Chernobylets* or *Chernobylians* (Tishler, 2006). Chernobyl direct victims may include liquidators, evacuees, resettlers, people who returned to the contaminated zones when the resettlement was over (*samossioly*), people who reside in territories that are not proclaimed to be for urgent evacuation, people with diseases, as well as abandoned villages as a separate category of victims. Chernobyl's liquidators are victims who either died from cancer afterwards, or continue suffering from diseases today. Chernobyl liquidators include firefighters, pilots, cleanup workers, soldiers, plant workers, constructors, doctors, drivers who were sent to Chernobyl to stop the exploded reactor, to calm down the fire, and to save people's lives (Mirnyi, 2001). Evacuees or resettlers are victims who lost their homes in the contaminated zone and resettled to another area. One more category of Chernobyl victims is *samossioly*, who were first resettled from the radioactive villages, but returned later to the evacuated zone and remained there of their own will. Another category of victims is foreign nationals that moved from dangerous 'spots' of the world (e.g. Afghanistan, Tajikistan, etc.) to the Chernobyl zone and were offered houses there. People with diseases include a separate category of victims. Men's diseases include tumours of the lungs, stomach, skin and prostate. Women are sick with tumours of the breast, uterus, stomach and skin. The most vulnerable category of people with diseases are children that were born right before and after Chernobyl and experience health problems such as thyroid cancer, bone cancer and leukaemia. Chernobyl indirect victims include relatives of direct victims, people who live in the zone of moderate contamination and the nation as a whole.

²⁷ The documentary *the Battle of Chernobyl* (2006) presents the interview with Gorbachev who discusses the decision-making processes during the first weeks about Chernobyl. He states that the first information he got was that accident and fire happened at Chernobyl, but not an explosion. He admits that the first decisions to deal with the catastrophe were made according to this information (07:10). Gorbachev recalls that the leading nuclear physicists of the country could not say anything for several days (12:09). They thought reactor would start working in June fully (17:10). Colonel Grebeniuk states that "the country refused to acknowledge the situation, the population was not informed of what had happened" (26:52). People went to marsh in the national parades in each city on the 1 May. However, Gorbachev stresses that it was needed to avoid panic. He remembers that highly ranked officials also participated in the parade. However, he stresses that if the government knew how serious the damage was, they would not do that (28:20). However, Marples argues that Gorbachev and all the rest knew very well the true consequences of the disaster, they just silenced them (in Yaroshinskaya, 1995).

the number and types of victims affected (Marples, 1988; Yaroshinskaya, 1995). It was not clear how many people died and what types of diseases developed.²⁸

It was the time of Gorbachev's practice of *glasnost* and *perestroika*. These policies were seen as a mixture of modest criticism of the Soviet system and traditional praise of the Soviet nation and its achievements (Luke, 1987:190). In this vein, Chernobyl was presented through praise of the Soviet people fighting the disaster and attempts of the state to safeguard them. The unity of the Soviet nation in coping with the disaster was emphasized to provoke a sense of moral responsibility and encouragement for preventive action. As Schmid shows, "the moral obligation to help mitigate the consequences of the accident united people at least as strongly as the accident had shocked them" (2004:367). It was constantly mentioned in the Soviet media that it was people's own free will to sacrifice their health and lives and save their country.

In addition to people's devotion and bravery, the Soviet state addressed people's tranquillity when dealing with the catastrophe and its consequences, as well as their moral and physical capacity to do so. Shcherbakov describes people's mood towards Chernobyl in *Ogoniok*: "As always, people ... proved that even now they had enough courage and ability to overcome the disaster" (in Schmid, 2004:362). The residents of the contaminated zones were portrayed by the dominant discourse not only as victims who fought for their lives and health in abnormal conditions, but also as exemplary people, strong and calm (Schmid, 2004:3). In this vein the state tried to 'normalize' the consequences of the disaster and the psychological conditions of the Soviet nation presenting information that everyone was brave and calm. All

²⁸ As the documentary *the Battle of Chernobyl* (2006) demonstrates, 2 men died at the same night when Chernobyl happened and 28 liquidators (firefighters) followed in the first weeks afterwards (03:00). These people received lethal amount of radiation and burns (25:20). The state did not acknowledge victims at this stage. Only after 15 years the first victims were recognized (25:31). 600 pilots later on joined the brigade of victims as they had to stop the possibility of the second explosion to deliver plumbum to the reactor (36:40). Later on miners from Tula were added to this list as they had to build the tunnel and establish a refrigeration device that could cool down the reactor (40:55). One fourth of miners died before they reached 40 years of age. 250 people died and this death toll was not indicated in any document (44:49).

the Soviet people, both affected and not, were framed more as heroes, rather than victims at this stage.

Furthermore, the state presented itself as legitimate and able to deal with the consequences of the disaster and provide people with all the necessary support (Schmid, 2004:364). In one of his articles Kalinichev states that “all ... is done so that Kiev and Chernigov ... can live and work peacefully” (in Schmid, 2004:364). The role of the state was portrayed as a fighter for normalization of the situation, transition from emergency case to everyday life. As Kuznetsova writes in *Ogoniok*, the Chernobyl’s “scale was difficult to assess during the first days ... [however], today the strategies are clear ... the situation is business-like and calm” (in Schmid, 2004:368). In this regard the meaning that Chernobyl received was some usual casualty that the Soviet state could manage easily.

