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**SINGAPORE**

JAPAN'S MILITARIZATION:  
FROM REACTIVE TO PROACTIVE ANTIMILITARIST STRATEGIC CULTURE

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A thesis submitted to the Nanyang Technological University in partial fulfilment of the  
requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

2024

## Statement of Originality

I hereby certify that the work embodied in this thesis is the result of original research, is free of plagiarised materials, and has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other University or Institution.

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## Table of Contents

<b>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>TABLE OF FIGURES</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>ACRONYMS</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1. EXPLAINING JAPAN’S MILITARIZATION: FROM REACTIVE TO PROACTIVE ANTIMILITARIST STRATEGIC CULTURE</b> .....	<b>12</b>
1.1. THE RESEARCH QUESTION AND ARGUMENT .....	12
1.1.1. <i>Defining Japan’s two antimilitarist strategic cultures</i> .....	17
1.1.2. <i>Article 9 and the Yoshida Doctrine in the antimilitarist strategic culture discourse</i> .....	22
1.1.3. <i>Antimilitarist policy of exclusive defense-orientation</i> .....	26
1.1.4. <i>Militarism, militarization, and antimilitarism</i> .....	28
1.1.5. <i>Organization and contribution</i> .....	34
1.2. ASSESSING ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATIONS FOR JAPAN’S MILITARIZATION .....	37
1.2.1. <i>Responding to an unfavorable regional balance of power</i> .....	39
1.2.2. <i>Configuration of domestic politics</i> .....	53
1.2.3. <i>Changing norms</i> .....	61
1.2.4. <i>Discussion</i> .....	73
<b>CHAPTER 2. STRATEGIC CULTURE: THEORY AND METHODOLOGY</b> .....	<b>76</b>
2.1. STRATEGIC CULTURE AS THEORY .....	76
2.1.1. <i>What is strategic culture?</i> .....	77
2.1.2. <i>The Gray-Johnston debate and its implications for my research</i> .....	84
2.1.3. <i>Berger’s political-military culture and my approach to strategic culture</i> .....	92
2.2. TAKING A CRITICAL REALIST APPROACH TO STRATEGIC CULTURE .....	96
2.2.1. <i>What is critical realism?</i> .....	99
2.2.2. <i>Critical realism and methodology</i> .....	104
2.3. CASE SELECTION RATIONALE .....	109
2.3.1. <i>Military doctrine</i> .....	111
2.3.2. <i>SDF’s place in politics and society</i> .....	115
2.4. CONCLUSION .....	119
<b>CHAPTER 3. JAPAN’S MILITARY DOCTRINE</b> .....	<b>122</b>
3.1. DEFENSE CAPABILITY CONCEPT .....	124
3.1.1. <i>Defense capability concepts from the 1976 NDPO to the 2018 NDPG</i> .....	126
3.1.2. <i>Discussion</i> .....	134
3.2. DEFENSE SPENDING .....	137
3.2.1. <i>1 percent limit on defense spending</i> .....	140
3.2.2. <i>Whither the 1 percent limit?</i> .....	144
3.2.3. <i>Discussion</i> .....	146
3.3. OVERSEAS TROOP DEPLOYMENT .....	148
3.3.1. <i>Article 9’s constraint on overseas deployment</i> .....	149
3.3.2. <i>Effect of ‘Gulf War trauma’</i> .....	151

3.3.3. <i>Iraq War</i> .....	156
3.3.4. <i>Proactive contribution to peace</i> .....	160
3.3.5. <i>Discussion</i> .....	168
3.4. CONCLUSION .....	171
<b>CHAPTER 4. SELF-DEFENSE FORCES (SDF) IN GOVERNMENT AND SOCIETY .....</b>	<b>177</b>
4.1. SDF AND POLICYMAKERS .....	179
4.1.1. <i>Transitioning from Cold War era civil-military relations</i> .....	179
4.1.2. <i>Shifting control from civil servants to politicians</i> .....	184
4.1.3. <i>Establishment of NSC and consolidation of SDF participation in policymaking</i> .....	194
4.1.4. <i>Discussion</i> .....	200
4.2. SDF AND THE PUBLIC .....	204
4.2.1. <i>The SDF's rebranding</i> .....	205
4.2.2. <i>Recognizing the SDF as a military force</i> .....	212
4.2.3. <i>Discussion</i> .....	219
4.3. CONCLUSION .....	221
<b>CHAPTER 5. CHARTING JAPAN'S POST-COLD WAR SECURITY POLICY EVOLUTION .....</b>	<b>224</b>
5.1. FROM REACTIVE ANTIMILITARISM TO PROACTIVE ANTIMILITARISM.....	226
5.2. WHY FOCUS ON ANTIMILITARIST STRATEGIC CULTURE NOW? .....	232
5.3. THE FUTURE TRAJECTORY OF JAPAN'S SECURITY POLICY .....	237
5.3.1. <i>The Russian invasion of Ukraine and Kishida's new security documents</i> .....	238
5.3.2. <i>Limitations on further military policy expansion</i> .....	242
5.4. LIMITS AND FUTURE RESEARCH .....	246
5.5. CONCLUSION .....	251
<b>APPENDIX .....</b>	<b>252</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>255</b>

## Abstract

Japan has increasingly alleviated the legal, budgetary, and ideological constraints on the Self-Defense Forces' (SDF) scope of activities and capabilities since the end of the Cold War. Accordingly, Japan's growing contribution to international security has been abundantly researched but not well understood. The prevailing analysis is that Japan's postwar antimilitarist constraints on exercising military force have eroded due to the intensifying threats from China, North Korea, and Russia. However, this reflects a simplistic and incoherent understanding of antimilitarism and how it influences Japan's security policymaking, which overlooks the nuanced interaction between the normative and material push and pull factors that have relaxed the constraints on Japan's security policies. This dissertation attempts to answer the question, *how has the pace and extent of Japan's militarization been influenced by antimilitarist strategic culture?* My central argument is that Japan's militarization is explained by a shift in Japan's strategic culture from an overreaching reactive antimilitarism to a specific, security-aware proactive antimilitarism. Briefly, I define strategic culture as a set of strategic thinking and practices that provide guidance on questions and choices related to war and peace and the use of military force. I explain that the Japanese public's immediate reaction to the devastation of war formed part of a 'reactive antimilitarism' that prescribed an intense fear of the SDF. But as the SDF's relationship with policymaking and society improved, the contours of antimilitarist strategic culture were reestablished as a precaution against excessive use of military force rather than against the SDF in general. I call this 'proactive antimilitarism'. To demonstrate this shift, I conduct two case studies – 'Military doctrine' and the 'SDF's place in politics and society'. Methodologically, I adopt a critical realist approach to strategic culture, which overcomes the

epistemological dichotomy between the normative and the material by analyzing the causal effects of a variety of ontological structures that affect social reality.

## Table of figures

Figure 1. Japan's defense spending with SACO-related expenses. ....	139
Figure 2. Japan's defense spending as portion of GNP/GDP. ....	140
Figure 3. Poll on impression of SDF (in %). ....	219
Table 1. Summary of defense capability concepts and their context. ....	125
Table 2. Poll (2006) on support for elevating (格上げする) the JDA to status of ministry (in %). ....	191
Table 3. Poll on perceived purpose, utility, prospect of SDF (in %). ....	208
Table 4. Responses to the statement: It is sometimes necessary to use military force to maintain order in the world (in %). ....	215
Table 5. Responses to the question: Do you favor or oppose changing article nine of the Japanese constitution so that Japan could officially have a military and could declare war? (in %). ....	216
Table 6. Poll on desired level of strength of SDF (in %). ....	216

## Acronyms

<b>Acronym</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
4MM	Four-Minister Meeting
9MM	Nine-Minister Meeting
ASDF	Air Self-Defense Forces
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
C3I	Command, Control, Communications and Intelligence
CSD	Collective Self-Defense
DN-model	Deductive-Nomological Model
DOJ	Defense of Japan
EU	European Union
FOIP	Free and Open Indo-Pacific
FY	Fiscal Year
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	Gross National Product
GOJ	Government of Japan
GSDF	Ground Self-Defense Forces
HADR	Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief
IJA	Imperial Japanese Army
INUS	Insufficient and Nonredundant components of a complex that is Unnecessary but Sufficient
JCG	Japan Coast Guard
JDA	Japan Defense Agency
JPY	Japanese Yen
JSC	Joint Staff Council
JSO	Joint Staff Office
LDP	Liberal Democratic Party
MOD	Ministry of Defense
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MSDF	Maritime Self-Defense Forces
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDPG	National Defense Program Guidelines
NDPO	National Defense Program Outline
NDS	National Defense Strategy
NSC	National Security Council
NSS	National Security Secretariat
PKO	Peacekeeping Operations
PMO	Prime Minister's Office
SACO	Special Action Committee
SDF	Self-Defense Forces
UN	United Nations
U.S.	United States
WWII	World War II

# Chapter 1. Explaining Japan's Militarization: From Reactive to Proactive Antimilitarist Strategic Culture

## 1.1. The research question and argument

Japan has increasingly alleviated the legal, budgetary, and ideological constraints on the Self-Defense Forces' (SDF) scope of activities and capabilities since the end of the Cold War. The Japanese government has become more willing to build deterrence through military force rather than economic or diplomatic means, participate in international security affairs, and integrate the SDF into the policymaking process. Japan has one of the highest defense budgets and advanced militaries in the world. The SDF contributes to promoting regional security cooperation in the Indo-Pacific through the Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) vision and the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad). Japan's current attitude towards international security and its own armed forces starkly contrasts the government's postwar priority of suppressing the discussion of security-related issues and the involvement of the SDF in policymaking. For example, Japanese leaders would not even use the term 'alliance' for their relationship with the United States, and the political discourse around the SDF was not how to employ it for national security but whether it should be allowed to exist at all.

The most recent notable policy decision has been the approval of three strategic documents – the National Security Strategy, the National Defense Strategy, and the Defense Buildup Program – by Prime Minister Kishida Fumio's administration on December 16, 2022. These documents formulate national security strategy based on the assumption that Japanese territory could be subject to a military attack, calling for the doubling of Japan's defense expenditure to

2 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and the acquisition of counterstrike capabilities.<sup>1</sup> Notwithstanding critical questions about the lack of detail on these policy initiatives and the necessary budgetary measures for their effective implementation, many experts agree that these documents reflect an ambitious plan to reinforce deterrence in an exacerbating regional security environment.<sup>2</sup> The lack of severe public opposition and protest against them unlike in the past demonstrates an important change in the public consciousness about defense issues.<sup>3</sup> However, these policy decisions are an extension of prior legislation that expanded the possible scope of Japan's military activities such as the 1999 Contingency Legislation in Areas Surrounding Japan and the 2015 Legislation for Peace and Security, which evidences the long-term incremental change that Japan's defense policy has been undergoing.

Many observers of Japan's security policy (including those I have interviewed and whose works I review in the literature review section) argue that Japan's postwar antimilitarist constraints on the use of military force have eroded due to the intensifying threats from China, North Korea, and Russia. Indeed, the three security documents themselves identify these three states as most threatening to Japan. However, reducing Japan's policy changes to a 'pragmatic' reaction to greater threat overlooks the nuanced interaction between the normative and material push and pull factors that have eroded the constraints on Japan's security policies. The pace of adaptation to the security environment has been excessively slow and there remain many constraints on the scope and level of the SDF capabilities for Japan's policy shifts to be purely 'pragmatic'.

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<sup>1</sup> Counterstrike capabilities is defined as "capabilities which, in the case of missile attacks by an opponent, enable Japan to mount effective counterstrikes against the opponent to prevent further attacks while defending against incoming missiles by means of the missile defense network". "National Security Strategy of Japan," 19.

<sup>2</sup> Jimbo, "Deterrence by Denial"; Kawashima, "Japan's Updated Defence Strategy Leaves Crucial Details to Be Determined"; Liff and Hornung, "Japan's New Security Policies: A Long Road to Full Implementation."

<sup>3</sup> Watanabe, "What's New in Japan's Three Strategic Documents."

Japan's growing contribution to international security and reinforcement of defense capabilities has been abundantly researched but not well understood, as the existing literature reflects a loose understanding of postwar antimilitarism and its influence on Japan's security policymaking. This thesis aims to complement rather than replace existing analyses and explanations of Japan's security policy as the existing literature critically lacks a normative understanding of Japan's sociopolitical attitudes toward security issues that would clarify the motivations and constraints of Japan's policy actors.

This thesis attempts to answer the question, *how has the pace and extent of Japan's militarization from the end of the Cold War until the end of the second Abe administration (2020) been influenced by changes in the country's 'antimilitarist' strategic culture?* My central argument is that the shift in Japan's strategic culture from an overreaching reactive antimilitarism to a specific, security-aware proactive antimilitarism helped facilitate Japan's militarization. I define strategic culture as a collection of strategic thoughts and practices that provide guidance on questions and choices related to war and peace, including the use of military force. In Japan, since its defeat in World War II, strategic thinking and practices were embedded within the normative framework of a strategic culture, culminating in 'antimilitarism'. It is important to note that strategic culture does not necessarily determine policy outcomes. It is best understood as an underlying social structure that *gives rise to* events and interpretations. Antti Seppo, a Finnish scholar of German strategic culture explains it as providing "reasons for action", which enable or constrain the array of strategic options for

political actors.<sup>4</sup> Strategic behavior is a collection of actions and decisions taken by policymakers in response to their threat perception.

I explain that the Japanese public's immediate reaction to the devastation of war formed part of a 'reactive antimilitarism' that prescribed an intense fear of the SDF. The antimilitarism formed during the immediate postwar period was rooted in the Japanese public's collective experience of emotional, psychological, and material loss from the war and directed at suppressing any form of military organization even at high cost. But as the SDF's relationship with policymaking and society improved, the contours of Japan's antimilitarist strategic culture were redefined as a precaution against the excessive use of military force rather than against the SDF in general. I call this 'proactive antimilitarism'. By proactive, I mean the Japanese public was more willing to get involved in international security issues and to employ the use of force in order to achieve peace and stability.

The profound sense of betrayal and loss from Japan's WWII defeat and the subsequent decades of recovery, peace, and prosperity together established the idea in Japanese society that there were immense benefits to avoiding conflict. The Japanese public came to recognize that the use of force was not a useful tool of statecraft. The public was exhausted by war and developed an 'allergy' against having to be involved in violence as a hangover from WWII when Japanese were killed, and Japan was destroyed and later occupied.<sup>5</sup> Analyzing this oft-used metaphor of 'allergy' could help understand the reactive nature of Japan's postwar antimilitarism. An allergy is a hypersensitive response against an allergen which is a physical,

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<sup>4</sup> More on Seppo and his relevance to this thesis in the next chapter on theoretical framework. Seppo, *From Guilt to Responsibility and Beyond?*, 12.

<sup>5</sup> Newsham, interview.

not cognitive reaction. Thus, the meticulous avoidance of discussing conflict and the use of force in security discourse was from hypersensitivity, rather than a pacifist conviction against war. But this “allergy” allegedly produced ideational roadblocks which “made security conceptually incomprehensible to the degree that the concept of national security remained ambiguous to even the government” for 70 years after the end of WWII.<sup>6</sup> Some Japanese security experts attribute this dislike of discussing conflict and security to the island mindset of the Japanese people. They explain that on top of their suffering from war, the Japanese were an inward-looking people who did not take security threats too seriously due to Japan’s geographical isolation.<sup>7</sup>

However, this allergy seemed to be vindicated and consolidated as Japan enjoyed peace and prosperity from the 1960s and onwards. Under reactive antimilitarism, the Japanese government passively benefited from the peace that was created by others while overlooking the varied threats and tensions that arose in the international environment. This stability convinced the Japanese people that as long as they did not do anything, there would be no war and the peace would continue if Japan did not have a strong military or get involved in international issues.<sup>8</sup> I argue that Japan’s reactive antimilitarist strategic culture is a product of institutionalizing these distinct characteristics of the Japanese people’s postwar psyche.

After the end of the Cold War, the external shock of the proliferation of non-state actors such as terrorists and the consequences of not participating in international security affairs forced policymakers to realize that the international community saw Japan as having a military that

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<sup>6</sup> Le, *Japan’s Aging Peace*, 12.

<sup>7</sup> Kanehara, interview; Michishita, interview; Nagaiwa, interview.

<sup>8</sup> Kotani, interview.

should be utilized, even as the Japanese themselves did not think so. Policymakers realized that the SDF could no longer function solely for the self-defense of Japan but had to contribute to managing international crises and new threats due to the experience of the Gulf War trauma. During the Gulf War, Japan had failed to respond to U.S. calls for troop deployment and was criticized by the international community despite having made significant financial contributions. This provided an opening for military officers and advocates of expanding the role of the military as a tool of Japan's security policy to appeal to the SDF's value to reduce policymakers' perceived dangers of the SDF. The severe cognitive dissonance between Japan's long-held principles and the exigencies of Japan's security environment set in motion the strategic cultural transition to proactive antimilitarism, where being 'proactive' is the willingness to prepare for and intervene in security situations. Under proactive antimilitarism, I argue that the government has become willing to utilize the SDF to partake in maintaining the peace while not diverging from the core antimilitarism framework of the constitution. While reactive antimilitarism suggested that the suppression of the SDF constituted Japan's antimilitarism, proactive antimilitarism entails the attitude that SDF action is necessary for Japan to uphold its antimilitarist and peace-loving identity. To demonstrate this shift, I conduct two case studies – one is devoted to Japan's military doctrine and the other to the SDF's place in politics and society.

### 1.1.1. Defining Japan's two antimilitarist strategic cultures

The most prominent work on Japan's antimilitarist strategic culture as an explanation for its security policy is Thomas U. Berger's 1998 book, *Cultures of Antimilitarism: National Security*

*in Germany and Japan*.<sup>9</sup> Berger argued that “strong antimilitarist sentiments” were responsible for “not only fundamentally [reshaping] the military and security policies of the two nations during the immediate [post-WWII] period, but over time [were] institutionalized and became constitutive components of Germany and Japan’s broader postwar political cultures”.<sup>10</sup> He examined the influence of strategic culture in three policy areas of alliance politics, military doctrine, and civil-military relations. By strategic culture (or “political-military culture” to use Berger’s term), he referred to a “subset of the larger historical-political culture that encompasses orientations related to defense, security, the military as an institution, and the use of force in international affairs”.<sup>11</sup> According to Berger, this antimilitarist strategic culture was the source of Japanese leaders’ reluctance to participate in international security cooperation or utilize their military as a component of foreign and security policy. He pointed to several examples including the 1 percent of GDP limit on defense expenditure and Japan’s refusal to send personnel to support U.S. troops in the 1990-91 Gulf War. This political-military culture of antimilitarism not only continued to characterize Japan’s political system well into the 1990s but according to Berger “all signs indicate that [Japan’s] security and foreign policies will continue to be driven by [the culture of antimilitarism] for years to come”.<sup>12</sup>

Yet in 2007, Thomas Berger explained that Japan had become a “more active player with independent action and greater capacity for adaptation” with an “increasing international security role”.<sup>13</sup> His analysis echoes that of numerous other scholars who believe that the norms

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<sup>9</sup> Berger, *Cultures of Antimilitarism: National Security in Germany and Japan*.

<sup>10</sup> Berger, x.

<sup>11</sup> Berger, 15.

<sup>12</sup> Berger, x.

<sup>13</sup> Berger, “The Pragmatic Liberalism of an Adaptive State,” 259.

and taboos that constrained Japan's post-1945 security policy have been disappearing and that Japanese leaders seem comparatively more comfortable with the use of their military.

I argue that this depreciation of the antimilitarist strategic cultural argument is rooted in two major problems with the conceptualization of antimilitarism in the existing literature on Japan's security policy. The misconceptualization not only unfairly downplays the usefulness of the strategic cultural explanation but also creates intractable gaps between scholars of different research traditions by preventing a consensual understanding of the configuration of antimilitarism and the mechanism of its influence on policymaking. These problems have been pointed out and explained in part by Tom Le in his book, *Japan's Aging Peace*.<sup>14</sup> While I appreciate his insights and utilize them here to support my own analysis, I add to the discussion by exploring the normativization of antimilitarism and clarifying the difference between militarism and militarization as well, as it relates to the discussion of the contemporary relevance of antimilitarism. By 'normativization' of antimilitarism, I refer to the process by which even antimilitarist attitudes and policies that result from cost-benefit analysis take on a normative dimension as they become institutionalized into policy actors' thoughts and organizational processes. This contributes to the small body of research conducted on the ontology of antimilitarism in Japan.<sup>15</sup>

The first problem of the antimilitarist concept in the existing literature is that the dominant realist literature often confounds antimilitarism with pacifism.<sup>16</sup> Tom Le explains that "to begin,

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<sup>14</sup> Le, *Japan's Aging Peace*.

<sup>15</sup> Such as Izumikawa, "Explaining Japanese Antimilitarism."

<sup>16</sup> The idea of a "pacifist" Japan is also widely disseminated by the media across the world. A few examples are McNeill, "Tokyo Letter"; Iwamoto, "Ukraine War Puts Japan's Pacifist Constitution in Election Spotlight"; Reynolds, "Pacifist Japan Embraces Strong Military in World of Threats"; Philip, "Japan Moves Away from Pacifist Ideal in the Face of Looming Threats"; "5 Things to Know about Japan's Pacifist Constitution."

realists have routinely misconstrued constructivist analyses of antimilitarism. Within the literature, terms such as ‘pacifism’ and ‘antimilitarism’ are used interchangeably, and critique of the former is equivalent to disproving the latter”.<sup>17</sup> In short, realists have turned pacifism into a strawman for antimilitarism. This strawman prevents a clear understanding of the beliefs, principles, and desired objectives of Japan’s antimilitarism and underappreciates its effect on the policymaking process. It also makes antimilitarism seem a more extreme and anachronistic phenomenon that is detached from the contemporary reality of Japan’s domestic security discourse. While there have been prominent pacifists and pacifism does exist as a sliver of Japan’s society today, it is clearly a different ideology from antimilitarism. Pacifism is the absolute rejection of war and the use of military force as acceptable tools of statecraft and its adherents opposed the establishment of the SDF, the continuation of the U.S.-Japan alliance, and the use of military force under any circumstances even in self-defense, preferring dialogue or peaceful protests. It is the love of peace based on the moral objection against violence.<sup>18</sup>

The Japanese public was resentful and fearful of the system of military domination that pervaded society and politics and enabled the imprudent and unilateral decisions of the imperial army during WWII. The public’s opposition was thus to the *ideology* of Japanese militarism that had directed foreign and security policy from the time of the Meiji restoration, leading to the Sino-Japanese War, Russo-Japanese War, and eventually, the Pacific War. The opposition to the use of force by the SDF was a corollary of this opposition to the ideology of militarism because the Japanese people associate the ability to exercise military force as a

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<sup>17</sup> Le, *Japan’s Aging Peace*, 17. For example, one author uses antimilitarist and pacifist norms interchangeably within a single sentence: “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.” Miyashita, “Where Do Norms Come From?,” 107.

<sup>18</sup> Le, *Japan’s Aging Peace*, 140.

marker of the wellbeing and strength of the military. This is why the public acquiesced to and now accepts the nonmilitary uses of the SDF such as peacekeeping operations (PKO) and humanitarian assistance and disaster response (HADR) – because the public has come to appreciate the SDF’s functions in community engagement that do not appeal to or enhance their military capabilities. Likewise, the public accepts security protection from the U.S. extended deterrence because it does not affect the status of the SDF or civil-military relations within Japan.

The second problem I find in the existing literature is the contestation over the normativity of antimilitarism. Materialists, when they are not arguing that antimilitarism is peripheral or has eroded, choose to argue that antimilitarism exists as a natural reaction to the devastation of war and the unprofitability of using military force (what Tom Le calls “consequentialist antimilitarism”).

There are normative implications to policy choices that cannot be fully controlled by policy actors. A logic of consequences – making a choice because the consequences are beneficial for the actor – is not categorically different or mutually exclusive from a logic of appropriateness – making a choice because the choice adheres to social norms.<sup>19</sup> Tom Le also argues that this logic of consequences “is not entirely divorced from ethics and norms... Antimilitarism can come from a logic of consequences and logic of appropriateness when burnt bodies, crying orphans, and beheaded civilians are the lasting images of war”.<sup>20</sup> This is in line with Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink’s idea of ‘strategic social construction’, which means that “[r]ationality cannot be separated from any politically significant episode

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<sup>19</sup> March and Olsen, “The Institutional Dynamics of International Political Orders.”

<sup>20</sup> Le, *Japan’s Aging Peace*, 146.

of normative influence or normative change, just as the normative context conditions any episode of rational choice”.<sup>21</sup> This is why, they argue, that pitting norms against rationality is a false dichotomy and unhelpful in explaining political processes. Accordingly, I argue that the Japanese public can be antimilitarist as a matter of right and wrong; they can be antimilitarist as a matter of cost and benefit; and they can be both. The Japanese public’s consequentialist antimilitarism does not in any way devalue normative antimilitarism, as “Japan’s monumental defeat and its imprint on the nation’s psyche have not faded and continue to shape Japanese security policy”.<sup>22</sup>

### 1.1.2. Article 9 and the Yoshida Doctrine in the antimilitarist strategic culture discourse

I discuss Article 9 of Japan’s constitution and the Yoshida Doctrine to elaborate on the idea of how antimilitarism became normativized in Japan’s society and policy. The Yoshida Doctrine is a set of policies pursued by postwar Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru that aimed to focus Japan’s national resources on reconstruction and economic growth by maintaining a limited defense capability and relying on the United States for Japan’s security.<sup>23</sup> Realists argue that antimilitarism was often a political ruse by Japanese pragmatist politicians to prioritize economic growth by freeriding on the United States for security guarantees to cut defense costs. Accordingly, policymakers such as Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru were not truly antimilitarist as he believed that Japan should remilitarize once it achieves economic recovery. As explained above, I believe that this line of reasoning ignores the fact that

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<sup>21</sup> Finnemore and Sikkink, “International Norm Dynamics and Political Change,” 888.

<sup>22</sup> Le, *Japan’s Aging Peace*, 146.

<sup>23</sup> All Japanese names are written in the Japanese order with surname first followed by given name. Thus in “Yoshida Shigeru”, “Yoshida” is the surname and “Shigeru” the given name.

calculated antimilitarism could also be normative. I argue that even those who put on the façade of antimilitarism and have not personally internalized antimilitarist strategic culture are still bound to its influence.

According to David S. Law, there is a conventional narrative within and outside Japan that the U.S. Occupation led by Supreme Allied Commander General Douglas MacArthur imposed the postwar constitution on an unwilling Japan.<sup>24</sup> However, he points out that this narrative “begs the question of *upon whom* [the constitution] was imposed” because postwar Japan was not a monolithic entity.<sup>25</sup> He argues that in contrast to Japanese political leaders then, the general public was largely receptive to the sweeping changes introduced by the new constitution, particularly the individual rights and freedoms that had not been guaranteed in the Meiji Constitution.

The present Article 9 is the result of the so-called Ashida amendment, authored by then-Home Minister Ashida Hitoshi in 1946.<sup>26</sup> What this means is that while the Constitution may have been ‘forced’ upon the Japanese political leadership, Article 9 specifically (although not uniquely) was the outcome of Japanese politicians’ participation. The following is Article 9 from Chapter II: Renunciation of War in Japan’s 1947 constitution with the Ashida amendment in italics:<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Law, “The Myth of the Imposed Constitution,” 240.

<sup>25</sup> Law, 241.

<sup>26</sup> “Birth of the Constitution of Japan.”

<sup>27</sup> Law, “The Myth of the Imposed Constitution,” 245.

*Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order,* the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes.

*In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph,* land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.<sup>28</sup>

While the Shidehara Kijūrō government during the constitution's ratification process repeatedly asserted that Article 9 would preclude Japan from maintaining military forces even for the purpose of self-defense, Article 9 has subsequently been invoked for Japan to acquire military self-defense capabilities and to contribute troops to UN operations. This is because the Ashida amendment allows the interpretation that Japan could maintain military forces so long as they were not designed as a means of aggressive wars or settling international disputes.<sup>29</sup> Sun-Ki Chai suggests that Ashida and the framers of Article 9 seemed to believe that it allowed rearmament for defensive purposes but thought such wording would be too inflammatory. Therefore, Ashida inserted the prefatory phrase of the second clause "with the explicit intention of leaving room for eventual limited rearmament and was approved by GS Public Administration Division Head Charles Kades with that in mind".<sup>30</sup>

Due to the Ashida amendment and its room for interpretation, Article 9 has been the basis for controversy regarding the constitutionality of the SDF and modernization of military equipment. Still, Article 9 has, particularly for the postwar period, limited much of the rearmament that

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<sup>28</sup> "The Constitution of Japan."

<sup>29</sup> Hughes, "Why Japan Could Revise Its Constitution and What It Would Mean for Japanese Security Policy," 3.

<sup>30</sup> Chai, "Entrenching the Yoshida Defense Doctrine," 397.

Japan would have been forced to implement otherwise. It provided Prime Minister Yoshida with “‘the perfect reason’ to resist American pressure for rearmament, as ‘devious’ as this was”.<sup>31</sup>

Although Yoshida may have instrumentalized Article 9 to prioritize economic recovery above rearmament, it has become a symbol of the unique pursuit of peace by the Japanese people. Article 9 is the basis for Japan’s national identity as a peace-loving nation, which “has now become a national consensus which both the liberal-left and the conservative-right can uphold”, according to Hosoya Yūichi.<sup>32</sup> What is more, “[i]t must be understood that most Japanese equate Article 9 of the Constitution with democracy itself; to alter one is to alter the other”, argues Chalmers Johnson.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, it was SCAP’s intention to wed democratic ideals to demilitarization through explicit prohibition of war as a means of dispute resolution. SCAP’s original policy for postwar Japan was to make disarmament and demilitarization both *complete* and *permanent*, in addition to actively attempting to change the Japanese psychology to prevent the reemergence of militarism.<sup>34</sup> In line with this peace-loving identity, Prime Minister Satō Eisaku established the Three Principles on Arms Exports constricting arms exports and the Three Non-Nuclear Principles in 1967, and Prime Minister Miki Takeo established the policy of capping military expenditure at 1 percent of GDP in 1976.

This is why the rollback of these policies has caused some alarm and new expectations of Japan’s military doctrine. For example, regarding Japan’s 1 percent ceiling on defense spending, in 1987, Prime Minister Nakasone passed a defense budget of 1.004 percent, breaching the 1 percent ceiling policy. Prime Minister Abe reaffirmed this in 2017, saying that he would not

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<sup>31</sup> Chai, 398.

<sup>32</sup> Hosoya, “Historical Memories and Security Legislation,” 45.

<sup>33</sup> Johnson, “Japan in Search of a ‘Normal’ Role,” 20.

<sup>34</sup> Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 75.

cap military spending to below 1 percent of GDP. Japan's ban on weapons exports has also been relaxed. In 1983, Nakasone made the United States an exception to the weapons export ban; in 2011 Prime Minister Noda Yoshihiko granted exceptions through comprehensive exemption categories; in 2014, Abe issued the Three Principles on Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology, creating new and relatively more lenient conditions on overseas arms transfers.

The point of this section was to dispel the assumption that antimilitarist strategic thought is limited to people who are ideological and believe it to be a matter of principle. I explained the process of normativization that enabled the Yoshida Doctrine, which was most likely originally conceived as a cost-effective strategy for national reconstruction and economic growth, to become a resilient pillar of Japan's antimilitarism. Indeed, while there are debates about the interpretation of Article 9 and how permissive it is of the SDF's activities, it remains the foundation of the Japanese public embrace of the peace-loving identity. This is because policymakers do not have full control over the ideas and policies that they implement in the public sphere as they are never introduced in a vacuum. Therefore, these ideas and policies can be embedded into policymaking processes, stakeholders, and institutions to perpetuate the prevalent strategic culture regardless of the originator's intent. The strategic culture then structures the workings of society and the relationships between the public, military, and policymakers at a level of reality that is not easily stirred by events or public perception. This should help understand the prevalence and resilience of Japan's antimilitarist strategic culture.

### 1.1.3. Antimilitarist policy of exclusive defense-orientation

In addition to Article 9 of the constitution, I also explain Japan's policy of exclusive defense-orientation as the foundation and source of legitimacy for reactive antimilitarist strategic culture

to provide the benchmark from which Japan's security policy changed. From the end of WWII, the Japanese government has adhered to a policy of exclusive defense-orientation. This is based on the interpretation that Article 9 of the constitution allows the possession of the minimum level of military force necessary to exercise Japan's right to self-defense, which has been the foundation and source of legitimacy for reactive antimilitarist strategic culture. Accordingly, Japan's military forces have been only allowed to possess capabilities for self-defense, excluding 'offensive' weapons such as intercontinental ballistic missiles, long-range strategic bombers, and aircraft carriers that could project more power than is necessary for territorial defense.

Even the exercise of self-defense is restricted to three conditions.<sup>35</sup> First, Japan must be facing an imminent and illegitimate act of aggression. Second, exercising self-defense must be the only appropriate means for Japan to deal with said aggression. Third, the use of military force in responding to said aggression must be confined to the minimum necessary. According to RAND analyst Jeffrey Hornung, the exclusive self-defense orientation was likely introduced by Japan Defense Agency (JDA) Director General Sugihara Arata in Diet debates in July 1955. While it was not officially defined at that time, "its normative power was evident in decisions that avoided rearmament".<sup>36</sup> It was defined as the main principle of Japan's defense policy in the first Defense of Japan (DOJ) in 1970 under the section "Defense Capabilities of Exclusive Defense-Orientation" (専守防衛の防衛力 *senshubōei no bōei-ryoku*).<sup>37</sup> This DOJ also

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<sup>35</sup> "Defense of Japan 1991," 55.

<sup>36</sup> Hornung, "Japan's Potential Contributions in an East China Sea Contingency," 8.

<sup>37</sup> "Defense of Japan 1970.;" This thesis uses the Hepburn system of romanization for transliteration of Japanese text.

affirmed that Japan's defense capabilities should only be mobilized for direct and indirect aggression against Japan, therefore not be used overseas, maintaining a narrow definition of self-defense.

This exclusive defense-orientation policy is still being upheld in Japan's security documents, including the latest National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG) in 2018. But I argue that as a result of changes in the reactive antimilitarist strategic culture, what constitutes 'exclusive defense' has incrementally changed since the end of the Cold War to a level that was unprecedented in the postwar period. After the Cold War, defense concepts reflect the government's perceived need for security and their confidence to use military force for defense. Post-Cold War defense concepts exhibit the government's attempts to maximize the efficiency and utility of Japan's military forces within the policy of exclusive defense-orientation. Given its close relationship to Japan's peace-loving identity established by Article 9, the exclusive defense-orientation policy serves as an important benchmark of reactive antimilitarist strategic culture.

#### 1.1.4. Militarism, militarization, and antimilitarism

Having clarified the understanding of antimilitarism, I seek to explore what an *erosion* of this antimilitarism would look like. Here, it is important to discuss the difference between militarism and 'militarization', which have also been confounded in the existing literature on Japan's security policy changes. Militarism is about the relationship between the military and the state and the society, as James Eastwood explains<sup>38</sup>:

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<sup>38</sup> Eastwood, "Rethinking Militarism as Ideology," 48. Also see: Vagts, *History of Militarism*, 17.

As a sociological phenomenon, militarism is inherently rather than contingently ideological: it always includes an ideological legitimation of violence. It is a structural relationship between military practice and the individuals who participate in them, which take effect by interpellating those individuals as subjects who desire war and military activity.

In contrast, militarization is about “the acquisition of the potential for force or the relative weight and importance of the state’s military in relation to its society”.<sup>39</sup> The confusion over these two phenomena gives way to a hypothesized and exaggerated cause-and-effect relationship between militarism and militarization. Expanding the SDF’s scope of roles and capabilities is unlikely to lead to the SDF’s usurpation of government processes and policies. The false assumption of such a cause-and-effect relationship has been observed particularly in Japan during Prime Minister Abe’s second administration as he passed the landmark 2015 Legislation for Peace and Security, which permitted limited collective self-defense and expanded the scope of activities for overseas SDF dispatches. Some observers saw this as Japan’s slide back to militarism despite the limitations built into the legislation.<sup>40</sup> Militarization of the SDF should not be assumed as an erosion of antimilitarist strategic culture because the enhancement of the SDF’s operational capabilities does not translate to its greater social and political influence.

Sasaki Tomoyuki presents a different definition of ‘militarization’ in his book discussing the SDF’s role in Japan’s postwar civil society.<sup>41</sup> He utilizes Cynthia Enloe’s broad definition that

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<sup>39</sup> Mabee and Vucetic, “Varieties of Militarism,” 98.

<sup>40</sup> Nagy, “How Abe Is Losing the Narrative on Japan’s New Security Laws.”

<sup>41</sup> Sasaki, *Japan’s Postwar Military and Civil Society*.

“[m]ilitarization is a step-by-step process by which a person or a thing gradually comes to be controlled by the military *or* comes to depend for its well-being on militaristic ideas... Militarization, that is, involves cultural as well as institutional, ideological, and economic transformation”.<sup>42</sup> While the SDF’s impact on the everyday lives of the Japanese people is an interesting discussion (what Sasaki’s book is about) that is relevant to public perception, it is not the phenomenon that I study in this thesis. I use ‘militarization’ to refer specifically to the increasing ‘normalization’ of the SDF as part of Japan’s national security policy – both greater participation in the policymaking processes and in implementing the policy decisions. I use it as a neutral term to describe a policy that describes national security policy choice rather than a socioanthropological phenomenon.

I believe that Japan’s reactive antimilitarist strategic culture was primarily about a strong, hypersensitive, and vigorous opposition to the military ever being able to dominate society and politics again. The intensity of this antimilitarism resulted in stringent civilian control of the military and by extension, severe suppression of the military’s use of force, although this did not mean opposition to the use of force in general.

