

Where do norms come from? Foundations of Japan's postwar pacifism¹

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Abstract

Constructivists have advanced the study of Japanese national security policy by illuminating how normative factors shape state behavior. At the same time, they have overemphasized the role norms and ideas play while downplaying the structural and material forces that often underlie normative factors. This article seeks to reveal the political foundations of Japanese postwar pacifism. It maintains that explanations based on norms and identities cannot be separated from discussion on material and structural factors when it comes to the question of where norms come from and why they are sustained. Power and interests may not explain everything, but they often account for why certain norms emerge and are sustained to influence policy. By examining the shifts in public opinions and the Social Democratic Party's defense policy, this article argues that Japan's postwar pacifism has been possible in large part because peace was relatively abundant in postwar Japan and that the majority of the Japanese felt that the alliance with the United States contributed to that effect.

1 Introduction

One of the enduring puzzles about Japanese foreign policy since the 1970s has been the gap between the nation's economic power and its military capability. Despite its status as one of the leading market economy in the world, Japan

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has been very reluctant to translate its economic resources into military power and has acted in large part as what Richard Rosecrance (1986) called a 'trading state'. Although the absolute amount of Japan's defense budget is quite substantial, its relative size, measured in relation to gross domestic product (GDP), is one of the smallest among the advanced industrial nations.²

Throughout the postwar era, Japan has persistently taken a low-profile stance on strategic issues and remained highly dependent on the United States for defense. Today, more than five decades after the end of World War II, Japan is still reluctant to become a military power commensurate to its economic status and continued to be very cautious about dispatching its Self Defense Forces (SDFs) abroad. To be sure, Japan has participated in UN peace keeping operations in places such as Cambodia, Mozambique, and Rwanda; enacted numerous defense-related legislation including counter-terrorism and national emergency bills; introduced (or decided to introduce) highly controversial defense equipment/measures such as the Aegis and missile defense (MD) system; and had the SDFs join the US-led multilateral forces in Iraq. Behind these are the shifts in Japanese perception regarding their national security. In a poll conducted in April 2003 by *Yomiuri Shimbun*, the most circulated daily in Japan, 67 percent of the respondents said Japan should play a more active role in the area of international security and 54 percent of the respondents were in favor of revising the so-called peace constitution (2 April 2003, pp. 1 and 30). Article 9 of the Japanese constitution denies Japan's right of belligerency as a sovereign state and prohibits the nation to possess military forces.

Yet, even under the recent shifts in public opinions and the passages of new laws that have allowed the dispatch of the SDFs to places such as the Indian Ocean and Iraq, the Japanese troops are unable to engage in military operations. The duties of the SDFs are strictly limited to non-combatant activities, such as providing drinking water, constructing roads, monitoring elections, as well as some logistical support. There are strict rules on the arms that the troops can carry them only to protect themselves when they are attacked while on duty. The Japanese are thus still very reluctant to resort to military force to maintain international peace and security. The gap between Japan's (and Germany's) economic and military power has been considered counter-intuitive by many international relations scholars. Thomas Berger, for

2 In her recent article Jennifer Lind attacks the conventional wisdom that portrays Japan as a 'military pygmy', arguing that the nation has become 'one of the world's foremost military powers' (Lind, 2004, p. 93). She uses aggregate defense spending as a measure of military power. By comparing Japan's defense spending and actual military capabilities with those of other advanced industrial nations, she makes a valid point that Japan is by no means a militarily weak state. My argument is that Japan's military power is disproportionate to its economic size. In other words, Japan spends less on defense than we would expect a country of Japan's economic power might otherwise spend. On this score, Japan stands an anomaly.

example, puts the puzzle in the following manner: 'Among comparable advanced industrial nations they [Japan and Germany] stand out for their extraordinary reluctance to become actively involved in international military security affairs' (1998, p. 1).

Many analysts have attempted to explain Japan's gun-shy diplomacy, especially the gap between its economic and military power. Some argue that the cold war and the alliance with the United States made it both unnecessary and unrealistic for Japan to become heavily armed. Under such external environment, Japan's best strategy has been to concentrate on economic security while riding cheaply, if not freely, on the United States for military security (Olson and Zeckhauser, 1966; Hellmann, 1974, 1989, pp. 242–243; Waltz, 1993, pp. 64–67; Waltz, 2000, p. 34; Lind, 2004). Others focus on domestic variables, ranging from institutional arrangements and intra-governmental politics (Otake, 1983, 1984) to techno-nationalism (Samuels, 1994; Green, 1995) and electoral systems (Calder, 1988, ch. 10; Nagahisa, 1995).

In the past decade or so, a growing number of scholars have focused on such intangible factors as norms and culture in explaining Japan's defense policy (Hook, 1988, 1996; Berger, 1993, 1998; Katzenstein and Okawara, 1993; Katzenstein, 1996a; Hook *et al.*, 2001). This reflects in large part the rise of constructivism in the study of international relations and the growing emphasis on the role norms and ideas play in shaping foreign policy (Kratochwil, 1989; Onuf, 1989; Sikkink, 1991; Goldstein, 1993; Goldstein and Keohane, 1993; Jervis, 1994/95; Finnemore, 1996a,b; Katzenstein, 1996b; Checkel, 1998; Desch, 1998; Hopf, 1998; Ruggie, 1998; Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998; Wendt, 1999; Zehfuss, 2002; Blyth, 2003). Constructivists hold that international position alone is insufficient to explain why Tokyo behaves the way it does and that collective identity as a peaceful trading nation and the norm of antimilitarism that emerged after its defeat in World War II have constrained Japan's postwar defense policy. By showing the ways in which inter-subjectively shared norms and ideas shape policies by constituting the identities and interests of actors, constructivists seek to explain the gap in Japan's economic and military power – a central anomaly from the standpoint of neorealism and a major puzzle in comparative defense studies. Indeed, by introducing intangible concepts such as norms and ideas, constructivists have enriched the study of world politics, which has long been dominated by the approaches that focus on structural and/or material factors in explaining state behavior.

