Japan’s Security Policy is a Strategy-Not a Norm.

H. Steven Green

Abstract

This essay is the second of two essays that examine Japan’s security policy in the early 21st Century. In the first essay I concluded that realist theories explain Japan’s security policy better than do constructivist theories. In this essay I advance two arguments. First, that what constructivists identify as a norm at the root of Japan’s security policy is actually an ideology and this fact reinforces the realist case. Second, I apply Jack Snyder’s concept of strategic myths to explain the role of antimilitarism in Japanese politics since the end of World War II and show how this myth has led to an under-extension of Japan’s military power.

Introduction

In the relationship between domestic politics and international relations, Jack Snyder demonstrates that “myths are ideologies that justify a foreign policy strategy, put forward by interest groups, bureaucracies, politicians, or domestic political coalitions that receive some parochial benefit from” the policy justified by the myth. “The myths help sell parochial policies in terms of a collective interest in national security.”(1)

For the past six decades a “myth of pacifism” has developed in Japan around the idea

of renouncing force as a means to settle disputes in Article 9 of Japan’s constitution. This myth takes from Japan’s defeat in World War II the lesson that Japan should promote peace globally by renouncing the right to wage war and has justified a constraint on the development of the state’s power capability and ability to contribute to the international use of force. Japan’s so-called antimilitarist norm is really an idea that has been utilized by different groups to advance their own ends, albeit in the name of the collective interest. Japan has applied its military power less than expected for a state of its size and wealth and, while this fact is conducive to a norm of anti-militarism, it is neither explained by it, nor evidence of it. Rather, it is the result of a strategic logic by policy makers that uses claims of anti-militarism without actually fulfilling the letter or the spirit of Article 9.

Of course, many people - Japanese and non-Japanese around the world - do sincerely believe in the principles enshrined in Article 9, and actively promote them through education as well as through political- and social activism. These efforts represent an attempt to create a norm through non-violent and legitimate means both within civil society and political and educational institutions, and may even someday be fully realized as a genuine societal norm. However, at this point in time the anti-militarist view of the so-called Peace Clause cannot be identified as the basis of Japan’s security policy.

Hook and McCormack refer to limits on Japan’s use of military power, such as the development of defense-only capabilities, the “three nons” and the absence of conscription for armed service as “positive fruits of Article 9.” These limits are, in fact, the “fruit” of Article 9. Whether or not it is “positive” depends upon one’s view of the best path for Japan’s security. However, the constructivist argument conflates the status of Article 9 as a constitutional provision with the presence of a pervasive norm. The so-called “peace clause” is not a norm, however, but a claim that has been used by differ-


(145)
ent groups from within and without the government to influence Japan’s security policy. The fact that its logic has been contested and “twisted” reflects domestic conflict about Japan’s role in the world and disproves the notion of anti-militarism as a genuine norm.

American occupation officials created Article 9. Since the Constitution’s ratification, it has been the pivot point around which Japan’s security debates turn. Arguments about Japan’s security policies revolve around Article 9 not because its principles represent a norm but precisely because it is rooted in the nation’s constitution. Those who do believe in the pacifist principles enshrined in the article have the power of appeals to constitutionality on their side. Those who have armed Japan have successfully deflected criticisms from pacifists by interpreting their policies as within the letter of the law, while publicly pledging support for the anti-militarism inherent in the law’s spirit.

A “myth” of Japan as pacifist state has helped to sell parochial policies in terms of a collective interest in national security. The process by which the different members of the coalition make appeals to anti-militarism as being in the national interest in order to advance their particular interests has created a “myth of pacifism” whose logic has led to an outcome that no single group would have chosen. In this section I will first review Jack Snyder’s theory imperialist myth and how it explains the case of Japanese overexpansion in the 1930s and early 1940s. Then I will apply this theory to the case of Japanese under-extension in the postwar era.

Snyder argues that overexpansion has been common among great powers by stressing the role of strategic concepts and their functions as ideologies in domestic politics. The central myth of empire is that the state can only safeguard its security through expansion. According to Snyder, “The myth of security through expansion originated... as a justification for the policies of domestic political coalitions among groups with paro-
chal interests in imperial expansion, military preparations or economic autarky."(3) These groups do not include only state actors but also economic sectors, and bureaucracies who logroll their particular interests into arguments about “a broader public interest in national survival.”(4)

However, “these opportunistic strategic justifications”(5) are not confined to the interest groups themselves, but are propounded by statesmen who must reconcile the groups’ competing interests within the government and even by the wider population who come to believe them. Snyder offers a two-step explanation for how a strategic myth leads to overexpansion with potentially disastrous consequences

First, a strategic concept that identifies security through expansion facilitates logrolling to war. Interest groups link their parochial interests to the argument that war for expansion is necessary for survival. It is the process of rationalization within and across groups, however, not the concept itself, which leads to the justification for war. While these groups form a coalition that generates support for expansion, the members of the coalition may not necessarily see their particular interest as complimentary vis-à-vis each other. In fact, they may perceive their interests as threatened by each other yet perceive the costs of retreating from the strategy as prohibitive.