As Japan’s antimilitarism pervaded, so did the idea that opposing militarism and refraining from the use of force were the right and sure ways to achieve peace. Therefore, restraint from the use of force came to be expected in Japan’s security environment as well. That is why the outbreak of the 1990-91 Gulf War and the proliferation of security threats after the end of the Cold War shocked the Japanese public. Because it showed that, contrary to the expectations of many, other states were not willing to refrain from the use of force and that military force

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<sup>42</sup> Enloe, *Maneuvers*, 3. quoted in Sasaki, *Japan’s Postwar Military and Civil Society*, 7.

had to be actively used to achieve and preserve peace, rather than simply being suppressed.<sup>43</sup> Again, this was the case as well for the Chinese fishing trawler incident in 2010 and the Chinese army's subsequent acts of aggression including incursions into Japanese territorial waters.

The majority of the Japanese public is still wary of unfettered freedom for the military and opposes policy reforms that may allow unforeseen uses of military force by the military. What has changed is that they have grown to be more trusting of the military institution as part of the government and more cognizant of the various uses of military force given Japan's new security environment. Most importantly, as will be substantiated in the case studies, the majority of the Japanese public seems to have come to detach militarism from the use of force, accepting that military force or defense capabilities in specific scenarios could be used without increasing the political influence of the military in general. Thus, the erosion of reactive antimilitarist strategic culture implies greater trust in the SDF as a military organization and abated fears of possible militarist backsliding. From the lessons of multiple outbreaks of conflict and violence such as the Gulf War and Iraq War and closer to home, the military aggressions of China and North Korea, most of the Japanese public has realized that peace is something that must be actively sought and sustained rather than something that passively exists. The SDF's usefulness in responding to humanitarian disasters such as the March 11 triple disaster also contributed to changing Japanese perceptions of the military. This critical change in perception that the SDF can promote peace and stability without being

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<sup>43</sup> Yamamoto, interview.

involved in war or armed conflict reduced the potential conflict between the existence of the SDF and Japan's identity as a peace-loving and promoting state.<sup>44</sup>

But this contribution to peace must still be conducted within the relatively cautious if loosening, boundaries of Japan's postwar antimilitarism. This is what I call Japan's proactive antimilitarism. I argue that the transition to a proactive antimilitarist strategic culture entailing confidence in the value of a military organization has permitted much of the militarization of Japan's security policy. But two caveats must be made about the implications of this strategic cultural change.

First, proactive antimilitarism is still a product of antimilitarism. Despite the change in Japan's security policy, the ultimate objective and fundamental desire of the Japanese people – a peace-loving security identity that focuses on Japan's own territorial safety and national interests – has not changed. The strength of norms is based on their legitimacy – reactive and proactive antimilitarism share the legitimacy of antimilitarism as Japan's self-given peace-loving identity and strategic culture. This means that Japanese policymakers are still navigating a complex area saddled with their long-term reluctance and newfound willingness to take on new international security commitments or militarize the SDF.

Second, the complex nature of strategic cultural change is such that the transition is rarely definitive at a given point in time. Short of experiencing direct external shock such as war, strategic cultural change is often incremental, slow, and sticky. Some remnants of the prior strategic culture will likely remain even as strategic cultural change can be observed in the overall direction of security policy, and even if the new strategic culture is clearly superior or

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<sup>44</sup> Glosserman and Snyder, *The Japan–South Korea Identity Clash*, 127.

more befitting to reality.<sup>45</sup> Old normative structures that are no longer dominant nor robust could still persist with low compliance.<sup>46</sup> Thus, the old and new could coexist because change in dominance does not necessarily imply *elimination* of the prior structure. I believe that while proactive antimilitarist strategic culture has become dominant, it has not completely *replaced* reactive antimilitarism. This is because strategic culture is a deep causal structure that generates influence, rather than a legal system with enforcing and policing bodies. Given these caveats on strategic cultural change from reactive to proactive antimilitarism, evident change within Japan's security policy may vary across indicators and over time.

Assessing the degree of change in the strategic culture requires examining which 'layer' of strategic culture has changed. We can identify a big, fundamental change when the foundational elements that give the strategic culture its core characteristics and comprise basic beliefs about the use of force. In my thesis, the foundational element of Japan's strategic culture is antimilitarism and this has not changed. However, strategic cultural change usually occurs in an incremental fashion. We can identify smaller changes when the policies and practices through which the strategic culture is observably applied, change. For antimilitarist strategic culture, these would include the 1 percent of GDP ceiling on defense spending, the practice of no overseas deployment, and the defense councilor system for the JSDF.

The ideas I discussed in this section are not completely new to Japan's security policy literature.<sup>47</sup> But I have collated them cogently to clarify the concept of Japan's antimilitarism.

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<sup>45</sup> Posner and Rasmusen, "Creating and Enforcing Norms, with Special Reference to Sanctions," 378.

<sup>46</sup> Sandholtz, "Norm Contestation, Robustness, and Replacement," 146.

<sup>47</sup> In a Nikkei commentary, Kitaoka Shinichi contrasts "proactive pacifism" with "passive pacifism" which he defines as the idea that "the less militarized Japan is, the more peaceful the world becomes". According to Tom Phuong Le, Kotani Tetsuo of the Japanese Institute of International Affairs (JIIA) calls the Japanese people's uncritical, instinctive feeling that war is bad, "ambiguous pacifism". See Le, *Japan's Aging Peace*, 14.

This discussion provides much-needed clarity on the nuanced nature of Japan's postwar antimilitarism, how it became normativized and institutionalized into the security policymaking process, and how it has affected security policy outcomes. The main takeaways from this discussion should be that antimilitarism is fundamentally different from pacifism and that normative antimilitarism and consequentialist antimilitarism are not mutually exclusive. I utilize these ideas to argue that Japan's antimilitarist strategic culture has come to distinguish the military as such from 'militarism', allowing greater utilization of the military as a tool of statecraft without the fear of militarist backsliding. Throughout this thesis, I provide examples of this transition by citing SDF's participation in international peacekeeping missions, adoption of an increasingly proactive military doctrine, and greater inclusion in the policymaking process, and discussing the public reaction to these new roles.

#### 1.1.5. Organization and contribution

The research proceeds as follows. The next section in this introductory chapter reviews existing accounts of Japan's security policy changes categorized into Realist, Liberal, and Constructivist research traditions to assess their effectiveness in conceptual and empirical dimensions. I do not claim to cover the whole range of theories or arguments that fall under these research traditions but the specific works that attempt to explain the post-Cold War changes in Japan's defense posture. I examine the variables and causal mechanisms other scholars employ to explain Japan's security policy evolution, test their assumptions about Japan's security policy actors, and scrutinize how they theorize the relationship between normative and material variables and the relationship between domestic and external variables. I highlight the explanatory gaps created by these assumptions and argue for the importance of studying strategic culture. Chapter Two is devoted to my theoretical framework, research design, and

methodology. It overviews the chronology of strategic cultural studies and delves into the scholarly debates about its origin, substance, and influence mechanism to produce an analytical framework that mitigates pitfalls in the existing accounts. It then details the corresponding methodology to be used in line with the strategic cultural framework and provides case selection rationale. I also explain what critical realism is and why taking a critical realist approach to strategic culture is essential in this thesis. Chapters Three and Four are case studies that portray the effect of strategic cultural change on two major aspects of Japan's security policy. Chapter Three examines how strategic cultural change to proactive antimilitarism expanded the SDF's functions and capabilities for national defense, focusing on three indicators – defense capability concept, defense spending, and overseas deployment. Chapter Four examines how strategic cultural change to proactive antimilitarism affected the SDF's place within politics and society. Policymakers' and the public's increased trust and favorability of the SDF is a clear demonstration of the changing tenets of Japan's strategic culture. Chapter Five analyzes insights from the case studies and reestablishes the argumentation that strategic cultural change helps better understand the militarization of Japan's defense policy and the improved status of the SDF within Japan's policymaking process. It concludes by discussing contemporary events in Japan's security policy environment that occurred after the period under study as an afterword to extrapolate the implications of this thesis. In particular, it discusses the impact of the Russia-Ukraine War on Japan's defense policy and the challenges that Japan faces against further militarization.

Over the course of these chapters, I make two main contributions to enhance understanding of the antimilitarist strategic cultural influence on Japan's security policy in particular and strategic cultural analyses of national security policy in general. First, I rectify the empirical

misperceptions about Japan's postwar antimilitarism and clarify the theoretical distinction between militarism and militarization as it applies to Japan's security policy. The imprecise usage of these terms in the existing literature has resulted in inconsistent accounts of the trajectory of Japan's postwar security policy. Second, I advance the study of strategic cultural analysis by providing hard case studies that demonstrate the influence and relevance of strategic culture. By identifying the Insufficient and Nonredundant components of a complex that is Unnecessary but Sufficient (INUS) in which strategic culture influences policy outcomes, I step closer to elucidating the specific causal mechanism of strategic culture.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, I reconceptualize the causal process of strategic culture through a critical realist lens.

Critical realism is a way of looking at the world that admits the limitations of human observation on human knowledge. It was derived from the 'epistemic fallacy', which reduces what we call 'real' (ontological statements) to what we can know or understand about this 'real' (epistemological statements).<sup>49</sup> This means that we are unable to fully understand the underlying forces that cause the events we experience. But these underlying forces – unobservable mechanisms, structures, and laws – are real. Taking a critical realist approach to strategic culture is indispensable because it is the only way to fully appreciate the unobservable structures that organize and influence our society. It explicitly builds strategic culture into security policymaking processes rather than relegating it to one of the many variables that can influence decisionmaking. This helps fully understand the potential of strategic culture as a collective thought and practice.

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<sup>48</sup> The INUS complex is explained in the next chapter on methodology.

<sup>49</sup> "What Is Critical Realism?"

A major objective of this thesis is to challenge the positivist and ‘Newtonian’ epistemology of current international relations literature, which assumes an overly mechanistic process of security policy change being caused once a set of conditions or variables are in place. This causal language is misleading and unempirical – I argue it is more instructive to speak of an increasing probability of change.

## 1.2. Assessing alternative explanations for Japan’s militarization

In this section, I discuss the most relevant Realist, Liberal, and Constructivist explanations for the change in Japan’s security policy toward the end of the Cold War. I provide a meaningful classification of the work of various scholars who contribute to the field of Japan’s security policy, focusing on their key ideas, arguments, and empirical findings. This means that I characterize the work rather than the scholar, which is why some contributions of a scholar may be categorized under the Realist research tradition while their other contributions are included in the Liberal research tradition. For example, Richard Samuels’ work with Eric Heignbotham on mercantile realism is categorized under the realist tradition while his work on the four schools of strategic thought in Japan is covered in the Liberal category. I do not assume that the entire work of a scholar necessarily belongs only to one research tradition. The focus on the work rather than the scholar also explains why I do not preclude the work of Kenneth Pyle on Japan’s security policy although some scholars may view him as a historian rather than an IR scholar.

Specifically, I examine arguments about the balance of power, the configuration of domestic actors, and changing norms. I critically assess each argument’s assumptions and evidence to show the need for a strategic cultural analysis of Japan’s security policy. I believe that they are

fairly representative of each research tradition due to the broad scope of these arguments – for example, I review works of defensive realism, postclassical realism, and mercantile realism under the balance of power argument. Still, I realize that the balance of power argument is not exhaustive of the diversity within the Realist tradition and that configuration of domestic politics is not the only argument within the Liberal research tradition. I selected these arguments based on prominence in the existing literature about Japan’s post-Cold War security policy and relevance to the topic of my thesis. More importantly, I present the arguments within the Realist, Liberal, and Constructivist research traditions because this organization best demonstrates why a critical realist approach is necessary.

There may exist various arguments within the realm of each research tradition but they share core attitudes to the role of norms and ideas in security policy, the type of variables they prioritize, and how they conceptualize the causal relationship between those variables. This is because these paradigms have fundamentally different assumptions about the world and the actors in it, and as Jonathan Kirshner explains, “the differences between them are rooted in distinct philosophical dispositions and underlying, non-falsifiable grounding assumptions that cannot be definitively adjudicated and settled”.<sup>50</sup> I introduce critical realism not simply to introduce a different set of assumptions about the causal relationship between the multiple actors and variables within our world, but to innovate how we think society is structured altogether.

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<sup>50</sup> Kirshner, *An Unwritten Future*, 186:2.

### 1.2.1. Responding to an unfavorable regional balance of power

Realist scholars commonly prioritize the effect of international systemic conditions and the availability of mobilizable state resources in analyzing Japan's security policy. They argue that shifts in the regional balance of power mainly due to the end of the Cold War changed the key incentives shaping Japan's security policy. This assumes that state behavior is influenced by challenges and opportunities arising from the anarchic international political system, in which the universal goal is to maximize security through self-help strategies. Arguments in this section are labeled Realist because they commonly focus on the significance of uncertainty and threat perception arising from the anarchic system as the major motivations of Japan's political leaders' policy choices, thus being some variation of balancing or hedging. Moreover, while they have varying levels of recognition and consideration of antimilitarism, they mostly consider normative variables to be peripheral, secondary, or unimportant to security policy outcomes.

There are variants within Realism that recognize the importance of domestic politics and institutions, which may seem more nuanced than structural realism. In contrast to structural realism or neoclassical realism, which analyzes states as like units that are differentiated only by their relative capabilities, classical realism emphasizes human nature and domestic politics as key factors in state behavior and neoclassical realism assumes that specific state responses are shaped by unit-level factors such as state-society relations or strategic culture.<sup>51</sup> However, these variants still assume the influence of the international system as the starting point and frame of reference for the state's strategic behavior. Neoclassical realism is a broad analytical umbrella for diverse Realists that continues to develop. Furthermore, the formula of state

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<sup>51</sup> Kirshner, 186:4-5.

behavior being largely regulated international systemic forces and tailored by domestic conditions generates three key explanatory challenges for neoclassical realism.<sup>52</sup>

First, scholars allege that neoclassical realism incorporates domestic variables in an ad hoc manner without a systematic explanation of when certain variables generate influence. These critics believe that neoclassical realism, while claiming to belong to the realist tradition, is shifting the causal logic away from the international system with ad hoc additions of variables, thereby abandoning the distinctiveness of realist explanation.<sup>53</sup> As a related matter, the second criticism is that neoclassical realism has lost parsimony – the amalgamation of systemic, political, and ideational variables makes it relatively inefficient than structural realist theories.<sup>54</sup> For example, Matthew Funaiolo conceptualizes Japan’s postwar foreign policy trajectory using Social Identity Theory combined with neoclassical realism and constructivism by focusing on their common emphasis on group dynamics.<sup>55</sup> While I appreciate his effort to integrate a normative analysis, this type of eclecticism entails a loss of parsimony and theoretical consistency. More importantly, he adjoins these theories because he makes the fundamental mistake of underestimating and misunderstanding the power of Constructivism as having “little utility for determining the direction of foreign policy outputs”.<sup>56</sup> Lastly, I find that it is most problematic to separate international and domestic variables, and material and normative variables, which are interconnected and inseparable.<sup>57</sup> This particular charge is not restricted to

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<sup>52</sup> Ripsman, “Neoclassical Realism.”

<sup>53</sup> Legro and Moravcsik, “Is Anybody Still a Realist?,” 6–8; Walt, “The Enduring Relevance of the Realist Tradition”; Vasquez, “The Realist Paradigm and Degenerative versus Progressive Research Programs,” 900–901.

<sup>54</sup> Freyberg-Inan, Harrison, and James, *Rethinking Realism in International Relations*, 259; Walt, “The Enduring Relevance of the Realist Tradition,” 211.

<sup>55</sup> Funaiolo, “Conceptualizing Japan’s Foreign Policy Trajectory Through Social Identity Theory.”

<sup>56</sup> Funaiolo, 363.

<sup>57</sup> Fordham, “The Limits of Neoclassical Realism.”

neoclassical realism and I believe that the interactive approach of strategic culture is more reflective of real-world events than the additive approach of neoclassical realism.

While neoclassical realists claim to occupy a middle ground between structural theorists and constructivists, they do not have a systematic framework of understanding or studying unobservable social structures like strategic culture, as critical realism does.<sup>58</sup> Neoclassical realists still process causal relationships in security policy in terms of ‘variables’ and ‘units’. I have mentioned previously that a major objective of this thesis is to challenge the positivist epistemology of the current international relations literature and therefore I do not define my research in terms of independent and dependent variables, which suggest a linear, deductive-nomological model of causation. Neoclassical realism’s definitive calculation of the influence of certain entities is incompatible with my definition of strategic culture as an underlying social structure that gives rise to events but may or may not manifest as observable events. Further explanation on my concept of causation is given in the second chapter on critical realism.

The greatest allure of Realist theories is how seemingly straightforward and intuitive they are since the threats they point to are directly observable and tangible. Particularly for Japan, the rapid modernization of China’s military and the technological advancement of North Korea’s missile program have been undeniable. One interviewee who is an academic and has experience advising the Ministry of Defense and the National Security Secretariat told me that if a missile is targeting you, you need to respond regardless of whether you are a liberal or realist, implying that Japan’s security policy choices depend less on the ideological background of policymakers than on the ‘material’ pressures they face.<sup>59</sup> I agree that policy-makers are likely to believe that

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<sup>58</sup> Rose, “Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy.”

<sup>59</sup> Jimbo, interview.

Japan should respond upon being targeted by a missile. They are unlikely to ‘socially construct’ a missile falling near Okinawa to be completely unalarming.<sup>60</sup> However, I argue that their ‘response’ or their policy decision is rarely a kneejerk *reaction*. It is shaped by vision, principles, objectives, and processes. In short, policy choices, even urgent ones, are not made in a vacuum. Moreover, quite often security decisions are simply not compulsive responses to an overwhelming threatening environment. Realist theories neglect these facts.

Realists’ underestimation or non-estimation of these variables is manifest in Kenneth B. Pyle’s argument that Japanese elites naturally possess a “readiness to accommodate to its changing demands, and an unusual degree of opportunism in the nation’s approach to its external environment”.<sup>61</sup> He explains that this combination of pragmatism and opportunism is the result of Japan’s experience of five fundamental changes in the international order, from the collapse of the Sinocentric system in the mid-nineteenth century to the end of the bipolar Cold War system with the collapse of the USSR in 1989.<sup>62</sup> Pyle explains that events like these forced Japan to adapt its political and economic systems for survival and “established a pattern of extraordinary sensitivity to the workings of the international system, readiness to accommodate to its changing demands, and an unusual degree of opportunity in the nation’s approach to its external environment”.<sup>63</sup> Pyle’s argument is a curious case for Realists and Constructivists alike

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<sup>60</sup> Robert Jervis responds similarly to a metaphor about a group of people who would feel compelled to run out of a house on fire. Jervis explains that policymaking is not as clear as this analogy and that key decisions are rarely reached so easily – decision-makers often hesitate and debate among several policy choices. We still have the burden of explaining why a specific exit was chosen among several. Furthermore, the “subjective feeling of determinacy” of certain policymakers at one point in time may not be generalizable because “when scholars claim that a situation permitted no policy other than the one that was adopted, it may be that at least part of the reason why the circumstances appear overwhelming in retrospect is that they were claimed to be so by the decision-makers”. Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, 19–21.

<sup>61</sup> Pyle, *Japan Rising*, 27.

<sup>62</sup> Pyle, 28.

<sup>63</sup> Pyle, 27.

because he identifies cultural roots for this pragmatism – “for reasons found deep in their inherited strategic culture, Japan’s conservative elites gave priority to the challenges from the outside”.<sup>64</sup>

I point out several problems with Pyle’s argument that have repercussions for other Realist explanations as well. The most critical of these is that his argument of pragmatism and opportunism lacks Japan specifications. By definition, from a realist standpoint, all states search for survival through self-help. Thus, arguing that Japanese leaders pursued survival by learning to adapt to changes in the international system does not explain anything specifically about Japan’s security policy, especially as the Indo-Pacific region is full of states that underwent the same and other external shocks, such as Korea and China. Furthermore, Pyle’s line of logic explaining consistent and sustainable adaptability is questionable. Pyle concludes these ‘fundamental changes in international order’ increased Japanese elites’ sensitivity to the international system but that “[t]heir traditions of realism, with its respect for power, its opportunism, and its pursuit of status and autonomy, persisted through the century and a half of Japan’s modern history”.<sup>65</sup> He is thus arguing that each of those fundamental events consistently affected Japanese policymakers to the extent that it did not upset their security strategy for 150 years. If Japan has had a ‘culture of realism’ for such a long time, then its postwar, Cold War, and post-Cold War behavior should have been consistent and caused no queries for political scientists.

A major problem with the argument of cultural pragmatism is the assumption that pragmatism produces a singular, coherent, flat, and definite outcome. This is why the definition and causal

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<sup>64</sup> Pyle, 23.

<sup>65</sup> Pyle, 23.

mechanism of each of the characteristics of the Japanese policymakers that Pyle identifies is not specified. What does it mean to be ‘sensitive’ to the international system? What does it mean to be opportunistic? What does it mean to be adaptable and accommodating to the security environment? What do all these mean in terms of policy choices? There are various ‘Realist’ accounts of what it means for Japan to be realist that are incompatible and inconsistent with each other. This does not necessarily mean that the Realist accounts are wrong but that the effect of external threats on domestic policymaking mechanisms requires further elaboration. I find most problematic Realists’ sweeping neglect of the intricacies of policy processes and actor preferences – an implication of the Realist assumption of the state as a unitary, rational actor.<sup>66</sup> Deep social structures such as strategic culture provide the common basis for policymakers to think in collective and coherent ways about security-related issues. Refuting Pyle’s argument of a culture of pragmatism should not suggest that Japanese policymakers are unpragmatic, glass-eyed idealists. But as attested by former Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Kanehara Nobukatsu who also served as Deputy Secretary-General of the National Security Secretariat, “Japanese security debates have always been filled with ideology”.<sup>67</sup>

Lastly, Pyle’s idea of a ‘culture of pragmatism’ that has persevered unwaveringly for a century and a half is indicative of Realists’ assumption that culture does not or is resistant to change – which is their point of criticism against the explanatory power of antimilitarist strategic culture. But as I argue in the rest of this thesis, culture – whether of pragmatism or antimilitarism – does and would change incrementally over long periods of time.

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<sup>66</sup> Kawasaki, “Review of Japan Rising.”

<sup>67</sup> Kanehara, interview.

Another group of Realists point to Japanese policymakers' emphasis on economic interests in their security policy decisions. Eric Heginbotham and Richard Samuels advance the idea of mercantile realism, which means that "when trade-offs must be made between military and technoeconomic security values, the latter frequently takes precedence" because "the very concepts of security and power frequently are defined in technological, industrial, and economic terms".<sup>68</sup> They point out that Japan's defeat in WWII discredited military power as a means of enhancing national security and the deconstruction of the military apparatus ensured the reinforcement of Japan's powerful economic stage organs and industrial allies. This is why Japan has not balanced against China (at least until the time of writing in 1998) and rather invested heavily in its commercial relationship with China. However, Kawasaki Tsuyoshi argues that mercantile realism is overly focused on the economic power dimension. Instead, he advances postclassical realism, which supposedly "construes states as actors who, while highly sensitive to the economic costs of defense, are maximizing their security without threatening others in a situation of the security dilemma".<sup>69</sup> Kawasaki explains that in contrast to other realist theories, postclassical realism views increasing economic resources as the ultimate goal, constrained by short-term security needs. This means that states are cost-sensitive about military goals and if a particular defense plan is too expensive, the state will choose a more cost-effective alternative so long as it does not seriously undermine its minimum security.<sup>70</sup> Interestingly, Kawasaki also criticizes constructivist studies of inaptly taking neorealism as a baseline against which to measure the deviance of Japan's security policy while also neglecting the security dilemma and suffering from selection bias in their case studies.

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<sup>68</sup> Samuels and Heginbotham, "Mercantile Realism and Japanese Foreign Policy," 171–72, 173.

<sup>69</sup> Kawasaki, "Postclassical Realism and Japanese Security Policy," 223.

<sup>70</sup> Kawasaki, 228.

These economic interest-based explanations are particularly relevant to the most recent changes in Japan's security policy and defense plans under the Kishida administration, which has adopted the target defense spending of 2 percent of GDP by fiscal year 2027. Despite the high public support for defense capability enhancement after the shock of the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the corollary fear of a Chinese invasion of Taiwan, the Japanese government will struggle to finance the spending increase by the government's own admission.<sup>71</sup> Neither does high public support for stronger defense translate to public support for tax hikes to fund the defense spending, leaving the Japanese government which runs the highest percentage of national debt in the world at 250 percent of GDP, in a tight spot.<sup>72</sup> I argue that mercantile realism and PCR are insufficient to explain the Japanese government's seeming selection of security over maximization of economic resources in this dire trade-off, as the new security plans are not short-term goals but aim to restructure the balance of priorities within the national security strategy. Most importantly, Kawasaki simply replaces the variable of military power for economic power in accounting for Japan's security behavior and focuses exclusively on materialist factors. This approach of underrating normative variables and dichotomizing the material and normative is fundamentally why I believe that Realist accounts of Japan's security policy are deficient.

The relative decline in the United States' ability and willingness to secure Japan is an indispensable causal argument for Realists as well. Paul Midford uses balance of threat theory complemented by social psychology to argue that Japan's security policy since the Cold War is explained by an adapted 'reassurance strategy' to make up for the weaker regional presence of

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<sup>71</sup> "In light of the increasingly severe fiscal conditions and the significance of other budgets related to the lives of the people..." "Defense Buildup Program," 48.

<sup>72</sup> Liang and Tian, "The Proposed Hike in Japan's Military Expenditure."

the United States. After WWII, Japan concentrated on constructing containment structures that would prevent an aggressive military establishment would ever reemerge, as it was surrounded by former colonies and victim states of its wartime atrocities whose experiences made them suspicious and hostile against Japan's reassertion in the security realm.<sup>73</sup> Midford argues that the collapse of the USSR and the subsequent decline in U.S. relative power have increased Japan's regional weight, "[creating] an incentive for Japan to expand its regional security role, which in turn caused Japan to expand its reassurance strategy".<sup>74</sup> Midford points to Prime Minister Nakasone's claim that the bilateral alliance with the United States and domestic legal constraints have become insufficient as signals of Japan's intention and strength, thereby necessitating the enmeshment of Japan into a larger multilateral framework such as the UN.<sup>75</sup> Therefore, Japan's security policy change from being a 'pacifist outlier' to pursuing multilateral security cooperation can be explained by the consistent need to find a new containment structure as part of its reassurance strategy. In this way, Midford's argument resembles Kawasaki's postclassical realist focus on the security dilemma.

I argue that the importance that Midford argues Japan has attached to its relationship with the United States and with its victim states is inconsistent with the trajectory of Japan's security policy choices. This is important because it implies that other factors than the security derived from maintaining amicable regional relationships significantly impact Japan's policymaking.

First, Japan's resilient preference for not engaging in military security initiatives even upon the request of the United States as in the Gulf War is better explained by antimilitarist strategic

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<sup>73</sup> Midford, "The Logic of Reassurance and Japan's Grand Strategy," 36.

<sup>74</sup> Midford, 31.

<sup>75</sup> Midford, 32.

culture. Midford explains that during the Gulf War, Japan experienced conflicting pressures from the United States to send personnel and from Asian neighbors not to send them. Ultimately, the deployment did not happen as the “Japanese Diet bowed to Asian and domestic opposition and refused to consider legislation authorizing the SDF’s overseas dispatch”.<sup>76</sup> But Midford also believes that “[h]ad American casualties in the Gulf been significantly higher, as was predicted at the time, or had the North Korean nuclear crisis resulted in armed conflict, Japan’s failure to participate in combat...could have ripped the alliance apart” and it was just lucky that those worst-case scenarios did not materialize.<sup>77</sup> Why did Japan not acquiesce to the U.S. request or at least send a tokenistic number of troops? The prize of Chinese and Korean satisfaction does not seem commensurate to the risk of “undermining, if not rupturing, the very alliance upon which it depends so heavily”.<sup>78</sup> As the United States was overwhelmingly more important and influential to Japan’s security policymaking than China or Korea – not to mention that it was also the main security provider for Korea – Japan could plausibly have cited the United States’ sustained pressure to rearm since the outbreak of the Korean War as a pretext.

Second, the argument that Japan expanded its regional security role and accordingly its military capabilities to continue to reassure its Asian neighbors in the absence of a strong U.S. constraint is not only counterintuitive but unconvincing.<sup>79</sup> The period in which the Cold War ended and the United States gradually lost its relative military and economic advantage coincides with the period in which Japan’s relationships with Korea and China – the loudest and strongest of Japan’s victim states – began to exacerbate due to renewed historical controversies. In particular,

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<sup>76</sup> Midford, 32.

<sup>77</sup> Midford, 15.

<sup>78</sup> Midford, 14.

<sup>79</sup> See Gustafsson, Hagström, and Hanssen, “Long Live Pacifism! Narrative Power and Japan’s Pacifist Model,” 504.

Korea's democratization strengthened its civil society that publicly criticized Japan's impenitence for its wartime atrocities.<sup>80</sup> Japan's expanding its regional security role, which would increase its international legitimacy and prominence, is highly unlikely to have soothed the resentment still felt in its victim states.

Jennifer M. Lind also formulates an explanation based on the relative decline of the United States. Lind attempts to explain the expansion of Japan's military capabilities and roles in the 1970s and 80s through buck-passing, which is a defensive realist strategy wherein the buck-passer recognizes a threat that requires balancing but passes on this task to others while exerting as little of their own effort as possible. In the 1950s Japan and the United States enjoyed a favorable balance of power because the USSR concentrated its military power in the European theater. The Sino-Soviet split in 1959 turned the USSR deployments to Asia, though still mostly on the Chinese border. The real disruption began in the 1970s when the USSR aimed to discourage Japan from a close trilateral relationship with the United States and China by deploying troops on the Kurile Islands and increasing its fleet visibility in the Sea of Japan. As a buck-passer, Japan expected the United States to respond to these pressures, but the United States did not balance and in fact, diminished its military capabilities.<sup>81</sup> Lind explains that this forced Japan to start building impressive military capabilities from the late 70s onwards, though with less momentum since the end of the Cold War. Lind concedes that her buck-passing theory achieves mixed results in the post-Cold War era as Japan has not reduced its military capabilities and roles despite a decline in conventional military threats. Still, she claims this does not

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<sup>80</sup> Jo, "Memory, Institutions, and the Domestic Politics of South Korean–Japanese Relations."

<sup>81</sup> Lind, "Pacifism or Passing the Buck?," 106–8.

entirely weaken the theory as there are new dangers of regional wars triggered by issues regarding Taiwan or the Korean Peninsula.<sup>82</sup>

I would argue that Lind's buck-passing strategy underexplains the broad scope of the increasing leadership roles that Japan has been taking to ensure international security such as building various security partnerships, training and transferring military equipment to ASEAN states, and actively taking part in military training exercises. Moreover, many of the security policy reforms taken since the second Abe administration such as the Legislation on Peace and Security, revision of arms transfers, and planned acquisition of counterstrike capabilities and defense expenditure increase seem much more permanent and critical changes to the structure of Japan's security policy that may hinder a return to buck-passing when the opportunity arises. This signals that there are fundamental changes to the very principles and objectives of Japan's security policy that cannot be explained by Lind's theory.

More recently, an expanding group of scholars uses the balance of power theory to explain that Japan's increasingly assertive security policy is the result of Japan's already insecure position in the region being threatened by the intensifying U.S.-China competition.<sup>83</sup> Since the end of WWII, Japan has benefited from extended deterrence from the United States, its main security provider. Relying on this safety net for economic reconstruction and economic growth, Japan emerged as an economic and technological powerhouse in the 60s, making it progressively more active in international relations, mostly through economic diplomacy. But the 'Lost Decade' of the 1990s due to low economic growth and recessions diminished Japan's relative

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<sup>82</sup> Lind, 109.

<sup>83</sup> See Green, *Japan's Reluctant Realism*; Hornung, "Japan's Growing Hard Hedge Against China"; Hughes, *Japan's Remilitarisation*; Hughes, "Japan's 'Resentful Realism' and Balancing China's Rise."

economic power – its main tool of inter-state interaction. Adding to the fear of uncertainty and instability, the end of the Cold War bipolar system eliminated the threat of Soviet communism, which was the primary reason for U.S. commitment to Japan. These events diminished both economic and military security for Japan. This is why the rise of China from the 2000s and consequent concerns over its opaque military modernization and assertive maritime activities threatened the domination of the United States and Japan on the regional order in the Asia-Pacific. Therefore, according to these scholars, Japanese policymakers are seeking a more proactive security policy to maintain the balance of power between a declining United States and a rising China.

However, Japan's security policy still manifests vestiges of antimilitarism that Realist theories are unable to explain. While the JSDF has significantly enhanced its air and maritime capabilities with advanced technological equipment, "the JSDF's operational readiness remains constrained, largely by legal and institutional factors rather than technical issues... Under [the positive-list bureaucratic and legal framework], rules of engagement have been very tight, limiting the JSDF's ability to respond to contingencies in a timely manner".<sup>84</sup> Therefore, despite the JSDF's recent military modernization, remaining problems with interbranch coordination, level of defense expenditure, and other policy gaps that hinder operation readiness cast doubt on the Realist explanation. I argue that considering the clear and immediate danger of the 'China threat' analyzed by these Realist scholars, Japanese leaders should have taken greater urgency in passing legislation or facilitating administrative reorganization that would enable the JSDF's effective deterrence against the rise of China. Yet, "Japan continues to remain quite exceptional

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<sup>84</sup> Hinata-Yamaguchi, "JAPAN'S DEFENSE READINESS," 49.

regarding its constraints on military power relative to other ‘middle-power’ allies of the United States”.<sup>85</sup>

This puts into question whether Japanese leaders really prioritize military security as the Realists reviewed in this section seem to believe. Realists assume that states inhabiting an anarchic political system are forced to prioritize survival and self-help. With these objectives, they “assume that material power, whether military or economic or both, is the single most important source of influence and authority in global politics”.<sup>86</sup> However, I argue that Japanese leaders have, in many instances, displayed higher concern for the adherence to domestic security norms and practices than material military calculus. It is, I suggest, the antimilitarist strategic culture, characterized by a defense-only military posture and minimal military roles that has constrained Japan’s military “normalization”.

The Realist scholars discussed in this section produce only a cursory analysis of Japan’s domestic actors and institutions. They mostly study the decisions of Japan as a unitary state without fully acknowledging the role of public opinion, factional or party interests, or norms in security policymaking. This is because they generally assume that state interests are shielded from domestic pressures and mostly determined by the international structure and distribution of power. This statist assumption mistakenly diminishes the agency of political leaders to develop interests, formulate priorities, and make choices.

I argue that interests are empirical questions that require contextualization and theorization, “for it is not large historical discontinuities themselves, that leave their imprint on entire politics; it is memories of and beliefs about those events as interpreted and reinterpreted by

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<sup>85</sup> Hornung and Mochizuki, “Japan,” 96.

<sup>86</sup> Hopf, “The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory,” 177.

political actors”.<sup>87</sup> Japan’s interests are constructed through domestic sociopolitical discourse and are subject to change depending on the actors’ interpretation of external events. Over time, this interpretation is sedimented into security norms, which constitute the actors’ identity and regulate behavior. The intergenerational transfer of this set of norms and ideas – strategic culture – explains the consistency in actors’ policy choices. Understanding the process of how strategic culture becomes so ingrained to be taken for granted helps reexamine the various institutions in security policymaking that Realists take as given.

### 1.2.2. Configuration of domestic politics

The core assumption of the Liberal research tradition in International Relations is that “[s]ocietal ideas, interests, and institutions influence state behavior by shaping state preferences”.<sup>88</sup> The state itself is not a unitary actor but a representative institution that reflects the configuration of individual and group policy preferences. From this perspective, it is important to examine the preferences of societal actors and the dynamics of their interaction with other domestic actors. In this section, I present the work of scholars who discuss whose preferences matter and how these preferences are reflected in Japan’s state behavior. Thus, security policy change would mean that either the preferences of the dominant societal actor have changed due to sociological, ideological, institutional, and geopolitical changes or the power dynamics amongst the different societal actors have shifted.<sup>89</sup>

I recognize that there is another major strain of the Liberal research tradition, which is liberal institutionalism. I have selected to review literature on the configuration of domestic politics in

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<sup>87</sup> Katzenstein, *Cultural Norms and National Security*, 2.

<sup>88</sup> Moravcsik, “Taking Preferences Seriously,” 513.

<sup>89</sup> Samuels, *Securing Japan: Tokyo’s Grand Strategy and the Future of East Asia*, 71.

this thesis because it is more useful to explaining how domestic political actors contribute to establishing state preferences. The conception of Japan as a representative institution of social groups rather than the liberal institutionalist idea of the state as an actor influenced by universal values and global interdependence is more relevant to my research question of how the attitude of domestic actors based on a unique, collective experience affected security policy, and therefore would be a more competitive and rigorous rival for strategic culture. Liberal institutionalism may help understand Japan's commitment to international institutions but provides limited explanation for its security concerns. It has traditionally been more marginal given the dominance of constructivist norms of antimilitarism and has emphasized continuity in Japan's international strategy.<sup>90</sup>

Richard J. Samuels explores this domestic political diversity in his argument that the power dynamics within the different schools of strategic thought in Japan shape its grand strategy. He identifies four schools of thought – “Neoautonomists”, “Normal Nation-alists”, “Pacifists”, and “Middle Power Internationalists” – which are divided into a matrix depending on their preference regarding the use of force (“Use of Force is OK” or “No Use of Force”) and desired level of cooperation with the United States (“Distance from the United States” or “Hug United States”).<sup>91</sup> At different points in time, the discourse and competition among these groups produced a consensus on Japan's security policy such as the Konoe and Yoshida Doctrines. Samuels estimates that the consensus on the Yoshida Doctrine is changing and “Japan is headed toward a new consensus that will give the nation the autonomy and muscularity” it has lacked so far.<sup>92</sup> Samuels attributes this to a series of threats – an assertive rising China, ballistic missiles

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<sup>90</sup> Hughes, “Japan's ‘Resentful Realism’ and Balancing China's Rise,” 112.