As much as it enlightens, however, constructivist theory leaves one crucial question unanswered: where do norms come from? If Japan's security policy is a product of cultural norms, how did such norms come to be shared among the Japanese in the first place and why do they continue to shape policy? Norms rarely emerge spontaneously: they are often reflection of underlying material interests and resulting political struggles. As such, explaining state

behavior solely in terms of norms may be insufficient and possibly misleading. This does not necessarily mean that shared norms and cultures play no important role. It only forces us to look into the relationship between intangible variables such as norms and their material underpinnings.

This article examines this relationship in Japan's defense policy. In particular, it seeks to reveal the nature of Japan's postwar 'pacifism' and the possible reasons why it has been sustained for an extended period of time.³ I argue that in order to explain the emergence and persistence of the kind of norms that have defined Japan's postwar security policy, one must look not only at the legacy of World War II but also at realist variables such as structures, threat perceptions, and political processes that constructivists often claim to be inadequate or irrelevant. In large part, these variables have defined the character and strength of Japan's postwar pacifism. This point will be developed by examining the changes in opinion polls and in defense policy of the Japan Socialist Party (since 1996, the Social Democratic Party of Japan), a major opposition party in Japan that had long adhered to a pacifist defense posture. Before going into the details, however, I outline some of the central arguments made by constructivists on Japan's postwar defense policy and discuss their strengths as well as weaknesses.

2 Constructivism and Japanese defense policy

Like most domestic political analysts, constructivists begin by claiming that neorealism is insufficient to explain Japan's national security policy. While the international position may explain Japan's minimalist defense posture in the 1950s and 1960s, they contend, it fails to account for the continuity in Japan's defense policy after the 1970s when the nation emerged as the second largest economy in the world. Peter Katzenstein, a leading proponent in this school of thought, argues, 'Since the mid 1970s Japan has experienced substantial changes in its relative standing in the international system without great changes in its policy for national security' (1996a, p. 24). Similarly, Thomas Berger contends, '[Japan and Germany] contradict a large body of literature that suggests great powers inevitably seek to develop military capabilities commensurate with their economic strength and overall political status in the international community' (1998, p. 1).

In light of its renewed power position, coupled with the anarchic nature of the international system, neorealists would lead us to expect that Japan would

3 Japan is often characterized as a pacifist nation because of its reluctance to use the military as an instrument of foreign policy. Peter Katzenstein, for example, argues that 'the Japanese police and military have been, by international standards, very reluctant to use violence' (Katzenstein, 1996a, p. 1). Similarly, Thomas Berger maintains that 'they [Japan and Germany] have actively avoided involvement in actions that included the use of military force . . . ' (Berger, 1998, p. iv). I define pacifism along these lines, and use the word synonymously with 'antimilitarism'.

possess much stronger military forces. Indeed, Kenneth Waltz in 1993 anticipated that Japan, along with Germany, would soon possess nuclear weapons. Two decades earlier, Herman Kahn had made a similar prediction (Kahn, 1970; Waltz, 1993). So far, both have been proven wrong. 'In sum', declares Katzenstein, 'there exists no observable relations between Japan's relative position and its security policy' (1996, p. 22). This inconsistency between neorealist predictions and actual defense policy of Japan, among others, led constructivists to focus on non-material factors in explaining the Japanese anomaly.

What, then, accounts for the gap between Japan's economic and military power? Constructivists contend that Japan's minimalist defense policy derives from the norms (defined as social facts) that have prevailed in the Japanese thinking of national security. As Katzenstein notes, 'Japanese officials define internal and external security in comprehensive terms. They emphasize the social, economic, and political aspects of security rather than force more narrowly on the explicitly coercive dimensions of state policy. Japan's security policy is thus part and parcel of its quest for social stability through economic growth' (1996a, p. 3). This comprehensive view of security rests on the common belief among the Japanese that 'violence does not pay' and on the collective identity of Japan as a 'peaceful trading state'. These shared identities, according to Katzenstein, have informed the way in which Japanese leaders define Japan's security interests – officials in Tokyo maintain that security should be pursued only by peaceful means.

Similarly, Thomas Berger stresses the importance of a collective identity in shaping Japanese (and German) national security policy. According to Berger, 'The solution to this puzzle (of the gap between economic and military power) . . . lies in the strong antimilitarist sentiments that emerged in Germany and Japan in the wake of their catastrophic defeat in World War II' (1998, p. *x*). He notes that Japan and Germany 'share an iron determination to avoid a repetition of past mistakes', with each nation developing the antimilitarist sentiment that 'can best be explained by each nation's struggle to draw lessons from its troubled past' (1998, pp. 6–7). These cultures of antimilitarism, he contends, continue to characterize the political systems of both nations and place a heavy psychological burden on them in their pursuit of more active defense policies (1998, p. *x*).