The emphasis on positive representation of Chernobyl, its victims and efforts of the state was done to take away the attention from the dangers of radiation as it was impossible to evacuate all the people from the vast area beyond 30-km zone of Chernobyl immediately. Marples demonstrates that some Soviet officials propagated the idea of Chernobyl evacuation as precaution measures rather than danger of radiation (1988:27). In this vein, evacuees were portrayed by the state not as victims, but just as temporary unlucky people. At the very moment of the catastrophe there were only 24 800 people resettled in Belarus. The First Deputy of the Ministry for the Emergency Situations of Belarus, I. Rolevitch, explained in 1996 that evacuation of all people was a slow process due to high costs of the resettlement procedures. He stated that time was needed to create proper living conditions for people in new places (in Bricks, 1996:15). Full evacuation was completed only 10 years after. For this reason the state needed to underrepresent publicly the seriousness of the catastrophe in order for people to remain calm.

Inability to deactivate all the necessary territory was another reason to underemphasize the consequences of Chernobyl. Deactivation measures were portrayed by the state as even more costly than resettlement. The state justified the fact that full deactivation was not accomplished and only socially important objects were deactivated due to financial issues. In Belarus most of the deactivation was undertaken only during 1986-1989: 60% of the areas were deactivated 2-3 times (*Ibid*). In this sense, in addition to political issues economic hardship was another substantial reason to cover the realities of Chernobyl.

Therefore heroic and positive mood was encouraged by the state, victims were assigned the positions of brave and tranquil people, and the consequences of the disaster were underestimated to avoid dissatisfaction of people who were waiting for resettlement, land deactivation, and were cautious about what happened.

1990s: Independent Belarus – Rehabilitated Victims and Revived Land

During the 1990s Belarus became independent from the Soviet Union and experienced economic crisis. In order to improve poor economic situation the state could not afford enormous compensation payments to the victims. Hence it launched the discourse of rehabilitation of the contaminated lands and health improvement of the citizens. The idea of low doses of radiation being not harmful for health was developed. For this reason the constructed concept of victims was narrowed down in each category of victims (e.g. liquidators, people with radiation illnesses, skeptical people, resettlers and evacuees). Chernobyl sufferers were transformed from victims to ‘normal’ citizens. Suffering was left in the past, while recovery and improvements were taking place in the present and future. All this was needed to invest budget money in the economy of the country, rather than to concentrate spendings only on healing victims.

In order to change victims' identities from 'ill' to 'healthy', scientific arguments were developed.²⁹ One of the achievements of the radiation science in Belarus was the development of the 35-rem conception.³⁰ It propagated the idea that small doses of radiation were not harmful for human health. It held that a human body could receive 35 rem during its whole life without any affect on health. According to Lepin this idea came into existence in order to make Chernobyl legislation 'cheaper' and decrease the state responsibility for the consequences of the disaster (1997:34).³¹

Moreover, Lepin shows that further on in 1995 the 35 rem conception was updated. Since then the Chernobyl consequences were measured not as a dose of radionuclides a human body could receive during the whole person's life, but only during one year of life (current year). Based on this updated concept, less people were in need to be compensated by the state (Lepin, 1997:34; *'La Vie Contaminee'*, 2001). If people are no longer in need to receive compensation, they are moved from the category of the affected to the category of healthy. Healthy people are no longer considered as victims. The number of Chernobyl victims is reduced.

²⁹ The peculiar moment here was that the increase in human illnesses was not easy to capture. More than that, it was difficult to distinguish whether this particular illness in this particular person was caused exactly by radiation and not by other factors. The study of Chernobyl's affects on human beings was only developing; there was no previous experience to rely on. It was difficult to give a precise estimation of damage and consequences (Petryna, 2002:10). This gave the possibility to different interpretations according to particular interests of different actors. In this sense Petryna argues that science, especially the one that was related to radioactivity (e.g. radiobiology, radiomedicine, radiopathology, etc.), was highly political and affected the lives of the people it was studying (2002:217).

³⁰ This conception is critically discussed in the article of Georgi Lepin 'The Republic Needs the Developed Network of the Chernobyl Hospitals' published in 1997 in the state newspaper *Narodnaya Gazeta*, Minsk (hereinafter, Lepin, 1997) and the documentary *'La Vie Contaminee/Contaminated Life'* produced by David Desrame and Dominique Maestralli in 2001, France (hereinafter, *'La Vie Contaminee'*, 2001).

³¹ This argument can be supported through the demonstration of the decreased budget spendings to finance Chernobyl problems. As the First Deputy of the Ministry for the Emergency Situations, I. Rolevitch, announced in his interview to the state newspaper *Tsentrlnaya Gazeta* in 1996, the money to finance Chernobyl problems were the following: 1991 – 16.8%, 1992 – 12.6%, 1993 – 9.6%, 1994 – 7.3% (hereinafter, Rolevitch, cited in Bricks, 1996:17).