<sup>91</sup> Samuels, *Securing Japan: Tokyo's Grand Strategy and the Future of East Asia*, 112.

<sup>92</sup> Samuels, 37.

from the North Korean regime, the fear of abandonment by the United States, and the relative decline of Japan's economy – that created the political impetus for anti-mainstream conservatives to seize power. Steadily, the conservatives sliced away Japan's antimilitarist constraints on the military, establishing firmer control over the security policymaking process and dominating the discourse on grand strategy.

Robert Pekkanen and Ellis S. Krauss also argue that domestic political competition has shaped Japan's security policy choices. Their explanation for the transformation of Japan's security policy considers the country's domestic structure comprehensively, linking the effects of the international system on domestic party politics together with the political impact of electoral and administrative reforms.<sup>93</sup> They argue that the security preferences of the LDP have become prevalent – or at least accepted for political convenience – across the political landscape. The LDP exercised policy leadership in four important cases: the Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law (2002), the Emergency Measures laws (2003), the SDF dispatch to Iraq (2004), and the debate on constitutional revision (2005).

Samuels and Pekkanen and Krauss provide a more comprehensive view of the effect of institutional changes, societal shifts, and external events on Japan's military establishment compared to Realist analyses. Samuels discusses how “antimainstream conservatives within the [LDP] used shifts in regional and world politics to seize power from within”.<sup>94</sup> They did so by establishing firmer political control over the bureaucracy, which had traditionally dominated the security policymaking process. The Cabinet Office and the prime minister were empowered with agenda-setting ability and exclusive institutional resources for policy research and

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<sup>93</sup> Pekkanen and Krauss, “Japan's ‘Coalition of the Willing’ on Security Policies,” 430–31.

<sup>94</sup> Samuels, *Securing Japan: Tokyo's Grand Strategy and the Future of East Asia*, 74.

proposals. Pekkanen and Krauss also discuss how the new prominence of the prime minister beginning with Nakasone in the 1980s gave Japanese prime ministers increased influence over foreign policymaking. Nakasone personally used television to cultivate an image within Japan as a world leader to implement executive decisions and increase influence over elections. These informal changes were bolstered by institutional reforms in 2001 that officially accorded the prime minister more power over security and crisis policymaking.

But their argument that certain types of external stimuli legitimized political interest groups or parties to implement institutional changes only explains the change in regulatory norms of Japan's defense policymaking. These regulatory norms may have redefined the boundaries for appropriate security policy processes, giving politicians and the executive branch more influence over policymaking capacity and crisis management abilities. But the assumption that the enlargement of the prime minister's security policy-related roles and abilities automatically pushed Japan's security orientation to be more assertive raises several questions. For example, how would Samuels and Pekkanen and Krauss explain the relationship between the change in the prime minister's role and the change in his security disposition; or how operational reforms persuaded LDP factions and other political parties to abandon the long-held Yoshida consensus? I argue that the mechanism of how political configuration and procedural reforms changed the constitutive norms, or the interests of political actors, remains unexplained.

I argue that these institutional reforms were paralleled by changes in the underlying strategic culture that provides the foundation of security ideas and preferences that is shared across the political spectrum. Political parties or political coalitions with different interests as portrayed in Samuels and Pekkanen and Krauss's works are also bound by the overarching constraints of

this strategic culture. Therefore, studying the social construction of how ideas interact and produce strategic culture is critical to understanding the deeper level of reality that Japanese policymakers act upon.

Although Pekkanen and Krauss and Samuels focus on the power shift among politicians or among political parties, Japan's bureaucracy has also been a significant player in security policymaking after WWII. The Japanese public and political elites identified the military's adventurism and rash, unilateral decisions as the cause of World War II in the Pacific and proceeded to impose strict measures to prevent a resurgence of militarism. In the process of introducing these controls, "the bureaucrats, not politicians became the main architects of the new Japan Defense Agency" and other components of Japan's security policy.<sup>95</sup> Thus, it is important to examine how Sebata Takao probes the power dynamics within Japan's bureaucracy for its effect on security policy.<sup>96</sup> He argues that "Japan's defense policy is decided by a tug of war among the politicians and bureaucrats rather than by a single rational choice."<sup>97</sup>

According to this view, Japan's increasing security assertiveness is not due to heightening external threat perception but to the growing power of military leaders over civilian officials in defense policymaking. Uniformed officers of the SDF and the Defense Agency expanded their influence in the 1980s and 1990s thanks to the increasing sophistication of military technology that civilian officials were unequipped to discuss in defense budget negotiations.<sup>98</sup> They also turned U.S. pressure into an excuse to argue for a higher JDA budget. The United States was a

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<sup>95</sup> Takako Hikotani, "The Paradox of Antimilitarism: Civil-Military Relations in Post World War II Japan" (Doctoral thesis, Columbia University, 2014), 99, <https://doi.org/10.7916/D8P849HZ>.

<sup>96</sup> Sebata's analysis is informed by the theoretical framework of Allison and Zelikow. See Allison and Zelikow, *Essence of Decision*.

<sup>97</sup> Sebata, *Japan's Defense Policy and Bureaucratic Politics, 1976-2007*, xiv.

<sup>98</sup> Sebata, 82-83.

willing accomplice in this tactic and at times, the pressure was requested by the JDA themselves.<sup>99</sup> In this analysis, U.S. pressure is not an external force as in Realist explanations but is transformed into a domestic factor through the conscious manipulation of this pretext to challenge antimilitarist constraints in bureaucratic competition.

It is unclear, however, why the armed forces' increased influence within the bureaucracy necessarily results in a more assertive security policy. It is an assumption that the military would always, or even is more likely to pursue a more assertive security policy.<sup>100</sup> A more established presence in the security policymaking process explains the armed forces' *ability* to make policy but not their *preference*. The driver of this group preference is left unexplained in Sebata's analysis.

Amy Catalinac's argument that the 1994 electoral reform changed the incentive structure for individual politicians so that they started paying more attention to security policy also confounds policymaking ability and interest with preference. A transition from the Single Non-Transferrable Vote in Multimember Districts electoral system to the Mixed-Member Districts raised the necessary vote share to win for each running candidate, facilitating a two-candidate competition dynamic.<sup>101</sup> This incentivized the candidates to focus on policy issues that appeal to the broader public despite the lower intensity of interest rather than specific policy issues for small groups with higher intensity of interest to capture the largest segment of voters. According to Catalinac, rather than pursuing infrastructure projects, tax breaks, and personal favors that

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<sup>99</sup> Sebata, 149.

<sup>100</sup> After all, Kier famously argues that the military does not always favor an offensive military doctrine. See Kier, *Imagining War: French and British Military Doctrine between the Wars*.

<sup>101</sup> Duverger, *Political Parties: Their Organization and Activity in the Modern State*, as cited in Catalinac, *Electoral Reform and National Security in Japan*, 51.

would benefit a small slice of the constituency, candidates would reflect voter interest in national security, as it is a broad policy that affects everyone. Thus, national security – a broad policy issue – became an attractive source of support for candidates. According to Catalinac, another effect of the electoral reform was the empowerment of party leadership relative to party members through control over candidate nominations, campaign funding allocation, and legislation outcomes. This importance of party discipline further encouraged candidates to focus on broad policy issues that will not just benefit themselves (such as ‘pork’ policies) but the party as a whole. With broad policies, individual politicians could get broad party support, which is necessary to pass legislation. Passing laws, in turn, is important to increasing their appeal amongst constituents.

The problem with Catalinac’s analysis is the relationship she assumes but does not justify, between a greater interest in security policymaking and specific policy changes. Increased attention to national security in a broad sense is a neutral stance that does not explain the specific choice in favor of a more *proactive* security policy. Specific policy choices would still depend on individual or group policy preferences, the discussion of which is absent in Catalinac’s argument. Thus, election reforms can explain the rise of new regulatory norms shaping how policymakers approach security policy, but as such it is insufficient to explain the emergence of new constitutive norms defining which security preferences the policymakers pursue. Paul Midford, in reviewing Catalinac’s book, raises another question about the relationship between the election reform and the direction of Japanese security policy change, arguing that “the book draws a straight line from district election strategies to Japanese security policy” by “ignoring intervening variables such as the bureaucracy, the cabinet, and LDP faction

leaders”.<sup>102</sup> Thus whether these actors would have had other policy preferences if not for the district election strategies, or if these policy preferences are the result of other political interactions is not addressed. This obscures the independent effect of the electoral reform.

Altogether, Liberal arguments present a relatively more inclusive picture of how the interplay of various security policy preferences affects Japan’s security policy. They point out intra-group divergences and explain inter-group power dynamics. Nevertheless, I highlight here that the lack of a cultural discussion of how security policy preferences are constructed in the first place runs the risk of overemphasizing individual choice and leadership from the influence of existing institutions and norms. For example, Sebata argues that security policy change results from the push and pull of influence among the bureaucracy and politicians. He assumes that each group within the security policymaking apparatus is interested in expanding its influence. Even if this were true, it does not tell us what the influence will be used for or how the influence will be attained. Sebata explains Japan’s increasing assertiveness in international security by the growing influence of the SDF and JDA within the bureaucracy. But this wrongly assumes that the armed forces are naturally inclined toward an offensive military doctrine.<sup>103</sup> According to Hikotani Takako, “it is problematic to assume that the military will have certain tendencies, and that their preferences will be uniform”.<sup>104</sup>

This rebuttal applies to other scholars who work under the assumption that certain actors have predetermined preferences or that their preferences are reactions to structural changes. Dissecting actor preferences to understand how their constitutive norms and values interact

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<sup>102</sup> Midford, “Electoral Reform and National Security in Japan,” 154.

<sup>103</sup> Kier, *Imagining War: French and British Military Doctrine between the Wars*.

<sup>104</sup> Zisk, *Engaging the Enemy*. As cited in Hikotani, “The Paradox of Antimilitarism,” 20.

with new external threats and events is important to prevent overstating the influence of structural conditions. In particular, I argue that there are collective constitutive norms in the form of a strategic culture that provides the benchmark for security preferences for all actors. Strategic culture takes analytical priority in explaining the norms and values that prescribe the preferences of each individual or group actor, which gives a more comprehensive and accurate picture of stakeholder interaction. It can explain a broader set of phenomena because “[c]ollective identities can compel actors to make choices that are costly from the perspective of regulatory norms and that serve no apparent (rational) purpose”.<sup>105</sup>

### 1.2.3. Changing norms

A number of scholars who broadly belong to the Constructivist research tradition argue that change in Japan’s security policy is shaped by norms that affect political actors’ ideas, perceptions, and behavior. Explanations offered by this group of scholars may be the most difficult to characterize and categorize because they have differing ideas about the ontology, epistemology, and causal influence of their normative variables, only agreeing that norms (in whichever form – identity, culture, norm, etc.) matter (and even then, to differing degrees).

According to Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, there are regulative norms that “order and constrain behavior” and constitutive norms that “create new actors, interests, or categories of action”.<sup>106</sup> At the end of their evolution, “norms acquire a taken-for-granted quality and are no longer a matter of broad public debate”.<sup>107</sup> Once internalized, they no longer express

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<sup>105</sup> Katzenstein, *Cultural Norms and National Security*, 27.

<sup>106</sup> Finnemore and Sikkink, “International Norm Dynamics and Political Change,” 891. But the distinction between regulative and constitutive norms was first introduced by Rawls in Rawls, “Two Concepts of Rules.”

<sup>107</sup> Finnemore and Sikkink, “International Norm Dynamics and Political Change,” 895.

individually held preferences, values, or ideas but become a collective practice that forms part of the objective reality “that often, though not always, commands some formal sanctioning mechanisms”.<sup>108</sup> Thus the central proposition of these scholars is that the emergence and internalization of new norms resulted in a change in Japan’s security policy.

Several scholars use the concept of identity or self-role conception to explain the change in Japan’s security policy.<sup>109</sup> Among them, Bhubhinder Singh extensively elaborates on the concept of identity. He argues that the transition of Japan’s ‘peace-state’ security identity in the Cold War period to an ‘international-state’ identity in the post-Cold War period changed Japan’s security policy. Using Andrew L. Oros’s definition of security identity, Singh explains that it refers to “collectively held principles that provide the overarching framework that determines a state’s policy in the domain of security affairs”.<sup>110</sup> It is affected by material factors such as territory and population size and immaterial factors such as historical and cultural contexts at both international and domestic levels.

According to Singh, “at any given time, multiple identities coexist pushing actors to behave in varying ways... ideas are constantly challenged, produced and reproduced in debates within communities and societies”.<sup>111</sup> The dominant security identity created through this debate or negotiation between groups of different identities creates an “intersubjective reality”, which is the mutually constituted and shared reality amongst understanding subjects.<sup>112</sup> It ‘co-creates’

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<sup>108</sup> Katzenstein, *Cultural Norms and National Security*, 21.

<sup>109</sup> Catalinac, “Identity Theory and Foreign Policy”; Gustafsson, Hagström, and Hanssen, “Japan’s Pacifism Is Dead”; Ryu, “The Road to Japan’s ‘Normalization’: Japan’s Foreign Policy Orientation since the 1990s”; Singh, *Japan’s Security Identity*.

<sup>110</sup> Singh, *Japan’s Security Identity*, 41.

<sup>111</sup> Saideman, “Conclusion: Thinking Theoretically about Identity and Foreign Policy.” As cited in Singh, *Japan’s Security Identity*, 44.

<sup>112</sup> Bukovansky, “American Identity and Neutral Rights from Independence to the War of 1812.” As cited in Singh, *Japan’s Security Identity*, 42.

the rules and constraints of the actors' security environment. However, according to Singh, identity conflict occurs when the dominant identity becomes increasingly irrelevant to historical conditions and there is a competition between identities that prescribe contradictory behavior. In Japan, this conflict resulted in the transition from its initial 'peace-state' identity to an 'international state' identity, which changed the Japanese government's definition of national security, the SDF's involvement in regional and international military affairs, and the domestic security policymaking regime.

It remains unclear whether Singh's concept of security identity indeed undergoes an *ideational* process of formation and change. If ideas are *constantly* competing, is the 'dominant' security identity dominant at all and how does it exert influence on behavior? Especially if actors' reality is already conditioned by a specific role conception, subordinate identities could exist, but they will have less opportunity and disagreements on which to challenge the dominant identity. The doubt over the normative influence of security identity is deepened by Singh's idea that "[w]hile the producer of identity is unable to control what it means to others, it has control over what identity should develop or adopt and how it is exercised"<sup>113</sup>. This suggests a Gramscian use of security identity. If "[i]n relation to Japan, the security policymaking elite, to a large extent, controls (even manipulates) the identity construction process", how is security identity any different from a propagandistic tool by policymakers to veil their true intentions in rhetoric that the public would more easily accept?<sup>114</sup> The above ideas of multiple sub-identities and instrumentalization of identity would suffer from the same criticism against the second and fourth generations of strategic culture research, which will be elaborated in Section 2.1.1.

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<sup>113</sup> Singh, *Japan's Security Identity*, 37.

<sup>114</sup> Singh, 43.

At a basic level, Singh's concept of security identity seems to resemble strategic culture as they both refer to a collectively held set of ideas, norms, and principles that shape states' security behavior. However, there is one major difference. Security identity for him "specifically focuses on the identity that is portrayed overseas or externally at both the regional and international levels".<sup>115</sup> This means that the identity mainly accounts for what kind of role Japanese policymakers aspire for Japan to take in regional and international security affairs. It focuses on who Japan wants to be to others and how it will act vis-à-vis other states. However, strategic culture influences policymakers' fundamental attitudes toward defense and security issues, including attitudes on policies that have a primarily domestic dimension, such as the role of the military within the state. I argue that Japan's strategic culture is not only important in its inter-state interactions but also for the domestic configuration of power. Focusing on Japan's international role is a secondary concern because according to Kier, "[i]n designing military policy, civilians address their concerns about domestic threats and stability, such as whether the proposed military policy will threaten civilian control or the army's stability to execute its domestic responsibilities".<sup>116</sup> Therefore, even decisions on overseas military deployment are dependent on domestic political agreement on the purpose of the military and its permissible scope of activities. Simply, I believe that policymakers' strategic thought begins with how they perceive the military first before they turn to how they perceive outside threats.

Thus, the available roles Japan can play internationally are developed and maintained within the context of strategic culture,<sup>117</sup> or can be understood as "the expressions of the underlying

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<sup>115</sup> Singh, 42.

<sup>116</sup> Kier, *Imagining War: French and British Military Doctrine between the Wars*, 21.

<sup>117</sup> Jo Hatch and Schultz, "Relations between Organizational Culture, Identity and Image." As cited in Vella and Melewar, "Explicating the Relationship between Identity and Culture: A Multi-Perspective Conceptual Model," 14–15.

culture”.<sup>118</sup> Then, the domestic manifestation of strategic culture may resemble Oros’s argument that Japan’s security identity “is one of *domestic* antimilitarism—focusing on limits to the reemergence of militarist elements at home, yet still accepting as legitimate a defensive role for a military at home”(original emphasis).<sup>119</sup>

Yet Oros specifically distinguishes himself from Berger (whose concept of culture I discuss in the next chapter) by explaining that security identity “does not provide the ‘goals and norms’ for individual political actors, but rather it sets such goals for the state as a whole, and in doing so sets boundaries for the appropriate political action of individual political actors”.<sup>120</sup> He argues that “security identity is not concerned with what political actors seek to accomplish but rather with how they will attempt to accomplish their goal given the overarching framework of [security identity of domestic antimilitarism]”.<sup>121</sup> Security identity is only one factor of security policy that affects its process, not the outcome. Therefore, in 2008, Oros argues that the little change that has happened in Japan’s security policy is “the result not of changes in Japan’s security identity, however, but rather a changed configuration of political power domestically and internationally, and a new international security environment”.<sup>122</sup> In 2008, Oros believes that Japan’s security policy has not changed as much as other scholars such as those mentioned here believe and that it will continue to be constrained by Japan’s antimilitarist security identity. Almost ten years later, in 2017, however, Oros recognizes that a bigger change has occurred in Japan’s security policy, or a “security renaissance”, by which he refers to the newfound

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<sup>118</sup> Seppo, *From Guilt to Responsibility and Beyond | The Evolution of German Strategic Culture after the End of the Cold War*, 19.

<sup>119</sup> Oros, *Normalizing Japan*, 6.

<sup>120</sup> Oros, 12.

<sup>121</sup> Oros, 12.

<sup>122</sup> Oros, 73.

openness amongst domestic political actors in discussing Japan's international role, accompanied by growing ground, air, and naval military capabilities; deepening security alliance with the United States; and institutionalization of defense organizations.<sup>123</sup> According to Oros, the magnitude and quality of policy change in the period of "renaissance" from 2006 to 2016 is different from the previous "Gradual Awakening" in which security developments occurred but were insufficient to amount to a "security renaissance".<sup>124</sup> He believes this "renaissance" to have emerged from the interaction between Japan's relative decline in regional power, an intensifying perception of security threats, and domestic political reordering, which "[created] a new domestic political landscape and new conceptions of how to provide for a secure Japan in this changed international order".<sup>125</sup> Still, he maintains that "Japan's security renaissance does not represent a break from the past but rather a new framing of the present in relation to the past"<sup>126</sup> and insists that "Japan's postwar antimilitarist legacy will also continue to critically shape Japan's security future".<sup>127</sup> While I agree that the influence of Japan's antimilitarist strategic culture will not disappear overnight, I disagree with Oros's overemphasis on its continuity. I argue that Japan's 'security renaissance' was undergirded by a qualitatively different set of norms and strategic culture, as my own analysis will show.

In contrast to the above study on broad collectively shared ideas, Glenn D. Hook focuses his analysis on the specific mechanisms of how norms were transformed, and how these new norms resulted in Japanese security policy change. He examines how antimilitarist ideas, norms, and language legitimized the demilitarization and later the militarization processes of Japan and

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<sup>123</sup> Oros, *Japan's Security Renaissance*, 1–3.

<sup>124</sup> Oros, 7.

<sup>125</sup> Oros, 16.

<sup>126</sup> Oros, 171.

<sup>127</sup> Oros, 184.

ultimately shaped its defense and security policies. He argues that “political leaders can act to direct mass opinion towards acquiescence, acceptance or denial of militarization processes, depending on the mode of discourse and rhetoric selected”.<sup>128</sup> This highlights the power of language as being somewhat able to constitute, rather than merely describe, reality. Thus, changing the use of language to reevaluate and legitimate the activities of the armed forces changed the perception of the SDF and norms around the military, ultimately changing Japan’s security policy.

Hook’s work demonstrates the role of the specific communication tools or linguistic devices used to influence individual security policies within the larger framework of the prevalent strategic culture. An accurate study of these rhetorical tools is not possible without analyzing the underlying strategic culture that empowers or rejects these tools. Therefore, referring to Hook’s examples of success and failure can provide indirect evidence of the prevailing strategic culture and suggest potential indicators for any future study on strategic culture.

Hook finds that the dissociation of SDF’s overseas deployments from the IJA’s aggressive overseas wars under the slogan of ‘international contribution’ was key to facilitating participation in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR), peacekeeping operations (PKO), and rear-area support. The political and military elites’ rhetorical branding changed the mass perception that first, the SDF could be employed for non-military purposes, and second, that this type of mission could elevate Japan’s international standing, rather than inviting criticism. It does not mean that language is purely a tool for elite manipulation, however, as rhetorical devices cannot diverge too much from the public’s existing norms. The ‘international

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<sup>128</sup> Hook, *Militarisation and Demilitarisation in Contemporary Japan*, 129.

contribution' slogan was successful precisely because it resolved the dissonance between the public's historical fear of a reckless military and its existing support of a limited SDF role involving self-defense and disaster relief.

Political leaders' linguistic devices have not always been successful, though. Hook explains how the 'unsinkable aircraft carrier' metaphor used by Prime Minister Nakasone in 1983 to promote Japan's role as a forward-attack platform was ineffective. Hook's analysis is that "the implication of deploying Japanese military forces in such new roles was the reason that 'unsinkable aircraft carrier' did not prove a particularly efficacious metaphor" as such a role would violate Japan's constitutional constraint on the SDF.<sup>129</sup> In effect, Nakasone did not succeed because his metaphor suggested overstepping the existing normative boundary of acceptable military behavior.

While Hook shows how language could be used to reframe issues, David Leheny shows how international norms can be recontextualized to provide the necessary justification for policy change. Leheny finds that "the meaning of norms can be 'de-linked' or 'decoupled' from their original purposes".<sup>130</sup> Because norms are socially constructed, they are not absolute across contexts or across time. Different norms apply under different situations and a norm may change in meaning depending on the social discourse. He argues that Japanese conservatives used this fluidity to recontextualize international norms according to their own preferences and "[encourage] citizens to recognize threats and to adopt [conservative] views about the proper solutions".<sup>131</sup> When, after the 9/11 attacks, the war on terror allowed U.S. policymakers to

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<sup>129</sup> Hook, 144.

<sup>130</sup> Leheny, *Think Global, Fear Local*, 12–13.

<sup>131</sup> Leheny, 7.

justify an expansion of traditional counterterrorism policy, Japanese officials quickly exploited this momentum to expand Japan's understanding of a terrorist threat. They used this rationale to address their frustrations against North Korean incursions into Japanese waters. The wide publicization of North Korean abductions of Japanese citizens fueled the notion that North Korea is a more urgent and dangerous terrorist threat for ordinary Japanese than the distant existence of al Qaeda.<sup>132</sup> The fear provoked by 9/11 was thus recontextualized to Japan's domestic fear of North Korea to draw parallels to what could happen to Japan without tougher security policies.

While Leheny does not claim that this one instance transformed the entire direction of Japan's security policy, his explanation provides a pathway for how individual policies, however significant and entrenched they seem, can be changed. Like with Hook's theory, Leheny's study on the role of elites' calculated recontextualization in major security policy change could be an important reference for my study on the precise mechanism for strategic cultural change.

In Leheny and Hook's analyses, political actors are both aware of the social attitudes toward the use of military force and capable of manipulating them through rhetoric and problematization to a certain extent. Their studies help understand the complex dynamic between the preferences of political actors and the prevailing norms. Within the boundaries of antimilitarist norms, Japanese policymakers found room for maneuver to incrementally expand the roles of the SDF, which had a profound impact on the public's attitude toward defense and security issues. Legalizing the overseas dispatch of the SDF and armed response against North Korean incursions legitimated the SDF and recognized their potential to contribute to certain

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<sup>132</sup> Leheny, 158.

missions. This implies a shift in the focus of Japan's security policy from *whether* the SDF should be used or not to *how* it should be used. By focusing on language and norms they can show the specific turning point of public attitude toward the military.

The benefit of this methodology is also endorsed by Peter Katzenstein, who “insists that ‘culture’ is not a helpful analytical tool for empirical research; instead, it is more useful to analyze particular aspects of culture (here, social and legal norms)” or security-related norms.<sup>133</sup> But if norms are particular aspects of culture, we can assume them to be broadly – although not completely – consistent with the underlying culture. Thus, norms are not isolated ‘pockets’ of institutionalized values but pieces of the larger fabric of culture. I would argue that providing a larger context to the norms, language, and ideas often used around security policy is the key contribution of strategic culture. This means that the arguments in this section are not mutually exclusive but can be built on top of the broader strategic cultural theory. By fundamentally demonstrating that strategic culture has changed and that this new strategic culture influences Japanese security policymaking, my study can provide the basis for which works like Hook's and Leheny's can further the discussion on *how*.

Apart from these norm constructivists who believe that actor behavior is shaped by intersubjective norms and logics of appropriateness, there is a group of relational constructivists who believe that differentiation and relationality are the main premises of identity construction. Relational constructivist scholars studying Japan construct Japan's peaceful identity in relation to a more aggressive ‘Other’ – usually China, North Korea, and Russia – differentiating Japan's

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<sup>133</sup> Katzenstein, *Cultural Norms and National Security*, 2.

peace identity from their ‘unpeaceful’ identities.<sup>134</sup> Simply, Japan knows and believes it is a peaceful state because it sees other states that are not being peaceful. Relational constructivists explain the changes in Japan’s security policy such as Abe’s slogan of ‘proactive pacifism’ as a responsibility that Japan must take up to defend peace from its selected unpeaceful Others. They claim to offer a more flexible account of how identities can change according to interactions between the Self and Other rather than limiting identity to domestic production. While the behavior of neighbors may affect self-perception and security policy choices, I disagree that relationality is the bedrock of identity construction. I believe there is a fundamental perception of Self that precedes interactions between the Self and Other(s). More importantly, relational constructivists struggle to explain the origin of Japan’s postwar antimilitarist identity as well as upon which ‘Others’ its antimilitarist identity is based.<sup>135</sup>

Hatakeyama Kyoko’s *Japan’s Evolving Security Policy: Militarisation within a Pacifist Tradition* may seem to fit under this Constructivist category because in the author’s own words, her book “analyses the shift in Japan’s security policy from a constructivist perspective”.<sup>136</sup> Hatakeyama writes that she examines the interaction effect of international and domestic norms and the collective ideas of political parties. To do this, she categorizes Japan’s political parties into two groups – anti-militarist and ‘normal state’ – and measures the influence of each group by the number of seats they obtained. Given the questions of whether this is an appropriate measure of the influence of the antimilitarist norm, and whether she is treating antimilitarism as a norm among party members, it is dubious that her work is truly constructivist. I agree with

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<sup>134</sup> See examples of works othering China, Russia, and North Korea, respectively: Yennie Lindgren and Lindgren, “Identity Politics and the East China Sea”; Bukh, *Japan’s National Identity and Foreign Policy*; Hagström and Hanssen, “The North Korean Abduction Issue.”

<sup>135</sup> Hanssen, *Temporal Identities and Security Policy in Postwar Japan*, 10–11.

<sup>136</sup> Hatakeyama, *Japan’s Evolving Security Policy*, 2.

David Leheny's review of this work that it resembles the liberal approach of equating normative with ideational factors.<sup>137</sup> He also points to how the book assumes that party balances in the Diet is the chief predictor of security policy orientation and questions how constructivist this approach is. Therefore, while I appreciate her effort to contextualize Japan's domestic norms within the international normative environment, I fundamentally believe that her focus on the distribution of political power absent an analysis of the origin, institutionalization, and influence of the norms is not a constructivist account of Japan's security policy.

In the works reviewed above, the public's beliefs seem to be controlled by the elites. As they often initiate efforts to modify or manipulate norms, it is easy to forget that policymakers are themselves influenced by the prevalent strategic culture. It is wrong to assume that policymakers and the public inherently have different security preferences or different sensitivity to cultural influence. Policymakers are not moderators but participants in cultural discourse. The works above present policymakers as bound not to cultural influence but to the political pressures of public opinion. While this is not completely inaccurate, generalizing this to assume that policymakers can detach themselves from cultural influence is misleading. This misperception occurs because norms are a more manageable unit of culture for policymakers to modify. Expanding the scope of study to how policymakers behave within the larger strategic culture – how they negotiate and compromise to construct culture, which then constrains their behavior – will result in a more accurate understanding of the level of agency elites can exercise over the normative framework of security policymaking. This is important to understanding how likely and quickly cultural norms would change.

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<sup>137</sup> Leheny, "Japan's Evolving Security Policy."

My broader critique is that a major feature of many of these Constructivist theories is that the actors and the normative variable – be it identity, norm, or culture – are co-constitutive and intersubjective. This presumption of mind-world monism posits a fluidity and continuity between the actor, the normative variable, and the empirical reality. The concept of monism is not inherently flawed,<sup>138</sup> and the Constructivist scholars reviewed here do make an effort to specify the causal relationships between these three aspects of their model, but I argue that the role of actor agency and the interaction effect of normative and material variables on policy decisions remain undertheorized. This is because accepting that actors’ perceptions, mindsets, and behaviors are intrinsically tinted by the normative context implies that the actor’s agency and empirical events will not have an independent effect on the actor’s actions and decisions. This possibly exaggerates the normative influence on policy decisions and complicates the understanding of how, then, the normative variable could change.

#### 1.2.4. Discussion

In this section, I evaluated three major groups of arguments in the scholarly literature on Japanese security policy change that are each derived from the Realist (responding to the unfavorable regional balance of power), Liberal (configuration of domestic politics), and Constructivist (changing norms) research traditions. While they make a strong case that Japan’s security policy has indeed changed through a variety of processes, I find the logic of the existing explanations insufficient to explain the specific content of these changes because they do not explain the content and source of policy preferences of Japanese policymakers that drove the change. Realists assume that external threats must be addressed without explaining why

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<sup>138</sup> See Jackson, “Foregrounding Ontology.”

Japanese leaders perceive certain incidents or states as threatening (such as potential balancing from China and North Korea) and not others (such as abandonment by the United States during the Gulf War), and why their evaluation changed over time (for example, a fairly lenient attitude towards China until the early 2000s but more alarmist since 2010). The conclusions of these authors on Japan's security policy often remain too general, which results in contradictory explanations for Japan's security policy change.

Liberals use the dynamics of competing domestic interests to explain security policy change. But they fail to address the process of preference formation, leaving a gap in their logic. They cannot explain how external events or domestic structural reforms have led to security policy changes. I agree with Peter Katzenstein's criticism that "it focuses solely on regulatory norms and neglects altogether the constitutive norms that define actor identities and also shape actor interests".<sup>139</sup> The narrow focus on regulatory norms, which define the standards of appropriate behavior, assumes that "actors are autonomous from their environment" and "fails to recognize political identity as a social fact that is always present and often salient".<sup>140</sup>

While Constructivist arguments here more clearly define the relationship between external events and the security preferences of Japan's elites and public, they only provide a snapshot of certain policy decisions, rather than an explanation for Japan's overall security orientation. I suggest strategic culture as a better alternative to help better understand the normative ecosystem comprised of various domestic actors and historical events that produce the intersubjective reality of Japan's policymakers. How exactly it does so is elaborated in the next

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<sup>139</sup> Katzenstein, *Cultural Norms and National Security*, 22.

<sup>140</sup> Katzenstein, 27.

chapter where I examine the concept of strategic culture more generally before offering my choice of strategic cultural concept.

This thesis provides a much-needed renovation of how to understand the normative environment of Japan's security policymaking processes and actors. As demonstrated in my discussion of the literature, existing accounts of Japan's security policy evolution lack a coherent understanding of the normative framework of Japan's security policymaking and the interaction between normative and material influences on policy. With a critical realist approach to strategic culture that methodologically disassembles the various dimensions that make up the comprehensive reality of decisionmaking in Japan, I explain both the direction and pace of Japan's security policy changes. This thesis also scrutinizes ideas that are entrenched in the existing literature but not critically examined such as the substance of Japan's postwar antimilitarism, which have created gaps of understanding between the explanations of different research traditions that are wider and more intractable than necessary. The relationship between antimilitarism, pacifism, and pragmatism which has been thoroughly confounded and confused in the existing literature is elucidated here to produce a more accurate analysis of which norms influence Japan's security policy and to what extent.

## Chapter 2. Strategic Culture: Theory and Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to build an understanding of strategic culture and contextualize its use within the study of Japan's security policy. I begin with the general literature on strategic culture, narrowing into the conceptual approach I adopt for my case studies. I aim to operationalize the notion of 'strategic culture' in the specific context of Japan.

To do this, I discuss critically the conceptual problems of each generation of strategic culture scholars and the efficacy of their solutions. In particular, I examine the essential questions about the concept of strategic culture and how it affects strategic behavior raised in the theoretical debate between Colin S. Gray and Alastair Iain Johnston. Evaluating the differences in Gray and Johnston's strategic cultural approaches helps me identify and justify a suitable concept for my research. I also discuss and evaluate Thomas U. Berger's concept of strategic culture used in his study of postwar Japanese and German security policy as a foundational work for understanding strategic culture in the context of Japan's security policy. But I argue that there are several problems in his concept that could be overcome with a new framework that I introduce, which is taking a critical realist approach to strategic culture. Finally, I provide the rationale for my case selection. Overall, this chapter explains my selected conceptual framework of strategic culture and the methodology I put to the task.

### 2.1. Strategic culture as theory

I first define and trace the concept of strategic culture as it has progressed through four research generations. By "generation" I mean a group of contemporary scholars with similar core beliefs about the concept of strategic culture. There is an approximate marker for when each generation began. The first generation of research on strategic culture emerged in the early 1980s and

consists of authors such as Colin Gray and David Jones. The second generation started in the mid-1980s and is mainly led by Bradley S. Klein. The third generation is epitomized in Alastair Iain Johnston's work from the mid-1990s. The fourth generation began in the 2010s with the works of Alan S. Bloomfield. Notwithstanding the development of subsequent generations of strategic culture scholarship, the new and old works of prior scholars have remained relevant to the discussion of how to conceptualize strategic culture. As the Gray-Johnston debate shows, the first-generation scholarship of Gray continued to engage with later conceptions of strategic culture. Still, this chronological classification best organizes each generation according to its distinctive characteristics.

### 2.1.1. What is strategic culture?

The specific term "strategic culture" was first coined in Jack Snyder's 1977 report sponsored by the U.S. Air Force to examine the factors affecting Soviet reactions to potential U.S. nuclear operations. Snyder sought to "(1) [provide] a context for a better understanding of the intellectual, institutional, and strategic-cultural determinants that would bound the Soviet decisionmaking process in a crisis, and (2) [speculate] on the dominant behavioral propensities that would motivate-and constrain-the Soviet leaders".<sup>141</sup> In effect, the notion of 'strategic culture' revealed the limits of prevailing systemic and material variables as explanations for Soviet strategic behavior. Strategic culture included cultural dispositions into the alleged 'rationality' of security policymaking.

Snyder's report's assumption that strategic culture affects security policy decisions has become the distinctive and formative theoretical foundation for subsequent research generations.

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<sup>141</sup> Snyder, "The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Limited Nuclear Operations," iii.

Snyder defined strategic culture as “the sum total of ideas, conditioned emotional responses, and patterns of habitual behavior that members of a national strategic community have acquired through instruction or imitation and share with each other.”<sup>142</sup> This understanding suggests that strategic culture is a learned, shared, and internalized set of ideas rather than the result of deep and indigenous structural factors such as geography or religion.<sup>143</sup> Importantly, he adds that strategic culture influences but does not determine strategic behavior, explaining that “the notions of strategic culture, strategic doctrine, and crisis style...suggest that the evaluation of the rationality of alternative courses of action *in a specific situation* will reflect, in part, stylistic and cultural predisposition”(original emphasis).<sup>144</sup>

In his subsequent work, Jack Snyder downplayed the importance of strategic culture and argued that culture only plays a genuine role when “a distinctive approach to strategy becomes ingrained in training, institutions, and force posture”.<sup>145</sup> For Snyder, military doctrine, is “a set of beliefs about the nature of war and the keys to success on the battlefield” that “[provides] a framework for organizing information and criteria for evaluating its importance”.<sup>146</sup> According to Snyder, military doctrine is a major component and a source of bias in determining the selection of an offensive or defensive strategy. While military doctrine provides the necessary simplification and structure in military decisionmaking, oversimplification of complex and disparate tasks can be a source of bias. This is especially so as the core assumptions of military doctrine are formulated by early experiences or training, and they are difficult to change even in the presence of disconfirming evidence. However, unlike Elizabeth Kier in *Imagining War*,

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<sup>142</sup> Snyder, 8.

<sup>143</sup> Snyder, 38.

<sup>144</sup> Snyder, 40.