Second, these concepts come to function as ideologies in domestic politics. In the case of an imperial autocracy, logrolling generates benefits for each member of the imperial coalition who stands to gain from successful military-led expansion, and distributes the costs of war across the society. In a cartelized state, such as Japan between

(4) Ibid., p.2
(5) Ibid.
(143)
1868 and 1945, the state is vulnerable to capture by narrow interest groups who can pay for overexpansion through tax revenues. The strategic concept is diffused through media and education and creates what Stephen Van Evera labels ideological “blowback” through public belief in the myth. Interest group and state elites either begin to internalize their own rhetoric, or they may become trapped in it. In one case, as Snyder notes, “the blurring between sincere belief and tactical argument has been common” so it is not surprising if some elites do believe that the national interest is irrevocably linked to their parochial interest. In the other case, elites may become trapped in their own rhetoric and risk losing power if they decouple their particular interests from the nation’s, in as much as their own authority has come to be based on popular belief in the myth. In either case, the affects of ideological blowback are the same- the possibility of a single group retreating from a strategy of expansion is low because the costs of doing so are high.

I summarize Snyder’s Japan case study below. According to Snyder, the coalition whose logrolling led Japan to a policy of overexpansion in the 1930s included the Imperial Navy and Army, the national bureaucracy, pro-imperial political parties, and owners of the zaibatsu. Throughout the 1920s, the army and navy felt antagonized by the expansion of democratic politics that began placing greater civilian control over the military into politicians’ hands. State bureaucrats also perceived the politicians as threats to Japan’s stability, because they too were losing the autonomy in making policy they had enjoyed during the decades of unitary government of the Meiji technocrats. In short, the movement away from autocracy to limited liberal democracy increasingly placed power in the hands of political parties and economic actors and the members of the threatened status quo were fighting their relative loss of power. Eventually, however, all of these groups would form the coalition for expansion leading to war.

(6) Ibid., p.41
(7) Ibid.
The belief in the necessity of expansion was based both in the perception that deterrent moves by the Western powers in the region were proof of their predatory intentions on Japan and that attempts at conciliation were proof of their inability or unwillingness to oppose Japanese expansion. The army claimed that Japan had to consolidate its grip on natural resources in Manchuria in order to prepare for war against American expansion and its leaders also argued that falling back on defense would not be enough to protect the nation. In particular, the Kwantung army sought to establish Manchuria as its base for independence from the politicians and bureaucrats in Tokyo. The navy, meanwhile, argued that the Washington Naval Treaties obscured America’s real intention to expand into the Pacific. It was also infuriated by the signing of the London Naval Treaty of 1930, which it argued violated the constitutional principle that the military answered only to the emperor. The navy officer corps resented expenditures on the army’s northeast operations that could have supported the development of a stronger navy, instead of one hamstrung by the treaties signed by politicians.

In fact, the military in general perceived Tokyo as corrupted by the democratic and bourgeois values of the Taisho-era (1912-26). The liberal democratic Minseito party captured a majority of parliament in 1930, followed closely by the imperial Seiyukai party. On the eve of the army’s annexation of Manchuria in 1931, these two parties garnered 90% of the vote. While the army and navy competed against each other for resources, both feared complete civilian control through the development of party politics in Tokyo. Their suspicions only grew when Minseito agreed to participate in disarmament talks in Geneva in 1931.

Snyder notes that against the backdrop of an agricultural depression that affected the thinking of many young officers who had come from the countryside themselves, and

\( \text{(8) Ibid., p. 120} \)
\( \text{(9) Ibid., p. 129} \)
the apparent rise of civilian powers that were seen as likely to cut defense spending, the
military and its sympathizers in the Seiyukai offered an alternative vision of Japan as
an industrial autarky. The military exaggerated the threat of foreign military power not
only as part of a struggle to preserve its budget but also “to find employment on foreign
battlefields.”(10) In light of the simultaneous rise of political party competition and the
influence of politicians on policy-making, the military was fighting a trend that threat-
ened a privileged position it had held since the Meiji Restoration of 1868.

How did the particular interests in the military, and other competing groups contribute to the belief that war against the more powerful Western democracies was in the national interest? The navy would initially resist the notion of total war with the United States. Admiral Yamamoto Isoroku’s warnings that, if Japan could not win within the first six-months of the war then it would not win at all are well known, for example. However, the navy high command would ultimately decide that announcing war with the United States was un-winnable would only serve to have its funding diverted to the army. Admiral Suetsugu Nobumasa claimed that “even [war with the United States] is acceptable if it will get us a budget,” and even Yamamoto concluded that “The one thing the navy must do now is see that it gets everything that it considers necessary in making proper preparations.”(11) Finally, the navy agreed to a military advance in Southeast Asia, not because its commanders thought it was an ideal military strategy, but because they believed it was less hopeless than an invasion of the USSR through Manchuria- the army’s proposal for starting war- and that it would procure for the navy a larger role and budget.