Moreover, in his other article ‘Deception, or Why Chernobyl Legislation Has Become Shagreen Skin?’ published in the independent newspaper *Narodnaya Volya*, Minsk, in 1996 (hereinafter, Lepin, 1996), Lepin demonstrates that the level of compensation to Chernobyl victims in 1996 was calculated in the prices of 1991. Thus, the indexation was not taken into account. Due to this the amount of money to be paid to victims was lowered even more (Lepin, 1996:21). Compensations to liquidators were also minimized. In addition to the scientific 35-rem concept, the state explained these cuts in terms of the economic crisis. Liquidators got framed as generally healthy people with abilities to work like others. As the First Deputy of the Ministry for the Emergency Situations, I. Rolevitch, continues in his interview, even though it was not easy for liquidators to live, they were supposed to share the economic burden that the republic was going through together with others. He justified these actions towards liquidators claiming that from the total number of 110 000 liquidators, more than 3 000 liquidators-invalids were still receiving compensation in full (Rolevitch, cited in Bricks, 1996:17). Therefore, the idea of the 35-rem concept and economic crisis were used as justifications by the state ‘to normalize’ health and conditions of living of the Chernobyl sufferers.

Moreover, the new 35 rem conception allowed the state to explain further increases in oncological diseases not as a result of radiation, but due to access to modern technological equipment provided by Western humanitarian aid. Yury Voloshin in his article ‘They Try to Send Belarusians Back to the ‘Zone’ published in 1996 in *Vseukrainskie Vedomosti*, Minsk, (hereinafter, Voloshin, 1996) showed that the state emphasized that this medical equipment gave the possibility to carry on diagnostic operations and identify human pathologies impossible during the Soviet times. Furthermore, the idea of 35 rem permitted the state to undertake changes in the functioning of Chernobyl institutions. Lepin provides with the examples of the two institutions – the Research Institute of Radiation Medicine and the

Ministry of GosKomChernobyl (1997:35). Thus, the Research Institute of Radiation Medicine created in 1989 was restructured in 1996 to a new organization called Research Clinic Institute of Radiation Medicine and Endocrinology. Lepin argues that endocrinology is only one of the numerous branches of radiation medicine and is not primarily based on radiation effects: radiation is only a part of its study (*Ibid*). In this vein, radiation impact on human bodies was reduced mainly to the level of endocrinology, while Chernobyl victims were framed mainly as endocrinological patients. Similarly, the main Ministry responsible for liquidation of the Chernobyl consequences named GosKomChernobyl was restructured to the Ministry for Emergency Situations in the same manner as it was created in Russia (Lepin, 1997:35). Since then, according to Lepin, Chernobyl was moving away from the catastrophe level to the emergency situation, radiation medicine was replaced by endocrinology.³²

In other words, the politics of forgetting Chernobyl took place already during the 1990s in independent Belarus by making inhabitants of the areas with low doses of radiation and liquidators ‘healthy’ people, sick victims - sufferers from endocrinology, and Chernobyl itself – an emergency case, not a catastrophe. The memory of Chernobyl was further transformed from problematic and painful to manageable and positive through the state practices of science.³³

Instead of constructing the system of knowledge about radiation on the idea of the existence of the relationship between dose of radiation and human suffering, the state created knowledge about radiation being not harmful and hence claimed that people were all

³² Based on this, Lepin assumed that with such direction Chernobyl could disappear from all state institutions’ names, program and from the budget line: “nothing will be left to liquidate, no one to cure, Chernobyl problems of Belarus will be closed in archives” (1997:35).

³³ Compared to Japan where science was used to study the atomic effects and promote the usage of the atom for peaceful reasons, in Belarus science was needed to come out with explanations that radiation in low doses is not harmful and people and territories can be cured.

involved in ‘radiophobia’.³⁴ The state portrayed radiation effects as the psychological problems of people, rather than as a real damage to the human body. Gessen demonstrates that the reason of normalization of people’s psychological situation and the attitude to radiation was to enhance economic development of poor Belarus through turning to living in the abandoned lands, developing industry and agriculture there (1995:84). On the one hand, the state framed people who were skeptical about radiation as ‘radiophobic’. On the other hand, it was important for the state to eliminate the elements of people’s skepticism about radiation and to encourage them not to relate human diseases to radiation and not to fear anything. In this vein, the policies of ‘normalization’ of the psychological conditions of people took place.