<sup>145</sup> Snyder, “The Concept of Strategic Culture,” 7.

<sup>146</sup> Snyder, *The Ideology of the Offensive*, 27.

Snyder does not seem to believe that military doctrine is the result, or the expression of a strategic culture.<sup>147</sup> Instead, he sees cultural explanations as the last resort because they “tend to be vague in their logic, with causes that are quite distant in time and sequence from their purported consequences. Often, culture is a residual label that is affixed to ‘explain’ outcomes that cannot be explained in any more concrete way”.<sup>148</sup> He relegates culture to the end of the line of available policy explanations, asserting that “differences in military strategy across states might be explained solely in terms of objective differences in the structure of their external or internal circumstances, without regard to subjective cultural differences”.<sup>149</sup>

Building upon Jack Snyder’s initial work, the first generation of strategic culture scholars emerging in the early 1980s mainly focused on explaining the differences in Soviet and U.S. nuclear strategies.<sup>150</sup> Instead of Snyder’s thin conception of ‘culture’ as *persistence* of a chosen approach rather than *cultural distinctiveness*, the first generation had a deeper conception of strategic culture as nationally and historically embedded beliefs and attitudes toward strategic choices.<sup>151</sup> Colin Gray contends that “[s]trategic culture should be approached both as a shaping context for behaviour and itself as a constituent of that behaviour”.<sup>152</sup> All human beings are ‘encultured’ actors, whose choices are influenced by their cultural education, upbringing, and environment. Culture not only constitutes the interests of actors but also ‘weaves’ meaning into reality. Hence, for Gray, it is conceptually misguided to distinguish strategic culture from strategic behavior. Despite his claim that “[t]here is vastly more to strategy and strategic

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<sup>147</sup> Kier, *Imagining War: French and British Military Doctrine between the Wars*.

<sup>148</sup> Snyder, “The Concept of Strategic Culture,” 4.

<sup>149</sup> Snyder, 4–5.

<sup>150</sup> Johnston, “Thinking about Strategic Culture,” 36.

<sup>151</sup> See Booth, “The Concept of Strategic Culture Affirmed”; Jones, “Soviet Strategic Culture.”

<sup>152</sup> Gray, “Strategic Culture as Context,” 50.

behaviour than culture alone”,<sup>153</sup> he also argues that “the effects of strategic culture will be more or less strongly stamped upon strategic behaviour of all kinds”.<sup>154</sup>

Gray provides seventeen dimensions of strategy which are categorized into ‘People and Politics’ (includes people, politics, culture), ‘Preparation for War’ (includes economics, organization, strategic theory, and doctrine), and ‘War Proper’ (includes geography, military operations, and time).<sup>155</sup> It should be noted that culture and strategic doctrine are themselves included in these dimensions that are supposed to affect strategic performance. Accordingly, according to Gray, a cultural approach is not categorically different from, say, a Realist approach because “culture embraces both ideas and behaviour and that it is inescapable: one cannot sensibly contrast culturalist with other approaches to politics or strategy, because all human beings are culturally educated or programmed. So, all strategic behaviour is cultural behaviour”.<sup>156</sup> This is why Gray does not seek to predict strategic behavior. Instead, he seeks to interpret and describe the observed behavior with contextual understanding.<sup>157</sup>

In the mid-1980s, the second generation of strategic culture literature appeared with “the premise that there is a vast difference between what leaders think or say they are doing and the deeper motives for what in fact they do”.<sup>158</sup> Bradley S. Klein’s Gramscian conception of strategic culture focuses “on the power relations of particular regimes and classes which are able to generate ideas and practices that gain the normalizing status of common currency”.<sup>159</sup>

In stark contrast to the previous generation, Klein’s concept grants full agency to political

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<sup>153</sup> Gray, *Modern Strategy*, 130.

<sup>154</sup> Gray, 150.

<sup>155</sup> Gray, 24.

<sup>156</sup> Gray, 129.

<sup>157</sup> Gray, 136.

<sup>158</sup> Johnston, “Thinking about Strategic Culture,” 39.

<sup>159</sup> Klein, “Hegemony and Strategic Culture,” 134–35.

leaders who intentionally manufacture strategic culture as a tool to produce legitimacy for their strategic choices. This excessive instrumentality is criticized by Johnston (of the third generation), who argues that “elites, too, are socialized in the strategic culture they produce, and thus can be constrained by the symbolic myths which their predecessors created”.<sup>160</sup> Given the power of social discourse to influence and constrain choices, elites cannot be expected to isolate themselves and stay above the discourse – even those they fabricate. By assuming that they are, Klein’s idea of strategic culture resembles that of Realists – as an artificial rhetorical pretext rather than a socially constructed and collectively shared set of security preferences.

The third generation of strategic culture thinkers emerged in the 1990s after the Cold War. While some of the members of this generation use slightly different concepts of strategic culture including ‘political-military culture’, ‘military culture’, and ‘organizational culture’, they are commonly critical of the limited ability of Realists’ structural-material variables to explain strategic choice. Belonging to this generation, Johnston describes it as “both more rigorous and more eclectic in its conceptualization of ideational independent variables and more narrowly focused on particular strategic decisions as dependent variables”.<sup>161</sup> Of the previous generations, he laments that “the analysis of ideationally based cross-national variation in strategic behavior has been fundamentally hampered by empirically untestable conceptualizations of strategic culture”.<sup>162</sup> Thus, he and other third-generation scholars, such as Elizabeth Kier and Jeffrey Legro, are careful to separate strategic culture from strategic behavior to avoid the first generation’s overly deterministic definition of culture that both constitutes and contextualizes

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<sup>160</sup> Johnston, “Thinking about Strategic Culture,” 40.

<sup>161</sup> Johnston, *Cultural Realism*, 18.

<sup>162</sup> Johnston, 32.

strategic behavior. They test the effect of culture on behavior by measuring how much the identified strategic culture is reflected in actual strategic behavior.

Lastly, an emergent fourth generation from the early 2010s claims to innovate by conceptualizing strategic culture as containing multiple coexistent strategic subcultures. Bloomfield criticizes existing strategic cultural models as being too coherent – strategic culture is conceptualized as a monolithic, singular entity and is unable to explain change or aberration in strategic behavior. His solution is to suggest that a state’s strategic culture includes various subcultures which he calls ‘strategic cognitive schemas’.<sup>163</sup> These subcultures are mainly distinguished by a particular cultural process of how to interpret their state’s international context, including who their state’s friends and foes are.<sup>164</sup> They coexist and compete to gain influence over strategic decisionmaking. Changes in strategic behavior, then, can be attributed to this competitive subculture dynamic. While I would agree that multiple epistemic communities can exist within a strategic culture, Bloomfield’s proposed model envisages various domestic groups like political parties and ethnic groups promoting their own favored subculture, which suggests that ‘subculture’ is an instrument for political influence rather than real ideological differences.<sup>165</sup> In this sense, strategic subcultures resemble the second generation’s “instrumental treatment of strategic culture as a resource for political actors”.<sup>166</sup> This also closely resembles the Liberal argument that the interaction and competition between multiple domestic interest groups decide policy.

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<sup>163</sup> Bloomfield, “Time to Move On: Reconceptualizing the Strategic Culture Debate,” 452.

<sup>164</sup> Bloomfield, 438.

<sup>165</sup> Bloomfield, 438.

<sup>166</sup> Seppo, *From Guilt to Responsibility and Beyond | The Evolution of German Strategic Culture after the End of the Cold War*, 36.

In conclusion, the different epistemological claims by the four research generations show that strategic cultural studies provide multiple theoretical propositions about the nature and effect of strategic culture. The first, third, and fourth-generation scholars would agree that culture constrains behavior but dispute the exact mechanism. Second-generation scholars fundamentally disagree, instead arguing that elite agency is what shapes strategic culture, not vice versa. There is also no coherent mechanism across the four generations that explains how strategic culture interacts with the systemic and material variables that affect security policy. Therefore, the only proposition common across the existing scholarship that is distinctive and formative to cultural studies is that strategic culture *matters* to defense and security policy.

Strategic culture is assumed to be naturally occurring as a reflection of deep social structures (first generation), an artificially constructed political instrument (second generation), a manifestation of classical strategic thoughts (third generation), and the prize of a contest between multiple coexisting subcultures (fourth generation). The current literature struggles to explain change in strategic culture and largely assumes continuity. Oftentimes the theory of change provided is not only insufficient to explain the impact and outcomes of strategic cultural change but also contradictory or conflicting with the given understanding of strategic culture. For example, the second and fourth generations of strategic cultural work criticize the overly coherent and monolithic conception of strategic culture and suggest the coexistence of multiple schemas. But their work raises doubt on whether strategic culture is truly cultural in nature, given their focus on the political instrumentality of subcultures and constant competition between various political groups. Furthermore, the causal relationship between strategic culture and strategic behavior in the existing literature is linear and unidimensional because there is little explanation about contingency effects with various external shocks.

There is either too much or too little agency in these conceptions, which impairs the normative value of strategic culture. Too much agency means that strategic culture is only instrumental, while too little agency means that it is deterministic. An accurate understanding of agency is critical to conceptualizing the process of how strategic culture is constructed and understanding how it shapes strategic behavior. I offer a layered conceptualization of strategic culture formation and influence that accounts for both the role and limits of actor agency. This dissertation aims to provide a more robust explanation for how strategic culture affects strategic behavior and a better mechanism for possible strategic cultural change. This will be done by utilizing a critical realist metatheory, which will be detailed below. Critical realism is a metatheory that does not offer a specific theory about the nature of world politics but challenges the existing assumptions in social science and causality, unlike Realism, Liberalism, or Constructivism.<sup>167</sup> The theory of this dissertation is strategic culture. Before moving on to this alternative, however, I concentrate on the theoretical debate on strategic culture between Colin S. Gray and Alastair Iain Johnston because their exchanges encapsulate the dilemma of how to formulate the causality of strategic culture. Thinking ahead of these problems is important for me to formulate my own strategic cultural framework.

### 2.1.2. The Gray-Johnston debate and its implications for my research

This section examines the assumptions and logical mechanisms underlying Colin Gray and Alastair Iain Johnston's theoretical debate to analyze the problems with existing concepts of strategic culture. It is by critically analyzing these core assumptions that weaken the existing

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<sup>167</sup> Kurki, "Critical Realism and Causal Analysis in International Relations."

strategic cultural concepts that I construct my own framework to explain Japan's security policy evolution.

The Gray-Johnston debate occurred from the mid-1990s in various publications and culminated in two articles of the *Review of International Studies* in 1999.<sup>168</sup> It is important not only because Gray and Johnston are two of the most prominent and frequently cited strategic cultural scholars. Their arguments and rebuttals to each other are critical to clarifying the relationship between strategic culture and state behavior. This debate has been widely studied by other strategic cultural scholars for this reason. I assess the conceptual benefits and problems of Gray's and Johnston's approaches. I highlight here the points of disagreement that help inform my research design to avoid the pitfalls of either an excessively holistic or deterministic concept of strategic culture.

Johnston's study on the strategic culture of Ming China focuses on whether strategic thought as an independent variable can explain strategic behavior as a dependent variable.<sup>169</sup> Johnston asks, "to what extent is there a substantively consistent and temporally persistent Chinese strategic culture, and to what extent has this strategic culture influenced China's use of military force against external 'threat' historically?"<sup>170</sup> He sets up falsifiable tests to conclude that strategic culture exists as a shared set of strategic preferences rather than as idiosyncratic individual preferences; and that it is a dominant, not residual variable in defense and security policy.<sup>171</sup> By first creating a test to identify strategic culture, he accepts the possibility that it might not exist at all. This is a clear departure from the first generation's definition of strategic

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<sup>168</sup> Gray, "Strategic Culture as Context"; Johnston, "Strategic Cultures Revisited."

<sup>169</sup> Johnston, *Cultural Realism*.

<sup>170</sup> Johnston, ix.

<sup>171</sup> Johnston, 32.

culture as being nationally and historically embedded. Explaining the importance of his chosen cultural sources, Johnston argues that “whatever consistent strategic precepts were embodied in the military classics would have been transmitted, at the very least, through the military-education system (as well as through the education of the emperor and his key advisers)”.<sup>172</sup> Johnston’s work implies that strategic culture is learned and institutionalized rather than intrinsic and indigenous.

While the first generation thinks of strategic culture as an anthropological byproduct that naturally occurs in all collectives with shared characteristics such as language and religion, Johnston’s strategic culture is a sociological construct that involves willful production and consolidation over time. By setting up a second test for whether grand strategy reflects the strategic culture, he also concedes that strategic culture – even if it exists – might not be significant in the policymaking process. Johnston’s insistence on a falsifiable and methodologically rigorous model enables competitive theory testing of strategic culture against alternative explanations of security policy.

However, this model is not without flaws. The central paradigm of Johnston’s idea of strategic culture makes assumptions about three different aspects of security policy – the likelihood of war, the nature of inter-state relations, and the efficacy of using force.<sup>173</sup> Yet the model assumes that they are equally important in making strategic choices as well as stable over time without explaining when some of these dimensions of security policy may be more pivotal than others or change in importance. Johnston’s model is also unable to capture strategic actors’ varying levels of influence on maintaining strategic culture, as it takes the implementation of strategic

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<sup>172</sup> Johnston, 46.

<sup>173</sup> Johnston, 37.

culture as a collective effort. This means the model cannot identify possible agents of strategic cultural change such as a particularly powerful individual, group, or institution, for example.

By contrast, Colin Gray dismisses the very idea of distinguishing culture from behavior, comparing Johnston to “a doctor who sees people as having entirely separable bodies and minds”.<sup>174</sup> For Gray, these two are indistinguishable and in fact, mutually constitutive. Actors are shaped by their internalized cultural upbringing. They then proceed to “construct, interpret, and amend that culture” through their behavior. It is important to remember that culture not only organizes the behavior of actors who execute strategy but also influences their perception of the strategic dilemma. This all-encompassing definition of strategic culture is summed up as “[s]trategic culture should be approached both as a shaping context for behaviour and itself as a constituent of that behaviour”.<sup>175</sup>

Rebuffing Johnston’s criticisms of this being a tautological definition that conflates strategic culture and strategic behavior, Gray argues that “[e]verything a security community does, if not a manifestation of strategic culture, is at least an example of behaviour effected by culturally shaped, or encultured, people, organisations, procedures, and weapons”.<sup>176</sup> Culture is everywhere and more importantly, within us. It is simply not possible to make falsifiable claims about culture because “[t]he unity of cultural influence and policy action denies the existence of the boundaries needed for the study of cause and effect. If there is cause in the effect, how can cause be assessed for its effect?”<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> Gray, “Strategic Culture as Context,” 53.

<sup>175</sup> Gray, 50.

<sup>176</sup> Gray, 52.

<sup>177</sup> Gray, 56.

Gray's anthropological view of cultural influence transcends the boundary of the topic and applies to scholars conducting the study as well. He says "[s]cholars... cannot be de-cultured, as opposed to accultured, or somehow rendered indifferent to the practical consequences of strategic debate", implying that the cultural background of scholars will distort their evaluation of strategic debate and in turn, will be affected by the conclusions of that debate as well.<sup>178</sup> Gray downplays this tautology by clarifying that strategic culture should not be used to *explain* or predict behavior but to *understand* it. For example, his concept of strategic culture would not explain why postwar Japanese leaders chose to maintain the 'Yoshida Doctrine' but to understand their cultural motivations for doing so.

Gray keeps reminding us that there is more to strategy than culture, but conceptually, if all dimensions of strategy are culturally perceived, this distinction has no practical consequence. He argues that the various dimensions of strategy function synergistically. But there is no analysis of which dimensions are more important under which conditions as it is implausible that all 17 dimensions are always equally salient. This problem arises because Gray neglects to integrate these disparate dimensions such as ethics (from category one), military administration (from category two), and friction (from category three) into a cohesive framework that explains how they altogether affect strategy. He does not explain how exactly these dimensions "interpenetrate".

Gray's holistic definition of culture implies that even when states act out of their preferences, by definition, their actions are culturally derived.<sup>179</sup> For Gray, what then, is the cultural dimension of strategy? It "comprises the persisting (though not eternal) socially transmitted

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<sup>178</sup> Gray, 61.

<sup>179</sup> Gray, 55.

ideas, attitudes, traditions, habits of mind, and preferred methods of operation that are more or less specific to particular geographically based security community that has had a necessarily unique historical experience”.<sup>180</sup> This means that any political community occupying common geography has the same unique historical experience. Accordingly, when he says, “Germans cannot help but be Germans”, I take it to mean that Germans by virtue of being a Germany-based security community, share a necessarily unique historical experience. But when using culture as an explanation, we must identify the source of the distinctive patterns amongst these collectivities. We must ask for nations, whether their collective experience is important or whether the inter-nation difference stems from the varying proportions of particular groups such as class, political parties, ethnic communities, that have their own unique experiences.<sup>181</sup>

Gray does not examine the root of this collective difference, instead making an ethnocentric assumption of inevitable national destiny. Therefore, he also fails to eliminate structural or institutional reasons why Germans may share the same strategic disposition. While I agree that strategic culture is nationally shared, it is not due to a predetermined destiny. It is because – as will be elaborated in Thomas Berger’s framework that I discuss below – strategic culture is derived from a process of sociopolitical discourse conducted amongst various stakeholders including the public, political elites, and bureaucrats. Gray might argue that this discourse would happen within a shared geographic boundary, therefore whatever the Japanese people institutionalize as a culture will be based on a ‘Japanese’ experience. But the common strategic culture is not because they are Japanese per se, but because they participate in the same political community. I insist on the importance of this feature that interpretation and intersubjectivity are

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<sup>180</sup> Gray, 51.

<sup>181</sup> Elkins and Simeon, “A Cause in Search of Its Effect, or What Does Political Culture Explain?,” 129.

facilitated through association, not birthright because it later helps explain the process of strategic cultural formation, institutionalization, and change.

The bigger problem is that Gray and Johnston have different ideas about the role of the concept of culture. Gray views culture as a basic ‘way of life’ while Johnston looks at strategic culture as a source of specific security-related ideas. For Gray, it seems, that strategic culture is simply culture applied to the field of strategic studies. Recognizing this difference, I come to two conclusions on the conceptualization and the methodology of study for strategic culture and clarify where I stand in this debate.

First, I agree with Gray’s belief in the salience of cultural influence in life’s choices but only to a certain extent. Gray’s concept of culture is too expansive and ingrained for any human actor to recognize the cultural influence and attempt to modify it – much less manipulate – according to their interests. It assumes all human decisions as dependent on their cultural background. This absence of instrumentality contradicts multiple examples of social movements or political propaganda, wherein actors consciously resist their cultural principles and attempt to take charge of the social narrative. While cultural innovation is not easy due to cognitive resistance against a new logic of appropriateness, a case for change could be made when the existing culture fails to provide appropriate solutions to problems. Culture influences us in all acts of life and our real-life actions feed into the cultural loop to either reinforce or alter beliefs. However, *strategic* culture is about specific actors and specific security ideas. Deep structural culture takes part only to the extent that it constitutes participating individuals but is not directly involved in the discourse that produces strategic culture.

Second, I agree with Johnston's rejection of Gray's unfalsifiable definition of strategic culture. Gray contends that "the price of [definitional] clarity can be clear error"<sup>182</sup> and that a definition should be driven by the character of the subject rather than the needs of theory building.<sup>183</sup> But can methodological rigor be sacrificed for conceptual clarity and if so, is it worth the price? Every concept should imply or suggest an appropriate methodology for verifying the integrity and utility of the concept. Otherwise, how could we ascertain the soundness of the concept at all? Gray's model invites and affirms criticism that the study of strategic culture relies on tautological and inductive reasoning.

At the same time, Johnston's model is too limited to capture this organic process of social discourse because his repositories are works by single individuals and the preferences of each work translate into a certain type of grand strategy. He tries to mitigate this criticism by pointing out that these works are compilations of the original strategists' works with contributions by various followers and annotators and that it was widely studied by professional military officials, bureaucrats, and even emperors. There is a major problem with this explanation. Johnston's chosen materials to identify strategic culture should *reflect* the shared assumptions. Instead, they are books of individual manifestos that *project* only that strategist's thinking. The fact that the strategist's students participated in the production of the final work does not mitigate this flaw, as they would mostly be conforming, with little deviation from the strategist's original thoughts and even then, their contributions would originate from the strategist's teachings. Therefore, I would label his independent variable strategic thought rather than strategic culture. Strategic thought could be the source of what eventually becomes strategic culture but the two

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<sup>182</sup> Gray, "Strategic Culture as Context," 50.

<sup>183</sup> Gray, 54.

should not be confounded. The main objective of this thesis is to understand what the prevailing strategic culture is, not to trace the strategic thought from where it came. This is why I refrain from referring to materials produced by single leaders who may be norm entrepreneurs and instead refer to a variety of materials such as the NDPGs and NSS that reflect the collective strategic culture. The selection of resources is elaborated in Chapter Two.

To avoid these pitfalls of Gray's tautological and Johnston's narrow models, I adopt a critical realist approach to strategic culture. To avoid regressing culture into an all-encompassing explanation for all human thought and behavior as does Gray, I conceptually locate strategic culture in its own level of reality separate from the dimensions where events and interpretations occur. This provides clear mechanisms and boundaries for the influence of strategic culture on policy actors. To avoid appointing the thoughts of a few strategists as 'strategic culture' as does Johnston, I explain how strategic culture is created and established as an underlying structure of society.

### 2.1.3. Berger's political-military culture and my approach to strategic culture

As seen in the review of existing strategic culture literature, strategic culture has been long established as static and causally linear. Existing concepts do not consider the various effects of the multiple levels of reality and believe in a singular linear causal process. Now that I have critiqued how the concept of strategic culture has been developed broadly, in this section, I examine how it has been applied to Japan's security policy in particular. One such concept is Thomas U. Berger's use of strategic culture. I examine his work in detail here because it has been a seminal reference for applying strategic culture to understand Japan's postwar security policy. I aim to resolve the theoretical ambiguities that plague his concept. Consequently, my own concept will more accurately reflect the workings of the real world by explaining how the

influence of strategic culture is moderated by and integrated with individual agency and the occurrence of empirical events. This means that I can better explain the conditions under which strategic culture generates influence on policymaking behavior and to what extent.

Berger is a third-generation strategic cultural scholar who takes a constructivist approach to conceptualizing strategic culture as a collection of security-related behavioral prescriptions that is produced by culturally conditioned social discourse. His strategic culture is a form of “negotiated reality” that is produced through compromises between various groups that participate in the interpretation of contemporary events. According to Berger, Japan's defeat in World War II and its immediate consequences did not *create* Japan's strategic culture of antimilitarism. Instead, these historical events *triggered* a debate in which various blocs of Japan's political actors competed and compromised to develop a relatively stable consensus of antimilitaristic political-military culture.<sup>184</sup> Over time, these compromises become consolidated through principled justifications and become ‘social facts’. This *strategic* culture shapes attitudes toward *defense and security* issues by constituting the goals and preferences of political actors and shaping their perception and interpretation of the political environment but does not influence actors’ broad way of life.<sup>185</sup> Strategic culture establishes specific propositions about security policymaking and behavior, rather than being an all-encompassing force for all individual choices.<sup>186</sup>

I identify three main problems about Berger's account of strategic culture on how the narrative is negotiated, how dependent the influence of strategic culture is on political actors, and how

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<sup>184</sup> Berger, “From Sword to Chrysanthemum: Japan's Culture of Anti-Militarism,” 137–39.

<sup>185</sup> Berger, *Cultures of Antimilitarism: National Security in Germany and Japan*, 16.

<sup>186</sup> Lane, “Political Culture,” 365.

the influence of strategic culture interacts or competes with the influence of events and experiences.

First, Berger's explanation that political actors compete to establish their favored perspective of events initially suggests a mind-world dualism wherein events happen independently of cognition. But as this competition results in negotiation and settlement on a certain interpretation, the demarcation between the mind and the world become blurred. The consequent establishment of a manufactured 'social fact' suggests a constitutive entanglement between mind and world. This raises the question of how independent the actors are of the social fact and what decides the winners of this competition. Furthermore, the idea of 'compromise' connotes an intentional and conscious decision of the various blocs to decide on the most favorable outcome, which is reminiscent of the second generation of strategic cultural scholars. Although Berger attempts to differentiate his concept by arguing that "neither [defense policies], or the ways in which those policies were legitimated, were purely the products of a single set of elites seeking to maximize their own expected utility or set of values" and political elites were "forced to make compromises with their domestic rivals on both principle and substance", the suspicion of elite manipulation and quid pro quo remains.<sup>187</sup>

Second, what is the relationship between political actors and strategic culture following its formation? According to Berger, "a process that begins as debate over highly fluid ideas and notions about defense and national identity coalesces and becomes sedimented and institutionalized through a process of negotiation, ultimately culminating in a relatively stable new political-military culture".<sup>188</sup> This means that the very process of compromising on a

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<sup>187</sup> Berger, *Cultures of Antimilitarism: National Security in Germany and Japan*, 84–85.

<sup>188</sup> Berger, 207.

strategic culture *is* the process of ingraining it into the decisionmaking process of political actors. I would argue that this co-constitutive relationship confounds the independent causal effects of political actors and strategic culture. But at the same time, Berger argues that culture is “not merely subjective reflections of objective reality but enjoy a fairly high degree of autonomy; [it is] transmitted through socialization; and by providing individuals with cognitive maps, [it serves] as filters through which subsequent events and experiences are apprehended”.<sup>189</sup> I find that this ambiguous position of strategic culture in relation to political actors diminishes its value as a causal explanation for Japan’s security policy.

Lastly, what is the relationship between strategic culture and domestic and international phenomena? According to Berger’s diagram of a culturally bound actor model, pressures generated by the international system cause changes in socio-culturally defined norms and perceptions (political culture) while shaping the perceptions of security policy outcomes. These outcomes then shape perceptions of objective domestic conditions and capabilities, which in turn, cause changes in the strategic culture.<sup>190</sup> Both international and domestic conditions directly cause changes in the strategic culture. But how exactly would these phenomena change strategic culture? I assume that this change occurs through the political actors’ interpretation of these phenomena, which results in the revision of the strategic culture. However, as the perception of political actors is under the influence of strategic culture, would not their interpretation of these phenomena be influenced by the existing strategic culture as well? This complex web of strategic culture, political actors, and phenomena demands a better explanation.

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<sup>189</sup> Berger, 10.

<sup>190</sup> Berger, 17.

These three problems arise mainly because Berger only conceptualizes one plane of reality in which political actors and strategic culture co-constitute each other and intersubjectively accord causal influence on security policy. This means that cultural influence, empirical events, and human interpretation all occur on one dimension.

Berger's ideas on how Japan's antimilitarist strategic culture was constructed is only based on the observable phenomena of the empirical level of reality. There are certain rigid social structures and relationships that cannot be co-constituted or subjectively imagined. Thus intersubjectivity is an important and necessary but not exhaustive component of the social world. For example, under Berger's constructivist model of intersubjectivity, strategic culture and social relationships will be mutually constructed, thus making a case study on the SDF's sociopolitical relationships as an outcome of strategic culture endogenous. However, in a critical realist model, the relationship between individual or even a whole generation of civilian bureaucrats and uniformed personnel within the Japan Defense Agency could become amicable, but the power dynamic and mutual obligations of each group would remain unchanged without a reimagination of the underlying strategic cultural tenets.

## 2.2. Taking a critical realist approach to strategic culture

Having discussed the wide-ranging concepts and controversies of strategic culture, this section explains the strategic cultural framework adopted in this dissertation. It overcomes the weaknesses of the previous frameworks by taking a critical realist approach.

In the Gray-Johnston debate, the dilemma between an overly holistic or deterministic conception of strategic culture remains unresolved. To avoid the pitfall of defining strategic culture in the broadest sense as 'the world out there' on the one hand and, on the other, narrowly

framing it as a monocausal independent variable, I use the critical realist notion of cause. In this section, I rely on the logic developed by Finnish scholar Antti Seppo, who applies critical realism – a philosophical approach to understanding science – to strategic culture in his book on German strategic cultural change after the end of the Cold War.<sup>191</sup>

While I appreciate Seppo’s extensive analysis of critical realism, strategic culture, and theory of strategic cultural change, I believe my thesis differs from his in two ways that could further enrich the landscape of strategic cultural studies. First, our country cases underwent strategic cultural change through different mechanisms. Seppo adopts Christoph O. Meyer’s argument that the primary source of strategic cultural change is external shocks such as security challenges, crises, and systemic shifts that can result in the “revision and reinterpretation of collective memory and beliefs”.<sup>192</sup> For Meyer, and accordingly for Seppo, the most obvious source of such shocks is the direct involvement in warfare. This is why Seppo’s thesis elaborates on the trajectory of German strategic culture over the various wars that Germany experienced from 1990 to 2015. I do not disagree with the power of the experience of warfare. But it is worth noting that Germany is both a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which has a binding treaty clause on collective security (Article 5) and the European Union (EU), which has a binding treaty clause on mutual defense (Article 42(7)). Germany also shared a border with Warsaw Pact countries throughout the Cold War. This means that Germany has not only had more exposure to conflict and warfare but also the legal and community obligation to participate in them. But Japan has had less direct involvement in war (after the end of WWII) and therefore by the sheer lack of exposure to this mechanism, I do not believe it has been the

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<sup>191</sup> Seppo, *From Guilt to Responsibility and Beyond | The Evolution of German Strategic Culture after the End of the Cold War*.

<sup>192</sup> Meyer, *The Quest for a European Strategic Culture*, 25.

primary mechanism of change for strategic cultural change in Japan. Japan's strategic culture has indeed been influenced by external shocks such as global systemic shifts and the rise of new security challenges, but I would argue that these are categorically different from the effects of 'warfare'. Therefore, my study would imply a trajectory of strategic cultural change that differs from that of Germany illustrated by Seppo.

Second, Seppo and I differ in our methodologies for causal explanation – Seppo utilizes counterfactuals, I utilize the 'INUS complexes'.<sup>193</sup> I believe that counterfactual thought experiments, which involve the exploration of moments of historical contingency where the situation could have gone off in another direction are incompatible with critical realism, which presumes transfactualism. Transfactualism means that it is possible to generate knowledge of real objects that we cannot directly experience by presuming the existence and power of unobservable but detectable causal structures.<sup>194</sup> There is nothing inherently flawed about counterfactuals, but it is theoretically inapt to conduct a thought experiment about a situation in which not all the causal factors can be directly seen or experienced. How would the effects of an unobservable strategic culture be detected in a counterfactual scenario? This is precisely why Jackson prescribes INUS complexes, which identify the dispositional properties specific to the situation at hand, to prove the explanatory power of critical realist variables.<sup>195</sup> By pointing to the specific conditions under which strategic culture influences strategic behavior, I can better isolate the effect of strategic culture and measure the extent of its influence. I believe that my study expands the toolkit critical realist approaches but more importantly, my use of

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<sup>193</sup> Short for 'Insufficient and Nonredundant components of a complex that is Unnecessary but Sufficient', INUS complexes will be elaborated in the methodology section.

<sup>194</sup> Jackson, *The Conduct of Inquiry in International Relations*, 77–92.

<sup>195</sup> An explanation of INUS complexes is provided later in the methodology section.

INUS complexes is a more rigorous procedure for explaining the causal power of strategic culture.

### 2.2.1. What is critical realism?

Critical realism, or philosophical realism, is a philosophy of science notably pioneered by English philosopher Roy Bhaskar.<sup>196</sup> Critical realism incorporates a mind-world dualism that separates things and our cognition of those things. This idea of ontological realism assumes that ontology – the philosophic inquiry into the nature of being and existence – is not reducible to epistemology – the philosophic inquiry of how we ought to generate knowledge of existence – because human knowledge cannot capture all of the reality that exists out there.<sup>197</sup> There are parts of a deeper and vaster reality that we cannot directly perceive and observe.<sup>198</sup> Therefore, knowledge transcends the realm of phenomenal experience, or the realm of what can be directly experienced, and penetrates levels of reality that cannot be directly experienced but do exist. This is transfactualism.<sup>199</sup> For example, the Japanese public’s memory of WWII is the transfactual, unobservable condition that manifests as their attitude to various security issues.

Critical realists also take a non-positivist approach to the concept of causation. They reject the deductive-nomological model (DN-model) of causation such that ‘if A, then B’. To critical realists, this excessively parsimonious and mono-causal expression faces some serious problems. First, it does not consider the complex and dynamic relationship between various real objects that exist besides A and B. For critical realists, this DN-model assumes closed, laboratory-like conditions that produce a mechanistic and predictive pattern of causal

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<sup>196</sup> Bhaskar, *A Realist Theory of Science*.

<sup>197</sup> Zhang, “Critical Realism,” 1.

<sup>198</sup> Fletcher, “Applying Critical Realism in Qualitative Research,” 182.

<sup>199</sup> Jackson, *The Conduct of Inquiry in International Relations*, 197.

relations.<sup>200</sup> But in open systems like the real world, multiple causal forces – some of which may be unobservable – interact in complex ways, making the isolation of individual causes difficult as in a laboratory experiment. Second, critical realists argue that the DN-model overly emphasizes the observable empirical reality when in fact, many causes are detectable but unobservable.<sup>201</sup> For example, the DN-model may not adequately consider individual motivations and biases, social structures, or social rules and norms. Therefore, the purpose of critical realists’ causal analysis is to identify the underlying reality that explains why the facts we observe exist. Critical realism believes that “the world is composed not only of events, states of affairs, experiences, impressions, and discourses, but also of underlying structures, powers, and tendencies that exist, whether or not detected or known through experience and/or discourse”.<sup>202</sup>

As I explain in this thesis, Japan’s postwar exclusively defense-oriented security policy was not simply catalyzed by the shock of defeat in WWII and the fear of the military but was facilitated by the causal mechanisms and hierarchies that were established by the antimilitarist strategic culture. It is not a direct relationship from experience to outcome. This is why minimalist security policy prevailed even when Japan faced contrary experiences and conditions that in theory should have incentivized it to change its security policy. Antimilitarist strategic culture is not directly observable, but its effects are detectable throughout the Cold War in the Japanese government’s refusals to deploy the SDF to the Iraq War, to increase its defense spending, or to allow greater involvement of the military in security policymaking. This is why critical realists prefer to use non-deterministic metaphors for causal relationships such as “produce, generate,

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<sup>200</sup> Kurki, “Critical Realism and Causal Analysis in International Relations,” 365.

<sup>201</sup> Kurki, 364.

<sup>202</sup> Patomäki and Wight, “After Postpositivism?,” 2000, 233.

create, constrain, enable, influence or condition”.<sup>203</sup> It is due to this complex idea of ‘causation’ that my concept of strategic culture does not fit the narrow definition of an ‘independent variable’. I would conceptualize strategic culture as facilitating an environment that increases the probability for certain outcomes.

With this belief, critical realism conceptualizes three different levels of reality – the real level, actual level, and the empirical level.<sup>204</sup> It is in the real but unobservable level of reality that critical realists attempt to conceptualize the causal structures that give rise to events and the observable level of reality.<sup>205</sup> For example, the conceptualizations and interpretations of policymakers about the world are socially embedded and can influence the political world. But policymakers do not *create* the political world – it precedes the conceptualizations of policymakers. There is a reality of sociopolitical structures, relationships, understandings, norms, and conventions that have a reality outside policymakers’ descriptions, although their input can have some impact back on the preexisting political world.<sup>206</sup>

While this underlying reality may have certain powers and tendencies, they may not always manifest themselves in the observable level of reality or they may not even be realized.<sup>207</sup> It is in this ‘real level of reality’ that strategic culture exists. By influencing social structures and relationships, it is ever-present in policy actors’ disposition towards security related issues. In

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<sup>203</sup> Kurki, “Critical Realism and Causal Analysis in International Relations,” 366.

<sup>204</sup> Fletcher, “Applying Critical Realism in Qualitative Research,” 183.

<sup>205</sup> Kurki, *Causation in International Relations*, 198.

<sup>206</sup> Kurki, 204.

<sup>207</sup> Patomäki and Wight analogize this idea to the effects of nuclear weapons, which can deter simply by existing even if they are not detonated (I would add that conventional military force also has deterrence effects even if they are not actually deployed). The event of a nuclear detonation would correspond to the actual level of reality and our observation and interpretation of that detonation to the empirical level of reality. A nuclear detonation would naturally induce some kind of reaction and generate perceptions, but the occurrence of detonation is independent of those reactions – the nuclear bomb would detonate even if no one was watching. In Patomäki and Wight, “After Postpositivism?,” June 2000, 223.

the actual level of reality, events occur without filter whether or not we observe or interpret them. There might be a major flood or earthquake, North Korea may launch a missile over Okinawa, the United States may raise the costs of upkeep for its troops based in Japan. These events happen without regard to the purview or cognition of policymakers – they happen whether or not people know or experience them. The intensification of security threats in Japan’s surrounding environment would correspond to this level of reality because the occurrence of these events is independent of the other levels of reality. Finally, on top of these two levels is the transitive, empirical level of reality where the occurred events undergo human interpretation, producing social ideas, norms, and actions. This is where the Japanese people’s perception and interpretation of the empirical events occur, given the ‘real’ structure they live with. This is how the three levels are differentiated yet interconnected.

Yet, critical realism’s ‘real level of reality’ should be distinguished from Colin Gray’s idea that strategic culture is the context of all behavior and perception. Critical realism’s differentiated levels of reality are interconnected but the ‘real’ level of reality is not deterministic of its successive levels of reality, as its causal structures have causal powers that do not always produce an observable or detectable impact at the empirical level. Additionally, critical realism provides specific methodologies to detect the unobservable effects of the deeper structures of reality while Gray believes that all behavior is evidence of cultural influence.