However, Prime Minister Konoe Fumimaru and the Seiyukai were keen for a quick, decisive military victory against Western powers in East and Southeast Asia. While Ko-

---

(10) Ibid., p. 142
(11) Ibid., p.143
noe and the Seiyukai politicians were nationalists, they were also concerned about losing civilian control of the military (even though by the late-thirties, they were using the 1925 Peace Preservation Law to suppress genuine political opposition by outlawing parties they labeled as state threats.) Konoe believed that rapid war mobilization would centralize the economy “in civilian bureaucratic hands” and also argued that a quick victory over resistance forces by the Kwantung Army in China would make Japanese control there a fait accompli that would deter the Western powers from interfering. Within his cabinet, Konoe worked to logroll the positions of different army and navy factions, whose concerns were merely co-opted by Konoe.

What about the civilian role in the myth-making coalition? Snyder suggests that the significance of politicians, bureaucrats and zaibatsu owners “was not in the role they played in support of imperial expansion, but in their failure to play a strong role in opposing it.” Some collaborated with the imperial drive of the state, some attempted to apply modest brakes, and others were easily pushed aside by a state with fewer democratic principles as the 1930s wore on.

State bureaucrats suffered a loss of influence with the rise of party politicians. As the parties’ power waned through the 1930s and crackdowns on genuine opposition, many bureaucrats would align themselves with the military high command for the creation of a centralized bureaucratic machine that would jumpstart Japan’s wartime economy. Along with sympathizers in the military and the media, the bureaucrats would persuade much of the populace that Japan faced a grave crisis both from within and from without that could not be handled by the politicians, who were alleged to be weak and corrupt.

Finally, Snyder notes that even intellectuals, including journalists, professors and
politicians, would form part of the myth-making coalition that led to war. Authoritarian nationalist intellectuals, not surprisingly, dismissed Wilsonian international principles and supported the bureaucracy and military in their efforts to put Japan on equal footing with Western power. However, even progressive intellectuals were divided over Japan’s foreign policy. Some outright opposed it on the grounds that two wrongs do not make a right, that fighting Western imperialism with Japanese imperialism was immoral. Others, however, would support the military as the best means to counter racist Western imperialism and hypocrisy in the region.

Between 1932 and the attack on Pearl Harbor near the end of 1941, the logrolling process would generate glaring contradictions in grand strategy. For example, the navy’s rejection of limits in the size and types of fleets, that had been agreed upon at the Washington and London conferences was seized by the army leadership to point out that a US and British threat would become imminent. The army’s claim, in turn, led it to add to the nation’s grand strategy a commitment to accelerated military preparations. In 1936, the army was authorized to prepare for war with the USSR and the navy to prepare for war with the United States, while the state did nothing to reduce the imports of metals and oil. At the same time, the navy “argued itself into corner” claiming that war with the United States was winnable so long as Japan was not fighting the Soviet Union, a bluff it hoped would constrain the army. As a result, the navy had no choice but to accept the order for the southern advance, which put it on a collision course with the United States.

Throughout this period, compromises led to inconsistent national policies and the strategic myth skewed Japanese perceptions of the state’s real capabilities. Elites deluded each other about the costs and risks of war and made unrealistic assumptions about American and British responses to Japan’s encroachment on their possessions in China, Southeast Asia and Hawaii. The army even convinced the government not to publicize
its loss at Nomonhan in the summer of 1939, a failed invasion of Mongolia and Inner Mongolia that left 18,000 Imperial Army troops dead, lest this failure be seized upon by the navy as proof that a northern campaign was a waste of resources.

Snyder argues that ideological blowback made impossible any attempt to reverse the drive to war that had begun originally with the army. Throughout the 1930s, the combination of military, bureaucratic and political rhetoric justifying the necessity of putting the economy on wartime footing to prepare to fight the West was backed by industrialists and forged the popular belief among Japanese that their nation faced an existential threat. Had any one group within the myth-making coalition withdrawn, it would have risked a loss of political influence and budget resources for the perceived benefit of other groups. Each group had hitched its claims on influence to a grand strategy of total war against Western powers.

Snyder’s argument has two important merits. First, for the case of Japan, it undermines the "hijack" theory that Japan’s drive to war was the result of a militarist clique that took over the reins of government and then cajoled and deceived other elites along with the public. Second, along with Robert Putnam’s theory of two-level bargaining, it is a good example of ideas that anchor international relations (IR) in domestic politics. While IR scholarship treats the state as a solitary, unitary actor in the international realm, states’ foreign policy is often the result of competing domestic forces. The process of politics between domestic groups may produce a foreign policy that no one of them would promote on their own and which may, in fact, produce a sub-optimal outcome for all of them.

To my knowledge, no one has yet recognized that Snyder’s argument can be utilized to explain other foreign policy goals than just expansion. The coupling of parochial interests to the national interest and the logrolling process of coalitions vying for influ-
ence on the state also explain the puzzle of Japan’s defense build-up justified through interpretation of a constitution that prohibits the maintenance of “war potential.” For most of the postwar era a strategic myth took shape around Japan’s security strategy. The myth of the Japanese state as a pacifist was planted by the American occupiers between 1945-52 but would be embraced by the peace and anti-nuclear movements taking shape in the 1950s. Initially, pacifism and anti-militarism would be confined to “true believers” among the groups that composed these movements, but gradually it would become utilized by governing elites who recognized they could not simply ignore a constitutional provision, yet did not want Japan’s security to depend on other nations’ consciences. The adoption of the pacifist rhetoric by the state set in motion a process of logrolling for peace that involved political parties, business interests, educators and citizen movements. Unlike the case of the imperialist myth that preceded it, the pacifist myth has persisted for a long time. Its costs really only became apparent in the 1990s, and, thankfully, the myth has not led to a disastrous conclusion. However, the costs are evident now and they challenge the development of a coherent Japanese security policy.