These policies could help to get rid of people’s complains and preoccupations and enhance economic development of the contaminated lands. For example, Anatoly Skryabin, the head of the laboratory of the Institute for Radiation Medicine, interviewed for the state newspaper *Segodnya*, Minsk, in 1995 by Masha Gessen (hereinafter, Skryabin, in Gessen, 1995) stated that the population was to be calmed down and informed that low doses of radiation were not harmful for health. Skryabin referred to the example of Tcheljabinsk (Russia) where people were not provided with negative information about the Kishimskaya nuclear tragedy and got sick less due to that. The official argued that all the illnesses in the zone were due to psychosomatic reasons: “If to tell people all the time that they are under sentence of death, they would start believing in it and behave accordingly” (in Gessen, 1995:85). Hence presenting radiation as manageable and not harmful in small doses would

³⁴ Marples explains the created by the state term ‘radiophobia’ from the times of the Soviet Union as “not an illness, but a condition, namely the fear of the biological influence of radiation...[people] do not believe anyone or anything, and connect the most trivial ailments with the effect of radioactive substances” (1988:49). Hence the term was invented by the state to frame suspicious people as psychologically unstable.

combat ‘fuss’ and preoccupations of people and make them more cooperative with the state. In other words, this would subordinate peoples’ discourse on radiation to the state.³⁵

Moreover, the highly ranked officials were giving positive examples of their own families living in the contaminated areas. For example, Ivan Kenik, the Minister of the Emergency Situations, stated on the Belarusian TV News program ‘*Panorama*’ on 25 April 1996 (hereinafter, Kenik, TV Program, 1996) that his grandchildren lived in the contaminated zone of Khoyniki and his son remained 1 km away from the resettled zone. He acknowledged the fact that the state gave the possibility to leave the contaminated zone for those who were afraid of radiation. However, Kenik stated that it was not correct to scare people all the time with radiation and tell them that “you will all die here soon”. In this vein the state was strengthening its hegemonic discourse through discrediting the alternative discourse of being sceptical of radiation and presenting it as exaggeration.

In addition to positive information and medical data, scientific findings in land rehabilitation were emphasized. Voloshin in his article demonstrates that the state “theory of the rehabilitation of the abandoned land” held that the Belarusian scientists estimated that 10 years after Chernobyl the area of the contaminated territory became 5% smaller than before. This meant that 5% of the land was framed as recovered and became ‘clean’ due to the natural decomposition of the radioactive particles (1996:53). However, Voloshin is skeptical about this argument. He believes that the state’s decision to rehabilitate the contaminated land was in fact based on the economic crisis, unemployment and deficit of agricultural land,

³⁵ In order to strengthen the argument of low doses of radiation being not harmful to human health, in 1996 “The Program of Improvement of the Informing of the Population about the Problems of Chernobyl and Radiation Safety” was developed. This Program stated the following: “Nowadays the mass consciousness of the Belarusian population overestimates the harmful effects of the consequences of the Chernobyl catastrophe. The propaganda strategy should orient people’s attention towards the positive factors. After the negative news recommendatory and encouraging information should follow (in Voloshin, 1996:53).

rather than simply referred to the natural decrease in radiation levels.³⁶ He supports the idea that the decomposition process that the state emphasized was related only to the radioactive strontium and cesium. Other radioactive particles that had half-lives of tens and thousands of years were neglected (Voloshin, 1996:53; *‘La Vie Contaminee’*, 2001). It is believed that these long-living particles still continue affecting the health of people that reside in the contaminated zone.

Another state’s argument for the rehabilitation of land was about protective measures undertaken by scientists to revive the land. For instance, Nikolai Korneev, a scientist in radiobiology, cited in the article ‘How Much Does Chernobyl Cost?’ of the state newspaper *Sovietskaya Bielorrussia* (Minsk, 1996), claimed that the contaminated land was to be ‘cured’ though provision of the necessary amount of fertilizers in the soil and usage of calcification for plants (hereinafter, in Skoroparov, 1996:45). Similarly, President Alexander Lukashenko stated in his 10th Chernobyl Anniversary speech in 1996, published in the state newspaper *Znanyia Yunisti*, that special agro-technical and agro-chemical works could help to get ecologically clean production in the contaminated areas. According to him, the population just had to follow specific protective measures in order to live a normal life. Moreover, the President admitted that the Chernobyl areas were to become exemplary to ‘clean’ territories in their effectiveness of development, standards of construction, services and medical provision (Lukashenko, public speech, 1996:13).³⁷ In this sense the Chernobyl lands were framed as being ‘clean’ and even more usable for production and agriculture than ‘normal’

³⁶ Marples states that during 1990s the problems Belarus was facing were “hyperinflation, fast-rising prices, an energy crisis, and a significant rise in crime (in Yaroshinskaya, 1995, introduction).

³⁷ The same argument is presented in the documentary *Bol’ Moya – Chernobyl/ Chernobyl is My Pain* (2011): “the scientists have concluded that people can live here [in the Chernobyl lands of the Gomel Region] and have agriculture” (04:10). The film shows that one of the first agricultural products to grow in the contaminated land was corn: “[i]f to believe to scientists, this crop is immune to radiation” (03:30). In addition, to calm down the citizens, the documentary portrays that the strong system of control in Belarus means that it is impossible to sell to consumers contaminated products. The film has a goal to convince that only products that correspond to norms can be sold (05:55). It states that these republican norms of control have been always tightened. Moreover, the film frames Belarusian norms as the strictest in Europe (06:00).

lands. Hence people who resided or could reside there were encouraged to use these lands fully for industrial and agricultural development, as well as employment. These activities could help enhance the economic situation of the country.