In conclusion, I want to explain the two main tenets of critical realism and how they specifically relate to this thesis. First, our knowledge should not only consist of the things we can directly perceive or experience because it is not possible human beings to capture reality in its entirety. It is easy for us to perceive physical threat from missiles or economic threat from fiscal inadequacies for example, but the conspicuity of these material variables should not be taken

as a measure of their causal influence. This thesis looks beyond these seemingly obvious reasons for security policy change to examine the influence of strategic culture. I highlight the importance of strategic culture despite its less obvious presence in the policymaking process. Second, based on this assumption that the world is a complex combination of perceivable and imperceivable elements, critical realism folds reality into three distinct but interconnected levels – real, actual, and empirical. Thinking about the world holistically helps integrate the various policymaking motivations into a single process while presenting a nonlinear causal mechanism for strategic culture.

Taking a critical realist approach to strategic culture provides a unique advantage over existing constructivist conceptions of strategic culture. Whether thick or thin, the core assumption of constructivism is the social construction of ideas and power and focus on placing greater weight on the social rather than the material in world politics. Thick constructivism, with its emphasis on constitutive logic and pursuit of exploring the conditions of possibility for change, may seem to produce similar analytical outcomes. But they are ontologically and epistemologically distinct. Unlike thick constructivism, critical realism assumes that the real world exists independently of our knowledge of it and that various strata of the world contain structures that may or may not generate patterns of events at a particular time. This could enrich the existing literature, which is prone to make theoretical judgments based on a selection of fitting cases. Critical realism could help factor in the existence of strategic culture even when it does not seem to generate influence at a particular time. It also provides a comprehensive, non-dichotomous analysis of the influence and interaction of material and normative variables. Most importantly, critical realism is a way of understanding the world and how its various observable and unobservable structures give rise to social relations and behavior, rather than a collection

of theoretical beliefs and methodological principles that is a research tradition. Thus, it is important to reiterate that critical realism is not the theory of this dissertation – strategic culture is.

### 2.2.2. Critical realism and methodology

How would I capture the effects of strategic cultural change and argue for its causal power if it cannot directly be ‘seen’?<sup>208</sup> I will use a combination of two methods – abductive inference and retrodution. As I mention above, I depart from Seppo here because he conducts counterfactual thought experiments to evaluate the causal significance of strategic culture. This is because making counterfactual claims requires a lot of time and resources by nature and could complicate the credibility of my strategic cultural arguments. Therefore, I use the INUS complexes as prescribed by Jackson.<sup>209</sup> I believe that according to the nature of cause and culture I espouse, critical realism is best paired with abductive inference and retrodution.

In contrast to deductive and inductive inference, *abductive* inference is a way to generate plausible explanations from available data.<sup>210</sup> Patrick Thaddeus Jackson explains that critical realists employ abductive inference to detect the causal effect of unobservables, going beyond the most superficial explanations for their observations to conceptualize a plausible account of those observations. For the purpose of my thesis, this means that I reason from my observation of Japan’s security policymaking processes and outcomes that the most *likely* explanation for changes in Japan’s security policy is the influence of strategic culture.

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<sup>208</sup> See Sagan, *The Demon-Haunted World*, chap. 10: The Dragon in My Garage.

<sup>209</sup> Jackson, *The Conduct of Inquiry in International Relations*, 199.

<sup>210</sup> Deduction is making an inference from general premises to form a specific conclusion. Induction is making an inference from specific premises to form a general conclusion. See “‘Inductive’ vs. ‘Deductive’: How To Reason Out Their Differences.”

In this thesis, I argue that existing theories of Realism, Liberalism, and Constructivism and their relevant variables are unable to sufficiently explain the speed, nature, and direction of Japan's post-Cold War security policy changes, thereby leaving the explanation of strategic culture understood through a critical realist approach as the *best possible* option. Abductive inference, as seen here, aims to generate conjectures about the existence of a process, entity, or property to account for the observable data and therefore is not a procedure for reaching conclusions. Deductive reasoning draws a specific, valid conclusion from a general rule and inductive reasoning draws a general conclusion that might be true from a specific observation. But abductive inference shows how something might be by introducing possible associations between ideas that are not evident or obvious.<sup>211</sup> For example, a detective investigating a crime scene will come up with various possible explanations that take into account all the observable evidence. This process inevitably must incorporate propositions about the context that cannot be observed from the crime scene such as the motivation for the crime, the relationship between stakeholders, and other relevant circumstances. The detective would also have to explore various ideas to try to connect all the available evidence that would be different for every crime scene. In this way, abductive inference enables the formulation of new ideas and seeing things in a different context that are not part of an established universal structure. This is why it is the most appropriate methodology to examine the unobservable effects of strategic culture.

I have mentioned that critical realists believe in the existence of structures, powers, and tendencies that underlie the empirical world even if they may not always be manifest. How, then, would we know when these influences do manifest themselves? It is important to analyze

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<sup>211</sup> Meyer and Lunnay, "The Application of Abductive and Retroductive Inference for the Design and Analysis of Theory-Driven Sociological Research."

the conditions under which the underlying causal structures influence the actual and empirical levels of reality to accurately understand their causal mechanisms and produce a plausible, rather than ad-hoc, explanatory account. This would close the gap between existing theory and observed reality. I will achieve this through retrodution.

Retrodution is an essential process of critical realist analysis, which attempts to identify not an isolated causal factor as in laboratory situations but a complex of causal powers that constitute 'INUS conditions'. This is short for 'Insufficient and Nonredundant components of a complex that is Unnecessary but Sufficient'. INUS complex is critical realists' solution to producing a holistic causal story rather than the ultimate or fundamental cause.<sup>212</sup> Jackson explains that "[t]his causal complexity is an additional reason why it is so important to critical realist accounts that posited causal factors be vetted outside of the explanatory situation itself... [because] simple empirics are insufficient".<sup>213</sup> Using retrodution, a researcher does not move from a basic premise or hypothesis to a conclusion. This is because the researcher must use existing assumptions and a priori knowledge about the social world to question the existing theoretical frameworks rather than moving linearly and sequentially from hypothesis to conclusion.

According to J. L. Mackie in his 1965 article titled "Cause and Conditions", INUS conditions are combinations of factors that under certain circumstances give rise to an effect or result. But they are not always necessary, nor sufficient as other complexes of factors could produce the same effect under other sets of circumstances.<sup>214</sup> He gives the example of experts who

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<sup>212</sup> Kurki, *Causation in International Relations*, 286.

<sup>213</sup> Jackson, *The Conduct of Inquiry in International Relations*, 110.

<sup>214</sup> Mackie, "Causes and Conditions."

investigated a fire that had broken out and concluded that it was caused by an electrical short-circuit. Mackie argues that the short-circuit was neither necessary – because there could have been other fire-starting scenarios, nor sufficient – because the fire would not have started without nearby flammable material. INUS complex refers to the set of conditions in that particular instance, including but not limited to the presence of flammable material and the absence of a water sprinkler, that was sufficient to start the fire. He says that “[i]n this case, then, the so-called cause is, and is known to be, an *insufficient* but *necessary* part of a condition which is itself *unnecessary* but *sufficient* for the result”.<sup>215</sup> Here, we use our existing knowledge about the variety of conditions that could start a fire – nearby flammable material or absence of water sprinkler – that are not necessarily provided in the original context – scene of fire with electrical short-circuit. The value of retrodution here is that by exploring possible causal mechanisms and realms of knowledge beyond the immediately observable events, we can produce a causal explanation that includes the deeper causal structures that give rise to the actual and empirical realities.

For example, when we are researching the causes of the gender wage gap, we may observe that women get paid less because there are fewer women in positions of power, they work in less lucrative industries, work less hours, or have less work experience. However, using abductive and retroductive inference, we could investigate outside of these directly relevant work structures and observable work patterns and find that women are responsible for a higher share of household work and childrearing. Venturing into the unperceivable but detectable realm of social norms and traditions, we may find that the most likely reason for this skewed division of

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<sup>215</sup> Mackie, 245.

labor is unfair gender roles and gender discrimination.<sup>216</sup> Hence we understand that the wage gap between men and women is caused not only by the conditions of their work but the contextual conditions of the society that they live in, which has structured their paths differently.

How do I conduct abductive inference and retrodution in the context of strategic cultural analysis? I first posit that a strategic cultural shift from reactive antimilitarism to proactive antimilitarism is the most plausible explanation for Japan's security policy changes. Through the case studies I identify the underlying mechanisms, relevant social structures, and context conditions in which Japan's security policy changed and how these conditions activated the generative powers of strategic culture – in other words, given the social structures and mechanisms in the real level of Japan's reality, why strategic culture is best explanation for security policy change.

But what empirical resources could I use if the causal influence of my explanations is unobservable? The inability to directly perceive an entity or mode of behavior either aided or unaided by sense-extending equipment does not imply that the entity is purely theoretical. These theoretical entities can be accessed indirectly through the perception of their effects. Bhaskar gives the examples of sensing a magnetic field with a compass and electricity by electroscope. Thus, there is a distinction between detection and perception of an object. In the social sciences, there are beliefs, principles, and norms that cannot be perceived but can be detected. For example, the national flag can induce nationalistic feelings in the citizenry. This emotionally charged nature of the flag cannot be empirically perceived – it cannot be seen with a microscope or a chemical analysis of its threads and colors.<sup>217</sup> But its rallying power is no less

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<sup>216</sup> Blau and Kahn, "The Gender Wage Gap."

<sup>217</sup> Eyerman, Madigan, and Ring, *Vietnam, A War, Not a Country*, 19.

real than any physical force and can be felt within each person. Thus it is not impossible to identify how strategic culture has such behavioral influence and to what extent.

Jackson argues that detectable unobservables can be detected through well-defined data collection and analysis procedures such as public opinion polls. For example, we cannot directly observe public opinion, but we can construct a detector through “reconceptualization of the object itself as summation of individual mental states” and relevant statistical techniques and rules for generalization.<sup>218</sup> Likewise, I use data from public opinion polls on diverse issues and diverse sources, data from expert interviews, Diet interpellations, politicians’ speeches, government reports and documents, and government press briefings to infer representative and generalizable insights about the strategic culture of Japan. In particular, I make extensive use of interviews that I have personally conducted with policy actors in Japan including former SDF members, former government officials, and policy experts. The full list of 23 interviewees is included in the appendix.

### 2.3. Case selection rationale

As a follow-up to Berger’s study of Japanese strategic culture from the end of WWII until the early 1990s, I study the strategic culture of Japan from towards the end of the Cold War, which is roughly from 1989, to the end of the Abe administration in 2020. I aim to show that Japan’s strategic cultural change after the end of the Cold War produced a change in its security policy. This means that deep structural shifts within Japan’s society and politics and the causal manifestations of those shifts in empirical reality generated the changes in Japan’s post-Cold War security policy. This requires proof of first, an observable contrast between Japan’s Cold

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<sup>218</sup> Jackson, *The Conduct of Inquiry in International Relations*, 87.

War era and post-Cold War security orientations; second, plausible explanations that these are due to the causal influence of strategic culture.

In this section, I briefly explain why each selected case best shows that Japan's security policy has indeed changed and why it is reasonable to pursue strategic cultural explanations. These cases *reflect* the strategic cultural change. I have two case studies on Japan's military doctrine and the SDF's place in politics and society. Each case consists of different indicators that allow us to disaggregate big concepts in Japan's security policy and specifically demonstrate the effect of strategic cultural change in the case. To ensure that my cases are representative of the strategic culture as being held by both the elite and the public, I have selected indicators that involve a broad range of actors and policy processes.

Observers of Japan's security policy may wonder why the U.S.-Japan alliance is not included as a case study in this thesis when it is one of the most important pillars of Japan's national security and was studied in Berger's work. This decision in no way denies the salience of the alliance in Japan's security policy. The major reason is because I have chosen case studies that are key components of Japan's security policy to demonstrate change. The U.S.-Japan alliance is categorically different from military doctrine and the SDF's place in politics and society because it is Japan's unique policy *choice* rather than a *core component* of a state's security policy. In other words, any other state would have a military doctrine and sociopolitical relations with its armed forces, but not all states have such a close relationship with the United States or perhaps any such close alliance at all. This means that if I were to examine the U.S.-Japan alliance, it would fall under a broader case study on Japan's relationships, Japan's foreign policy, or Japan's external balancing mechanisms. Moreover, because the alliance is such an indispensable tool for Japan's national security, I believe the U.S.-Japan alliance is actually part

of the explanation for the variation in Japan's security policy, as will be demonstrated in my case studies. Many Japan analysts have believed that Japan lacks a realistic and coherent grand strategy of its own and owes its security strategy to its junior partnership with the United States to the extent that there is a consensus of Japanese leaders practicing "karaoke diplomacy".<sup>219</sup> This refers to the idea that the United States set the background music and lyrics while Japanese policymakers simply decide what to wear and how to sing the songs. With the United States having such a significant influence on Japanese policymaking, studying the U.S.-Japan alliance as an independent case study would potentially make the causal logic tautological and endogenous.

### 2.3.1. Military doctrine

Military doctrine is a critical subcomponent of national security policy that prescribes specifically the military means to be employed to achieve security. It answers the questions of what military means should be used and how, in response to recognized threats and opportunities.<sup>220</sup> These prescriptions are based upon a set of beliefs about the nature of war, efficacy of the military, and the role of the military in national security. According to Jack Snyder, "[t]hese beliefs provide a framework for organizing information and criteria for evaluating its importance" and "a curriculum for the training of new soldiers, a guide for the design of organizational structures, and a criterion for the establishment of standard operating procedures".<sup>221</sup> Thus, military doctrine is a standardized structure to scan and organize

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<sup>219</sup> Samuels, "Japan's Goldilocks Strategy," 111–12.

<sup>220</sup> Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 13.

<sup>221</sup> Snyder, *The Ideology of the Offensive*, 27.

information for the military organization built on policymakers' existing principles and perceptions about the value of military force.

Military doctrine is an important indicator of strategic culture because it reflects the state's value-laden perceptions of its security environment, cause-and-effect beliefs about military force, and perspectives about the role of the military in national security. It is not a prerogative of the armed forces alone. Military doctrine is not solely based on materialist calculations about the optimal military response to threats, but the values that the state attaches to the military and their capabilities. But it is a hard case for strategic culture because it affects the physical security of the state.

In the postwar period, Japan's military doctrine was long stifled by reactive antimilitarist norms that prevented the military from making independent threat diagnoses and prescriptions for the use of force and other military resources. One of the major examples of this is the 1 percent of GDP limit on defense spending. This decision by Prime Minister Miki Takeo in 1976 became an official LDP policy until Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro abolished the policy by passing a military budget of slightly more than 1 percent of GDP in 1987.<sup>222</sup> Despite Nakasone's 'abolition' of the policy, it persisted throughout the Cold War years and beyond. In 2017, Prime Minister Abe again announced in the Diet an official break with the 1 percent policy.<sup>223</sup> But the idea of the 1 percent limit runs much earlier than Prime Minister Miki Takeo. John Wright writes that "[t]he origins of the decision can be traced to 1958 when the government was still profoundly affected by an introspective attitude towards its wartime activities and taboos

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<sup>222</sup> Wright, "The Persistent Power of 1 Percent," 3–4.

<sup>223</sup> Wright, "Abe Scraps Japan's 1 Percent GDP Defense Spending Cap."

associated with national security and military discussions”.<sup>224</sup> This means that the shadow of defeat in WWII and the reactive antimilitarism that it fostered within the Japanese public heavily constrained the role that the military could play in Japan’s national security. Other ex-ante controls to limit the freedom of the military include the exclusively defense-oriented policy, ban on overseas combat deployment for the SDF, ban on conscription, and the denial of the right of collective self-defense. Mobilizing the JSDF is constrained by Japan’s positive-list framework, which specifies what the military could do while in principle prohibiting all other activities.<sup>225</sup> This reinforces the understanding of Japan’s basic defense strategy as exclusively defense-oriented.

While the positive-list approach to mobilizing the JSDF has not significantly changed, I demonstrate that after the end of the Cold War, the role of military force as a tool of Japan’s statecraft has expanded as exaggerated fears about the SDF subsided with the shift from ‘reactive antimilitarism’ to ‘proactive’ antimilitarism. Using three indicators – defense capability concept, defense spending, and overseas deployment – I explain that the government has increased the military dimension of Japan’s national security, has become willing to mobilize the JSDF in more diverse and broader situations, and has become laxer in their attitude toward the use of weapons.

The three indicators were selected based on the definition of military doctrine as an outline of what military means should be used and how. I recognize that military doctrine is an enormous concept that also includes force structure, professional military education, modes of interservice cooperation, and more. However, I focus on the three aspects of Japan’s military doctrine that

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<sup>224</sup> Wright, “The Persistent Power of 1 Percent,” 2.

<sup>225</sup> Hinata-Yamaguchi, “JAPAN’S DEFENSE READINESS,” 49.

essentialize how it was impacted by the experience of WWII. Together, they explain what, how, and where the SDF are planned to be used for national security by Japan's policy actors.

First, under defense capability concept, I trace the evolution of the 'defense concept' used in the National Defense Program Guideline (NDPG) to prescribe the posture to be adopted by the JSDF to achieve the necessary readiness and effect of deterrence. The defense concept entails where the JSDF should be mobilized to and under what conditions and using what kind of force. The NDPGs have set the basic policy for Japan's defense as its primary security doctrine. There are six NDPGs in total, published in 1976, 1995, 2004, 2010, 2013, and 2018 (the ones published in 1976 and 1995 were called National Defense Program Outline (NDPO)). While the government produced its first National Security Strategy (NSS) in 2013, it was essentially compiled based on past NDPGs.<sup>226</sup> The defense concept outlined by the NDPG is important because it embodies the government's perception of Japan's threat environment, evaluation of the utility of military force, and the security principles that it wants to uphold. It serves as the foundation for military doctrine by broadly defining the role and disposition of the military forces in defending Japan.

Second, defense spending is a critical component and indicator of military doctrine, as it determines to some extent the readiness of the military forces and their material capabilities to successfully fulfil the objectives specified by the defense capability concept. By defense spending, I am referring to the defense budget spent on personnel, equipment and vehicles, and research and development of the three SDF services. In particular, I trace the change and resilience in the discourse on the 1 percent limit on defense spending consolidated by the Miki

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<sup>226</sup> Akihiro, *The Self-Defense Forces and Postwar Politics in Japan*.

Takeo administration in 1976 and explain how it has become a landmark policy for Japan's antimilitarism.

Lastly, overseas deployment refers to sending the SDF outside of Japanese territory for missions – excluding trainings and exercises – involving participation in international peacekeeping operations and assistance to the military forces of security partners. I examine how much Japan's discourse on engaging in international security issues has changed since the Gulf War trauma, when Japan was heavily criticized by the international community and the United States for not sending troops to Iraq. I describe the government's willingness to deploy troops abroad for purposes not immediately related to the security of Japanese territory. This willingness is based on the scope of the government's definition of threat to national security and the perceived usefulness of having the SDF contribute to international peace. I look for expansions in the scope of roles and activities for troops dispatched overseas and a greater willingness in the government to deploy troops abroad. I explain that particularly since Abe's Proactive Contribution to Peace policy, Japan has approached peace as something that must be collectively and proactively created and maintained rather than something that could be passively enjoyed. I infer from the government's position on overseas deployment how and whether it perceives a relationship between international security and the security of Japan, breaking away from the postwar insular and inward-looking attitude to national security.

### 2.3.2. SDF's place in politics and society

This case study focuses on how much the SDF could be trusted to contribute to national security and how much it should be involved in making those plans in the eyes of civilians – civil servants, politicians, and the public. This is examined through two indicators – the SDF's relationship with policymakers and the SDF's relationship with the public. These are critical

discussions for this thesis, as Japan's postwar antimilitarism was in large part generated by fear and resentment of the IJA that led Japan to war and devastation. Thus, it is important to analyze whether and how Japan's civilians – both the policymakers and policy recipients – accept the SDF as a legitimate organization and provider of security to accurately understand and characterize Japan's antimilitarist strategic culture. The SDF's sociopolitical status must be considered in relation to these two groups of political actors – policymakers (civil servants and politicians) and the public – because they comprise a feedback loop for legitimizing the SDF. Policymakers – elected representatives and civil servants – strategize security policy based on the SDF's popularity among the public and the SDF also attempts to mobilize popularity among the public for favorable policy outcomes, as will be explained in the case study. This is why I consider both of these stakeholder groups in this case study – to fully comprehend the policy ecosystem regarding the SDF. At the same time, any similarities and differences in the elite and public attitude towards the military is important to the study of strategic culture, which is defined as a *collective* set of attitudes, beliefs, and principles. Given that a state is not a unitary actor, we must understand its policymaking stakeholders as a whole before analyzing comprehensively the strategic culture of Japan as a state.

After WWII, the Japanese public and elites' sense of being victimized by their own military and the ultra-nationalist far right created “a strong consensus in Japan that it should minimize [the military's] involvement in security affairs and that the armed forces as an institution must be kept in constant check”.<sup>227</sup> The military was “[held] responsible for destroying Japan's nascent prewar democracy and who led them into a hopeless war which they should have known Japan

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<sup>227</sup> Berger, “Power and Purpose in Pacific East Asia: A Constructivist Interpretation,” 403.

could not win”.<sup>228</sup> The Japanese elites insisted on strong civilian control over the military and deprived the Japan Defense Agency (JDA) of institutional autonomy. As implied by the name, the agency was institutionally inferior to other security policymaking organizations such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Finance, being elevated to ministerial status only in 2007. Similarly, Japan’s military is still euphemistically called the ‘Self-Defense Forces’, emphasizing the tight scope of their mandate.

It should be noted that the ‘civilians’ in the civil-military relationship in postwar Japan referred not to politicians, but the civilian bureaucrats within the JDA. Hikotani Takako provides interesting explanations for this. She first suggests that the civilian officials who oversaw postwar rearmament misinterpreted the reference to civilians in the General Headquarters’ Civilian Affairs Section Annex – which demanded the guarantee of civilian control over the Police Reserve Force – to be limited to civilian bureaucrats.<sup>229</sup> In general, the civilian bureaucrats monitored other bureaucracies on behalf of politicians as well, but the distinction between civilian and uniformed personnel was particularly clear within the JDA. The civilian bureaucrats assumed the responsibility of monitoring and controlling the uniformed personnel and Japan’s military establishment was based on this premise. But more importantly, Hikotani argues, bureaucratic control of the military persevered for so long because the political elites delegated this responsibility to the bureaucrats for political benefit.<sup>230</sup> While I will deal with the logic of Hikotani’s argument later, it is important to understand this dynamic between civilian

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<sup>228</sup> Berger, 403.

<sup>229</sup> Hikotani, “The Paradox of Antimilitarism,” 32.

<sup>230</sup> Feaver, Hikotani, and Narine, “Civilian Control and Civil-Military Gaps in the United States, Japan, and China,” 247.

bureaucrats, politicians, and uniformed personnel because the end of the Cold War involves a reconfiguration of this relationship.

Strict bureaucratic monitoring and control limited the SDF's freedom of action and uniformed personnel's participation in the policymaking process. Therefore, Japan's postwar civil-military relations is characterized by separation of the military from the political class.<sup>231</sup> Uniformed personnel could not act autonomously from the bureaucrats and their interaction with politicians was restricted. A JDA directive prohibited staff officers of the three SDF branches from interacting directly with Diet members and other government officials in the absence of a civilian JDA official. Instead, officials of the JDA's Internal Bureau maintained primary control over various aspects of Japan's defense policy, including military planning, procurement, and training. They also monopolized the JDA's negotiations with other organizations. Weak authority of the Joint Staff Council only allowed it to 'coordinate' rather than command and control the different service branches. These examples typify political actors' perception of the military as a contaminant that must be bottled up, which had tangible restrictions on the policymaking abilities of the military – this is the mark of reactive antimilitarist strategic culture that undergirded Japan's postwar security policy.

But this military-political separation was not only due to civil servants' heavy hand. The political class was also wary of public criticism of being involved with the military. A prominent example is of this military-political separation is Prime Minister Kaifu's decision to exclude the JDA from cabinet decisions for some time during the Gulf Crisis to minimize the influence of military leaders on civilian decisions.<sup>232</sup> Therefore, integration of the military into the

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<sup>231</sup> Aoi, "Japan: Separation, Control, and Effectiveness."

<sup>232</sup> Berger, *Cultures of Antimilitarism: National Security in Germany and Japan*, 172.

security policymaking process signifies a change in the political actors' perception of the military's role and intentions for the national security of Japan. The idea that the military could have any important role at all in security policymaking is a barometer for how the postwar taboos and normative constraints have changed. This is why the civil-military relationship is an important indicator of Japan's strategic culture.

In the case study of the SDF's place in politics and society in post-Cold War Japan, I describe how the transition from reactive antimilitarism to proactive antimilitarism alleviated civilians' exaggerated fears and hostilities against the SDF members and reoriented their attention to establishing effective control over the organization. I examine why and how politicians reclaimed civilian control over the military from civil servants and the process by which they granted increasingly more policy influence to uniformed officers. I present legislative and administrative reforms that materialized these changes. In relation to the public, I present polling data on the public's perception of the legitimacy, credibility, and role of the SDF and contextualize it within the historical currents of Japan's security and policy environments. This will show a complex picture of how the public's approval and trust in the SDF have increased yet their wariness of granting the SDF formal policymaking legitimacy and authority remains.

## 2.4. Conclusion

This section began with the discussion and critique of the four research generations of strategic culture. It introduced the assortment of theoretical propositions within the study of strategic culture to dispel the misunderstandings that may arise from the assumption that strategic culture is reducible to a monolithic and internally consistent concept. It also aimed at revealing the conceptual flaws and benefits of each strategic cultural concept through comparison to highlight

the room for improvement for my own theoretical framework. I found that the major flaws in the existing literature are mostly derived from the difficulty of conceptualizing the agency of political actors in the formation and consolidation or change of strategic culture. The tautology and ethnocentrism of Gray's strategic culture arise from his overly holistic concept that both constitutes and envelops actors, leaving them with too little agency. The rigidity of strategic culture criticized by the fourth generation is due to the insufficient disaggregation of the different actors and interest groups that construct and sustain strategic culture. Lastly, the excessive instrumentality of the second and fourth generation's concept of strategic culture is due to conceptualizing too much agency to political leaders. The dilemma over agency and other problems within the study of strategic culture such as methodology were explored in-depth in the section on Gray and Johnston's debate.

Examining the existing literature led me to believe that I must take a critical realist approach in conceptualizing strategic culture to accurately reflect the differentiated levels of reality that we live in and accord actors the appropriate level of influence in changing strategic culture. By locating strategic culture in the real level of reality and the manifestation of its causal influence in the empirical level, I establish a layered system of causality that considers both the social structure that is the organized set of institutions and institutionalized relationships, and agency that is the perceptions and actions taken by people.<sup>233</sup> This combination of positivist and interpretivist paradigms generates a more complex concept of cultural causality and simultaneously addresses the problems of holism, determinism, and instrumentality.

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<sup>233</sup> Mukumbang, "Retroductive Theorizing."

I then explained how my research is designed and the methodologies I will utilize to obtain my research objectives. I will study two important aspects of Japan's security policy as case studies – Japan's military doctrine and the SDF's place in politics and society. Each case being its own chapter, these cases have been selected based on their ability to represent the changes observed in Japan's security orientation and the difficulty of proving the influence of culture each case, which would strengthen my argument. Based on the initial reading and research conducted to select the cases, I believe that strategic culture is the most plausible explanation for change in Japan's security policy. In the case study chapters, I will elaborate on why strategic culture is the most plausible explanation (abductive inference) and identify the specific conditions that enabled strategic culture to generate influence on Japan's post-Cold War security orientation (retroduction).

## Chapter 3. Japan's Military Doctrine

This chapter shows that with the shift from reactive to proactive antimilitarist strategic culture, the SDF was assigned broader and more significant roles within the military doctrine to ensure Japan's national security. Military doctrine is a critical subcomponent of national security policy that prescribes specifically the military means to be employed to achieve security. It answers the questions of what military means should be used and how, in response to recognized threats and opportunities.<sup>234</sup> These prescriptions are based upon a set of beliefs about the nature of war, efficacy of the military, and the role of the military in national security.

Thus, military doctrine is a plan for the use of the military organization and use of military force built on policymakers' principles and perceptions about the value of the military as a national security organization. For example, if policymakers believe that the risks of employing the military as part of statecraft outweigh the benefits due to distrust about the military's inclination for violence, then military doctrine would prescribe stringent constraints over the military's operations, roles, and budget. Military doctrine is a political, not military, decision that reflects not only the state's military and industrial capabilities but also the choices the government wants to make about how to use them. This makes military doctrine a valuable case study for Japan's strategic culture.

In this chapter, I discuss Japan's defense capability concept, defense spending policy, and overseas troop deployment policy as three major components – or indicators – of Japan's

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<sup>234</sup> Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 13.

military doctrine. I selected these indicators to cover the broad range of actors and policy processes that contribute to establishing Japan's military doctrine and to ensure that the case study is actually representative of the strategic culture, rather than being a repository of a specific group's strategic thought. Under the defense capability concept, I explain how proactive antimilitarist strategic culture allowed the government to incrementally increase the adaptability and agility of the military according to changes in their external threat perception. This indicator shows that the SDF has become equipped to function in a wider array of threat situations and national security domains. Under defense spending policy, I examine the resilience of the 1 percent of GDP ceiling on defense spending, which is one of the most important and symbolic policy constraints on Japan's military. I show that along with the strategic cultural change, there has been a diversification of the discourse regarding the cap, but the policy remains. Finally, under the overseas troop deployment policy, I examine the changes in the military's permitted scope of activities and territories outside of Japan. I show that the SDF has been sent to various PKO missions since the Gulf War trauma, albeit with many constraints on the deployment location and the SDF's functions. The chapter ends by analyzing what the changes in the three indicators mean for Japan's military doctrine as a whole, then comparing Japan's current military doctrine with its postwar military doctrine to evaluate the magnitude of change.

This chapter illustrates that the change in Japan's military doctrine mainly occurred through the Japanese people's realization that militarism is one but not the only ideology about how to construct military doctrine. The dissociation of military doctrine from the heavily opposed militarism allowed the sociopolitical acceptance of the use of military force to establish and maintain international peace and stability. But the chapter also describes the lingering

perception of the SDF as a ‘defensive’ force rather than a ‘military’ force, which still inflames domestic security discourse about the appropriate limits of SDF action and restricts its activities more heavily compared to the militaries of other states.

### 3.1. Defense capability concept

In every National Defense Program Outline/Guideline (NDPO/NDPG) since 1976, the government has outlined what kind of defense force Japan plans to build. This is in response to what the government identifies as national security threats and needs in that NDPO/NDPG and what kind of defense force is deemed to be necessary to respond to those threats and needs. I call this the ‘defense capability concept’. The defense capability concept includes the targeted geographical scope of the defense force along with the planned size, capabilities, and other characteristics that the defense force is to have such as readiness, flexibility, versatility, and level of technological advancement. Primarily this would reveal how willing the government is to expand and enhance the military’s capabilities but also at an underlying level, the increasing permissiveness of antimilitarist strategic culture as a result of the government’s changing threat perception.

A chronological overview of the defense concepts and the main threats identified in Japan’s security environment provided by the NDPGs is organized in Table 1.

<b>NDPG year</b>	<b>Defense capability concept</b>	<b>Context</b>
1976	Standard Defense Force	East-West rivalry
1995	Standard Defense Force	End of Cold War, collapse of USSR
2004	Standard Defense Force	Proliferation of WMD and terrorism
2010	Dynamic Defense Force	Shift in global balance of power, rise of large-scale military forces, gray-zone situations
2013	Dynamic Joint Defense Force	Shift in global balance of power, rise of large-scale military forces, gray-zone situations, North Korea's military buildup, rapid rise of China's military capabilities
2018	Multi-Domain Defense Force	Shift in global balance of power, rapid rise of China's military capabilities, hybrid warfare, technological innovation

**Table 1. Summary of defense capability concepts and their context.**

Source: NDPGs, table prepared by author.

### 3.1.1. Defense capability concepts from the 1976 NDPO to the 2018 NDPG

I explain how the defense capability concepts outlined in the NDPGs evolved over time and whether they remain aligned to the concept of exclusive self-defense (専守防衛 *senshubōei*).

As described in the introductory chapter, exclusive self-defense orientation – based on Article 9’s instruction to possess the minimum level of military force necessary to exercise Japan’s right to self-defense – has been the main principle of Japan’s defense policy since the postwar period and the foundation for reactive antimilitarist strategic culture. Therefore I examine how much the defense capability concepts increasingly diverge from the exclusive self-defense concept to demonstrate the magnitude of strategic cultural change to proactive antimilitarism.

The 1976 NDPO introduced the “Standard Defense Force” Concept, which emphasized the qualitative improvement in defense capabilities and a minimum defense posture during a period of détente and peace that could be expanded to adapt to various types of aggression if need be.<sup>235</sup> According to this concept, Japanese defense forces were designed to repel “limited and small-scale aggression” first without external assistance; but if continued resistance seemed unfeasible, they should be able to endure until the United States intervened.<sup>236</sup> This reflected the original function assigned to the SDF to manage Japan’s internal security as a compromise for the U.S. guarantee of its external security. Primarily, the government viewed the SDF as a deterrent and “only remotely as a fighting defense”.<sup>237</sup> Some politicians regarded this as dovish

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<sup>235</sup> Hughes, *Japan’s Security Agenda*, 145.

<sup>236</sup> “NATIONAL DEFENSE PROGRAM OUTLINE for FY 1977 and Beyond.”

<sup>237</sup> Weinstein, *Japan’s Postwar Defense Policy, 1947–1968*, 114–15.

and naïve.<sup>238</sup> But at least in the postwar period, this overreaching minimalism seemed consistent with both the actual events and the reactive antimilitarist strategic culture, as the Japanese believed maintaining a minimal military and refraining from using force would insulate Japan from threat although it was the United States that provided this protection.

The 1995 NDPO published the Basic and Standard Defense Force Concept, defined as “possessing the minimum necessary defense capability for an independent nation so that it would not become a source of instability in the surrounding regions by creating a vacuum of power rather than building a capability directly linked to a military threat to Japan”.<sup>239</sup> This meant that Japan would maintain the minimum necessary defense capabilities measured at an absolute level, not a relative level that would be affected by actual military threats.

This Basic and Standard Defense Force Concept was upheld in the 2004 NDPG despite the recognition of new threats to the international community including the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and international terrorism.<sup>240</sup> But even as the government adhered to the ‘exclusively defensive defense policy’ of not becoming a military power that could threaten others, its tone on improving defense capabilities had changed. It not only made commitments to streamlining the security decisionmaking mechanisms, improving information collection and analysis, and enhancing cooperation among the defense forces, but also seemed more anxious about making qualitative improvements to the defense force. For example, it committed to “develop multi-functional, flexible, and effective defense forces that are highly ready, mobile, adaptable and multi-purpose, and are equipped with state-of-the-art technologies

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<sup>238</sup> Sebata, *Japan's Defense Policy and Bureaucratic Politics, 1976-2007*, 3.

<sup>239</sup> “National Defense Program Outline in and after FY1996.”

<sup>240</sup> “NATIONAL DEFENSE PROGRAM GUIDELINES for FY 2005 and Beyond.”

and intelligence capabilities measuring up to the military-technological level of other major countries”.<sup>241</sup> It also aimed to enhance joint operation capabilities, strengthen intelligence capabilities, and incorporate information and communications technologies.

The 2010 NDPG was the first to observe that “[t]he global shift in the balance of power is apparent in the Asia-Pacific region”, “with the rise of powers such as China, India and Russia, along with the relative change on influence of the United States”.<sup>242</sup> This new security environment threatened the regional power equilibrium that Japan previously enjoyed and under which its reactive antimilitarist strategic culture flourished. Such an external shock forced political actors primarily and the Japanese populace in general to contemplate whether the previously planned system of response was still relevant. The assumption under reactive antimilitarism that Japan’s own restraint from using force and abstaining from international security affairs would ensure security began to fracture under the weight of the heaping tensions between the three levels of real, actual, and empirical realities.

Accordingly, the “Standard Defense Force” Concept was finally retired in the 2010 NDPG, which introduced the development of a “Dynamic Defense Force that possesses readiness, mobility, flexibility, sustainability, and versatility” that would be “reinforced by advanced technology based on the trends of levels of military technology and intelligence capabilities.”<sup>243</sup> This new concept emphasized the efficiency and effectiveness of defense forces by rationalizing and streamlining the military organization and choosing truly necessary functions. The 2010 NDPG established that deterrence through the sheer existence of the SDF was no longer

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<sup>241</sup> “NATIONAL DEFENSE PROGRAM GUIDELINES for FY 2005 and Beyond.”

<sup>242</sup> “NATIONAL DEFENSE PROGRAM GUIDELINES for FY 2011 and Beyond,” 3.

<sup>243</sup> “NATIONAL DEFENSE PROGRAM GUIDELINES for FY 2011 and Beyond,” 7.

sufficient to safeguard Japan against the various contingencies in the Asia-Pacific security environment. The retirement of the “Standard Defense Force” Concept demonstrates policymakers’ new belief that the SDF could and should be used to address Japan’s national security threats and that this ability should be flexible to change. Furthermore, this change also implies the recognition that Japan’s old ways of maintaining the peace – by refraining from rather than using military force – has become untenable.