The origins of the myth of the Japanese pacifism actually precede the US occupation of Japan. By the spring of 1945, the United States had already decided that it would rebuild its enemy into a liberal democratic state. To do so, however, would require a clear assignation of blame for Japanese expansion and the military’s harsh treatment of POWs and of Asian populations that fell under Japanese control. The Americans officially assumed that the average Japanese person had merely been obeying authorities they had been raised to follow unflinchingly. A 1945 report by the Psychological Warfare Branch of the US Army exclaimed that:

The Japanese people are honest, frugal, industrious and patriotic... All their effort is to no avail because their military leaders have betrayed them. The people are not to blame for their suffering. The military has practiced false indoctrination.\(^{(15)}\)
As James J. Orr notes, this report reflects an early intention to avoid holding the Japanese population responsible for the war and, in fact, to present them as victims of their own military government. Another report, by the US Foreign Morale Analysis Division in June 1945, urged that propaganda be used to give the Japanese people hope in defeat by making clear they would not be held accountable for their government’s or military’s actions:

While making it perfectly clear that we are going to eliminate the militarists because they went to war with us, we may point out how the militarists have harmed the Japanese and we may make it clear that we have no intention of punishing the Japanese people once the militarists are overthrown.\(^\text{(16)}\)

After Japan’s surrender, General MacArthur adopted this same approach toward the Japanese and extended it to the emperor. On the event of the signing of the surrender documents, General MacArthur told America that the Japanese had been liberated from slavery. During the occupation he would emphasize that the militarists had betrayed even the emperor. Along with the Japanese government, SCAP would cultivate an image of the Showa Emperor as “a kindly family man who well illustrated postwar Japan’s peaceful and cultural ethos.”\(^\text{(17)}\) Throughout the occupation, opinion polls would reveal that between 80% and 90% of Japanese favored the preservation of the Imperial institution.\(^\text{(18)}\) The result of divorcing both the people and the emperor from any complicity in Japan’s aggression and war crimes was achieved by “what might be termed the Japanese version of the Confucian ‘Mandate of Heaven’ philosophy of government applied selectively to militarist advisors.”\(^\text{(19)}\) While the Americans tried and executed selected

---

\(^\text{(15)}\) Cited in James Orr, *The Victim as Hero: Ideologies of Peace and National Identity in Postwar Japan* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2001), p.16 (See footnote 4, p.188)

\(^\text{(16)}\) Ibid, p. 16 (See footnote 6, p.188)

\(^\text{(17)}\) Ibid., p.15

\(^\text{(18)}\) Ibid., p.27

\(^\text{(135)}\)
members of the militarist clique, their decision to exonerate the emperor and the Japanese people “hindered open discussion of war guilt,” which, in turn allowed the people to consider themselves as victims.

The Americans emphasized the honesty and frugality of the Japanese, and they paved the way for liberal democracy to flourish in Japan by giving women the right to vote for the first time in Japan’s history, and implementing popular land reform, among other policies. The decision to include Article 9 in the constitution might have reflected that SCAP wanted to hedge its bets against a future resurgent Japan, nonetheless. MacArthur promised the emperor, though, that all the nations of the world would admire Japan’s constitution in a hundred years’ time.

Orr locates postwar Japanese national identity in “victim consciousness” (higaisha ishiki 被害者意識). If the Americans conceived of the idea of Japanese as victims of their own leaders, many Japanese nurtured the concept of higaisha ishiki with the claim for the Japanese people’s unique status as victims based on the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I will build on Orr’s thesis to argue that, the official occupation line regarding wartime responsibility combined with victim consciousness would form a keystone in the pacifist myth. Thanks to Article 9 it was a small step from victimhood to pacifism as a unique, forward-looking purpose for many Japanese to embrace—either sincerely or instrumentally—and incorporate into official policy.

The “organizational center” of Japan’s ban-the-bomb movement was Gensuikyō, and while factions competed within it “all parties spoke of nuclear weapons with a sense of mission based on shared atomic victimhood.” Through the 1980s and even into the

(19) Ibid., p.33
(20) Ibid., p.34
(21) Ibid., p.36
post-Cold War era, politicians of all parties, and leaders of citizen movements, frequently point out that Japan is the “only country to have suffered an atomic bombing” (世界唯一被爆国 sekai yuiitsu no hibakukoku). Socialist politicians, in particular, have used this claim to criticize the LDP’s reliance on the US nuclear umbrella.