Many analysts, constructivists or otherwise, do point to the collective memory of World War II as a key factor shaping Japanese postwar defense and foreign policy. For example, Masaru Tamamoto wrote, 'Remembering what happened the last time the nation ventured abroad, the Japanese are afraid of what they might do once they reenter the international political-strategic arena' (1990, p. 498). Similarly, Mataka Kamiya argued that 'After witnessing nearly two decades of the follies of their own military leaders, the Japanese

people developed a deep distrust of the military after the war, as well as a strong aversion to anything related to the military as a tool of national policy, including even Japan's national security policy' (2002/3, p. 66).

These antimilitarist sentiments have translated into various self-restraining measures that the Japanese government has imposed on its own defense policy: the three non-nuclear principles (that Japan would not possess, manufacture, or permit the introduction of nuclear weapons on its territory); prohibition on participating in collective defense; ban on arms exports; and the 1-percent-of-GDP limits on defense spending. In addition, Tokyo, as a matter of policy, has refrained from acquiring such 'offensive' weapons as long-range strategic bombers and intercontinental ballistic missiles. Although some of the restrictions have been breached or open to interpretations, the fact that the Japanese government ever had to introduce them to justify or rationalize its defense policy is indicative of the existence of strong pacifist norms among the Japanese people.

3 Structures, norms, interests

Despite the contributions to the study of Japanese defense policy, constructivism has its own shortcomings.⁴ One of its fundamental weaknesses appears to be the failure to address the question of where norms come from (Mearsheimer, 1995, pp. 90–92; Copeland, 2000; Brooks and Wohlforth, 2000). As Robert Jervis pointed out, 'It is one thing to argue that material factors and the external environment do not determine a state's behavior and to point to the importance of regulative and constitutive norms, shared understandings, and common practices; it is quite another to say how norms are formed, how identities are shaped, and how interests become defined as they do' (1998, p. 976).

Indeed, even if we acknowledge the impact of normative forces upon Japanese defense policy, questions such as the following quickly arise: Why has the culture of antimilitarism been sustained in Japan for more than five decades after the end of World War II? If the antimilitarist sentiment is firmly rooted in the Japanese political culture, why has Tokyo chosen not to adopt more pacifist positions such as 'unarmed neutrality' as advocated by the Japan Socialist Party and its supporters throughout much of the cold war era? Why has the Japanese government gradually modified its interpretation of Article 9 of the Japanese constitution to allow gradual expansion of its armed forces since the 1950s? These questions constitute core tests for the constructivist

4 For an excellent recent critique of the constructivist explanations of Japan's postwar defense policy, see Izumikawa (2004). For a comprehensive review of Berger's *Cultures of Antimilitarism*, see Noguchi (2000).

claim that norms matter, yet they remain largely unanswered or are discussed only in a *post hoc* manner in the literature.

As noted, Thomas Berger attributes the origins of Japan's antimilitarism to its defeat in World War II. He argues that 'historical culture is the product of events and experiences, such as revolutions, wars, economic and natural catastrophes, and at times, the impact of intellectual movements' (1998, p. 12). In this sense, the bitter defeat in World War II can be said to have caused the dramatic shift in Japan's culture of national security from aggressive militarism to pacifism after 1945. This claim appears plausible in its own right but becomes questionable in a comparative context. Does a defeat in a major war always make a country antimilitarist? Did Athens after the Peloponnesian War, the Confederate States after the American civil war, France after the Napoleonic Wars, Germany after World War I, or Italy after World War II become pacifist? Certainly not, or at least not to the degree that postwar Japan or Germany have been. The question then is Why does a defeat in a major war make some countries antimilitarist but not others? This leads us to expect that a historical experience alone is insufficient to account for the kind of pacifism that emerged in postwar Japan and Germany.

To be fair, Berger acknowledges structural factors. As he notes, 'Without the security guarantees provided by the United States, in all likelihood Germany and Japan would have had little choice but to develop more powerful military capabilities, including independent nuclear deterrent forces' (1998, p. 5). Nonetheless, he maintains that the US factor alone cannot explain 'the strength of German and Japanese antimilitarism' because even under the US security guarantee Japan and Germany could have possessed much greater defense forces and become more active in military affairs, given the existence of strong domestic forces calling for larger defense buildups (1998, pp. 5–6).

While Berger is right to point out that the systemic factors, such as US security guarantee, are inconclusive, his discussion on domestic politics raises a question about the cultural arguments he makes: If there were people in Japan calling for a larger and more autonomous defense policy, why did their view not prevail? Indeed, there existed in Japan many ideas or beliefs on the nation's security policy, ranging from unarmed neutrality and economic nationalism to Gaullism and military realism (Nagai, 1967; Mochizuki, 1983/84; Pyle, 1992, ch. 3 and 4; Oros, 2002). Why did only the kind of antimilitarism that Berger suggests to have prevailed in postwar Japan triumph and become institutionalized in the Japanese state? That is, why did the culture of antimilitarism take the form of economic nationalism rather than unarmed neutrality in actual policy? As discussed below, norms are a product of politics as much as they are a product of historical events. As such, they cannot be separated from the discussion of power and interests.