The 2010 NDPG shows a key change in the government’s perspective of the military’s role in national security. While the 2004 NDPG prescribed “the minimum necessary basic defense forces lest [Japan] becomes a destabilizing factor in the region by creating a power vacuum”, the 2010 NDPG asserts that “[c]lear demonstration of national and strong defense capabilities...is a critical element for ensuring credible deterrence and will contribute to stability in the region surrounding Japan”.<sup>244</sup>

The 2013 NDPG introduced the “Dynamic Joint Defense Force” Concept, which integrates “both soft and hard aspects of readiness, sustainability, resiliency and connectivity, reinforced by advanced technology and capability for C3I (Command, Control, Communications and intelligence), with a consideration to establish a wide range of infrastructure to support the SDF’s operation”.<sup>245</sup> This defense concept reflects a more acute perception of the dangers posed by China’s military, placing greater emphasis on Japan’s defense forces’ adaptability to diverse threats, especially gray zone situations. The increasingly explicit depiction of threat is in line with the findings of Eitan Oren that over the postwar period, Japan’s threat perception has

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<sup>244</sup> “NATIONAL DEFENSE PROGRAM GUIDELINES for FY 2005 and Beyond”; “NATIONAL DEFENSE PROGRAM GUIDELINES for FY 2011 and Beyond,” 6–7.

<sup>245</sup> “NATIONAL DEFENSE PROGRAM GUIDELINES for FY 2014 and Beyond,” 8.

become more concrete in pointing out the exact type of threat rather than using abstract terms; specific in pointing out the country source of threat; and the evaluation of threat became shared more widely across the political spectrum.<sup>246</sup>

Proactive antimilitarism does not only prescribe greater trust of the SDF but also greater recognition of the use of force for good. While reactive antimilitarism mostly rejected the use of force due to the risk and various possible implications of emboldening the SDF, proactive antimilitarism recognizes – after the experience of external shocks – that using force is necessary for peace. Thus, the 2013 Dynamic Joint Defense Force concept and the 2018 Multi-Domain Defense Force concept were established in line with Abe’s 2013 policy of ‘Proactive Contribution to Peace’.<sup>247</sup> While not exclusively a defense policy – and a loose and broad ‘policy’ at that – it commits Japan to “[strengthening] its bilateral and multilateral cooperative relationships in order to ensure the stability of the Asia-Pacific region, which is closely related to its own security”.<sup>248</sup> It envisions a greater leadership role for Japan in maintaining regional security and the pursuit of closer international cooperation for that purpose. This policy has brought about two important changes in Japan’s traditional security principles.

First, the proactive contribution to peace policy expands the geographical scope of Japan’s security to not only Japanese territory but the Indo-Pacific region. It aligns the stability of the Indo-Pacific region with Japan’s own safety. This contrasts with Japan’s narrow territorial conception of national security during the Cold War that separated the security of Japan from

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<sup>246</sup> Oren, “Japan’s Evolving Threat Perception.”

<sup>247</sup> “Japan’s Proactive Contribution to Peace.”

<sup>248</sup> “NATIONAL DEFENSE PROGRAM GUIDELINES for FY 2014 and Beyond.”

that of the region.<sup>249</sup> While some cite Prime Minister Suzuki Zenkō's 1981 verbal commitment to provide naval protection for 1,000 nautical miles of commercial sea lanes from Japan as evidence for Japan's expanding military role, it is questionable whether Suzuki had adequate knowledge of the military implications of this statement. Moreover, neither his nor the subsequent administration of Nakasone Yasuhiro (who did have the military knowledge and experience to grasp the full meaning of the statement) furnished the necessary financial means for defense capabilities to realize that policy.<sup>250</sup>

Second, it commits Japan to *providing* rather than simply *receiving* security in the region by tying the security, peace, and prosperity of Japan with that of the international community. The proactive peace policy also serves as the foundation for Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy (FOIP) initiated in 2016, which aims to promote stability and prosperity of the two continents (Asia and Africa) and two oceans (Pacific Ocean and Indian Ocean).<sup>251</sup> FOIP – a major example of Japan's international security engagement – is Japan's broad policy vision that encompasses various initiatives to promote the key pillars of ensuring the rule of law, economic prosperity, and peace and stability. Under this umbrella term, Japan has endeavored to promote maritime order, secure connectivity across the two oceans, and contribute to capacity building of regional neighbors. While these broad objectives are not new to Japan's foreign policy, the change is that they have been integrated into a security framework that competes with Chinese interests in the region. The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue – better known as the Quad – through which Japan more closely aligns itself with the U.S.-led security

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<sup>249</sup> Singh, *Japan's Security Identity*, 77–78.

<sup>250</sup> Modly, “The Rhetoric and Realities of Japan's 1,000-Mile Sea-Lane Defense Policy.”

<sup>251</sup> “Address by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe at the Opening Session of the Sixth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD VI).”

order, has also accepted FOIP as a unifying agenda. The Japanese government supports the Quad structure by enhancing security cooperation with the United States, India, and Australia despite the Quad's implicit position of strategic competition with China. This suggests that Japan now thinks of international partnerships as assets rather than risks for entrapment and conflict, which was a prevalent perspective of the U.S.-Japan alliance during the Cold War.<sup>252</sup>

The last NDPG under study published in 2018 produced the “Multi-Domain Defense Force” Concept, which “organically fuses capabilities in all domains including space, cyberspace and electromagnetic spectrum; and is capable of sustained conduct of flexible and strategic activities during all phases from peacetime to armed contingencies”.<sup>253</sup> It recognizes the expansion of geopolitical conflict and rivalry in the new domains of space and cyberspace and determines that the SDF must also gain competitive capabilities in these domains. This walks a fine line on Japan's non-military space policy, which stipulates the peaceful use of space.

We can also observe increasing assertiveness in the defense forces' role in responding to attacks on remote islands in the NDPGs. The 2005 NDPG committed to “[maintaining] necessary defense force structure to respond effectively to the invasion of Japan's offshore islands” and the 2010 NDPG that the SDF will respond “by quickly deploying mobile units to prevent and reject invasion” in addition to ensuring air supremacy and security of surrounding sea lanes.<sup>254</sup> But NDPGs published thereafter stated that the SDF would respond to *attack* rather than *invasion* on Japan's remote islands. While attack and invasion are both aggressive military acts,

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<sup>252</sup> Izumikawa, “Explaining Japanese Antimilitarism.”

<sup>253</sup> “NATIONAL DEFENSE PROGRAM GUIDELINES for FY 2019 and Beyond.”

<sup>254</sup> “NATIONAL DEFENSE PROGRAM GUIDELINES for FY 2005 and Beyond”; “NATIONAL DEFENSE PROGRAM GUIDELINES for FY 2011 and Beyond,” 10.

‘attack’ refers to violent acts more broadly compared to ‘invasion’, which connotes the intention of intruding to take possession of territory and violate sovereignty. This broadens the scope of hostile acts to which the SDF is expected to respond. Additionally, the 2013 NDPG’s description of the SDF’s response to attacks on remote islands was more forceful, saying that “Japan will intercept and defeat any invasion” and “should any remote islands be invaded, Japan will recapture them”.<sup>255</sup>

This demonstrates the government’s willingness to allow the forces to engage in a certain level of combat or at least some type of contestation to ensure dominance over national territory. The 2013 NDPG’s statement coincided with the surge of Chinese incursions into Japan’s contiguous zone and territorial sea beginning in the latter half of 2012.<sup>256</sup> The forcefulness of the SDF’s response to attacks on Japan’s remote islands increased as the high number of Chinese incursions continued. The 2018 NDPG stated that “[s]hould any part of the territory be occupied, SDF will retake it by employing all necessary measures”.<sup>257</sup> It is notable that the government is committing the SDF to take proportionate action against the threatening party rather than a minimal response to simply end the situation. This not only accepts the possibility of a hostile occupation, displaying a change in Japan’s perception of its adversary, but also affirms that the SDF will engage in military conflict. Although Japan has repeatedly committed to self-defense in its NDPGs, the potential for escalation that this statement assumes seems discordant with Article 9, which renounced the right of belligerency and the possession of war potential.

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<sup>255</sup> “NATIONAL DEFENSE PROGRAM GUIDELINES for FY 2014 and Beyond,” 14.

<sup>256</sup> “Trends in China Coast Guard and Other Vessels in the Waters Surrounding the Senkaku Islands, and Japan’s Response.”

<sup>257</sup> “NATIONAL DEFENSE PROGRAM GUIDELINES for FY 2019 and Beyond,” 12.

The idea of Japan contributing to regional security is not entirely new. But the substance of this contribution has changed over time. The 1976 NDPO explains that Japan’s maintenance of its restrained defense capability and the U.S.-Japan security arrangement is its contribution – “the very fact that Japan firmly maintains such a defense posture contributes as well to the international political stability of Japan’s neighboring region”.<sup>258</sup> The 1995 NDPO’s idea of contribution consists of more direct action on Japan’s part. It calls for Japan to participate in international cooperation activities, international disaster relief activities, mutual confidence building, and international arms control efforts.<sup>259</sup> The NDPGs since 2013 have codified this idea of contributing to international into policy.

### 3.1.2. Discussion

Each NDPO lays out the defense capability concept in response to what the government identifies as national security threats and needs to adequately respond to them. It includes targeted geographical scope, planned size, capabilities, other characteristics necessary. Threat perception, cause-and-effect thinking about the use of force, preferred type of response to threat are necessarily dependent on policymakers’ attitude towards the use of military force and questions about how to achieve peace. The idea that prescriptions about whether, how, and when the military should be used are based on strictly material and contextual cost-benefit analyses is illusory. As mentioned in the introduction, these decisions are made based on policymakers’ beliefs about the role and utility of the military, which in turn I believe, are derived from a deep underlying social structure that is strategic culture.

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<sup>258</sup> “NATIONAL DEFENSE PROGRAM OUTLINE for FY 1977 and Beyond.”

<sup>259</sup> “National Defense Program Outline in and after FY 1996.”

I see ample evidence that Japan's defense capability concepts were founded on the postwar reactive antimilitarist strategic culture. The Japanese reaction to having been forced by the United States to organize a military after the outbreak of the Korean War was to minimize the employment of this military force based on a narrow definition of self-defense. The reactive antimilitarist sensitivity to involving the military in national security, much less in international security affairs, was not extinguished. Even the more recent NDPGs still strongly maintain the Japanese military forces' adherence to the exclusively defense-oriented defense policy and Japan's commitment to peace. But I have explained in this indicator how Japan's defense capability concepts have evolved to pursue a more far-reaching geographical scope, expansive military capabilities, and proactive participation in international security issues over time.

The Japanese government has demonstrated heightened awareness of the need for international peace and community responsibility since the end of the Cold War and its Gulf War trauma. A recurring theme in Japan's post-Cold War NDPGs is the idea that a stable international environment is beneficial for all its members and that no one country can handle the varied global security challenges single-handedly, therefore it is important for states to share interests and regularly cooperate with each other. Departing from its limited geographical scope of security in the postwar period, Japan began to enmesh itself into international security cooperation.

The discrepancy between the increasingly more proactive security postures of Japan's defense forces and the original minimalist conception of Japan's defense policy is widening. This is not to suggest that Japan is returning to the chauvinistic militarism of the early 1900s. But there is a clear difference between the government's preferred function and roles for the SDF during

the Cold War and what they have expected of the SDF from the 1990s onwards. The NDPGs have gradually expanded the force with which the SDF is allowed and expected to respond to threats and have reflected the Japanese government's increasing sensitivity to potential aggression, resulting in a noticeably stretched definition of 'defense'. I argue that this would not have been possible without greater appreciation of the SDF's indispensable role in national security but also trust that the SDF will function as an arm of government to fulfil a role given without pursuing its own agenda or political influence. I point to this as an implication of the strategic cultural change from reactive to proactive antimilitarism.

These increasingly proactive concepts were produced in the context of important geopolitical events such as the end of the Cold War and shifts in the global balance of power. But Japanese policymakers' and the public's reception of these external events led to tensions between these actual events and the way that the Japanese had been cultivated to perceive them; and between the array of responses and capabilities that were recognized to be necessary and those that were available. Accordingly, after the 2010 NDPG recognized the critical impact of the global shift in the balance of power, the 2013 and 2018 NDPGs introduced measures for the SDF to be ready and adaptable against new and diverse threats, contrary to the more stagnant and basic level of defense called for in the past. So what makes these external shocks meaningful to Japan's security policy is how they challenged the longstanding beliefs about relationships relevant to security issues – the relationship between states that use force and do not; the relationship between the use of force and conflict or war; the relationship between the military and national security; and the relationship between national and international security.

These challenges to the logical consistency and moral appropriateness of the existing strategic cultural structure caused fractures so that the Japanese people no longer felt safe by adhering to reactive antimilitarism. This feeling of safety that I refer to does not only include the assurance of physical safety but also the confidence in one's convictions. The NDPGs became increasingly alert and wary of the security threat from China and North Korea, focusing the SDF's capabilities specifically to respond to them, allocated more national security responsibility to the SDF, and planned more sophisticated equipment. I argue this was only made possible by newly established trust in the SDF and the belief that the use of military force is effective and necessary against security threats rather than the sole reliance on economic measures or diplomacy.

### 3.2. Defense spending

I discuss defense spending as part of military doctrine because practically, money matters is inseparable from the effective use of the military. Defense spending could be a measure of the state's potential military capability and spending patterns could represent key political events and their implications on political attitudes toward security.<sup>260</sup> I contextualize the trend of Japan's defense spending within the larger discourses about Japan's threat environment, the appropriate role of the SDF, and normative principles on defense spending. The 1 percent of GDP ceiling on defense spending is a prominent representation of Japan's postwar reactive antimilitarist strategic culture that has long suppressed defense spending and capability building. It is worth mentioning that due to the sheer size of its economy, even at 1 percent spending,

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<sup>260</sup> "What Does China Really Spend on Its Military?"

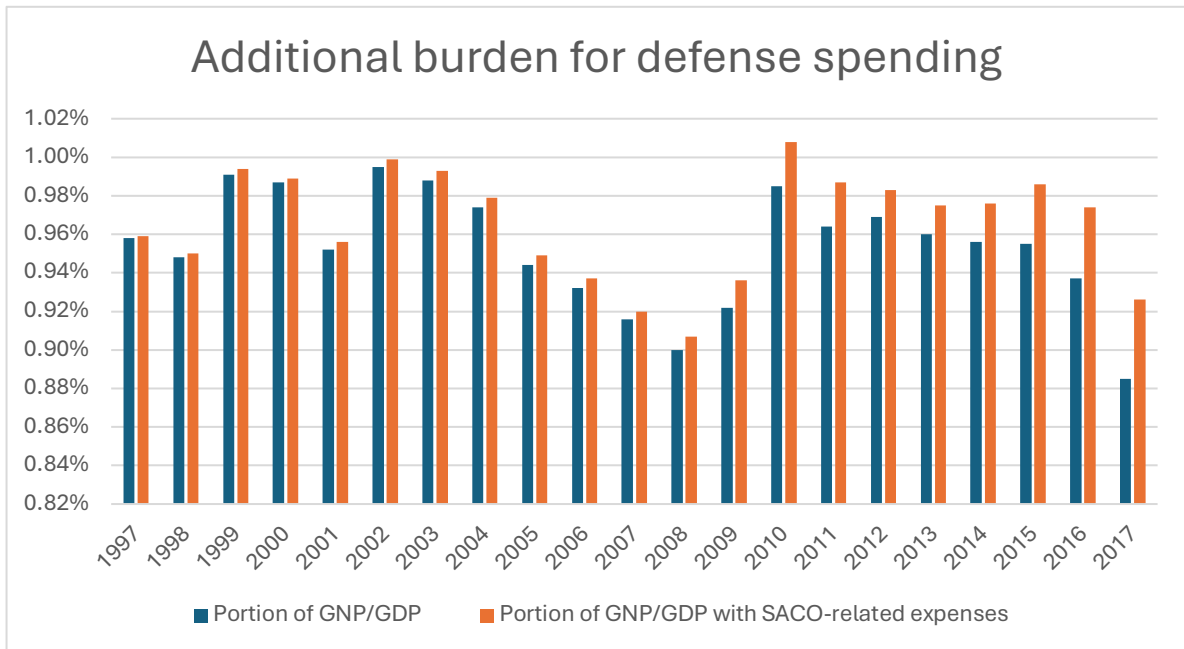
Japan is easily one of the top 15 military spenders globally.<sup>261</sup> However, not only is 1 percent lower than what many industrialized countries like NATO states spend on defense but it is an arbitrary cap on defense capabilities that is based on principle, not security need.<sup>262</sup> A successful shift to proactive antimilitarist strategic culture should show that the GOJ is willing and politically able to allocate a defense budget based on appropriate security needs rather than bound to postwar norms, even if it exceeds 1 percent of the GDP.

I begin this section by exploring the origins of the 1 percent ceiling on defense spending, then examining how the discourse around defense spending has evolved through time. I find that although recognition for investment necessary for adequate SDF capabilities has emerged more clearly in the political discourse, there has not been an actual breach of the ceiling.

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<sup>261</sup> SIPRI, “The Top 15 Military Spenders, 2022 | SIPRI.”

<sup>262</sup> NATO, “Secretary General Welcomes Unprecedented Rise in NATO Defence Spending.”



**Figure 1. Japan’s defense spending with SACO-related expenses.**

Source: Foreign Affairs and National Security Research Committee, figure prepared by author.

A report by the House of Councillors’ Foreign Affairs and National Security Research Committee shows the Japanese government’s GNP/GDP (used interchangeably in the document), defense spending, and defense spending as a proportion of GNP/GDP from 1950 to 2017.<sup>263</sup> This data has been organized into Figure 1. The defense spending shown in Figure 1 includes the Japan-U.S. Special Action Committee (SACO)-related expenses from the year 1997 and includes SACO-related expenses and U.S. military reorganization (reduction of local burden)-related expenses from the year 2007. From the year 2015, it includes these expenditures in addition to expenses for the introduction of new government aircraft. SACO was established in 1995 by the governments of Japan and the United States to reduce the base burden of

<sup>263</sup> 沓脱, “戦後における防衛関係費の推移 [Changes in defense-related expenditures after the war].”

Okinawa residents by returning U.S. military base land and relocating functions and facilities.<sup>264</sup>

This means that the Japanese government bears the costs of these U.S. base reorganizations in Okinawa.

### 3.2.1. 1 percent limit on defense spending

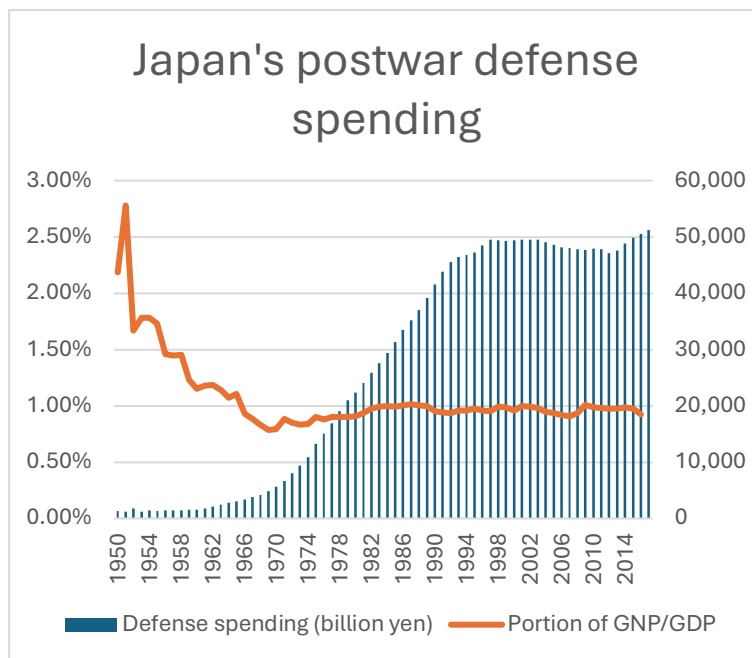


Figure 2. Japan's defense spending as portion of GNP/GDP.

Source: Foreign Affairs and National Security Research Committee, figure prepared by author.

Figure 2 shows two representations of Japan's defense spending. The blue bars show the amount of defense spending in billion yen with the measurement legend on the right side of the graph. The orange line shows the defense spending as a portion of the GNP/GDP with the percentage legend on the left side of the graph. Together, the graph represents Japan's 1 percent of GNP/GDP limit on defense spending.

<sup>264</sup> "MOFA: The Japan-U.S. Special Action Committee (SACO) Interim Report."

The Japanese government's long-term adherence to the 1 percent ceiling on defense spending as a proportion of GDP is well-cited as an example of antimilitarist influence limiting military capabilities, particularly as it is a policy choice, not the result of a legal constraint. In the early 1970s, there were misgivings among Japanese politicians and public about the rising defense budgets of the 1960s, which fueled fears of unlimited expansion of defense capabilities. Prime Minister Tanaka Kakuei directly addressed this as he remarked in 1973 that "the government must do its utmost to counter the fear of unlimited expansion of defense capability."<sup>265</sup> Still, he also explained that limiting defense spending would be difficult as relative defense capability must be considered fluidly within the changing international situation.<sup>266</sup>

The succeeding Miki Takeo administration consolidated the existing orientation on spending limitation into government policy on November 5, 1976. The government was facing pressure to cut costs from the 1970s oil crises, beginnings of détente with the USSR, and the economic repercussions of the Nixon shock.<sup>267</sup> But the policy decision was also aligned with the Basic Defense Force Concept formulated in the NDPO for FY1977 and beyond that was released in 1975. This policy paper proposed the maintenance of a minimum necessary defense force during peacetime and to expand the defense force should the occasion arise due to international tensions. Due to some pushback from the JDA Director General Sakata Michita, the policy was framed as a 'goal' rather than a limit, but this hardly made a difference in its practical implementation, which continued until the Nakasone Yasuhiro administration in 1987.

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<sup>265</sup> “第 71 回国会 衆議院 予算委員会 第 3 号 [71st Diet Session, House of Representatives Budget Committee No. 3].”

<sup>266</sup> “第 71 回国会 衆議院 予算委員会 第 3 号 [71st Diet Session, House of Representatives Budget Committee No. 3].”

<sup>267</sup> Wright, “The Persistent Power of 1 Percent,” 3.

Nakasone, unlike Miki, was a security hawk who advocated for rearmament and revision of Article 9. In 1985, an opposition lawmaker asked Nakasone if he would preserve the 1 percent ceiling, because according to the Mid-term Defense Program for 1986-1990 that was released in 1985, the ceiling would be breached in 1986 or 1987.<sup>268</sup> Nakasone answered that while he wants to preserve the spirit of the policy, he would propose a ‘third concept’ that would respect and preserve that spirit. This caused commotion in the Diet, as attending lawmakers could be heard saying, “are you kidding” or “please retract”.<sup>269</sup> At the next budget committee session, however, he veered more closely toward existing policy, saying that he will adhere to the opinions of the Diet session regarding the Miki Cabinet’s decision on defense spending thereby preserving the 1 percent limit in compiling the budget for fiscal 1986.<sup>270</sup> Nakasone was forced to abandon his explicit revocation of the policy by the outcry he had caused. Three opposition parties threatened to indefinitely boycott Diet sessions and factions within his own LDP threatened to abstain in any vote of no-confidence against him.<sup>271</sup> Still, he was able to win a five-year spending increase that took the defense budget to barely over 1 percent by raising the pay for SDF personnel, which would have been difficult for the opposition parties to oppose.

As persistent as the one percent policy is, the consensus on limiting defense spending has not been monolithic nor constant over time. Sebata Takao, a professor at University of Nagasaki explains that there were three unspoken rules in postwar defense budget preparation.<sup>272</sup> First,

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<sup>268</sup> “第 103 回国会 衆議院 予算委員会 第 2 号 [103rd Diet Session, House of Representatives Budget Committee No. 2].”

<sup>269</sup> “防衛費の GNP1%枠問題 [GNP 1% frame problem for defense spending]”; “第 103 回国会 衆議院 予算委員会 第 2 号 [103rd Diet Session, House of Representatives Budget Committee No. 2].”

<sup>270</sup> “第 103 回国会 衆議院 予算委員会 第 3 号 [103rd Diet Session, House of Representatives Budget Committee No. 3].”

<sup>271</sup> Chai, “Entrenching the Yoshida Defense Doctrine,” 402.

<sup>272</sup> Sebata, *Japan’s Defense Policy and Bureaucratic Politics, 1976-2007*, 183.

the defense budget should not grow faster than the total budget of the general account. Second, the defense budget should not outgrow the welfare budget. Third, the defense budget should not exceed 1 percent of GDP. However, the defense budget's growth rate in 1980 was set at 7.61 percent, compared to 7.6 percent for the social welfare budget. Though the difference is minuscule, this was the first time since the end of WWII that the growth rate of the defense budget exceeded that of social welfare. Sebata argues that this was a major turning point in Japan's military expansion, which revealed the decline of the Ministry of Finance's power to set the budget for the military.<sup>273</sup> This continued until 1986 when the defense budget growth rate was higher than that of welfare, education and science, and public works.<sup>274</sup> However, the limit on the total proportion of the defense budget remained, as Japanese leaders continuously and successfully resisted increasing U.S. pressure to increase the defense budget.

As illustrated above, under the 1 percent ceiling policy on defense spending, there were frequent tensions between those who believed that the arbitrary limitation should be broken to normalize Japan's defense budget and military capabilities; those who believed that 1 percent is not only enough but also guards the peaceful nature and identity of the Japanese; and those who conformed to the taboo. Strategic culture is a powerful social structure that may have severe sociopolitical consequences for violators, but it is not a law that has a state to administer specific and concrete punishment for all violators. This is why I presented evidence contrary to antimilitarist norms regarding the budget such as Nakasone's efforts and the higher growth rate of the defense budget compared to that for welfare. Thus, what I argue is that the defense budget limitation has survived and remains resilient not for the lack of trying by norm defectors, but

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<sup>273</sup> Sebata, 156.

<sup>274</sup> Sebata, 147–48, 155.

because the reactive antimilitarism continues to hold sway over the majority of policymakers' attitudes toward security affairs.

### 3.2.2. Whither the 1 percent limit?

Since Nakasone, no prime minister has been as vociferous against the 1 percent ceiling as Abe Shinzo, a revisionist and security hardliner, who began his second administration in 2012. In 2012, he gave a speech in Washington DC declaring, "Japan is Back".<sup>275</sup> He affirmed that "Japan must stay strong, strong first in its economy, and strong also in its national defense" rather than being self-absorbed in its economic malaise. "I will bring back a strong Japan, strong enough to do even more good for the betterment of the world", he promised. Among many efforts for security policy reform, Abe explicitly expressed his commitment to revoke the spending limitation in 2017.<sup>276</sup> His government had been raising defense spending to record levels – by Japanese standards – since the beginning of Abe's second administration in 2012. Despite these consecutive record-breaking budgets, defense spending was still under 1 percent of GDP. Michael Green argues that Abe's raises were hardly radical, as Japan's 2018 defense budget was comparable to the 1997 defense budget in nominal terms.<sup>277</sup> In comparison, the U.S. defense budget in 2017 was 3.3 percent of GDP, China's 1.7 percent, and Korea's 2.4 percent.<sup>278</sup> I agree with Green that Abe's defense budget increases and security reforms were not radically different from the long path of incremental changes that his various predecessors had implemented, and indeed despite his rhetoric Abe did not breach the ceiling. What I find striking,

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<sup>275</sup> Abe, "Japan Is Back."

<sup>276</sup> Reuters Staff, "Japan PM Abe Says No Defense Budget Ceiling as 1 Percent to GDP."

<sup>277</sup> Green, *Line of Advantage*, 210.

<sup>278</sup> "SIPRI Military Expenditure Database."

though, is the rhetoric and force with which Abe approached security policy, particularly given his reputation as a nationalist and hardliner. There was pushback against some of his more significant reforms such as the 2015 legislation to allow limited exercise of collective self-defense but unlike previous leaders, Abe maintained his seat and resigned the premiership of his own volition five years later.<sup>279</sup>

Japan's annual defense white paper found in 2016 that China's national defense budget had grown 44-fold since FY1988 and 3.4-fold since 2006.<sup>280</sup> The 2016 DOJ also found China's assertiveness over maritime issues dangerous, particularly given the lack of transparency in the decisionmaking process related to military and security affairs. It also pointed to the developments in China's long-range missile systems and the threat these posed to the Senkaku Islands, which Japan believes are its "inherent territories". This specific and explicit expression of threat perception suggests that the Abe administration's policy agenda likely benefited from the Japanese public's heightened awareness of the advancement in China's military modernization and increases in military spending. Furthermore, North Korea had stepped up its missile tests during the second Abe administration. It conducted 17 missile tests and 1 nuclear test from 1994 to 2008, but since then conducted 62 missile tests and 4 nuclear tests until 2016, with 20 missile and 2 nuclear tests in 2016 alone.<sup>281</sup> Therefore, even though Abe was unable to violate the budget ceiling in practice, he was able to speak publicly against it without serious backlash that threatened his political position. I believe this demonstrates how far proactive

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<sup>279</sup> "Massive Protest Against Japanese Military Legislation," August 30, 2015.

<sup>280</sup> "Defense of Japan 2016."

<sup>281</sup> "Countering the North Korean Threat."

antimilitarist strategic culture has pushed Japan's security policy away from postwar reactive antimilitarism yet also how fundamentally Japan's security is still beholden to antimilitarism.

### 3.2.3. Discussion

There were clear geopolitical interests for the Japanese government to raise defense spending and clear attempts to do so. But even Abe, one of the strongest leaders that postwar Japan has seen, was unable to break through the 1 percent policy that many conservatives including himself had long thought was an irrational hindrance to Japan's necessary military normalization. The persistence of the 1 percent limit suggests that the policy has been deeply ingrained as a structure upholding Japan's security policy, being able to influence the budget preparation process. This is why even multiple explicit revocations by Nakasone and Abe have been unable to create a new consensus among Japanese politicians and the public about breaking this taboo.

While defense capability concepts are critical to formulating the direction of Japan's security policy and the capabilities of the SDF, it is necessarily limited by the defense budget that is allocated to acquiring the prescribed equipment and infrastructure. Japan's defense spending ceiling is one of the most prominent indications of its reactive antimilitarist strategic culture. The 1 percent ceiling on defense spending is not only significant because 1 percent of GNP/GDP is such a low bar for defense spending even for such a big economy as Japan. 1 percent is indeed significant as an arbitrary political decision rather than a strategic one, especially as a policy that has been carried on by consecutive administrations despite lacking a legal or administrative basis.

But what I focus on is not only the number but *how* the ceiling – which was originally conceived from various antimilitarist, economic, and security motivations – has been institutionalized as a core and heretofore almost immutable component of Japan’s military doctrine. I address the claim that Japan’s military spending actually exceeds 1 percent due to specificities in the definition of its defense budget and support for U.S. forces in Japan. Christopher Hughes points out that if Japan’s defense budget were to include pension payments to service personnel as does the NATO definition, then its defense budget has always exceeded 1 percent of GDP.<sup>282</sup> Robert Dekle, an economist who studies Japan’s economic system, would add that Japan’s defense budget does not include the opportunity cost of the use of GOJ land by the U.S. military forces due to underassessment of the land value by the GOJ in addition to the taxes and fees unlevied to the U.S. forces.<sup>283</sup> Dekle pointed out that Japan’s defense budget also does not include military aid to other nations due to its policy of refraining from exporting weapons. Taking these components into consideration and after making the Japanese defense budget more comparable to that of NATO, Japan’s military spending would rise to almost 2 percent, rather than 1.

While I agree it is important to understand the peculiarities of the composition of Japan’s defense budget compared to NATO’s, as Japan itself compares its expenditures with other states based on the NATO methodology, this does not fully appreciate the embeddedness of antimilitarism. First, the composition of Japan’s defense budget – whether it includes military pensions or not – has been consistent and that was what all of Japan’s policymakers have considered as the defense spending before and after the installation of the 1 percent ceiling

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<sup>282</sup> Hughes, *Japan as a Global Military Power*, 35.

<sup>283</sup> Dekle, “The Relationship between Defense Spending and Economic Performance in Japan,” 8.

policy. Second, whether it is 1 percent or 2, the continued adherence to the policy demonstrates the difficulty of overcoming the hurdle that is an institutionalized norm without garnering criticism from domestic and international observers who have also come to expect norm preservation. Fundamentally, the low proportion of the GDP allocated to defense indicates that the expansion of the SDF has been constrained by the government's prioritization of economic and domestic political considerations even if they view the SDF as a necessary element of Japan's defense policy.<sup>284</sup> We can infer from this indicator that one of the ways that strategic culture exercises influence is by setting the status quo and an inclination to protect it. I argue that the reactive antimilitarist strategic culture established the defense budget ceiling as the status quo for a long time and even Abe could not violate this status quo. However, I explore the future trajectory of Japan's defense spending as planned by Kishida's three security documents in the concluding chapter.

### 3.3. Overseas troop deployment

Deploying the SDF outside the Japanese territory or for missions that do not directly concern national security would lie outside the framework of the exclusive defense-orientation prescribed by reactive antimilitarist strategic culture. Therefore, deploying the SDF overseas and by extension, permitting the exercise of collective self-defense, are important representations of how important Japan's policymakers think the SDF is for national security. The approval of such activities would mean policymakers recognize not only that the maintenance of international peace is necessary for the guarantee of Japan's security but more

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<sup>284</sup> Weinstein, *Japan's Postwar Defense Policy, 1947–1968*, 122.

importantly that this integral contribution to international security should be made by the SDF rather than through economic aid or diplomacy, which have traditionally been the tools of choice in postwar Japan, particularly under reactive antimilitarist strategic culture. But this realization and the policy implementation of this realization have been enabled by changes in the relationship structures that have shaped security policymaking processes since the postwar period, such as the perceived relationship between international and national security; the SDF and international security; and the use of force and international peace. I explain in this section the processes through which legislation allowing Japan's overseas deployment and exercise of limited collective self-defense were passed and what they have meant for the SDF's activities in practice. I argue that while these policy changes demonstrate a significant shift from reactive to proactive antimilitarist strategic culture, which places greater trust and responsibility on the SDF for Japan and international security, the remaining policy limitations attest to the resilience and stickiness of reactive antimilitarism.

### 3.3.1. Article 9's constraint on overseas deployment

The ambiguity of Article 9 of the constitution fuels the debate on the constitutionality of many of Japan's security issues, including the SDF's overseas deployments. Although deploying the SDF overseas is not technically prohibited by Article 9, it is seen by many Japanese political actors to be a use of force that exceeds Japan's exclusive defense-orientation. Even if the SDF participates as noncombatants in peacekeeping operations, the potential for the SDF to confront situations where the use of force may be necessary is a risk of constitutional violation.<sup>285</sup> Thus,

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<sup>285</sup> Chinen, "Article 9 of the Constitution of Japan and the Use of Procedural and Substantive Heuristics for Consensus," 63–65.

overseas deployments including the SDF's provision of international disaster relief have been the subject of intense political debate in Japan between those who want to expand SDF operations overseas and those who believe that Article 9 prohibits Japan from even possessing military forces. There have been three main issues in the debates surrounding the issue – should the SDF be deployed overseas, under what conditions should they be deployed overseas, and why they should be deployed.<sup>286</sup>

During the Cold War, the Japanese government held a steadfast adherence to not dispatching the SDF overseas even at the request of the United Nations (UN) or as part of UN forces. Even Prime Minister Kishi Nobusuke, the maternal grandfather of Abe Shinzo who wanted Japan to have a more independent foreign policy, was strictly opposed to the SDF operating outside of Japanese territory.<sup>287</sup> In the 1980s, the cabinet of Prime Minister Suzuki Zenkō distinguished overseas dispatch (海外派遣 *kaigai haken*) from overseas troop deployment (海外派兵 *kaigai hahei*) to argue that the SDF could be 'dispatched' to participate in UN forces when it does not involve the use of force. However, opponents within the government refuted, arguing that the SDF Law did not provide the legal basis for the SDF to even participate in such missions. This was the fine line of argumentation that continued throughout the Cold War until the debate on the PKO Cooperation Law in the Diet in 1992.<sup>288</sup>

Currently, the SDF has and can engage in international disaster relief operations, a full range of UN peacekeeping operations, and supporting roles for the U.S. military in regional

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<sup>286</sup> Tatsumi, "The Legal and Political Environment Surrounding the Self-Defense Forces' Overseas Deployments."

<sup>287</sup> Tatsumi, 48.

<sup>288</sup> Tatsumi, 49.

contingencies – and since 2015, it can also engage in scenarios wherein Japan’s survival is threatened. This is the culmination of continuous political debate and enactment of legislation including the 1992 PKO Cooperation Law, 2001 Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law, 2003 Iraq Humanitarian Reconstruction Assistance Special Measures Law, and the 2015 Legislation for Peace and Security. The rest of this section will focus on how two major factors – the Gulf War and policy of proactive contribution to peace – enabled this incremental process of overseas deployment expansion.

### 3.3.2. Effect of ‘Gulf War trauma’

The Gulf War began with the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on August 2, 1990. In response to U.S. President George H. W. Bush’s repeated requests for human contribution, Japan made a swift but largely financial contribution of 13 billion USD, which amounted to 20% of the total war cost.<sup>289</sup> This reflected the broad national consensus that Japan’s comprehensive security policy should prioritize the application of its economic resources rather than military capabilities. Despite the large sum, the United States, Kuwait, and the rest of the coalition members criticized Japan for its ‘checkbook diplomacy’ and it was excluded from the Kuwaiti government’s official expression of gratitude on the New York Times.

Japan became cognizant of the importance of contributing troops and a shared responsibility for international peace and stability.<sup>290</sup> The Gulf War reminded the Japanese that they were ill-equipped to deal with the demands and expectations of the new international system. It

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<sup>289</sup> Catalinac, “Identity Theory and Foreign Policy,” 62.