Peace activism in general and anti-nuclear activism in particular became the centerpieces of left-wing groups who, by the 1950s, stood in firm opposition to the Yoshida administration’s acceptance of the centering in Japan of American security arrangements for East Asia. References to the atomic bombings were often used to condemn the government for its agreements to host US military bases and the left equated the US-Japan relationship with a resurgence of militarism. In 1952 the left-wing Japan Teachers Union sponsored a film about Hiroshima that portrayed the Japanese as guinea pigs in an American series of a-bomb tests. The film ends with a scene of an orphan hibakusha selling skulls of Japanese war victims to American tourists. In that same year, the writer of the daily “Tensei Jingo” (天声人語) feature in the Asahi Shimbun, Aragaki Hideo, made the “first explicit reference to Hiroshima as an exclusively Japanese experience” in his column. Referring to another film about the Hiroshima bombing, Aragaki wrote that it is a film “only Japanese can make. Only Japanese have the right, more than that, the greatest duty to make it...I’d like to show this film to all the people in the world.” The teachers union had actually rejected this film for distribution in schools, as it did not meet its ideological requirements.

By the end of the US occupation the left had linked pacifism to victimhood consciousness and the atomic bombings. The peace movement directed its efforts against US bases in Japan and to protecting the peace constitution. As Orr notes, “Although the peace constitution had widespread support in principle, when it came to concrete policy

(22) Ibid, p.42
(23) Cited in Ibid, p. 43
issues opinions differed.” (24) At this point in time, Hiroshima as a pacifist icon “did not transcend other interests of society” especially those who benefited from the US alliance. (25) Japanese pacifism was initially a plank in left-wing platforms. Had it remained a left-wing issue then, it is conceivable that anti-militarism would not have developed into a strategic myth. One man, in particular, refashioned the message of the peace movement into a broad-based campaign that transcended traditional political allegiances.

During the war Yasui Kaoru was a professor of international law at Tokyo Imperial University who promoted the state’s claim that Japan’s war would liberate Asia from Western imperialism. Yasui was purged from academia in 1948, but would find a new life as a leader in the ban-the-bomb movement. He organized a national petition, known as the Suginami Appeal, from its origins in the Suginami Community Center where Yasui volunteered, that called on all states to ban nuclear weapons. Yasui carefully avoided discussing potentially divisive issues such as wartime Japanese aggression or the morality of US bases in Japan, and focused his message, and the Appeal’s message, on a narrative of Hiroshima that stressed Japan’s unique victimhood “divorced from its origins, so to speak, in Japan’s conventional wartime aggression.” (26) He also encouraged women to play a significant role in activism.

Yasui chose to avoid the issue of Japanese responsibility for Japanese aggression and to focus on Japan’s future as a pacifist nation. (27) At the first World Conference to Ban Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs, Yasui made only a passing reference to Japanese wartime aggression and the issue was excluded from the conference’s official declaration, which did include mention of Japan’s status as the only nation to have suffered an

(24) Ibid., p.46
(25) Ibid.
(26) Ibid., p.50
(27) Ibid., p.51
atomic bombing. Furthermore, Yasui explicitly used language that emphasized the civic, popular and Japanese nature of peace activism. He used the terms kokumin (国民 the people, as in the civic nation), and minshu (民衆 the people as the popular masses) and he referred to the “Japanese ethnic nation’s (日本国民 Nihon kokumin) earnest desire for [Japanese] ethnic nation’s (minzoku no) independence and for Asia’s freedom." At this same point in time, the Japanese left was embracing Stalin’s view of the ethnic nation as a force for liberation from imperialism, which was an ironic position to take as the ethnic nation “had been glorified in the wartime ultranationalist, pan-Asianist rhetoric that justified the very same military state” that had oppressed the left. (29)

As many as 20 million people signed the Suginami Appeal, so, Japan’s successive conservative governments were "compelled...to make anti-nuclear pacifism an unchallengeable component of national policy." (30) Yasui’s “ethno-pacifism” may have originally appealed to the left, but it also took hold on the right and become easily co-opted by the LDP. Yoshida’s successor, Hatoyama, privately promised the anti-nuclear movement he would promote their aims and his foreign minister, Shigemitsu Mamoru spoke of Japan’s duty of “freeing the world from the nightmare of nuclear war.” (31) The Hatoyama administration would be the first to make use of anti-nuclear rhetoric that had originated on the left and to link it to claims about Japan’s mission to promote world peace. Had the peace movement remained a left-wing vehicle for criticizing conservative governments, the LDP probably could not have co-opted its message so easily. The claim to a uniquely Japanese mission, instead of a class-based appeal by the peace movement, allowed its ideals to diffuse more quickly throughout society but at a political cost. Yasui Kaoru’s leadership in the peace movement turned pacifism itself

(28) Ibid., p.53
(29) Ibid
(30) Ibid., p.59
(31) Cited in Orr, p.59

(131)
“into a viable, conservative, even patriotic position.”(32)

Once the LDP could stake a claim in the peace movement’s message it could begin to promote its security policy under the same pacifist banner as the parties of the left. Now the message of Japan as a nation with a unique mission for promoting peace was part of national policy. From the mid-1950s onward, the LDP could both justify the creation and maintenance of the JSDF and make a claim as adherents of the principles of the peace movement that appealed to many voters.