The hegemonic discourse of the 1990s was also speaking the language of the affected. In other words, the dominant narrative used arguments of alternative stories of victims in order to present them as its own and to foster its sustainability. Old ladies and gentlemen that lived in the zone did not believe in radiation and proposed to any researchers, scientists, journalists, or whoever visited them in the zone, to try their vegetables. This attitude to radiation of old people is demonstrated in the articles of Gessen (1995), Yurkevitch and Malinovsky (1995), and in the documentaries '*La Vie Contaminee*' (2001) and *Bol' Moya – Chernobyl/ Chernobyl is My Pain* (2011). "Everything grows in radiation" old people say (Gessen, 1995:83). For example, Gessen in her article describes the old lady Anna from the one of the most contaminated villages in Belarus, called Bartolomeevka, who said that her apples were 'clean', they were checked by specialists who visited her to measure radiation. Anna talked about her neighbor who did not want to move out: in his age radiation was less harmful than resettling and change (Gessen, 1995:84). Similarly, Yurkevitch and Malinovsky in their article 'In the Heart of Europe, the village of Bartolomeevka, Inhabitants Start to Forget What It Is to Live with Electricity', from the newspaper *Sovietskaya Bielorrussia* (Minsk, 1995), present Arkady from the village Pobuzhie who said that "everyday peasant work is the best remedy in any age" for everything, including radiation (hereinafter, Yurkevitch and Malinovsky, 1995:20).³⁸

The above mentioned sources demonstrate that old people preferred simple hardships in their own village, rather than complicated hardships of no job, no private garden, high

³⁸ Similarly, the documentary '*La Vie Contaminee*' presents many inhabitants of the Belarusian villages with different level of radioactive contamination. They all said that radiation was better than resettlement, contaminated food was better than starvation. One of the old lady admitted that "it is better to die full, than hungry".

prices when resettled to the city. Knowing this, the state used this positive argument of old people for its own purposes: instead of providing resettled people from contaminated zones with assistance in the city, they encouraged them to go back to the village, even if they resettled before, and supported these people in their villages. This was needed for the revival purposes of the contaminated lands. Resettlers were no longer victims, through returning back they became ‘normal’ people again.³⁹ Thus alternative discourse of victims was used by the state to strengthen its hegemonic discourse and to subordinate its ‘subjects’ even more.

In addition, the politics of revival had different aim towards resettlement policies compared to the Soviet times. President Lukashenko in his 10th Anniversary Chernobyl speech in 1996 presented the resettlement of people during the Soviet times as “absolutely empty-headed” without taking into consideration people’s wish to remain in their lands (Lukashenko, public speech, 1996:13). Similarly, Sergei Posokhov, the adviser of the President, presented the same argument in the TV News program ‘*Naviny*’ on 23 April 1996 (hereinafter, Posokhov, TV program, 1996) that resettlement of people and building new houses for them was done “in the open field” without any infrastructure and jobs. This was the reason why according to him people did not feel comfortable in the resettled houses, they wanted to go back home. Thus, the idea of sending people back was framed as coming not from the state, but from the people. However, the President in his speech admitted that the resettlers were to understand that the state could not finance fully their lives in the city in new flats. This means that if people returned back to the zone, the state could help them there and provide them with everything (house, job, etc.). But if people moved to cities, towns or other

³⁹ The state also used its citizens for participation in documentary films to present the official hegemonic discourse. Hence, in the documentary *Bol’ Moya – Chernobyl/Chernobyl is My Pain* one of the interviewees stated that love for her small town, for a small peace of land, “has risen over all fears and sufferings” from radiation (01:60). Another family that was interviewed demonstrated that at the very beginning they were hesitating, whether to stay or to leave the contaminated land, but later they changed their mind and now were enjoying living there (02:11). Another lady responded that initially she was afraid of radiation, but then got used to it and now it was fine (02:20). Hence the state used victims to perform publicly to strengthen its ideology.

‘clean’ settlements, the state could not help as much as needed. The meaning of this idea was that people were ‘needed’ in the zone to rehabilitate it and to start economic activities there. In this case, the state used domination to shape people’s decisions and lives.⁴⁰

Hence, the state’s rehabilitation measures allowed controlling its own citizens setting them under the special criteria of living. The state ideology dominated people’s consciousness, identities, beliefs and conditions of living through the practices of science, psychologicalization, as well as manipulation of victims’ discourse. The constructed concept of victims was shrunk in each category: from liquidators to invalids, from radiation sick to endocrinologically ill, from resettled or evacuated to ‘normal’ returned, from cautious to radiophobic.

2000s: Socio-Economic Development - No More Direct Victims, No More Contaminated Land

Since the 2000s when the rehabilitation projects were accomplished, the hegemonic discourse moved further in the narrowing down of the constructed concept of victims. The idea of development in social and economic spheres took place. Victims from being ‘Them’ – sufferers, became ‘Us’ – ‘normal’ citizens, with good health and living conditions in their returned places. Moreover, victims became participants of the hegemonic discourse: they helped to develop and sustain it.