Other constructivists are more wary of the political foundations of norms and ideas. For example, Peter Katzenstein argues that Japan's antimilitarist social norms emerged as a result of the sharp ideological battle that divided the nation in the 1950s. He notes, 'Until 1960 proponents of competing national identities were locked in bitter conflict. Eventually the proponents of economic nationalism prevailed, institutionalizing a national consensus on economic growth and the subordination of the search for political equality with other states, especially the United States' (1996a, p. 30). For Katzenstein, then, norms arise not spontaneously or automatically from historical events. Instead, they are 'contested and made and remade through politics' (1996a, p. 38).

By acknowledging and analyzing the political context within which certain norms emerge and develop, Katzenstein seeks to avoid the mistake of taking any behavior or policy after the fact and point to its intellectual antecedents – a common pitfall of constructivism (Kowert and Legro, 1996, p. 486; Checkel, 1998; Copeland, 2000, p. 208). Nonetheless, while Katzenstein is able to explain why some ideas but not others find their way into policy, his political arguments bring him back to the realist/rationalist position he started out to reject. Had he gone further to ask why doves prevailed over hawks as well as why Japan's antimilitarist social norms were sustained for an extended period of time, he would probably have had to bring in some structural as well as material factors, such as the cold war, the US security guarantee, and Japan's economic success.

Indeed, one can sensibly argue that, given the alliance with the United States, the Japanese government, led by the pro-American and pro-business Liberal Democratic Party, perceived that it was in Japan's best interest to pursue dovish rather than hawkish security policy – the policy line first pursued by Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida and subsequently institutionalized in the Japanese state in much of the postwar era. As its national economy expanded, Japan was expected to share larger defense burden with the United States, but it made the contribution only enough and necessary to prevent the United States from abandoning Japan (Inoguchi, 1986). The end of the cold war did not fundamentally change this pattern since the United States continues to provide security guarantee for Japan.

In this context, it is important to point out that realism, with its central premise on material power and interests, has never been alien to the analyses of Japanese defense and foreign policies. Samuel P. Huntington once noted that 'Japan has acted in a way totally consistent with the "realist" theory of international relations' (1993, p. 311). Eric Heginbotham and Richard J. Samuels (1999) developed the notion of mercantile realism and explained how Japan best fits to this model. Similarly, Tsuyoshi Kawasaki (2001) showed that Japan's postwar defense policy, while not fully explained by

neorealism, is perfectly consistent with the predictions of what he calls 'postclassical realism'. These studies do not necessarily undermine the role norms and ideas play, but they make us wonder whether Katzenstein's contention that 'the normative context matters more than the economic or military content of policy' (1996a, pp. 14–15) is a valid statement. The question is not whether norms are more important than material/structural forces but how they are related with each another.

In a recent article, Katzenstein acknowledges the limits of constructivism and advocates for a more eclectic approach combining realist, liberal, and constructivist perspectives in explaining Japanese defense policy. As he notes, 'Japan's and Asia-Pacific's security policies are not shaped solely by power, interests, or identity but by their combination. Adequate understanding requires analytical eclecticism, not parsimony' (2001/02, p. 167). Unfortunately, he does not fully elaborate his point by specifying how exactly different perspectives can be combined, or how power, interests, and identity interact with one another to shape policies.

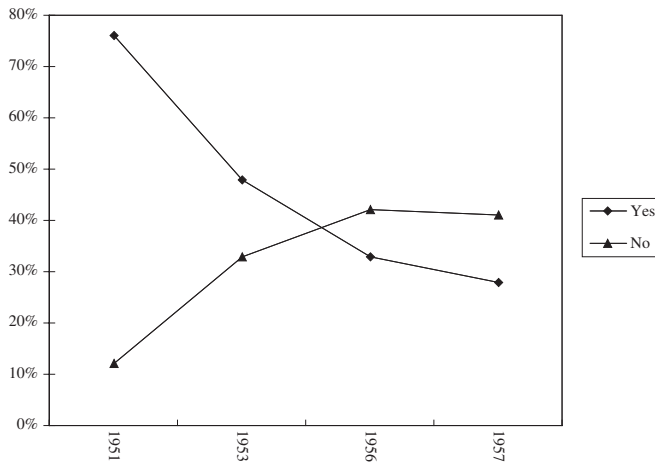
I argue that explanations based on norms and identities cannot be separated from discussion on structural and material factors when it comes to the question of where norms come from and why they are sustained. Power and interests may not explain everything, but they often account for why certain norms emerge and are sustained to influence policy. While it is true that antimilitarist norms have been stronger in Japan than in most other major countries, the extent to which pacifist norms are sustained has a lot to do with Japan's security environment and domestic political conditions, such as security ties with the United States, threat perception, economic prosperity, and political stability. As will be discussed later, these variables affected the robustness, as well as content, of Japanese pacifism. When, for example, security was (perceived as) abundant, Japanese norms were more pacifist; when security was scarce, norms grew less pacifist.

In the following two sections, I seek to show how structural and material factors have affected Japan's antimilitarist norms by looking at opinion polls and security policy of the Japan Socialist Party. A careful examination of these major indicators of Japan's postwar pacifism reveals that the culture of antimilitarism and the collective identity of Japan as a trading state emerged and sustained in large part because the country has been economically successful while its security was guaranteed by the United States.

4 The paradox of public opinion

Variables such as cultures and norms are difficult to operationalize. I use public opinion polls to measure Japanese pacifism for two reasons. First, compared with other possible measurements, such as institutionalization

Figure 1 Should Japan rearm?