As Snyder notes, it is irrelevant for outcomes whether or not elites actually believe in the strategic myth. Once the LDP could convince enough voters that it shared the same peace-based security vision as its opponents, the left became trapped in the pacifist myth’s logic. The JSP and JCP could not dislodge themselves from the ethno-centrism of the pacifist message without the risk of taking away the perceived unique role for Japanese in world peace, which would surely be a losing proposition. Furthermore, while the left’s accusations that the LDP was recklessly hooking Japan to the American juggernaut may have gained some traction before, the potency of their charges were diluted once the LDP had established its pacifist credentials. Now the debate was over how best to promote this role. The last great battle over Japan’s grand strategy in the Cold War was the conflict over the signing of the US-Japan Security Treaty in 1960. Yet, as already noted, the fight did not dislodge the LDP from office. Throughout the fast-paced growth years of the 1960s, electoral outcomes indicate that millions of Japanese rank-ordered a preference for anti-militarism below other policy values and most seem to have rank-ordered it alongside or just below a preference for a spot under the US umbrella.

(32) Ibid., p.70
The pacifist myth enabled the LDP to deflect criticisms from the JSP and JCP in two ways. First, the LDP legislators could argue that their policies were producing a peaceful, prosperous and secure Japan, all within the limits of Article 9. Second, LDP governments could point to American requests they declined as proof of the sincerity of their belief in Article 9. In this light, the three non’s, the refusal to directly support American in Vietnam, and even the qualitative build-up against the Soviet threat in the 1970s- because it aimed merely to supplement, not replace, American defenses of Japan- were all presented as examples of the LDP faithfully remaining true to the spirit of Article 9. Even if the LDP did not convince the constituencies of the JSP and JCP, their rationalizations did not dissuade enough other voters to force them out of office, either.

When the left tried to expose the right’s evident hypocrisy it failed, as the issue of compensation for war victims shows. As early as September 1945 the government established the Repatriation Civil Affairs Office, the predecessor to the Repatriates’ Relief Bureau, to address the needs of more than three million Japanese civilians returning from the territories of the former Greater East Asia Coprosperity Sphere. Repatriates received government support for counseling, medical care, housing and job-hunting and even school supplies for their children, in addition to loans and cash grants. 

Assistance for the victims of the atomic bombings, known as the hibakusha（被爆者）, came more slowly, and would not be a settled issue for two decades after the war. During the occupation the government cooperated with SCAP’s decision to censor images and information about the effects of the bombings on survivors in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Then, in light of Japan’s position under the US nuclear umbrella, the LDP defined the hibakusha as eligible for a special kind of welfare. Such classification re-

(33) Ibid., p.156

(129)
quired the afflicted to demonstrate specific illnesses related to their exposure to radiation. This policy fell short of socialist demands that, since the atomic bombing victims represented the unique status of Japan and its mission in promoting world peace, they were deserving of more than medical aid tied to specific, identifiable ailments. In November 1959 the JSP proposed amending a bill for hibakusha welfare aid to include 30,000 yen in condolence money to families and 15,000 annual pension payments for each family member killed by the bombs, in addition to travel allowances for medical treatment and compensation for lost work time.\(^{(34)}\)

However, even on the issue of compensation the conservatives co-opted what had been a left-wing issue. On the one hand, socialists rightly argued that the LDP was reluctant to link the atomic bomb victims to the image of Japan’s special status as the only nation to have suffered a nuclear attack. The status of atomic victim was abstract and easily subsumed into the principles of official pacifism. The hibakusha were real people whose faces and voices could bear witness to the horrors of nuclear weapons and, therefore, might facilitate criticism of the government’s acceptance of the US nuclear umbrella. However, whereas the conservatives always couched their positions in terms of the national interest and a collective responsibility to bear witness to Article 9, even if their claims were hollow, left-wing politicians were quick to try to use the hibakusha issue as a wedge between the LDP and the United States. Socialists frequently referred to veterans, who, like the repatriates, began to receive generous benefits shortly after the war’s end, as “war criminals.” The left also claimed the LDP’s alliance with the US betrayed both Japan’s pacifist principles, and the hibakusha. The left also referred often to the LDP as Japan’s “ruling class” and claimed it was pursuing its own interests at the expense of the people, who were represented, of course, by the JSP or JCP, depending on who was making the charge. Unfortunately for both parties of the

\(^{(34)}\) Ibid., p.145
left, although polls showed that most Japanese opposed nuclear weapons in principle, they also supported the government’s relationship with the United States. Furthermore, for the LDP “the saga of Japanese hibakusha served to limit US hegemony in Japan, no eliminate it. Atomic victimhood established Japan’s bona fides as a pacifist nation that could speak its own moral mind on nuclear and war issues.” (35)

Meanwhile, Japanese business interests also benefited from the pacifist myth. Just as role of the industrialists in the imperial coalition was defined more by what they did not do, the industrialists of the postwar era reaped the benefits of the pacifist myth without actively contributing to it. First, the buck-passing strategy of the LDP helped to facilitate the dual-economy. Thanks to the grand bargain between Tokyo and Washington, Japanese businesses could count on access to the lucrative American market without competition from US manufacturers back home. The LDP, in turn, could count on the support of Japanese industry. Second, defense expenditures were kept to a minimum. Even before the pledge to keep them at, or below 1% of GDP the state never allowed defense spending to go above that figure. The savings on the military contributed to the LDP’s distribution of pork to maintain its popularity.