According to the discourse of development, victims or people affected became actively involved in the procedures of revival of their land.⁴¹ The development strategy, on the one hand, helped to enhance economic achievements of the state through usage of the

⁴⁰ In order to persuade people to go back, the discourse of ‘there is no radiation any more’ was developed. Voloshin demonstrates that after the Presidential speech in some Belarusian mass media there appeared such headings to articles as “There exists such a nation that is not afraid of radiation” or “It is not wise to blame radiation for all illnesses” (1996:53).

⁴¹ This idea is very well described in the official publication *Belarus and Chernobyl: 25 Years Later* of the Administration of the President of Belarus, the Ministry of the Emergency Situations, and the Institute of Radiology (hereinafter, *Belarus and Chernobyl*, 2011:23-24).

labour force of victims, and on the other hand, made victims change perceptions about themselves. Active involvement fostered the politics of forgetting Chernobyl and shifted inhabitants' status of victims to 'normal' people with equal rights as all other citizens.

The state scientists believed that the rehabilitation period did not take into consideration the idea of victim's involvement in the process of recovery and development of their land (*Belarus and Chernobyl*, 2011:24). They argued that the rehabilitation period presented people from the radioactive zones as the victims of Chernobyl spreading this idea among the whole country. This prevented the state to implement its policies of rehabilitation and proceed to the stage of development fully. That is why the new approach of victim's involvement was created by the state. According to *Belarus and Chernobyl* it encouraged victims to participate actively in the strategy of recovery and development of the land. Moreover, the idea of victim's involvement was supported by the international community and was put as a main principle of the UNDP program CORE (Cooperation for Rehabilitation) that functioned in Belarus during 2003-2008. This program promoted community-based projects and made people from the affected areas participate in the problem-solving of their regions through created project initiatives.

The *Belarus and Chernobyl* admits that the idea of CORE was to shift people's perceptions about themselves from "We have suffered, the whole world is indebted to us" to "We can do lots of things for revival of the land on our own, if we possess all the necessary conditions and means for that" (2011:24). In this vein, the alternative discourse of CORE was used by the state to support its own hegemonic discourse: it made dominant ideas look more credible and convincing for the people involved. At the same time, the idea of involvement made victims active participants of the hegemonic discourse of the state. While in Japan *hibakusha* and their testimonies were publicly used by the state to promote peace and anti-nuclear weapons rhetoric, in Belarus *Chernobilians* were used to participate in the land

recovery projects for economic development of the country. Chernobyl became more and more manageable by both state and citizens, and therefore, more easy to forget.

One of the reasons of the socio-economic growth discourse and encouragement of participation of victims in problem-solving projects of their regions was the decision to build the first nuclear power plant in Belarus. The idea was developed in 2006 and approved in 2008. In order to convince the citizens of the necessity and safety of the nuclear power, the constructed concept of victims was transformed from sufferers to ‘normal’ citizens. Once again economic argument was the core of justification: the dependency on the Russian energy resources was made the reason for the search for alternative ways to achieve energy security. The necessity of possession of a nuclear power plant in Belarus was explained by the President in the official publication ‘The State of the Socio-Political Situation in the Republic of Belarus’ in the *Review of the Events within the Country and Abroad* published by the Administration of the President in April 2011 (hereinafter, *the Review*, 2011:16). The President stated that a Belarusian own nuclear power plant could allow Belarus to produce energy twice as cheaply than it could produce via gas thermal power plants. Moreover, he promised that the new nuclear power plant would correspond to the best quality standards of safety. To proceed with the idea of own nuclear power plant the state had to change the status of Chernobyl victims first: to transform their identities of ‘nuclear’ citizens to citizens of an economically developed country.

Therefore, the safety standards and economic dependency discourses were important to convince the suspicious public after Chernobyl. People status was to be changed from victims to ‘normal’ inhabitants and participants of the recovery projects, the economic situation of the country was to be improved with the help of the nuclear power plant.⁴²

⁴² While Japan narrates itself as a defender of peaceful usage of the atom and a technologically advanced country to justify nuclear power, Belarus presents itself as a poor country with no own natural resources and severely damaged by Chernobyl, so in need of nuclear power for economic development. In both cases victims become ‘tools’ of spreading this hegemonic discourse.

2010s: Mentality Change: from Direct to Indirect Victims, from Contaminated Land to Cultural Heritage

The previous discourses of rehabilitation and development targeted the change of the concept of direct victims (liquidators, radiation sick, resettlers, evacuees) and their perceptions about themselves. The discourse of rehabilitation shrinks the constructed concept in each category of victims. The discourse of development goes further and eliminates the concept of victims making them ‘normal’ through their active participation in problem solving. The new discourse of the 2010s shifts its attention from direct victims to indirect ones, targeting the population in general and youth in particular. This new discourse is connected to a mentality change of the Belarusian people through creation of a positive memory about Chernobyl.