<sup>290</sup> Singh, “Japan’s Post-Cold War Security Policy,” 83.

repudiated the reactive antimilitarist causal belief that avoidance of the use of force would maintain peace, at least for Japan. Former MSDF Admiral and 5<sup>th</sup> Chief of Staff of the JSDF Joint Staff Kawano Katsutoshi told me in his interview that many politicians – particularly on the left of the political spectrum – argued at the outbreak of the Gulf War that sending SDF overseas would be returning Japan to militarism. He added that the international community severely criticized Japan’s significant monetary contribution to the coalition effort, leaving Japan’s policy actors fearing international isolation.<sup>291</sup>

Furthermore, this external pressure faced by the Japanese government was congruent with the aims of domestic political forces who desired remilitarization. The rhetoric of Japan’s responsibility to make an international contribution was powerfully appealing to the public and the normative restraint against the overseas deployment of the SDF began to be eroded.<sup>292</sup> Thus, Japan’s experience of the Gulf War “served as the catalyst for an emerging consensus that Japan must play a more proactive political role in international affairs, commensurate to its international economic power, and also partially remedied the ‘allergy’ of the Japanese people and opposition parties to military matters”.<sup>293</sup>

But this process of wearing down the Japanese public and opposition parties’ resistance against international peace cooperation was not easy. Prime Minister Kaifu Toshiki introduced the UN Peace Cooperation Law on October 16, 1990, to establish a UN Peace Cooperation Corps (UNPCC) but had to withdraw the bill on November 11 due to the lack of parliamentary support.

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<sup>291</sup> Kawano, interview.

<sup>292</sup> Hook, *Militarisation and Demilitarisation in Contemporary Japan*, 95–98.

<sup>293</sup> Purrington, “Tokyo’s Policy Responses During the Gulf War and the Impact of the ‘Iraqi Shock’ on Japan,” 162.

In a policy speech to the Diet on October 12, Kaifu argued that Japan's postwar determination to reject militarism and war has "contributed significantly to peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region" and that "it is only right that Japan should seek to undertake responsibilities for preserving the peace by means that are compatible with these ideals and this stance".<sup>294</sup> This reflects Japanese policymakers' traditional cause-and-effect belief that Japan's antimilitarism and lack of military capabilities have contributed to international security and at the same time, deems participation in PKOs to be consistent with those principles.

The proposed legislation would have authorized SDF and civilian personnel to support the coalition forces in the Gulf area to secure Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait and authorized future SDF overseas deployments for UN PKOs, ending Japan's policy of noninvolvement in overseas military conflicts. This raised the important question of the constitutional legitimacy of such operations and whether they constitute an act of collective security, which had been interpreted to be prohibited by the Constitution.<sup>295</sup> Public and political opposition to the bill reflected steadfast fear of the risk of entanglement in foreign military conflict and entrapment. The salience of such perception despite heavy alliance pressure and UN authorization to pacify the Gulf crisis suggests that the Japanese were more afraid of utilizing their military than the possibility of abandonment.

The bill was heavily criticized by the Socialists and Communists; Komeito demanded changes to the bill to specify a period of time, to restrict the deployed personnel to non-combat areas, to make SDF personnel take leave from their units while serving in the corps, and to ensure that

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<sup>294</sup> "Policy Speech by Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu to the 119th Session of the National Diet."

<sup>295</sup> Akaha, "Japan's Comprehensive Security Policy," 330.

the SDF does not carry arms on such missions. The last demand was made by the Democratic Socialists as well. The government did not accept those conditions and tried to assure the opposition that Japan would not join the coalition's military operations. The Japanese public sided with the opposition on the legislation. According to a Nikkei opinion poll, 48.5% of respondents opposed the overseas deployment of SDF, 28.4% approved if the corps were unarmed, and 10.9% supported the deployment without condition. Opposition to the bill outnumbered support even among supporters of the incumbent LDP.<sup>296</sup> This implies that the source of opposition transcends political groupism and ideology to a more fundamental common ground of antimilitarist strategic culture.

After the demise of the UNPCC bill, six MSDF ships were deployed for minesweeping operations in the Persian Gulf on April 26, 1991. According to former Admiral Kawano Katsutoshi, it was the success of these subsequent minesweeping operations that changed the political actors' beliefs and public opinion about the SDF "and the SDF entered a period of operation from a period of non-operation".<sup>297</sup> In contrast to the public's overwhelming opposition to the UNPCC, a majority of those polled by the Asahi Shimbun supported the minesweeping dispatch. Courtney Purrington argues that this dramatic swing in public opinion was fueled by their disappointment over the lack of recognition for the 13 billion USD aid, fear of isolation in the international community, and fears of exacerbating the U.S.-Japan relationship.<sup>298</sup> Hughes adds that the minesweeping mission did not violate constitutional

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<sup>296</sup> Akaha, 331.

<sup>297</sup> Kawano, interview.

<sup>298</sup> Purrington, "Tokyo's Policy Responses During the Gulf War and the Impact of the 'Iraqi Shock' on Japan," 171-72.

prohibitions because it occurred during peacetime after the cessation of hostilities.<sup>299</sup> The SDF was eventually able to participate in UN-authorized PKO through the International Peace Cooperation Law of June 1992, which limited participation to peacetime and mainly in logistical and reconstruction activities. The law did not constitute either collective security nor collective self-defense by permitting the use of force only for the defense of Japanese personnel and those under their control, excluding the protection of personnel of other PKO participating states.

Prime Minister Miyazawa Keiichi made the politically challenging decision to send Japan's first PKO personnel contribution to the United Nations transitional authority in Cambodia from late 1992. The deployment included military observers, civilian police officers, electoral observers, and engineering units. Two Japanese personnel died from alleged Khmer Rouge assaults – a young UN volunteer (who was not part of the Japanese national delegation) and a civilian policeman. The government had focused on the SDF at the expense of other components of the delegation, who were facing a more perilous situation in Cambodia. The SDF in fact were stationed in one of the safest areas of Cambodia located far from Khmer Rouge guerrilla camps; housed in Camp Takeo, a luxurious base camp supposedly built to dispel the Japanese public's misgivings about the safety of the peacekeeping operation; and received privileges such as arriving relatively late and leaving early the mission.<sup>300</sup> These fatalities highlighted the danger of participating in UNPKOs for the Japanese public and necessarily raised concerns about the state of the ceasefire and continuing participation in the mission. However, the Japanese government was determined to complete the first milestone in

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<sup>299</sup> Hughes, "Japan's Strategic Trajectory and Collective Self-Defense," 104.

<sup>300</sup> Shenon, "Actions of Japan Peacekeepers in Cambodia Raise Questions and Criticism."

Japan's peacekeeping policy and declined to withdraw the delegation from the UNTAC, and "the gap between official legal assumptions and the brutal reality on the ground grew ever larger".<sup>301</sup>

### 3.3.3. Iraq War

Japan's participation in the Iraq War is significant because the U.S. war in Iraq was not sanctioned by the UN and lacked international support and legitimacy. Yet, in contrast to the Japanese government's hesitant response to the Gulf War, which reflected strong political and public resistance against overseas deployment of military force, Prime Minister Koizumi Jun'ichirō's administration reacted swiftly and eagerly to the 2003 U.S. War in Iraq. Koizumi had supported President Bush's opinion on Iraq even before the U.S. invasion in March 2003 and when the United States officially requested 1,000 GSDF members in May to provide rear area support for the reconstruction of Iraq, Koizumi quickly set on developing the necessary legislation.<sup>302</sup> At the summit with Bush in May 2003, Koizumi said that Japan wanted to make a "contribution commensurate with its national power and standing".<sup>303</sup> But there was less external pressure and political justification for Japan to support the U.S. military engagement compared to during the Gulf War. Many close allies of the United States vehemently opposed the military intervention for fear of increasing rather than decreasing terrorist attacks and even among those who supported the U.S. position, majority public opinion was in opposition.<sup>304</sup>

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<sup>301</sup> Fujishige, Uesugi, and Honda, *Japan's Peacekeeping at a Crossroads*, 93–94.

<sup>302</sup> Catalinac, "Identity Theory and Foreign Policy," 65.

<sup>303</sup> "Overview of Japan-US Summit Meeting."

<sup>304</sup> Catalinac, "Identity Theory and Foreign Policy," 64.

Still, Koizumi's cabinet submitted the Special Measures on Humanitarian and Reconstruction Assistance in Iraq to the Diet in June, which passed both houses of parliament on July 26.<sup>305</sup>

It is interesting to note that Koizumi, who led Japan into assisting the United States in the Iraq War and participating in the war on terror, had called for the SDF to withdraw from the peacekeeping mission in Cambodia after the death of the Japanese policeman and volunteer worker. Then Minister of Posts and Telecommunications, he pointed out that the government had not been ready for the possibility of casualties and the SDF faced legal limitations in their activities on the ground that necessitated their withdrawal.<sup>306</sup> I believe his change in attitude reflects the changes in the urgencies of Japan's security environment and their effect on the antimilitarist strategic culture. Participation (or lack thereof) in the Iraq War carried higher costs for the Japanese in alliance management; the perceived need for contributing proactively to peace against an international proliferation of threats was heightened; and the SDF's ability to recognize the gaps between theoretical legal assumptions and official assessment, and the reality of the operational environment improved.

A majority of the Japanese public opposed the U.S. military attack on Iraq, Japan's own deployment to support the U.S. operation, and war in general. Polls by the Asahi Shimbun, NHK, and the Yomiuri Shimbun taken from late 2002 to early 2003, consistently showed that more than 50% of respondents were opposed to the U.S. invasion of Iraq.<sup>307</sup> Most of this opposition stemmed from opposition to war in general rather than due to the lack of a UN

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<sup>305</sup> Formal name for act is "Special Legislation concerning Support of Humanitarian Restoration Activities in Iraq and Implementation of Activities in Support of Peace and Security".

<sup>306</sup> Akimoto, "The Shift from Negative Pacifism to Positive Pacifism; Japan's Contribution to Peacekeeping in Cambodia," 128–29.

<sup>307</sup> Ishibashi, "The Dispatch of Japan's Self-Defense Forces to Iraq," 768–69.

mandate. Along with this aversion to war, polls from late 2003 found that respondents also opposed the revision of Article 9 and reinterpreting Article 9 to allow the exercise of the right to collective self-defense.<sup>308</sup> Among those who favored revision of Article 9, the majority agreed that the SDF should be ruled constitutional and used for national defense and UN peacekeeping operations. These polls from Japan's three largest newspaper companies that represent a broad political spectrum show that the Japanese public was generally averse to war and military conflict and preferred their military force to have a limited role.

The law kept many activities under prohibition. The law permitted the SDF to conduct humanitarian and reconstruction activities including providing medical services, rehabilitation and maintenance of public facilities, and transportation of materials humanitarian and reconstruction uses. The SDF's other function was undertaking activities to ensure security and safety such as providing transportation, storage of goods, construction, repair, and maintenance. However, the law was still prohibitive of the SDF's engagement in even the slightest of combat. The law distinguished between 'use of weapons' and 'use of force'.<sup>309</sup> The SDF were only allowed to use weapons under immediate danger of attack, but this could not amount to a use of force beyond self-defense. Additionally, the SDF could only operate in non-combat areas and could not conduct rescue operations of Japanese hostages in Iraq. The SDF's restrictive mandate even prevented them from going on joint patrols around their base after a mortar attack, which frustrated their coalition counterparts.<sup>310</sup> There was a severe gap in the pomp of the deployment and actual effectiveness of the SDF as a military force.

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<sup>308</sup> Ishibashi, 771–72.

<sup>309</sup> Hayashi, "The Japanese Law Concerning the Special Measures on Humanitarian and Reconstruction Assistance in Iraq," 582.

<sup>310</sup> Aoi, "Japan: Separation, Control, and Effectiveness," 82.

Indeed, the question of whether the SDF deployment adhered to Article 9 was contended when the Nagoya High Court recognized that the mission was unconstitutional. More than 5,700 citizens had filed lawsuits against the government for the JASDF deployment to the Middle East in eleven district courts nationwide in what was one of the largest coordinated litigation efforts in modern Japan.<sup>311</sup> In the *Mōri v. Japan* case heard at the Nagoya High Court, plaintiffs alleged that the deployment violated the Japanese Constitution's Article 9 and the plaintiffs' 'right to live in peace' as provided by the Preamble. The plaintiffs defined the right to live in peace as "the right to live in a Japan that does not engage in war or the use of military force".<sup>312</sup> The plaintiffs demanded an injunction to the deployment, a ruling that the deployment is unconstitutional, and 10,000 JPY each in damages, while the government argued that the plaintiffs lacked legal standing because the right to live in peace is an abstract concept rather than an enforceable right. Although the plaintiffs did not win the case, the Nagoya High Court ruled in dicta that the right to live can be considered a foundational right under certain conditions. It also ruled that even if the Iraq Special Measures Act itself is constitutional, the JASDF's air transport activities conducted in Iraq violate the Act's prohibition on the use of military force and limitation of areas of activity to non-combat areas, and consequently, Article 9 of the Constitution.<sup>313</sup> Thereafter, the Okayama District Court also recognized the right to live in peace in another case against the SDF deployment in Iraq.

These lawsuits reflect the public's fear of the Iraq deployment's potential to harm the peace that Japan has enjoyed since the establishment of the peace constitution, despite the government's

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<sup>311</sup> Hamilton, "*Mōri v. Japan*," 549.

<sup>312</sup> Hamilton, 549.

<sup>313</sup> "自衛隊のイラク派兵差止等請求控訴事件 [Appeal for Injunction against Deployment of Self-Defense Forces to Iraq, etc.]," 16–23.

repeated emphasis on the restrained and non-combat nature of the deployment. Rearguard support for military engagement, even when not engaging in military operations directly, was perceived to be a threat to the preservation of peace. This demonstrates the public's high standard of how the peace constitution should be upheld by the government and their desire to adhere in principle to the non-use of military force. Given the low possibility of involvement in war and occurrence of casualty (due to restrictions on the SDF's activities) the argument of a right to live in peace used by the plaintiffs represents a principled conviction against violence and a broad expectation of 'basic rights'. The Nagoya High Court's partial affirmation of this right as a concrete right shows the durability of the legal normative character of Article 9. Given the constitution's obstruction of various SDF activities especially in supporting U.S. missions abroad, I would argue that the hard case for a realist explanation of Japan's security policy evolution should involve constitutional amendment.

#### 3.3.4. Proactive contribution to peace

Japan's proactive contribution to peace policy was first introduced by Prime Minister Abe Shinzo in his address to the UN General Assembly in 2013. He promised that "I will enable Japan, as a Proactive Contributor to Peace, to be even more actively engaged in UN collective security measures, including peacekeeping operations".<sup>314</sup> In this speech, Abe commits Japan to international cooperation for peace and stability of the international community because "[i]t is now impossible for any one country, no matter which it may be, to safeguard its own peace and security acting entirely by itself". According to Abe and the Japanese government,

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<sup>314</sup> "ADDRESS BY PRIME MINISTER SHINZO ABE, AT THE SIXTY-EIGHTH SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE UNITED NATIONS."

this is in no way different from the basic security posture that Japan has maintained since the end of WWII as a peace-loving nation. The idea of taking a proactive attitude toward peace has gained traction in Japan's diplomatic and national security community since the end of the Cold War. In particular, Professor Kamiya Mataka at the National Defense Academy of Japan has explained that proactive pacifism is recognizing that "peace and order cannot exist without force".<sup>315</sup> He has advocated for Japan to overcome its historical passivity to start contributing proactively to world peace and recognize the role of military power for peace, given the changing international environment of the post-Cold War years. It is in this context of a different security environment that necessitates multilateral cooperation and contribution to peace commensurate with one's national capabilities that Abe passed the Legislation for Peace and Security in 2015 (hereafter, the Legislation).

The Legislation is a package of ten amendments and one new law that originated from the recommendations of Abe's Advisory Panel on Reconstruction of the Legal Basis for Security established in 2007 (hereafter, the Panel) then reconstituted in the second Abe administration in 2013. In response to the task of examining the capacity of the Japanese military forces under various hypothetical scenarios and gray-zone situations, the Panel recommended constitutional reinterpretations and corresponding policy reforms related to the use of military force.<sup>316</sup> The Panel's report was submitted on May 15, 2014, and the resulting discussions within the government led to the cabinet's adoption of the Decision on Development of Seamless Security Legislation to Ensure Japan's Survival and Protect its People on July 1, 2014. Here, the cabinet declared its intention to develop domestic legislation to enact the Panel's recommendations.

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<sup>315</sup> Kamiya, "A Nation of Proactive Pacifism — National Strategy for Twenty-First-Century Japan."

<sup>316</sup> Fujishige, "New Japan Self-Defense Force Missions under the 'Proactive Contribution to Peace' Policy."

The cabinet decision describes an international environment that has changed rapidly since the end of the Cold War due to a shift in the global power balance, proliferation of WMDs and ballistic missiles, increase in international terrorist threats, and risks in new domains. This is why, it argues, “[n]o country can secure its own peace only by itself, and the international community also expects Japan to play a more proactive role for peace and stability in the world, in a way commensurate with its national capability”.<sup>317</sup> It is the same rhetoric and line of reasoning from Abe’s speech on the proactive contribution to peace policy from 2013. The alignment of the Legislation and the proactive policy suggests that Abe held a clear and consistent worldview and security attitude from his first to second administration and practiced strong leadership in the process of formulating and establishing this legislation. Most importantly, it suggests that the government can integrate a military aspect to Japan’s foreign policy and indicate a clear role for the military in Japan’s pursuit of peace involving the use of force.

The legislation allows the SDF to use weapons in rescue operations (駆け付け警護 *kaketsuke keigo*) of Japanese nationals overseas in emergency situations; to conduct rear area support, search and rescue operations, and ship inspection operations not only in situations in areas surrounding Japan but also in situations that will have an important influence on Japan; to participate in peacekeeping missions not under UN control (revision of 1992 International Peace Cooperation Act); to respond not only to immediate attacks on Japanese territory but also against “survival-threatening situations”; and to exercise limited collective self-defense.<sup>318</sup> The

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<sup>317</sup> “Cabinet Decision on Development of Seamless Security Legislation to Ensure Japan’s Survival and Protect Its People,” 1.

<sup>318</sup> “Defense of Japan 2016”; “Defense of Japan 2019,” 248.

SDF's Sinai mission to serve under the command of the Multinational Force & Observers (MFO) monitoring the ceasefire between Israel and Egypt in 2019 was the first time that the SDF participated in a PKO not under UN control. Hornung writes that although this does not mean that the SDF will soon fight on equal footing with coalition forces against authoritarian regimes or terrorists, it does signal the possibility for the SDF to contribute more to peace along international forces and that "we may be witnessing the start of a different kind of new era [besides the start of Reiwa] for Japan".<sup>319</sup>

As part of the Legislation, 'The Law Concerning Measures to Ensure Peace and Security of Japan in Situations that Will Have an Important Influence on Japan's Peace and Security' permitted the exercise of a limited right to collective self-defense (CSD) for the SDF. Until the Legislation, Japan's constitution was understood to prohibit the exercise of the right to collective self-defense despite the UN Charter's Article 51 acknowledging an inherent right of state for collective self-defense. Controversy over this law is derived from the fact that it is based on a *reinterpretation*, not *revision* of the constitution. Exercising collective self-defense has been opposed by the public for fear of entrapment and excessive use of force, and political actors had traditionally opposed as well.<sup>320</sup> But the Abe-appointed chairman Komatsu Ichiro of the Cabinet Legislative Bureau, which had theretofore been a stalwart against CSD, declared that the Cabinet, not the Cabinet Legislative Bureau, should decide matters of constitutionality.<sup>321</sup>

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<sup>319</sup> Hornung, "With Little Fanfare, Japan Just Changed the Way It Uses Its Military."

<sup>320</sup> The dilemma between entrapment and abandonment have been a longstanding tension in Japan's relationship with the United States. See Liff, "Japan's Security Policy in the 'Abe Era': Radical Transformation or Evolutionary Shift?"; Snyder, "The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics."

<sup>321</sup> Pempel, "Why Japan's Collective Self-Defence Is so Politicised."

Under the law, the SDF is allowed to exercise CSD under the condition that an armed attack against Japan has occurred or against a foreign country in a close relationship with Japan and as a result threatens Japan's own survival; there is no alternative means to ensure security; minimum necessary force is used. This means that Japan can use force for the defense of other countries only when that act also serves the self-defense of Japan itself. The SDF could conduct logistics or rear support for UN-sanctioned multinational forces but not use force in military operations nor exercise the full right to collective self-defense such as the U.S. forces in cases like the Vietnam War.<sup>322</sup>

There has been fierce debate on the implications of the Legislation on the nature of Japan's military forces. Many scholars downplayed its significance, arguing that instead of a radical transformation in security posture, the move was consistent with the incremental normalization of Japanese defense forces that has evolved from Japan's changing security environment.<sup>323</sup> On the other hand, Hughes deems the legislation as Abe and the LDP's success and projects that "Japan has embarked on a genuinely radical trajectory in security policy".<sup>324</sup>

The view of radical change in Japan's security policy rang true for the opposition parties and the opposing members of the public who attended the Diet's public hearing for the Legislation. One such individual was Hamada Kunio, a lawyer and former Supreme Court judge (2001-2006) who pointed out that despite the traditional role of the Cabinet Legislation Bureau to examine the constitutionality of government proposals, it did not do so for that legislation. He

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<sup>322</sup> Akimoto, "Exercising the Right to Collective Self-Defense? An Analysis of 'Japan's Peace and Security Legislation,'" 162.

<sup>323</sup> Liff, "Japan's Security Policy in the 'Abe Era': Radical Transformation or Evolutionary Shift?"; Nakanishi, "Reorienting Japan?"; Samuels, "Who Defines Japan's Past, And Future."

<sup>324</sup> Hughes, "Japan's Strategic Trajectory and Collective Self-Defense," 126.

added that a single cabinet decision to reinterpret the constitution would destabilize Japan's interpretation of law and that such intentional distortion is not legally upright. Hamada used the word “法匪 (*houhi*)” or “law bandit” to refer to the government's move, which is a derogatory term for someone who employs sophistry to manipulate the law for personal gain.<sup>325</sup> Various segments of society including academics, legal experts, bureaucrats, politicians, and students opposed the legislation as well, citing its unconstitutionality.<sup>326</sup>

Strong public opposition to the legislation proves the stickiness of antimilitarist strategic culture that engendered the public's normative resistance to Abe's favorable perception of JSDF's ability to contribute to peace and national security. Public backlash erupted in street protests and letter-writing campaigns. In the summer of 2015, as the bill was being deliberated by the upper chamber of the Diet, tens of thousands of protesters both old and young swarmed to the parliament building, denouncing the war legislation and demanding Abe's resignation.<sup>327</sup> TV-Asahi's public opinion polls showed that between May 2015, when the draft legislation had been submitted to the Diet for deliberation, and September 2015, just before the legislation was approved, the Abe Cabinet and the security legislation faced increased opposition.<sup>328</sup> After the law had taken effect in 2016, more than 800 residents of Osaka and Nagasaki, including hibakusha (atomic bombing survivors) filed a suit with their respective district courts

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<sup>325</sup> “第 189 回 国会参議院 我が国及び国際社会の平和安全法制に関する特別委員会公聴会 第 1 号 [189th Diet House of Councillors Public Hearing of the Special Committee on Legislation for Peace and Security of Japan and the International Community No. 1].”

<sup>326</sup> See Akimoto, “Exercising the Right to Collective Self-Defense? An Analysis of ‘Japan's Peace and Security Legislation,’” 141.

<sup>327</sup> Takenaka, “Huge Protest in Tokyo Rails against PM Abe's Security Bills”; “Massive Protest Against Japanese Military Legislation,” August 30, 2015.

<sup>328</sup> “May 2015 | Public Opinion Poll | Hosono Station | TV Asahi”; TV Asahi, “September 2015 Opinion Poll (Yoron Chousa).”

demanding compensation for the emotional distress caused by the security legislation. Their complaint claimed that the government's arbitrary interpretation of the constitution would result in war, with the possible use of nuclear weapons, which threatens their right to live in peace.<sup>329</sup>

However, I would argue that Japan's withdrawal from South Sudan, its longest and largest peacekeeping mission, in 2017 cast doubt not only on the actual operationalization of the 2015 legislation but also the SDF's capacity and Abe's commitment to proactive contribution to peace. The JSDF had been deployed in South Sudan since late 2011, assisting in noncombat roles, as they could not legally use their weapons to assist other international troops under attack aside from themselves and those under their supervision. With the authority of the 2015 Legislation on Peace and Security, a GSDF unit was deployed in December 2016, armed with the new responsibility of playing a bigger role in protecting peacekeepers' camps and the staff of the UN or nongovernmental organizations. But in March 2017, only three months after the new assignment became active, the Abe administration announced the withdrawal of these troops and the end of the South Sudan mission.<sup>330</sup> The withdrawal eased political pressure on Abe and Defense Minister Inada Tomomi who were running the risk of any troops getting killed in the. Inada in particular had been called to resign by the opposition for denying the presence of any 'fighting' in the deteriorating local conditions, which would have constitutionally prohibited the participation of Japanese forces.<sup>331</sup> The withdrawal ended the mission without the SDF ever actually exercising the new rights and raised reputational costs for Japan as a

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<sup>329</sup> Kyodo News, "800 Osaka, Nagasaki Residents Sue over Security Laws."

<sup>330</sup> "Japan to Withdraw from South Sudan Peacekeeping Mission."

<sup>331</sup> Kumagai, "Why Did Japan Leave South Sudan?"

proactive contributor to peace, demonstrating that “evidence of Japan’s seriousness about proactive contributions to peace remains elusive”.<sup>332</sup>

The withdrawal from Sudan marked the last of the SDF’s withdrawals from its PKO missions in Haiti, the Golan Heights, and South Sudan between 2012 and 2017, leaving no Japanese troops engaged in peacekeeping missions anywhere in the world (with the exception of liaison officers).<sup>333</sup> How could these withdrawals be reconciled with Abe’s rhetoric and strategic shift to proactive contribution to peace?

At the same time, the SDF has been participating in more joint military training and exercises with partners all over the Indo-Pacific.<sup>334</sup> The JMSDF has conducted the Indo-Pacific Deployment since 2017; joined Malabar Japan-US-India trilateral exercise since 2007; and participates in other multilateral exercises such as AMAN 21 hosted by Pakistan and La Perouse 21 hosted by France. Garren Mulloy, Associate Professor at Daito Bunka University, suggests, “Perhaps the government judged the Trump administration’s regard for multilateral efforts was so limited that peacekeeping deployments had become ‘redundant’ within alliance management”.<sup>335</sup> But participation in peacekeeping missions is not without strategic benefit. Mulloy mentions that because China was heavily invested in South Sudan, Japan sent a ratio of peacekeepers proportional to the Chinese contingent to prevent the PKO from being transmuted to protect Chinese oilfield interests. More importantly, the UNPKO provided the SDF with a

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<sup>332</sup> Hornung, “Japan’s Mistaken South Sudan Withdrawal.”

<sup>333</sup> Jimbo, interview.

<sup>334</sup> These include training and exercises related to “joint protection of camps”, “kaketsukekeigo” (coming to the aid of a geographically distant unit or personnel under attack), and “safety-ensuring operations” based on the International Peace Cooperation Act, but do not involve actual participation in UNPKO.

<sup>335</sup> Mulloy, “Japan Is Back! From South Sudan.”

continual opportunity for critical operational experience such as analyzing opponent capabilities, rescuing people from a threatening environment, and securing transport routes that could not be gained from peacetime training.<sup>336</sup> I believe that the Abe administration's decision to discontinue peacekeeping missions forgoes the opportunity for operational experience and casts doubt on Japan's commitment to international peace. This decision suggests the government's prioritization of defending against casualties and domestic instability about the legal framework of collective self-defense over the perceived benefits of peacekeeping missions and international recognition.

### 3.3.5. Discussion

For this indicator, I have explained how the reactive antimilitarist rationale for opposing the SDF's overseas deployments and collective self-defense conceded to the proactive antimilitarist realization that the guarantee of national security is not limited to the boundaries of Japanese territory. In the postwar period, deploying the SDF overseas was not technically prohibited by the constitution but Japan's political actors felt it would be inappropriate because doing so would be a use of force that exceeds Japan's exclusive defense-orientation. This informs us that the reactive antimilitarist strategic cultural notion of exclusive defense-orientation was tightly confined to Japan's territory and physical security. It also reinforces the idea that that the strategic culture held a higher standard of behavioral constraint than the law as the definition of 'excessive use of force' relied on interpretation.

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<sup>336</sup> Hornung, "Japan's Mistaken South Sudan Withdrawal."

Ian Buruma, who writes about the culture of Asia particularly about China and 20th century Japan, shares in his book an interview that may shed light on the source of the taboo on overseas deployment. He writes about an appointment with Hagi Jiro, who was the deputy director general of the JDA, to discuss Japan's response to the Gulf War. According to Buruma, Hagi explained that the "majority" of Japanese were against sending any troops but public opinion varied among generations depending on their memories of WWII. Buruma quotes Hagi who added that the opposition to overseas deployment was because "The Japanese people do not trust the Self-Defense Forces because they cannot trust themselves as Japanese. This is why they need the constitution to block security efforts".<sup>337</sup> Here, Hagi is pointing to something even deeper than the public's collective experience and memory of the Imperial Japanese Army (IJA) in the prewar and WWII period. I suspect that he is implying in Colin Gray's holistic fashion that the public's distrust of the SDF is not derived solely or even directly from their fear of militarism but from what they believe are characteristics of being Japanese itself that may enable or at least tolerate militarism. I have elaborated sufficiently in Chapter Two on the flaws in Gray's conception of strategic culture, but similar to Hagi, I recognize that the fears of reactive antimilitarist strategic culture do not only concern the SDF as a standalone organization but sociopolitical institutions, administration, and legislation that comprise the security policymaking apparatus that must deal with the SDF.

This indicator is best situated to be affected by the experience of warfare, which Antti Seppo treats as the primary mechanism of strategic cultural change because Japan has been called on to participate in the wars of its singular ally the United States. The importance of overseas

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<sup>337</sup> Buruma, *The Wages of Guilt*, 33.

deployment for peacekeeping and alliance management has challenged reactive antimilitarist notions of what constitutes Japan's national security and the role of the use of force. The proliferation of the type and purveyors of threats after the end of the Cold War opened the conceptual room for proactive antimilitarist strategic culture that operates a more permissive scope of SDF activities without compromising the core antimilitarist principle of exclusive self-defense by maintaining the prohibition on deployment to combat areas and the usage of weapons. This new security environment catalyzed among Japan's political actors a new set of thinking about the need for overseas deployment and why. The limitations on PKOs sometimes to the extent that stifled adequate cooperation with multinational contingents and the Japanese public's desire for the right to live in peace without the fear of entrapment demonstrate the vestiges of the overreaching reactive antimilitarism.

The Japanese government's deployment of a military force that could not engage in military activities and could barely defend itself for fear of violating Article 9 and confronting massive public backlash should raise doubts against realist explanations. Critics of a strategic cultural or any normative explanation for Japan's security policy may argue that political and public opposition to the deployment did not actually stop the passing of the legislation and the deployment nor voted out Koizumi, whose government submitted the bill. But that is only partially true. Such an argument assumes that the Japanese public lives in a vacuum state wherein the state's implementation of a security policy that contravenes the strategic culture automatically leads to its political downfall. More importantly, a focus on policy *outcomes* blinds us to the broader effect of strategic culture in the full process of policymaking from design to discourse, implementation, and evaluation. I argue that such a comprehensive

examination yields a more complex and nuanced analysis of the stickiness of strategic cultural influence.

Shinoda Tomohito, Professor at the International University of Japan, argues that the 2001 administrative reform centralized power in the prime minister's office (官邸 *kantei*) and facilitated a top-down policymaking structure, enabling radical security decisions more efficiently and decisively, especially in times of crisis.<sup>338</sup> He explains this was how the Koizumi government was able to pass significant security legislation despite Koizumi's limited experience and weak factional base within the LDP. These reforms to increase political control over the bureaucracy had been sought since the Nakasone administration for a "president-style premiership" and continued to the Hashimoto administration. Koizumi did benefit from the enactment of these reforms. But this is an insufficient explanation for a more assertive security policy because as repeated in the literature review, policy reform itself does not direct policy.

### 3.4. Conclusion

A major task of this chapter was to determine whether Japan's military doctrine still maintains the exclusively defense-oriented defense policy as its basic defense principle and constrains the SDF's funding, force structure, and roles accordingly. An examination of military doctrine's three indicators – basic defense concept, defense spending and defense capabilities, and overseas deployment – finds that the government continues to adhere to the broad framework

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<sup>338</sup> Shinoda, *Koizumi Diplomacy*.

of Japan's postwar antimilitarist principles but has significantly changed how they represent and implement these principles in Japan's security policy.

Japan's postwar antimilitarist strategic culture constituted the intransitive social structure that generated the various legal, administrative, and normative constraints on Japan's remilitarization. The Japanese government rejected the right to war and renounced the use of military force because the military was an organization to be feared, distrusted, and suppressed. The sheer existence of the military was thought to suffice the need for deterrence and security. This is why NDPGs until 2010 prescribed the Standard Defense Force Concept, which preempted rapid arms buildup of the SDF. This wary perception of the use of military force also kept the defense spending low, precluded the SDF's acquisition of power-projecting equipment (defense equipment whose use could exert excessive force and harm), and confined the SDF's activities to Japan's national territory.

Incrementally, Japan's military doctrine became more permissive of the SDF's roles and activities. The government displayed greater willingness to integrate the SDF into the national security infrastructure and began to acknowledge the efficacy of military force. For example, the 2004 NDPG stated that "the use of military force now plays a broader role in the international community than simply deterring or responding to armed conflict: Military force is also used for a variety of purposes, including the prevention of conflict and the reconstruction assistance".<sup>339</sup> This statement appreciates the utility of military force while avoiding its potential for violence by highlighting the positive functions of force and recontextualizing the

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<sup>339</sup> "NATIONAL DEFENSE PROGRAM GUIDELINES for FY 2005 and Beyond."

international role of the SDF not as a *military* organization per se but a peacemaking organization.

This perceived need for common responsibility and cooperation for security is emphasized in Koizumi's defense of Japan's support of the United States in the 2003 Iraq War. He says almost warningly, "The United States is the only country which clearly states that an attack on Japan would be considered as an attack on the United States. The people of Japan should not forget that the fact that the United States deems the attack to Japan as an attack to itself is serving as a great deterrence against any country attempting to attack on Japan".<sup>340</sup> He seems to suggest that Japan must contribute commensurately to preserve the alliance, given the magnitude of U.S. importance in Japan's national security. He continues to say, "The most important basic policy that has underpinned Japan's postwar development to date has been our adhering to the Japan-U.S. alliance and to the international coordination. Deeply reflecting on the defeat of the Second World War, Japan must never again allow itself to be isolated from the international community".<sup>341</sup> Abandoning Japan's fear of entrapment and inward-looking security disposition, Koizumi chose to consolidate the U.S.-Japan alliance and promote Japan's place in the international community. Given the importance of the United States in Japan's security policymaking, I argue that a Constructivist, intersubjective perspective of strategic culture would have suggested a more rapid and dramatic response to the Gulf War trauma due to the inseparability of experience and interpretation.

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<sup>340</sup> "Press Conference by Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi on the Issue of Iraq."

<sup>341</sup> "Press Conference by Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi on the Issue of Iraq."

Abe maintained this need to commit to international security in his advocacy of Japan's right to exercise limited collective self-defense. At the press conference to introduce the report by the Advisory Panel on Reconstruction of the Legal Basis for Security in May 2014, he argued that "even if [peacekeeping operations personnel] were to be suddenly attacked by armed groups, the JSDF conducting missions in that region or country cannot rescue them. Even if the forces of other countries working hard with the JSDF for peace-building request the JSDF to rescue them, the JSDF has no choice but to abandon them. That is the reality".<sup>342</sup> This reflects Japan's realization that peace can no longer be derived from simply refraining from violence – it must be actively created. Whereas antimilitarist peace was characterized by a *lack* of use of military force and participation in international security, proactive peace is about active and effective participation in creating and keeping the peace – making 'positive peace' as Abe wants to call it. This emphasis on maintaining peace assures his audience that the foundation of his policy remains antimilitarism but that the practices through which this antimilitarism is realized, must change.

Understandably, there would be allegations that all this rhetorical packaging is a ruse to conceal nationalist leaders' aim to more radically reform Japan's security policy and remilitarize in response to increasing pressure from the United States and security threats from China and North Korea. Indeed, at a Diet session discussing the 2015 Legislation, Kawada Ryūhei of the Japan Innovation Party asked if adopting the term 'proactive peace' would allow Japan to use force preemptively rather than reactively, which Defense Minister Nakatani Gen denied by saying that 'proactive' meant Japan would actively seek to achieve world peace, not proactively

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<sup>342</sup> "Press Conference by Prime Minister Abe."

use force. Nakatani added that Japan would still have to meet the three requirements to use force under the legislation, which makes it impossible for Japan to use force preemptively, and that there will be no change in the exclusive defense-orientation.<sup>343</sup> Kawada also pointed out that the Abe government has been criticized for plagiarizing Norwegian peace scholar Johan Galtung's concept of positive peace, to which Foreign Minister Kishida Fumio responded that Japan has contributed to various aspects of human security and the protection of human rights under the proactive peace policy, which therefore overlaps with Galtung's definition of positive peace.<sup>344</sup>

It is undeniable that the post-Cold War shifts in the global balance of power and proliferation of threats have changed Japan's own security environment. The relative decline of the United States and China's military modernization have indeed pressured Japan's domestic political actors to remilitarize but to say that these factors *caused* Japan's security policy change is simplistic. There is a more nuanced mechanism of how strategic culture serves as an underlying structure of Japan's security policy responds to external threat. External events influence actors through its interaction with the existing social structure (in the 'real level' of critical realism). The changes in Japan's security environment have recontextualized the Japanese people's perceptions about national security and the SDF, thereby changing their perceptions about what is the 'most appropriate action' possible to Japan's national security needs given Japan's normative constraints. The systemic shift of the global balance of power and peer pressure from

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<sup>343</sup> “第 189 回国会 参議院 我が国及び国際社会の平和安全法制に関する特別委員会 第 16 号 [189th Diet Session, House of Councillors Special Committee on Legislation for Peace and Security in Japan and the International Community No. 16].”