Throughout the Cold War, which coincided with the period of rapid economic development under LDP rule, the pacifist myth carried few costs for conservatives and many benefits. The opposite was the case for the parties of the left, who were trapped by the rhetoric of ethno-pacifism so their messages were easily co-opted by the LDP. Furthermore, their attempts to drive a wedge between the LDP and the United States were not successful and most of the public never got on board with the left’s economic programs.

(35) Ibid., p.171
However, the storm that erupted over Japan’s perceived slow and insufficient response to the Gulf Crisis of 1990-91 proves that the myth bears significant costs for the LDP as well. Now the myth hinders Japan’s security interests. First, it allows those who oppose either the LDP or DPJ vision of Japanese internationalism a great deal of leverage in resisting fulfillment of their plans. Constitutional revisionists, not the pacifist left, are trapped by ideological blowback. Second, for as long as the issue remains unresolved, i.e. for as long as Article 9 remains unrevised, Japan’s security policy will be burdened with a constitutional debate that will hinder Japan’s ability to contribute to international uses of force in a manner reflective of its economic power, which will likely frustrate not only its American ally, but other democratic powers as well, if Japan is unable to join future international coalitions.

Considering that the two major parties differ only over the matter of whether to use Japanese force primarily to support the *Pax Americana* or to lead a broader, as yet incompletely defined international coalition, it is unlikely that the JSDF will resume its Cold War posture. So, the left must decide whether it will tolerate revision of Article 9 and adopt its own position on how best to utilize the JSDF, or if it will continue to use appeals to the constitution to try to limit the application of Japanese force. On the one hand, left wing politicians have a majority of the electorate on their side. As cited above, a March 2007 poll by the *Yomiuri* show only 46% support revising Article 9. On the other hand, the LDP and the DPJ continue to capture nearly 80% of the national vote between them.

The pacifist myth generates ideological blowback not just from within Japan but also from without. Concurrent with the era of Japanese deployments to humanitarian missions abroad, the governments of both Koreas and of China have frequently protested what they perceive as Japan’s lack of repentance for wartime atrocities. Elites in these countries also demand Japan honor the letter of Article 9 and refrain from deploying
the JSDF overseas. The Heisei Emperor and different governments have issued a dozen formal, public apologies. However, controversy seems regularly renewed by individual LDP politicians, such as Koizumi, who pay respects at Yasukuni Shrine, where the spirits of Class A war criminals are housed, and Abe, who in March 2007 claimed that Korean “comfort women” were paid volunteers. However, it is not just the right’s views on the war that are the source of this blowback from outside Japan. The left bears responsibility as well. The postwar era left’s decision to privilege Japanese atomic victimhood and to anchor the moral claim of the peace movement in Hiroshima and Nagasaki with no discussion of what came before the bombings contributed to the neglect of consideration for Imperial Japan’s Asian victims. Ethno-, or national pacifism would develop alongside the remilitarization of Japan during the Cold War era and now the Japanese left and right must overcome the blowback as they try to adopt a new national security.

Finally, thanks to the pacifist myth, “In postwar Japan, the sovereign is absent by intention: if the Western constitutional theorist insists that sovereignty always exists, the Japanese constitutional thinker... has embraced the contrasting assumption that Japanese sovereignty can be abolished.” (36) The contradiction inherent in the pacifist myth poses two threats to Japanese sovereignty and, as the quote in the previous sentence implies, for as long as it remains unresolved, sovereignty is not guaranteed. A literal interpretation of Article 9 that imagines Japan as a pacifist state would leave the fate for Japan’s security in other nation’s hands. Japan would have to hope that it was never attacked or that its friends would come to its defense. Either proposition places the matter of defending against existential threats outside of the democratically elected government of Japan or the prospect of leaving Japan to be overrun by a foreign invader.


(125)
However, the current arrangement, which places Japan’s defense primarily in the hands of the United States, poses a risk to sovereignty as well. Since, the Japanese government cannot make the final decision about how to defend itself without consulting the United States, the matter of who has the final say on national security matters is obscured. In these ways, the pacifist myth has allowed Japanese on the left and the right to “evade sovereignty.” (37)

Is the time ripe for Japan to become a “normal country”, to use the expression made popular by Ozawa Ichiro? Poll results published by the Yomiuri Shimbun in September 2006, two months after the 600 members of the Japan Self-Defense Forces Iraq Reconstruction and Support Group had been brought home, suggest that many Asians may support the deployment of Japanese troops abroad more than the Japanese themselves do Among seven East and Southeast Asian nations (including Japan) majorities in four nations support the deployment of the JSDF for humanitarian missions In Indonesia 80% of respondents support JSDF participation in such dispatches, compared to just under that figure in Thailand and India. In South Korea 42% support these deployments, which figure may be higher than expected considering the voracity of protests against Japan’s perceived lack of regret over its colonial and wartime behavior on the Korean peninsula. According to the same poll, 96% of Indians have a good impression of Japan, as do 94% of Indonesians and 90% of Malaysians, Thais, and Vietnamese. (38) A BBC World Service Poll released in March, 2007 seems to confirm goodwill toward Japan from most of its Asian neighbors, as well as from the world. The poll shows that 84% of Indonesians and 70% of Filipinos view Japan as a “mainly positive” global influence and that 54% do worldwide, making Japan “one of the most positively viewed countries.” (39)