The idea of changing people’s mentality is included in the new State Program for Liquidation of the Chernobyl Consequences. This Program is discussed in the *Belarus and Chernobyl* (2011:23-26) and the official materials published by the Administration of the President for the information purposes ‘From Liquidation of the Chernobyl Consequences to the Dynamic Development of the Affected Regions’ (hereinafter, *From Liquidation to Development*, 2011). Both publications criticize people’s skeptical attitude to radiation and frame them as Chernobyl stereotypes. *Belarus and Chernobyl* portrays unwillingness of the young people (university graduates) to go and work in the ‘zone’ as one of this ‘stereotypes’. This factor, according to the official publication, prevents provision of the Chernobyl areas with qualified specialists, and hence, slows down the development phase. In this vein, the state aims to change this attitude of the young people through construction of their vision on Chernobyl as wrong.

Furthermore, people's skepticism towards the foodstuffs produced in the Chernobyl areas is presented as another existing 'stereotype' by both *Belarus and Chernobyl* (2011:27) and *From Liquidation to Development* (2011:15) resources. The official publications emphasize the existence of the same radiation-hygiene certificates for all the Belarusian products, no matter the region of production, as a justification to claim that people have biased perceptions towards products from the Chernobyl areas. The materials state that people's preference to buy dairy products from 'clean' areas to the Chernobyl region should be changed. Therefore the purpose of the hegemonic discourse since 2011 is to transform perceptions about Chernobyl at the level of the population, especially the youth.

There are two ways how the state chooses to implement Chernobyl mentality change. One of these ways is through education of young Belarusian people (*Belarus and Chernobyl*, 2011:27). The interest in young people is core as young people are the category of the population who remember Chernobyl least.⁴³ Another way to influence people's perceptions about Chernobyl is through the state media (*Ibid*). The official publication states that Chernobyl is not presented positively enough in the public media. The document demonstrates that more than a half of the local newspapers of the affected regions have pessimistic headings when talking about Chernobyl, such as 'Under the Black Wing of Chernobyl', 'Attention, Radiation!', 'Under the Sign of Chernobyl' (*Ibid*). The local media specialists explain that the Chernobyl topic was tragic from the very beginning and it is quite difficult to change it to a positive direction. Thus, the aim of the state is to frame Chernobyl publicly in more positive lines in order to change people's perceptions about it. Positive information about Chernobyl will take off the barriers of the state to promote the idea of

⁴³ On the one hand, it is easier to influence their vision on the catastrophe, and, on the other hand, they are the future of the country. The way their perceptions are formed now will influence the approach the state will develop in future. In order to preserve and expand the discourse of socio-economic development of the affected territories it is important to make young people believe in it. Hence young people become the target of the state to change Chernobyl mentality.

revival and socio-economic developments of the contaminated lands and get the population involved in it.

According to the new State Program for Liquidation of the Chernobyl Consequences 2011-2015⁴⁴ positive view on Chernobyl should be created through the construction of Chernobyl memory (*Belarus and Chernobyl*, 2011:29). The emphasis the state makes in memory politics is on the cultural heritage of the buried villages. The constructed cultural heritage on the Chernobyl land may help the state to eliminate the belief in ‘the Chernobyl Zone’ which it treats as a stereotype. Instead, the Chernobyl territories will be framed as rich in cultural traditions, history and people who live there and preserve these traditions (*Ibid*:30). Therefore, in addition to purely economic development of the territories, building enterprises and farms there, involvement of people in revival processes, the national narrative of 2011-2015 will be oriented towards cultural development that will directly shape the national identity of people living in the zone and Belarusians in general when promoting tourism and culture of Belarus.

The national narrative of Chernobyl becomes about “the Chernobyl Route”, a hard and difficult way of eliminating the consequences of the disaster. Memory of Chernobyl in a hegemonic discourse is positive, linked to development and revival, rather than negative. What the state aims to preserve in memory is not just one day 26 April 1986 and its horrors. It is more about what came after. Hence collective memory about Chernobyl from being concentrated on the event itself is shifting to the process of successful combating its consequences. The national narrative of Chernobyl as ‘pain’ is shifting to Chernobyl as ‘life’. The constructed victims’ concept shrinks to normality, healthy and willing inhabitants.

⁴⁴ All the other components of the Program have already started being practiced during the rehabilitation discourse, and especially, during the development discourse. They include the importance of the role and attempts of the state to revive and develop the land, encouragement of the population to get involved in the revival activities, development of the radiological culture of the population, promotion of the idea of “Belarus as a Country-Expert in Managing the Nuclear Catastrophe Aftermath”.

Therefore, redefinition of Chernobyl victims since 1986 was connected with the recovery and development policies of the Belarusian state. Economic hardships were taken as a starting point of shrinking the concept of victims from the broadest including direct victims (liquidators, evacuees, resettlers, radiation sick) to the narrowest (excluding direct sufferers who got ‘cured’) including indirect ones, especially young Belarusians. Through shrinking the concept of Chernobyl victims the state demonstrates the politics of forgetting Chernobyl, showing its ability to manage the disaster and to step on the way to rebirth. Direct victims are constructed as no longer existent, while all the other people affected by Chernobyl are dispersed among the whole Belarusian nation.