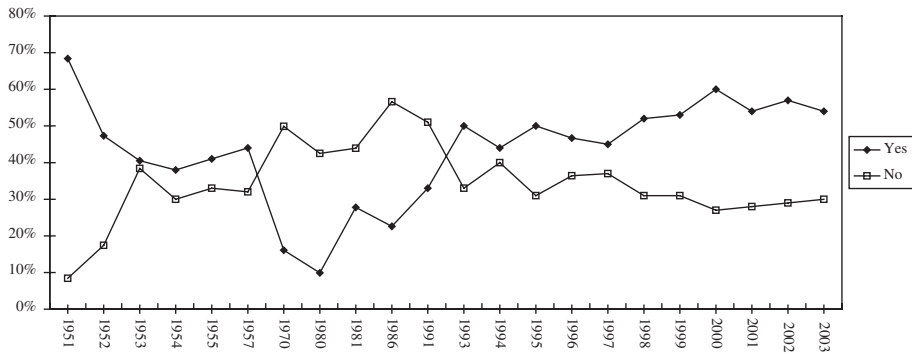
Source: *NHK Hoso Seron Chosa Jo* (1982), p. 171.

and public speeches by policy-makers, public opinion is much easier to operationalize. While not complete, data are available across issues and over a relatively long period of time. Second, most constructivists do use opinion polls to measure the extent to which antimilitarist norms/cultures prevail in Japan. Berger and Katzenstein cite results of various opinion polls to show how widely and strongly the norms of antimilitarism are embedded in the Japanese society.⁵ Opinion polls are certainly not the only way to measure norms, but they provide some useful information as to whether there are shared perceptions and identities among the Japanese over the country's defense policy.

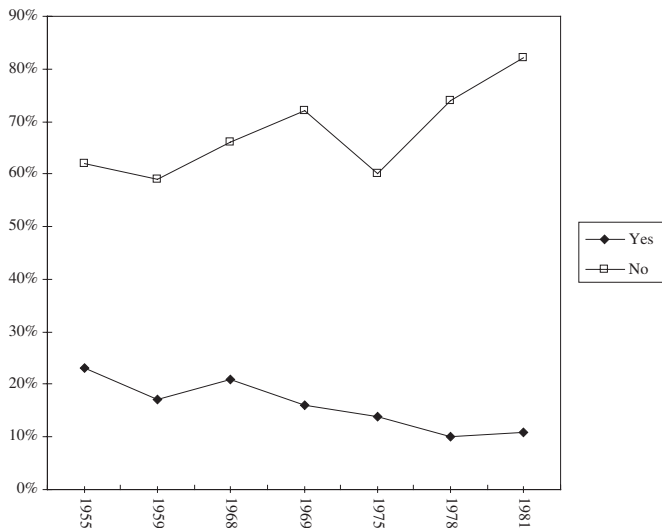
According to most opinion polls, the Japanese people have consistently supported the idea of keeping the nation's defense forces at a minimum, limiting Japan's international contribution largely to economic assistance, and preserving Article 9 of Japan's 'no war' constitution (*NHK Hoso Seron Chosa Jo*, 1982; Nishihira 1987; Bobrow, 1989). As Katzenstein notes, 'The public has opposed all attempts to shift power to the military, and the end of the Cold War did not lead to great changes in this opinion profile. Japan's antimilitarist social norms have been remarkably stable' (1996a, p. 116).

That said, a closer look at the polls reveals some interesting trends. First, the pacifist orientation among the Japanese people was actually weaker than the pro-armament sentiment in the immediate postwar years. For example, the polls taken during the 1950s concerning Japanese attitudes toward rearmament show that the supporters of rearmament outnumbered the opponents (Figure 1). Similarly, more Japanese favored revising the constitution than

5 Berger (1998, pp. 67–71, 112–115, 151–155) and Katzenstein (1996a, p. 116).

Figure 2 Should the constitution be revised?

Source: *Yomiuri Nenkan*, various years.

Figure 3 Should Japan possess nuclear weapons?

Source: *NHK Hoso Seron Chosa Jo* (1982), p. 171.

preserving it in the early 1950s (Figure 2). Second, the pacifist orientation was weaker in the immediate postwar years than in the subsequent decades. The polls on Japanese attitudes toward constitutional revision revealed that support for constitutional revision was higher in the 1950s than in the 1970s and 1980s (Figure 2). A similar trend can be observed on the issue Japan's nuclear options. Although most Japanese have opposed Japan's acquisition of nuclear weapons, the number of those who favored it in 1955 was more than double in 1981 (Figure 3).

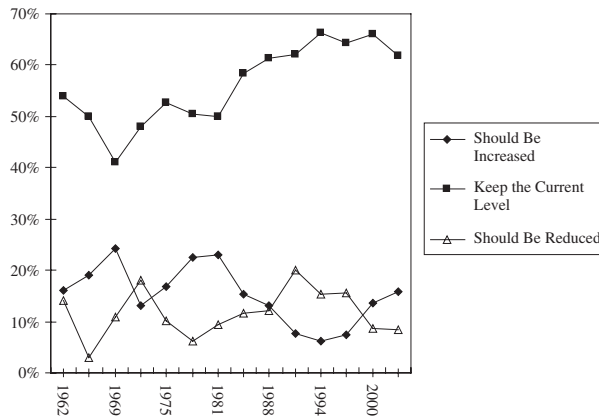
These results appear counterintuitive: we should expect more Japanese people opposing rearmament and constitutional revision in the immediate postwar period than in the 1970s and 1980s when memories of World War II were

waning as a new generation with greater self confidence began to emerge.⁶ As noted earlier, Thomas Berger maintains that Japan's culture of antimilitarism stemmed from the disastrous defeat in World War II, implying that Japan's antimilitarism would grow weaker with time. What explains the relatively high degree of pro-rearmament attitude among the Japanese in the early postwar years? At least two possible reasons stand out.