(37) Ibid.
(38) 「アジア7か国世論調査」(“Ajia 7-ka-koku seron-chosa”), 読売新聞 (Yomiuri Shimbun), September 04, 2006
The September 2006 poll also showed that only 50% of Japanese support the deployment of the JSDF to the Middle East, a figure only 8% higher than among South Koreans. Furthermore, the September 2006 Yomiuri poll indicates 46% of respondents support revision of the constitution reveals several other results with implications for the pacifist myth. First, on the question of whether the first, the second or both paragraphs of Article 9 should be revised, 67.4% of pro-revision respondents oppose changing paragraph one, which renounces war as a means for resolving disputes, yet 77% of this same group support revising the second paragraph, which forbids the maintenance of war potential. This result is consistent with the pacifist myth, which promotes a well-defended nation but not one with an active military overseas. In fact, these responses could indicate a desire to resolve the contradiction at the heart of the myth by making Japan’s remilitarization truly “constitutional.” Second, the poll results reveal that the greatest support for revision comes from respondents in their 20s and in their 40s, at 50.8% and 52.7% respectively. These two groups are the only pro-revision majorities among six age-cohorts. However, in no age group do a majority of respondents oppose revision, either. Finally, the poll shows that among those who support the DPJ 40.6% support revision, compared to 50.2% of LDP supporters, and to 46% of independents. For the LDP and DPJ these numbers are lower than the percentage of Diet representatives who support revision in both parties. A Kyodo News survey near the end of 2004 found 84.5% of members of both Diet chambers support revision. While 76.8% of LDP parliamentarians support revision of Article 9, only 46.7% of DPJ Diet members do.\(^{(40)}\)

The public reluctance to revise Article 9 indicates that the LDP must contend with the ideological blowback of the pacifist myth, even 16 years after the Gulf War crisis set in


\(^{(40)}\) “85% of lawmakers support revising the Constitution,” Japan Times, September 5, 2004
motion the deployment of JSDF personnel overseas numerous times in the 1990s and 2000s. On the other hand, as the data about age groups suggests, support for revision may grow over time, if the trend continues with the cohort behind the 20-somethings.

V. Conclusion: Ideas Matter- and So Does Japan

The debate over Japan’s defense policy takes place against a backdrop of a fluid security environment in East Asia. Japanese policy makers do not plan to be unprepared for Chinese hegemony if it comes, particularly if the United States relocates its forces out of Japan. Ninomiya Takahiro, executive director of the Japan Forum for Strategic Studies, advocates “reforming people’s minds to match world standard,” [sic] which means convincing the public to vote for revision of Article 9 so that Japan can participate fully in international military and security operations. Under Prime Ministers Koizumi and Abe the LDP has already involved the JSDF overseas. Furthermore, in early 2007 Prime Minister Abe Shinzo inked a bilateral security deal with Australia and signed a “Joint Statement towards Japan-India Strategic and Global Partnership” in December 2006 that continues joint coast-guard operations set up in 2000 as well as establishes regular meetings on regional security and defense, in addition to other issues.

Much of the Western world’s media has focused attention on the apparent rise of China and what this means for American hegemony in East Asia and in the world, at the expense of considering Japan’s role. However, Japan’s military is among the most powerful in the world and its actions in NorthEast Asia will determine the balance of power more than will China’s, at least for the foreseeable future. Given the size and power of Japan, the democratic great powers should welcome its willingness to participate in the debates and actions of international security.

At issue, of course, is when and how Japan will overcome fully the pacifist myth of the Cold War era. Snyder’s argument for strategic myths bridges two important gaps in the study of international politics. It links domestic politics to international relations and it reveals the causal power of ideas in politics. Realists tend to discount the role of ideas on state’s strategic thinking and reduce actors’ choices to perceptions of the security environment. They cannot explain why Japanese policymakers have not developed a larger military with a more active role in world affairs, instead of making only incremental changes in policy during the post-Cold War period. Constructivists assume that norms are diffused evenly throughout society through a shared, sublime cognitive experience. They do not consider that states pick the historical lessons that best fit their security strategies.\(^{42}\) The ideas culled from these lessons are social, political and ideological. Constructivist theories tend to discount ideational conflict as well as the logic that such conflict generates, such as logrolling and myth-making.

Finally, Japan is neither a resurgent militarist nor a committed pacifist. Scholars, statesmen and journalists should follow closely the social and political context in which security debates occur and keep in mind that, ultimately, the citizens of democratic Japan are fighting amongst themselves over the same thing as their counterparts in other democracies- their nation’s place in the world.

—H. Steven Green・法学部専任講師—

\(^{42}\) Snyder, p.14

(121)