Conclusion

The present research has demonstrated that the construction of national identity in the state depends on the way collective memory of a traumatic event is preserved or transformed. Thus, national identity of the Japanese depends on how the state constructs memory of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, while national feeling of Belarusian citizens is based on how the elites frame the memory of Chernobyl. Memory of a traumatic event may be shaped, reshaped, or reinvented by the current situation or events in the society. One of these factors can be economic issues. Hence, in Japan memory of Hiroshima is shaped by the state's dominant discourse about Japan's leading position in the world, technological superiority and nuclear safety. Similarly, in Belarus memory of Chernobyl is constructed on the basis of the state's course on economic development and rehabilitation of the contaminated lands.

Any trauma presupposes the existence of its living testimonies called victims. As memory of a traumatic event shifts, the identities the state assigns to its sufferers also change. Thus, the growing economic and nuclear status of Japan allowed the state assign the category of being a victim to all possible people affected – *hibakusha*, indirect Japanese victims, foreigners, and the whole Japanese nation. The concept of Hiroshima victims has become too broad and dispersed. Therefore it has got a symbolic meaning instead of an objective meaning of who can be a *de-facto* victim. In contrast, difficult economic position of Belarus has made the state shrink the concept of victims and assign its position to less and less people. The state has moved people from the status of being a victim to the status of healthy and 'normal' labour force. Ultimately, the concept of the Chernobyl victims has shifted from direct victims to indirect victims of young people. In both cases the state has aimed to 'normalize' victims. The politics of construction of who could be a victim and who could not has led to forgetting trauma. Hiroshima has become a symbol of a peace-loving country with

peaceful usage of atom, while Chernobyl has emerged as a symbol of rebirth and development. Past ‘pain’ was forgotten in both cases in order to boost economic ideas of their states.

In order to sustain its hegemonic discourse, the state establishes unequal ‘ruler-ruled’ relations with victims of a traumatic event. Firstly, the state uses victims of a traumatic event to promote its policies: victims’ status may be helpful in advertising certain ideas of the state, victims get framed by the state in a particular way. Thus, *hibakusha* in Japan are used to promote peace on Earth and Japanese anti-nuclear weapons campaigns, while Chernobyl victims are used by the state to help Belarus in recovery and development projects by personal participation in them. Secondly, victims’ discourse may be used by the state to justify the state’s policies. In this sense the state frames the problem, as if the initiatives to launch state policies come not from the state, but from victims themselves. Hence, in Belarus the resettlers’ returning back to the contaminated zones is framed by the state as if it is their own desire to go back home. Similarly, in Japan, victims’ participation in the radiation studies or peace promotion campaigns is portrayed, as if it is their own wish to help the whole world with similar problems. Thirdly, victims are encouraged to accept the state’s discourse: in Japan – the discourse that nuclear energy is safe and should be developed further, in Belarus – the narrative that returning to the contaminated zones for living is safe for economic purposes.

For the dominant ideology to prevail, scientific research is used by the state and its findings are presented to the people. In Belarus science is used to demonstrate no health effects from low doses of radiation from Chernobyl (35-rem concept, fertilizers for soil, etc.), while in Japan science is needed to show no radiation effects on health as Japanese technological superiority and nuclear safety will never allow it. Based on this, the state adjusts the concept of victims to the scientific findings and either stretches it, or shrinks.

The notions of change and forgetting become important in sustaining the dominant ideology. Change happens not only when hegemonic discourse is challenged or threatened by an alternative. It happens in order for the hegemonic discourse to sustain itself or strengthen its essence for the long term. Hence stages of change in the Chernobyl national narrative were gradual and not based on the specific event to mould them: from evacuation and resettlement through the rehabilitation to socio-economic development and mentality change. This gradual change was aimed to fight the poor economic situation in the country. As the state preferred to invest in industry and agriculture, it reduced compensation to Chernobyl victims. To increase economic activity meant to reduce spendings on victims. In Japan, in comparison, there was no problem with economic development. This factor allowed it to stretch the concept of victims to direct and indirect ones and provide them all with compensation. Compensation aimed to ‘please’ them and to calm them down. However, in comparison with Chernobyl where no special events preceded each step of change, in Japan the situation within the country and out influenced the direction the national narrative and definition of victims took.

Therefore the research has shown that identities, positions, relations, beliefs, and knowledge about the world are constructed by the state through social practices for its own reasons. In the cases studied, victims were framed through the practices of memory and trauma on the basis on state’s economic issues.

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⁴⁵ The part of the speech used for analysis: "The earthquake triggered gigantic and multiple tsunamis, which caused the accident at the TEPCO's Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power station. These triple disasters triggered the starkest crisis Japan and Japanese people have faced in a generation. March 11th is a day that will remain etched in our collective memory. The earthquake and tsunamis claimed the lives of more than 15,000 people, while more than 3,000 people are still missing... With regard to the accident at the TEPCO's Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station, the nuclear reactors have already reached a state of cold shutdown. Nevertheless, the challenges continue to rehabilitate the surrounding environment. Japan will continue to share with the international community the experiences and lessons learned from the accident, and contribute to enhancing international nuclear safety. As part of these endeavors, Japan will host "The Fukushima Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Safety" in co-sponsorship with the IAEA from 15th to 17th December 2012 in Fukushima".

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