In East Asia’s increasingly competitive security environment, observers worry about a more nationalistic Japan. Rising Japanese nationalism would indeed have significant implications for regional threat perception, East Asian territorial disputes, and US-Japan relations. But is Japanese nationalism indeed on the rise? In order to answer this question, this project defines and measures Japanese national identity and military assertiveness using a variety of metrics. We find that (1) Japanese national identity is not becoming more nationalistic; it has actually grown more “cosmopolitan.” We do find that (2) Japan is growing more militarily assertive. But a cross-case comparison shows that (3) despite its growing assertiveness, Japan remains one of the least assertive of the great powers.

Jennifer Lind is Associate Professor in the Government department at Dartmouth College, and a Faculty Associate in the Reischauer Institute for Japanese Studies at Harvard University. She is spending Fall 2017 as an Associate Fellow at the Department of Politics at the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London. Professor Lind is the author of Sorry States: Apologies in International Politics, which examines the effect of war memory on international reconciliation (Cornell University Press, 2008). She has also authored numerous scholarly articles in journals such as International Security and International Studies Quarterly, and often writes for wider audiences in Foreign Affairs and National Interest. Her commentary is regularly quoted in The New York Times, Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal, and National Public Radio (NPR).