First, the level of insecurity was relatively high in the immediate postwar era. During the late 1940s and early 1950s Japan's security environment was highly volatile – the cold war was dividing the postwar world; the communists took over mainland China in 1949; and North Korea invaded the South in 1950. Meanwhile, Japan stood armless, having enacted the new constitution, which denied the right of belligerency and prohibited a possession of land, sea, and air forces. Even after it became clear that the US military forces would remain in Japan after the peace treaty, the Japanese people at that time were not sure whether the American military presence would bring peace or war to Japan (Dower, 1999). Under these circumstances, the sense of insecurity prevailed over the antiwar sentiment in Japan. In fact, the level of Japanese support for rearmament went up in the wake of the Korean War. Soon after the war broke out in Korea, the Japanese government launched its rearmament programme by creating the Police Reserve Force (PRF) in the summer of 1950. Two years later, the PRF was reorganized into the National Safety Force, which became the SDF in 1954. Support for rearmament gradually declined with these developments and the conclusion of truce in Korea in 1953. Indeed, after the establishment of the SDF, the opponents of rearmament outnumbered the supporters.

This interpretation seems to be supported by looking at the Japanese attitudes toward the SDFs during the cold war. Although the majority of the Japanese always favored keeping the SDFs at the existing level, those who favored an increase outnumbered those who opposed it in two periods: the late 1960s and the late 1970s/early 1980s (See Figure 4). It can be said that the incidents such as the US involvement in the Vietnam War, President Richard Nixon's Guam Doctrine (suggesting a decrease in US military commitment in Asia), and the Sino–American rapprochement made the Japanese feel that the security was relatively scarce in the late 1960s. The similar psychological effects were present in the late 1970s/early 1980s when events such as President Jimmy Carter's proposal to withdraw US troops from South Korea and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan left Japanese with a sense of insecurity. Many analysts point out that the sense of insecurity in Japan, caused by the fear of

6 In 1975, 60 percent of the Japanese population was born in the post-World War II era. It must be noted, however, that there are those who argue that norms can be strengthened with time because they get institutionalized (Chai, 1997).

Figure 4 Japanese attitudes toward the SDFs.

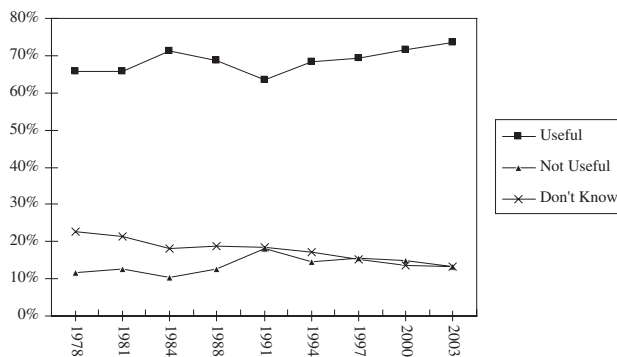
Source: *Sorifu Kohoshitsu, Zenkoku Seronchosa no Gaikyo*, various years.

abandonment by the United States, was high in those periods (Tsuchiyama, 1995; Cha, 1999; Ono, 2002).

It appears that the recent shift in public opinion in favor of an expansion of the SDFs and constitutional revision, as shown in Figures 2 and 4, further supports the security scarcity/abundance thesis. That is, the level of threat perception and the sense of insecurity strongly affect the robustness of pacifist norms. The shift is certainly unthinkable without the events such as the Persian Gulf War of 1991, the abduction of Japanese nationals and a series of missile testing by North Korea, the terrorist attacks in the United States in September 2001, and the Iraq War of 2003. They have gradually altered the political climate in Japan toward greater military assertiveness and contributions.

A second reason for the relatively high degree of pro-rearmament attitude among the Japanese in the early postwar years has a lot to do with domestic politics. The fierce ideological battle between conservatives and liberals faded, if not completely ended, after 1960. Until then, the country had been divided on the issue of national security, with conservatives seeking to revise the constitution, expand the SDFs, and strengthen Japan's security ties with the United States, while liberals opposing constitutional revision, rearmament, and the alignment with the United States. The ideological battle reached its highest point when the former class A war criminal Nobusuke Kishi emerged as a prime minister in 1957 and tried to pursue conservative policy agendas. Kishi's prime objective, to renegotiate the terms of the US–Japan security treaty to make it more 'equal' for Japan, was successfully carried out, but his forceful tactics for the ratification of the new treaty in the National Diet backfired, making many Japanese upset and causing massive demonstrations against him. In the end, Kishi was forced to resign.

Figure 5 Japanese view on US–Japan security treaty.

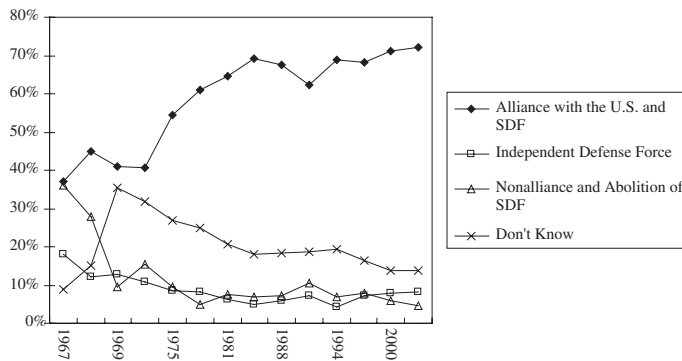


Source: *Sorifu Kohoshitsu, Gekkan Seronchosa*, June 2003.

It was after the turmoil of the security treaty revision of 1960 that the pacifist social norms largely came to define Japanese security policy. After Kishi's resignation in 1960 Japanese politics stabilized and a national consensus on Japan's international strategy – low profile on defense (and dependence on the United States for national security) while concentrating on economic security – began to emerge. By the end of the 1960s, this view became a guiding principle of Japan's foreign policy (Muramatsu and Krauss, 1987; Pyle, 1992). Many analysts, including Katzenstein, refer to 1960 as a turning point in Japan's postwar security policy. For one thing, after the security treaty crisis of 1960, the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) chose not to bring the question of national security to the center of political debate; instead, it focused national energy and resources on economic growth. For another, the leftist agenda of abolishing Japan's security ties with the United States and achieving unarmed neutrality gradually lost popular support. As the national economy began to grow at an unprecedented speed, more Japanese came to believe that the security treaty with the United States brought peace and prosperity to Japan instead of unwanted wars as leftist political parties had long claimed.

Indeed, support for the US–Japan security treaty in Japan has been fairly robust throughout the postwar era (Figure 5). By the late 1960s, most Japanese people had come to believe that Japan's security would be best insured by the alliance with the United States and the SDFs, while supporters of unarmed neutrality and independent national forces had declined and become marginal (Figure 6).

What is remarkable about Japanese postwar pacifism thus is that the Japanese people embraced both Japan's no war constitution as a pacifist ideal and the US–Japan alliance as an inevitable product of the geo-strategic reality. These otherwise antithetical positions are not mutually exclusive but rather reinforcing in the Japanese thinking of national

Figure 6 What is the best way of defending Japan?

Source: Sorifu Kohoshitsu, *Zenkoku Seronchosa no Gaikyo*, various years.

security: they are the two sides of the same coin (Sakai, 1991). Indeed, the alliance with the United States became a material and structural basis upon which Japan's culture of antimilitarism rested. Without the security guarantee provided by the United States, it is highly questionable whether the public support for the modest defense force, the peace constitution, and other pacifist policies could have been sustained. In this sense, it was the long postwar peace, more so than the disastrous defeat in the World War II, that kept the postwar Japan a pacifist state.⁷

5 The Japan Socialist Party's security policy

How strongly Japan's postwar pacifism is influenced by power and interests can be well understood by looking at the shifts in national security policy of the Japan Socialist Party (after 1996, the Social Democratic Party). The JSP was the largest opposition party in Japan during the cold war, challenging the LDP's defense policy by advocating unarmed neutrality. Specifically, the party called for (i) abolishing the US–Japan security treaty, (ii) preserving Japan's peace constitution, and (iii) eliminating the existing SDFs as they claim that the SDFs are unconstitutional. In many respects, the party represented key elements of Japan's postwar pacifism both in its philosophy and policy. Although the party's pacifist orientation attracted many voters beyond workers and intellectuals in the 1950s, its popularity gradually declined after

⁷ As noted earlier, Peter Katzenstein (1996a, p. 200) recognizes the political processes by which Japan's postwar antimilitarist social norms developed. He argues: 'The norms that have shaped Japan's security policy did not emerge fullblown from defeat in war and American occupation. They resulted, rather, from intense political conflicts inside Japan, both in elite and in mass politics . . . Conflict was so wrenching that by 1960 LDP factions that favored accommodation with the opposition prevailed. The LDP abandoned efforts to make Japan a normal country with a normal military and police'. Yet, the more Katzenstein emphasizes the political foundations of Japan's pacifist norms, the more difficult it becomes to distinguish his constructivist claims from realist arguments. It is no doubt that norms shape policies. The question is whether norms exist independently of the underlying power and interests relations.

the 1960s as more people came to regard the JSP's pacifist agenda unrealistic. The decline was particularly serious in the post-cold war era. The number of seats the JSP gained in lower house elections fell from 136 in 1990 to 70 in 1993 and then to 15 in 1996. In the most recent general election, held in November 2003, the party won only six seats.

Japanese politics went through major changes during the 1990s. The LDP lost power in 1993 for the first time in its history due to an internal split and the emergence of a coalition of most opposition parties and a group of politicians who defected the LDP. The JSP joined the anti-LDP coalition, which selected Morihiro Hosokawa, the former governor from Kumamoto prefecture and the head of the Japan New Party, as the new prime minister. The JSP joined the anti-LDP coalition despite disagreement in select policy issues largely because the party leaders felt it important to end the LDP dominance. The price the JSP had to pay to become a party in power, however, was not negligible. In June, the members of the coalition government agreed not to divert from the existing foreign and security policy position pursued by the LDP government. This meant that the JSP now recognized the US–Japan security treaty and Japan's SDFs, although the party did not publicly announce that it had changed its position on these matters. Under the coalition government, the JSP abandoned its opposition to a bill that allowed a dispatch of SDF airplanes in order to rescue Japanese people facing military conflicts in overseas.

The new government, however, did not last long. The thrust for power led the LDP in 1994 to form a coalition government with the JSP, its long-time political rival, under the socialist Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama.⁸ For its part, the JSP was ready to leave the anti-LDP coalition as Ichiro Ozawa, who had defected the LDP and played a leading role in orchestrating the coalition, was trying to marginalize the JSP's influence. Although the JSP was initially divided as to whether it should remain in the anti-LDP coalition or join the LDP to form a new government, the fact that the LDP was willing to give the JSP a prime ministerial seat led the party to choose the latter option.

Once in power, however, the JSP officially backed down from its pacifist stance. In July 1994, Prime Minister Murayama announced in the lower house that the US–Japan alliance was indispensable for the peace and stability of the Asia-Pacific region. He also acknowledged that the existing SDFs (of which he was the commander-in-chief) are constitutional. Once accepting these, it became logically inconsistent to stick to the party's long standing policy of 'unarmed neutrality'. On the following day of his lower house speech, Murayama told the members of the upper house that he would no longer pursue 'unarmed neutrality' as a policy (Hara, 2000, pp. 316–320).

⁸ The coalition also included a small party called Shinto Sakigake.

The LDP–Socialist coalition came to an end in the late 1990s as the LDP regained a majority in the lower house. The JSP seats were no longer needed for the LDP to stay in power. Interestingly, after returning to the old position of the ‘permanent opposition’, Socialists revisited the pacifist agenda they once abandoned. In spring 2001, the party adopted a new security guideline, which stipulated that the US–Japan security treaty ended its mission with the end of the cold war and should therefore be abolished. It also called for a reduction of the SDF (*Asahi Shimbun*, 3 May 2001). The ways in which the Socialists have changed their security policy suggests that their pacifist norms had a lot to do with their political standing: the JSP held on to its pacifism in large part because it settled into a permanent opposition during the cold war. After it became a party in power, that position was no longer attainable, and the party had to alter its policy orientation rather drastically. The JSP’s pacifist norms, in other words, reflected the party’s distance to power: the longer the distance, the more pacifist the JSP could afford to become.

This thesis seems to be validated by looking at the security policy of the Komeito, which followed the path similar to that the Socialists had pursued earlier. Komeito, the political party established in 1964 with the backing of an influential Buddhist organization in Japan, once held a pacifist security stance, which included preserving Japan’s peace constitution, opposing rearmament, and terminating US–Japan security treaty in the long run (Nagai, 1967, p. 181; Curtis, 1988, pp. 24–27). Over time, and especially since it joined the LDP and the Liberal Party to form a coalition government in 1998, however, the party has altered its position on security issues, including the US–Japan alliance and rearmament. Indeed, once in power, the Komeito became more supportive of Japan’s stronger military ties with the United States and a larger role for Japan’s SDFs in both abroad and at home. Without the backing of the Komeito, for example, the LDP could not have been able to pass the bills that allowed the dispatch of the SDF to the Indian Ocean and Iraq. Like the Socialists, the Komeito has abandoned its earlier position to stay in power.

The episode of the JSP’s and Komeito’s security policy illustrates the essence of Japan’s postwar pacifism: norms are inseparable from underlying power and interests relations. Just as the ‘comfortable’ status as a permanent opposition allowed the JSP to sustain its pacifist principles, the peace and prosperity Japan enjoyed under the American hegemony made it possible for Japan to develop and maintain the culture of antimilitarism that constructivists claim has shaped Japan’s security policy.

6 Conclusion

Constructivists have advanced the study of Japanese defense policy by illuminating how normative factors shape state behavior. They rightly point out

that structural and situational forces alone are indeterminate and that the culture of antimilitarism has affected the ways in which Japan defines its national security interests. To the extent that power and interests cannot be understood except within their normative frameworks and that norms often shape interests and define power, constructivists make a major contribution to our understanding of why countries, as well as individuals, behave the way they do. Nonetheless, they have overemphasized the role norms play while downplaying the structural and material forces that often underlie normative factors.

It is no doubt that pacifism has constrained Japan's national security policy in a significant way. After all, Japan is still reluctant to dispatch its SDF overseas for combat or possess certain types of arms, including nuclear weapons. This article has not denied the importance of antimilitarist norms in Japan. Rather, it has called for attention to the structural and material bases upon which norms rest. As this article has shown, Japan's postwar pacifism has been possible in large part because peace was relatively abundant in postwar Japan and the majority of the Japanese people feel that the alliance with the United States has contributed to that effect. In the absence of the American security guarantee, it is highly questionable whether the kind of pacifism that has prevailed in Japan actually emerged and was sustained.

Power and interests are particularly important in answering the question of where norms come from. Without them, one would be unable to explain why some norms but not others prevail, why certain norms persist for a long time, or why they change. As this article demonstrated, structural factors are critical in understanding why Japan's antimilitarist norms were stronger in the 1970s and 1980s than in 1950s, why they took the form of light armament but not of unarmed neutrality, and why they persisted for more than five decades after World War II. Norms do shape policies, but they are often inseparable from material and structural forces.

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