<sup>344</sup> See “Johan Galtung, ‘the Father of Peace Studies’, Says Prime Minister Misused the Term ‘Proactive Peace.’”

the alliance with the United States are important sources of strategic cultural change as they accentuate the dysfunctionality in this link between appropriate strategic thinking and appropriate strategic behavior. These continuous pressures on Japan's antimilitarist strategic culture have challenged its normative structure by forcing political actors to reconsider whether it still provides clarity to issues of war and peace and to adapt it to the new security environment. This has resulted in the incremental shift from reactive to proactive antimilitarist strategic culture. But in the absence of an understanding of Japan's antimilitarist strategic culture, it would be difficult to have a consistent analysis of the cautious, possibly stunted, development of Japan's policy to proactively contribute to peace.

## Chapter 4. Self-Defense Forces (SDF) in Government and Society

This chapter studies the SDF's changing relationships with Japan's policymakers and with the public to understand how improving perceptions of the SDF has helped expand their role in the security policymaking process. I explain how the Japanese policymakers' and public's respective perspectives of the SDF have been influenced by the transition from reactive to proactive antimilitarist strategic culture. This is to show that the structural and normative constraints provided by reactive antimilitarist strategic culture were no longer tenable for Japan's security policy goals and needs in the face of intensifying security threats from the end of the Cold War. The adaptation of reactive antimilitarism to proactive antimilitarism gave rise to attitudinal changes that motivated policymakers to allow the SDF to contribute more to the security policymaking process and be integrated as an asset for national security.

I examine the perceptions of two major groups among Japan's policy actors – policymakers (elected representatives and civil servants) and the public. They are both important actors in the complex process of Japan's security policymaking – the policymakers as policy designers and implementers, and the public mostly as the recipients of policy but also as voters. This means that the two indicators mutually influence each other but are also distinct groups due to the different roles they play in their respective relationships with the SDF. This case study shows that while the SDF has been increasingly well-received by both groups, the public is relatively more reluctant to accept the SDF as a military organization. I speculate that policymakers are more confident of a proactive security position because they are closer to the reins of control; have more interactions with the military; and have more information about the capabilities and

limitations of the military and about Japan's threat environment. On the other hand, the public is always on the receiving end of policies and the outcomes – whether good or bad – of policies without access to the type and magnitude of information available to policymakers. To support this, public opinion polls often show that the public does not believe politicians have explained security policy decisions fully or well enough to the public.<sup>345</sup> This is why it is important to examine how each group perceives the SDF's purpose and what kind of relationship they build with the SDF. This case shows that the improvement in the SDF's relationships is uneven across the indicators but also within them.

This chapter is organized as follows. The first indicator – SDF and policymakers – discusses how Japan's new security environment that emerged from the end of the Cold War encouraged the bureaucracy and politicians to accept uniformed officers as part of the security policymaking process. It then explains how control over the military shifted from the hands of civil servants to the purview of politicians with particular emphasis on the effects of reforms made under the second Abe administration. Then, the chapter moves on to the second indicator – SDF and the public – which explains how the public's view of the SDF became increasingly favorable but maintained a level of wariness about the SDF's intentions and disposition. After the two indicators have been discussed individually, the conclusion discusses their relationship and the significance of changes found within each indicator. It also analyzes the difference of change in the strategic culture from reactive to proactive antimilitarism of elites and the public.

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<sup>345</sup> For example, a series of Asahi polls between 2014 and 2015 found that approximately 80 percent of respondents did not think that Prime Minister Abe sufficiently explained the issue of the right of collective self-defense and other security bills to the public. “July 2014 Survey | Public Opinion Poll | Hosono Station | TV Asahi”; “May 2015 | Public Opinion Poll | Hosono Station | TV Asahi”; “June 2015 Survey | Public Opinion Poll | Hosono Station | TV Asahi”; “July 2015 Survey | Public Opinion Poll | Hosono Station | TV Asahi”; “August 2015 Survey | Public Opinion Poll | Hosono Station | TV Asahi”; TV Asahi, “September 2015 Opinion Poll (Yoron Chousa).”

## 4.1. SDF and policymakers

In most nation-states, civil-military relations refers to “the control or direction of the military by the highest civilian authorities”, with ‘highest civilian authorities’ meaning elected political representatives such as the president or prime minister and the minister of defense.<sup>346</sup> However, as mentioned in Chapter Two, ‘civilians’ in Japan’s postwar civil-military relations referred to civil servants mainly within the Japan Defense Agency (now the Ministry of Defense), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Finance, and the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (now the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry).<sup>347</sup> Therefore, the changes to civilian control that this chapter presents is with regard to both who the civilian controller is, and the mechanisms of control. I argue that due to the strategic cultural change from reactive to proactive antimilitarism after the end of the Cold War, policymakers recognized the value and credibility of the SDF, thereby formally integrating the SDF into the policymaking apparatus and building an increasingly close relationship of interaction and consultation with the SDF. In this process, the postwar system of the SDF being prevented from security policymaking by civil servants eroded and control over the military was transferred from civil servants to politicians.

### 4.1.1. Transitioning from Cold War era civil-military relations

From the postwar era to around the late 2000s, the SDF was closely monitored by civil servants rather than politicians. This was due to Japan’s unique approach to managing the ‘civil-military problematique’, which Feaver describes as the paradox that “[t]he very institution created to

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<sup>346</sup> Feaver, “Civil-Military Relations,” 211.

<sup>347</sup> Katzenstein and Okawara, “Japan’s National Security,” 95.

protect the polity is given sufficient power to become a threat to the polity”.<sup>348</sup> Hikotani Takako develops this idea further in the context of Japan. She argues that “civil-military relations in Japan are characterized by an excessive concern among its people about ensuring protection from its own military, and inattention to the protection provided by the military”.<sup>349</sup> The Japanese public enjoyed a stable sense of security during the Cold War from Japan’s alliance relationship with the United States and the consequent nuclear umbrella in addition to the predictability of the Cold War. Thus, there was no room or opportunity for Japan’s civilians to contemplate whether and how the SDF could provide national security. Rather, the public’s concern over protection *from* the military overwhelmed their appreciation of the protection *by* the SDF. This is the essence of Japan’s postwar antimilitarism as has been described in the theoretical chapter. Hikotani argues that “[t]his led to the mistaken notion that the purpose of ‘civilian control’ was only to restrict the military, not to ensure that civilian preferences prevail in decisions over the use of the military”.<sup>350</sup>

Martin E. Weinstein, the Japan Program Director for the Center for Strategic and International Studies, explained that the government was reluctant to use the SDF even for internal security in the postwar period, the management of which was the original conception of the SDF.<sup>351</sup> He wrote that defense planners worried that relying on the SDF to suppress internal disturbance would be interpreted as an open admission of the government’s incompetence, which would damage its authority and legitimacy. Moreover, they worried that if indeed the SDF were successful in this function, not only would the public interpret it as a return to the militaristic

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<sup>348</sup> Feaver, “Civil-Military Relations,” 214.

<sup>349</sup> Feaver, Hikotani, and Narine, “Civilian Control and Civil-Military Gaps in the United States, Japan, and China,” 244.

<sup>350</sup> Feaver, Hikotani, and Narine, 245.

<sup>351</sup> Weinstein, *Japan’s Postwar Defense Policy, 1947–1968*.

and authoritarian prewar government but that the government would be unable to limit the SDF's political influence. Weinstein framed their apprehension bluntly – “Would twenty years of civilian control offset a thousand-year tradition of military rule?”<sup>352</sup>

This is why the question for civilian control in postwar Japan was how to keep the military down, rather than how to utilize it for national security. As the military was not part of the national security policy, there was no need for political decisions and politicians did not need or want to be involved in military affairs. Instead, they chose to delegate that responsibility to civil servants, who were already exercising strong influence in policymaking. Thus, the structure of postwar civil-military relations was such that the military was suppressed by a strong middle occupied by civil servants acting as the intermediary to the politicians who distanced themselves from the military. This approach contributed to maintaining the reactive antimilitarist strategic culture – attitudes toward the SDF and the use of force were nebulously pessimistic simply because policymakers put a blanket over them and never gave them serious consideration.

Civil servants began to include uniformed officers in the security policymaking process in the late 1980s and 1990s. This was because the emergence of new international security threats and the launch of overseas dispatch of the SDF after the end of the Cold War necessitated the uniforms' expertise in military technology, strategy, and operations. Civil servants of the JDA – most having majored in law in university and being temporarily seconded from other organizations – did not possess sufficient information about military affairs or weapons technology and had no recourse to accumulate this knowledge due to the lack of university

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<sup>352</sup> Weinstein, 119.

courses on these matters (except in the military academy).<sup>353</sup> Thus, the expanded scope of the SDF's activities from the early 1990s including the dispatch of minesweepers, escort ships, and tankers to the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean expanded the role of uniformed officers in the security policymaking process.<sup>354</sup>

In particular, Japan's elected representatives realized the high cost of delegating civilian control to the bureaucracy and neglecting military matters because this gap in the relationship prevented the politicians from making efficient and informed decisions in times of need.<sup>355</sup> Civil servant control over the military through exclusion and suppression had maintained legitimacy according to the appropriateness of antimilitarist caution but this legitimacy began to erode with policymakers' growing recognition of the value of the SDF.<sup>356</sup> Therefore, Japan's politicians began to reorient their mindset toward the civil-military relationship, attempting to redefine control and strengthen it by closing the existing gap. This was because the gap in the hierarchy between politicians and the military that used to alleviate antimilitarist fears began to hinder the maintenance of peace and stability for Japan. Still, the utilization of the SDF was possible because the newfound purpose of the SDF did involve the use of military expertise but not the use of military force. Even then, the overseas dispatch of the SDF met with strong political and social opposition, as has been described in the previous case study.

This newfound need for military expertise coincided with generational change in the JDA, where civil servants who started their careers at the JDA rather than having been seconded rose

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<sup>353</sup> Sebata, *Japan's Defense Policy and Bureaucratic Politics, 1976-2007*, 82–83.

<sup>354</sup> Sebata, 84; Onoda, interview; Yamaguchi, interview.

<sup>355</sup> Feaver, Hikotani, and Narine, "Civilian Control and Civil-Military Gaps in the United States, Japan, and China," 249.

<sup>356</sup> Yoshitomi, interview.

through leadership positions by the late 1980s.<sup>357</sup> This new generation perceived the uniformed officials differently from preceding bureaucrats who were prejudiced against the military and therefore wanted to maintain dominance within the JDA. The resulting feeling of organizational unity alleviated the conflict over the organization's interests and goals between the civilian civil servants and military officials, as previously they disagreed on the priorities of defense policy, threat perception, and attitudes towards the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty.<sup>358</sup>

This changing dynamic between civil servants and uniformed officers contributed to generating a public debate on the true meaning of 'civilian control'. In 1998, JDA Director General Kyūma Fumio opined in a Diet session that he understands 'civilian control' as the primacy of politics over the military rather than control by the JDA's internal bureaus.<sup>359</sup> Kyūma Fumio served as JDA director general from 1996 to 1998 under Prime Minister Hashimoto Ryūtarō and again in 2006 under Prime Minister Koizumi Jun'ichirō. In his view, the JDA director general, the cabinet including the prime minister, and the Diet should be the basis of 'civilian control'. He emphasized the need for integration and unity between the civil servants and uniformed officers as working for the same defense administrative organization rather than being segregated into the JDA and the SDF. Kyūma was pointing out that civil servants and uniformed officers were working in parallel rather than in coordination, which was an institutionalized remnant of reactive antimilitarist strategic culture to exclude and suppress the military by keeping uniformed officers as far away as possible from politicians.

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<sup>357</sup> Musashi, "The Ground Self-Defense Force and Civilian Control," 248; Smith, *Japan Rearmed*, 33–34; Sebata, *Japan's Defense Policy and Bureaucratic Politics, 1976-2007*, 81.

<sup>358</sup> Sebata, *Japan's Defense Policy and Bureaucratic Politics, 1976-2007*, 81.

<sup>359</sup> National Diet Library. 1998. "Lower House Security Committee, April 2nd, 1998." <http://kokkai.ndl.go.jp/>.

#### 4.1.2. Shifting control from civil servants to politicians

This section explains the long, onerous process of how the SDF became institutionalized into the government's security policymaking process, which entailed the process of transferring control over the SDF from civil servants to politicians. As the government recognized the importance of efficient political control and demonstrated confidence in the integrity of the SDF, the SDF was increasingly permitted to contribute to their military expertise and interact freely with politicians - neither of which they were permitted to do during the postwar period. I begin by discussing institutional and administrative changes that incrementally allowed politicians to have direct access to the SDF. Then I detail the process of how the JDA changed into the MOD and what kind of security-related principles and beliefs this process revealed Japanese policymakers to have. I explain how these long-term changes demonstrate the boundaries of proactive antimilitarist strategic culture.

Prime Minister Hashimoto Ryūtarō valued building a relationship with uniformed officers. Hashimoto's attitude that a relationship could and should be built between politicians and the military implied that politicians should be the civilians controlling the military, that the military is part of security policymaking, and fundamentally, that the military could be trusted to ensure national security and protect the Japanese public. This changing relationship between the military and civilian authority dispelled the core beliefs of reactive antimilitarist strategic culture that structured the postwar political-military relationship.

In June 1997, Hashimoto abolished National Safety Agency Order No. 9, which prohibited direct contact between General Staff officers and politicians or central ministry bureaucrats

without the presence of a civilian JDA official since 1952.<sup>360</sup> Consequently, JSDF officers could directly offer advice to the prime minister and his cabinet. This contributed significantly toward the formal integration of the JSDF into the defense policymaking process. It demonstrates a crucial change in politicians' mindset that military input would not become "contaminated by the presumably jaundiced view of professional military leaders" as had been previously thought under Prime Minister Kaifu during the Gulf War crisis.<sup>361</sup> The prohibition on access was the institutional basis for the civil servant-run internal bureaus' monopolization of the JDA's external relationships.

At this point, however, the 'spirit' of separation between decisionmakers and uniformed officers was alive, as there remained a layer of civilian defense councilors. Defense councilors (防衛参事官 *bōeisanjikan*) monopolized the flow of information to the top of the JDA by shielding the director general from direct contact with JSDF officials. This was a remnant of bureaucratic civilian control that was willingly endorsed by politicians in the postwar years to delegate possibly controversial and politically risky decisions regarding the military to civil servants. This defense councilor system was thinned out by Ishiba Shigeru when he was director general of the JDA in 2003 and finally abolished by Prime Minister Asō Tarō in 2009.<sup>362</sup> As such, the fundamental structure of the policymaking apparatus as having a mental partition between the military and the politicians according to the reactive antimilitarist strategic culture shifted under a popular leadership of a reform-minded prime minister – albeit with some remnants reminding policymakers that institutionalized norms remain a formidable obstacle.

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<sup>360</sup> Eldridge and Midford, *The Japanese Ground Self-Defense Force*, 247; Hughes, *Japan's Remilitarisation*, 56.

<sup>361</sup> Berger, *Cultures of Antimilitarism: National Security in Germany and Japan*, 172.

<sup>362</sup> Aoi, "Japan: Separation, Control, and Effectiveness," 74; Schwenke, "Changing Civil–Military Relations in Japan," 706.

The military's policymaking influence continued to be formalized and institutionalized under Prime Minister Koizumi, who expanded the Cabinet Office in 2005, thereby also increasing the number of seconded officials from the JDA. There were twice as many JDA officials in the Cabinet in 2005 than in 1995. More importantly, the allotment of three new deputy cabinet secretary posts for foreign affairs, finance, and defense established the JDA on an equal footing with MOFA within the cabinet.<sup>363</sup> These administrative reforms under Prime Ministers Hashimoto and Koizumi not only changed the structure of civilian control but also signified the readiness of political leaders to govern and utilize the military for national security needs.

Another major hurdle for the military's participation in policymaking was the lack of a unified military leadership. This meant that the military was divided because there was no central authority to gather the voices of the three branches of the SDF and represent them to other members of government and policymakers. Given the importance of hierarchy within the military organization and the importance of a military leadership structure to enable coordination with other parts of government, the long-term absence of these critical arrangements demonstrates how the military was not given an important role in policymaking and national defense.

This was rectified in 2006 through the reorganization of the Joint Staff Council (JSC) into the Joint Staff Office (JSO) following the publication of the National Defense Program Guidelines of 2004. The Chairman of the Joint Staff Council became the Chief of Staff of the Joint Staff. The chief of staff, who had merely acted as a coordinator among the different services under the JSC was granted the authority to command the three subordinate service staff chiefs (GSDF,

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<sup>363</sup> Samuels, *Securing Japan: Tokyo's Grand Strategy and the Future of East Asia*, 75.

MSDF, ASDF). The JSO became the ‘force user’ of all JSDF operations with the three service chiefs being the ‘force providers’.<sup>364</sup> This reorganization is significant because it created a hierarchy of command within the military – delegating some decisionmaking power to top uniformed officers – from a hierarchy of command from civil servants and politicians to the military. It allowed the military to supervise its own. The chief of staff also gained the right to directly advise the civilian JDA director general. The JSO expanded in size up to 500 personnel to support the new role of the chief of staff, which shows that the new position was not merely symbolic but had real functions and the resources to support them.<sup>365</sup> These changes built a military hierarchy within the JDA and gave the military leadership more autonomy over their operations.

The Japan Defense Agency became the Ministry of Defense during the first Abe administration on January 9, 2007. Professor Musashi Katsuhiro of Doshisha University who is an expert on Japan’s civil-military relations and the SDF explains that changing the JDA to the MOD was a mostly symbolic act that did not significantly impact the security policymaking process.<sup>366</sup> But I explore the discourse surrounding this reform precisely because of its symbolic nature – to analyze what values and principles the advocates and opponents associate with and prioritize and understand their thought processes about how the organizational change would violate or affirm which values.

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<sup>364</sup> Hughes, *Japan’s Remilitarisation*, 57; Tatsumi, “Great East Japan Earthquake,” 37.

<sup>365</sup> Schwenke, “Changing Civil–Military Relations in Japan,” 710.

<sup>366</sup> Musashi, interview.

This transition had been debated since the establishment of the JDA in 1954.<sup>367</sup> The Ikeda Hayato cabinet in 1964 approved a bill to establish it as a ministry but did not submit it to the Diet. Then in December 1997, the Administrative Reform Council under the Hashimoto administration decided in its final report that “[f]undamental defense issues shall be discussed separately in the political arena”.<sup>368</sup> The Council’s report pushed security policy issues closer to the political arena away from the sphere of bureaucratic influence. In line with this prescription, a group of lawmakers submitted the Defense Ministry Establishment bill in June 2001. The bill was carried over to consecutive sessions until it was scrapped along with the dissolution of the House of Representatives in October 2004.<sup>369</sup> A revised bill began to be discussed in the Diet again in October 2006 and it was finally enacted in December 2006 with the closing of the 165th Session of the Diet.

I detail this here to demonstrate that an institutional reorganization to establish a ministry for defense that should seem commonplace and commonsensical given its ubiquity in other governments has been a protracted process in Japan. Even Germany established a Federal Ministry for Defence by 1955, which became the Federal Ministry of Defence in 1961, “putting it on a par with the ‘traditional’ ministries of foreign affairs, finance, the interior, and justice”.<sup>370</sup>

Proponents of the bill to formalize the JDA into MOD argued that the JDA in its existing state could not provide sufficient and appropriate legal and administrative support for SDF activities.

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<sup>367</sup> According to Nishikawa Tetsuya, who answered questions on the submitted bill for establishment of the Defense Ministry as chief secretary to the JDA director general (防衛庁長官官房長). National Diet Library. 2006. “165th Session of the Diet House of Councilors Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, Dec 7th, 2006.” <http://kokkai.ndl.go.jp/>.

<sup>368</sup> Administrative Reform Council, “Final Report of the Administrative Reform Council.”

<sup>369</sup> “Defense of Japan 2005”

<sup>370</sup> “History of the Federal Ministry of Defence.”

For example, JDA Director General Saitō Toshitsugu in 2001 pointed out that he could not request a cabinet meeting by himself even to discuss defense matters. Saitō also complained that he has insufficient control over the JDA budget vis-à-vis the Minister of Finance.<sup>371</sup> Moreover, proponents of the transition argued that it would be strange for Japan not to have a Ministry of Defense, as its neighbors all have such an organization, and establishing of the ministry would allay apprehensions against perceived remilitarization. Director General Saitō argued that it is important for Japan to clarify to domestic and international audiences its “basic stance and will” on national defense and security by establishing a single ministry responsible for national defense. Here, he was arguing for the formal integration of defense issues into government processes to be in line with the standard system of organization in other countries, rather than preserving Japan’s anomalous system of defense policymaking. This is not only a clear personal recognition but a public pronouncement that the antimilitarist practice of avoiding defense-related issues and maximizing the distance between uniformed officers and politicians was no longer functional for a post-Cold War security environment with more diverse and unpredictable threats. The 30 years that passed since the idea was first raised in the Ikeda cabinet and was actually approved to establish the MOD demonstrates the difficulty of overcoming embedded norms and taboos against any hint of strengthening the military.

The opposition still showed some concern over the bill in the December 2006 interpellation. Ōta Masahide from the Social Democratic Party of Japan asked why any defense administration – whether a defense agency, defense ministry, or national defense ministry – should not be directly under the Prime Minister’s Office when that was considered appropriate at a House of

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<sup>371</sup> “第 151 回国会 参議院 予算委員会 第 8 号 [151st Session of the Diet House of Councillors Budget Committee No. 8].”

Councillors Cabinet Committee discussing a bill for the establishment of the JDA in 1986 under Nakasone. Here, Ōta was questioning why the MOD, after the JDA transition, must become an independent organization, which would involve less management and intervention than if under the PMO. Kyūma, who was the last JDA director general and became the first minister of defense, responded that the way of thinking has changed since then, as the anxiety over the capabilities of the JDA had subsided and trust in the SDF had increased.<sup>372</sup> Kyūma is suggesting that the favorable change in the sociopolitical perception of the SDF's proclivity toward violence and militarism, rather than any material change within the SDF organization itself, is enough justification for greater administrative independence. This indicates that questions about the SDF's trustworthiness were indeed a major motivation for the postwar constraints on its policymaking abilities and reflects top policymakers' recognition that these anxieties have subsided enough for the SDF's administrative normalization within government.

However, Haku Shinkun of the Democratic Party asked why the JDA's pamphlet titled 'Making the JDA into a Ministry' included public opinion statistics on the positive perception of the SDF (85 percent) and PKO activities (85 percent) but not the public's actual views on the transition. Taniguchi Takashi, the Head of the Government Public Relations Office said that this omission was because the Cabinet Office opinion polls on the SDF's international activities were ongoing. Haku was accusing the government of distorting public opinion and presenting the transition as a popular move through deliberate exclusion of relevant statistics. Indeed, the high favorability rating of the SDF would be contrasted with a low support rating of the transition, evidenced by the 30 percent support rating of the transition in the Asahi poll shown in Table

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<sup>372</sup> “第 165 回国会 参議院 外交防衛委員会 第 8 号 [165th Session of the Diet House of Councillors Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee].”

2.<sup>373</sup> This would have signaled that even as the public viewed the SDF favorably – which could be due to a myriad of reasons including the SDF’s humanitarian and natural disaster response – it was not ready to support formal integration of uniformed officers into government policymaking. A Yomiuri Shimbun poll from January 2007 does show a higher percentage of respondents supporting the organizational change with 16.3 percent greatly supporting, 29.4 percent somewhat supporting, 27.8 percent not supporting very much, 11.4 percent not supporting at all, and 15 percent being unsure.<sup>374</sup> Still, the percentage of respondents in the Yomiuri poll supporting the transition does not reach a majority or the level of public enthusiasm illustrated in the JDA’s ‘Making the JDA into a Ministry’ pamphlet. These polls reflect a transitional development where the public increasingly distinguished the military from militarism, yet the postwar anxieties remained, and a substantial segment of the respondents were still unsure.

	October	November	December
Support	30	29	30
Do not support	45	45	50
Unsure	25	26	20

**Table 2. Poll (2006) on support for elevating (格上げする) the JDA to status of ministry (in %).**

Source: TV Asahi, table prepared by author.

An interesting matter of terminology was whether to call the change from JDA to MOD an elevation (昇格 *shōkaku*) or transition (移行 *ikō*). In the December 2006 interpellation, ‘elevation’ was used much more frequently by opposition lawmakers while government

<sup>373</sup> The Asahi poll also uses the wording “to upgrade” or “to elevate” (格上げする *kakugesuru*). “October 2006 Survey | Public Opinion Poll | Hosono Station | TV Asahi”; “November 2006 | Public Opinion Poll | Hosono Station | TV Asahi”; “December 2006 | Public Opinion Poll | Hosono Station | TV Asahi.”

<sup>374</sup> Le, “Japan and the Revolution in Military Affairs,” 191.

officials and proponents of the bill opted to say ‘transition’. Araki Kiyohiro of the New Kōmeitō asked Kyūma Fumio if the SDF will be considered equivalent to foreign soldiers (軍人 *gunjin*) once they are abroad under the Ministry of Defense, and whether this aligns with the government’s term of ‘transition’. Kyūma asserted that the term ‘transition’ should be used because the organization is not rising to a higher rank although it is being separated from the Cabinet Office.<sup>375</sup> He underscored that even as a ministry, the organization will remain the same – there will be no expansion of duties, increase in budget, or increase in personnel.

At a press conference on the launch of the Ministry of Defense, Kyūma – as the first Minister of Defense – repeated the mundanity of the transition by affirming that Japan’s basic defense policies including exclusive defense, prohibition of overseas troop dispatch, and three non-nuclear principles will remain unchanged and be stoutly protected by civilian control.<sup>376</sup> At the same time, he also presented the transition as a recognition of the SDF’s increasing importance in national politics and a sign of greater public understanding and trust. Kyūma was emphasizing that the nature and functions of the SDF would remain even as the legal administrative system overseeing it would change. For Kyūma who believed that civilian control should naturally be political control over the military, this transition was simply a natural return to the normal and had no relevance to expansion of the military’s influence or strength. This exchange elucidates Kyūma’s attempt to distinguish the MOD as an administrative organization for defense and the SDF as the actual force user. He walked a fine line between normalizing the SDF as a defense organization *administratively*, while avoiding a

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<sup>375</sup> The current Japan Ministry of Defense website also displays the change as “Transition to the Ministry of Defense”. “Japan Ministry of Defense.”

<sup>376</sup> Kyūma, “久間大臣会見概要 [Overview of Minister Kyuma’s Press Conference].”

direct implication as a force-using organization by avoiding the use of “軍” (military), which has heavy and negative connotations in Japan. This shows an attempt to separate SDF from militarism.

Haku also wanted clarification that the elevation of the JDA will not lead to a slippery slope of elevating other military-related organizations first in name and then in substance. He asked Nishikawa Tetsuya, the chief secretary to the JDA director general, whether the name of the Self-Defense Forces (自衛隊 *jeitai*) would be changed to a ‘self-defense military’ (自衛軍 *jeigun*) along with the elevation of the JDA. To this Nishikawa responded that the SDF would remain the GSDF, MSDF, and ASDF as written in the law and would not change with the transition of the JDA. Haku shows how opponents were still careful to refrain from legitimating any sign of ‘military’, lest it transforms into militarism.

While this exchange shows that the opponents are heavily inclined to err on the side of caution in granting independence to the SDF, it also reveals the dimensional change in the debate regarding the SDF. In the postwar era, the major sociopolitical debate about the SDF was the very legitimacy of the organization – how to reconcile the constitutional ideal of living in unarmored peace with the presence of an organization with military capabilities.<sup>377</sup> The potentiality of the SDF’s infringement of the Japanese people’s right to live in peace was raised again during the Iraq War when concerned citizens filed an injunction for the SDF from collaborating with the U.S. war effort. However, the starting point of the opposition in the debate about the SDF’s elevation was not whether the SDF should be allowed to *exist* but should be *independent*. The opposition’s chosen line of defense connotes the level of acceptability of

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<sup>377</sup> Sasaki, “Whose Peace? Anti-Military Litigation and the Right to Live in Peace in Postwar Japan.”

the SDF and how the sociopolitical discourse moved on from whether the SDF should exist at all, to *how* the SDF should exist.

The debate over the elevation of the JDA shows the pull and push within Japan's antimilitarist strategic culture between those who believe that the stability of civilian control is credible and those who fear a slippery slope into violating Japan's exclusively defense-oriented nature and peace identity. Opposition leaders' concerns of a slippery slope despite the fact that policy reforms such as the JDA's elevation change the administration rather than the nature of the SDF hints that they already assume the SDF has certain militaristic inclinations. That is why any administrative change that might give the SDF more autonomy over its operations seems dangerous to them. This is characteristic of Japan's postwar antimilitarist strategic culture of having a negative predisposition about the military's intentions. However, as the outcome of this policy debate shows, the perception that such fears are unwarranted and that civilian control is credible had already gained much traction.

#### 4.1.3. Establishment of NSC and consolidation of SDF participation in policymaking

Prime Minister Abe in his second administration from December 2012 to September 2020 institutionalized politicians' civilian control over the military by creating a new hierarchy of security policymaking under the National Security Council and National Security Secretariat. While policymakers' perception of the military and the structure of their relationships had already been changing, Abe's organizational reforms formalized the military as a regular and routine part of government, helping consolidate the new proactive antimilitarist strategic culture. The Cabinet Secretariat created the Act of Partial Revision of the Establishment of the

Security Council (the NSC Establishment Act) in 2013. The bill was enacted by the Diet on November 27, 2013 and put into effect on December 4, 2013.<sup>378</sup> These reforms fully appreciate the SDF's contribution and role in statecraft while addressing reactive antimilitarist concerns by emphasizing the principle of civilian control. By maintaining systemic and resilient civilian control, these reforms demonstrated to Japan's policymakers that the counterpart to militarism is civilianism and that the expansion of the military's role in government does not equate to an expanded possibility of the use of force (distinguishing militarization from militarism).

This NSC was created for the Japanese government to effectively make security decisions in a severe security environment, with a focus on responding to Chinese aggression. The Defense of Japan 2013 highlighted several concerns, including China's rapid military modernization, aircraft and vessel intrusions into Japanese territorial waters, and the 2010 fishing trawler incident when a Chinese trawler rammed into a JCG vessel. This threat environment raised the need for the Japanese government to bolster executive leadership of strategic planning, crisis management, and security decisionmaking. Another impetus to create the NSC was the need for an improved crisis response and management system with a quick decisionmaking structure that was exposed by the government's incompetence in responding to a series of terrorist acts against Japanese citizens in 2004, 2007, and 2013.<sup>379</sup> Again, this highlights the new and volatile security environment that GOJ had to grapple with at the end of the Cold War, ending decades of predictability and stability in which the SDF and security policy decisions could be dormant.

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<sup>378</sup> "Defense of Japan 2014," 125.

<sup>379</sup> Fukushima and Samuels, "Japan's National Security Council," 6; Hiromi, "Act of Partial Revision of the Establishment of the National Security Council of Japan and a Related Act," 133; Liff, "Japan's National Security Council at Five," December 4, 2018; Miller, "How Will Japan's New NSC Work?"

The Japanese government did have some sort of security council preceding the National Security Council (National Defense Council: 1956-1986; Security Council: 1986-2013). But they were not standing bodies and did not meet as frequently or regularly as the NSC. For example, the Security Council met less than 9 times per year for 10 minutes at a time.<sup>380</sup> This shows that their real role was not making policy but reinforcing civilian control over the SDF, as both these councils were comprised only of civilians. Under the previous Security Council, the Chief of the JSC could be summoned to speak but was not a member.<sup>381</sup> Thus, Japan's foreign policy scholars Fukushima Mayumi and Richard Samuels call the NSC the "centerpiece of the most ambitious reorganization of Japan's foreign and security policy apparatus since the end of the Pacific War".<sup>382</sup> Many of Japan's former uniformed officers and policymakers both recognize the importance of the NSC in making informed and efficient security policy choices. They explain that the NSC formally integrates uniformed officers into a regular – even frequent – process of planning and decisionmaking for security policy with the bureaucracy and politicians. It ensures that their perspectives are included in policy choices.<sup>383</sup>

The new NSC organizational structure allows centralization of defense and foreign policy deliberation under the direction of the prime minister and includes the minister of defense as a permanent member. It consists of three meeting formats. The newly established four-minister meeting (4MM) is run biweekly by the prime minister, minister of defense, minister of foreign affairs, and the chief cabinet secretary. This institutional innovation is at the core of the NSC, producing fundamental foreign and defense policy decisions. The nine-minister meeting

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<sup>380</sup> Fukushima and Samuels, "Japan's National Security Council," 4.

<sup>381</sup> Gow, "Civilian Control of the Military in Postwar Japan," 58.

<sup>382</sup> Fukushima and Samuels, "Japan's National Security Council," 1.

<sup>383</sup> Kanehara, interview; Kawano, interview; Miyake, interview; Yamamoto, interview.

(9MM) – inherited from the preceding Security Council – is designed to ensure civilian control over the SDF.<sup>384</sup> It adds the minister of internal affairs and communications; minister of finance; minister of economy, trade, and industry; minister of land, infrastructure, transport, and tourism; and the chairman of the National Public Safety Commission on top of the four participants of the 4MM. The 9MM occurs at times of need, including when deliberation on the NDPG or SDF deployment is necessary. Lastly, the ministerial emergency meeting consists of members designated by the prime minister and the chief cabinet secretary depending on the nature of the emergency.<sup>385</sup> The emergency situations meeting now allows senior military officers such as the chairman of the Joint Staff to participate and comment on planning at the invitation of the prime minister, which ensures the inclusion of the military’s perspectives in times of need.<sup>386</sup> The NSC met 48 times in 2016 and 46 times in 2017, which demonstrates that its function is far more frequently utilized and meaningful than any of its previous iterations.<sup>387</sup>

To support the activities of the NSC, Abe also launched the National Security Secretariat (NSS) on January 7, 2014 as part of the Cabinet Secretariat. The establishment of the NSS as an auxiliary organization for the NSC increases the credibility and formality of enhancing the status of security issues within the government agenda and involving military officers in policymaking. The NSS consists of six departments – Management and Coordination, Strategy, Intelligence, Allied and Friendly Nations, China and Korea, and Other Nations.<sup>388</sup> They are staffed by approximately 60 people primarily from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of

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<sup>384</sup> Miller, “How Will Japan’s New NSC Work?”

<sup>385</sup> Nakanishi, “Reorienting Japan?”

<sup>386</sup> Fukushima and Samuels, “Japan’s National Security Council,” 10; Nakanishi, “Reorienting Japan?,” 411.

<sup>387</sup> Liff, “Japan’s National Security Council at Five,” December 4, 2018.

<sup>388</sup> Hiromi, “Act of Partial Revision of the Establishment of the National Security Council of Japan and a Related Act,” 135.

Defense, SDF, Public Security Intelligence Agency, National Police Agency, and the Japan Coast Guard. Simply, the NSC is the main policymaking body and the NSS is its supporting organization. Notwithstanding its limitations on staff, resources, and authority to contribute to policy, the NSS provides an opportunity to strengthen the influence of the Ministry of Defense, which is the newest and institutionally weakest ministry within the Japanese government.<sup>389</sup>

The NSS guarantees an institutional space for MOD and SDF officials to contribute to policymaking in contrast to the one or two MOD and SDF officials that were seconded to the Cabinet Secretariat or the PMO. It also facilitates interagency cooperation on contingency planning, policy agenda setting, and crisis response, reducing the rifts between the MOD and other ministries. Still, there are critics of the JSDF officials' increased influence over security-related decisionmaking, as the NSC is "interpreted as a clear sign of Abe's prioritization of the military over diplomacy".<sup>390</sup> There are also concerns over the NSC's lack of transparency and public accountability, as there are no clear mechanisms for record keeping of the discussions that occur in NSC meetings. The careful planning of these security-related organizations demonstrates the transition from reactive to proactive antimilitarism yet the wary discourse surrounding their role in the policymaking process reveals some resilience against further change.

Abe's reforms relatively democratized the relationship between military officers and civilian bureaucrats. These reforms were important in thwarting the various constraints and challenges that the MOD faced even after its elevation to ministerial status such as insufficient policy-planning capacity, lack of coordination with other government agencies, and the overpowering

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<sup>389</sup> Bosack, interview.

<sup>390</sup> Maslow, "A Blueprint for a Strong Japan?," 755.

role of the Internal Bureau.<sup>391</sup> For example, in 2014, a revision of the Act for Establishment of the Ministry of Defense established 40 new permanent posts for uniformed officials in the MOD's Internal Bureau and permanent posts for civilian officials in the Joint Staff and the major commands of each branch of the SDF. This cross-posting of personnel was intended to "foster a sense of unity among civilian officials and uniformed personnel".<sup>392</sup>

Furthermore, the Internal Bureau of Operations and Planning was abolished and its functions were transferred to the Joint Staff Office.<sup>393</sup> The Internal Bureau had functioned to manage and restrain rather than operate the SDF by overseeing the defense buildup plan and the administration of personnel.<sup>394</sup> The transfer of its functions to the JSO unified the tasks related to actual unit operations and strengthened the integration of operational and management functions. The tasks of conducting external communications with the Diet and coordinating with related ministries and agencies were also transferred to the JSO. By breaking up the Internal Bureau's monopoly on external communications, this reform strengthened the MOD's policymaking functions and public relations capabilities and contributed to full-fledged equalization of authority between civilians and uniformed personnel. New posts were created to preserve civilian control, such as the Director General for Operational Policy and a Deputy Chief of Joint Staff-level position for civilian officials to provide policy assistance to the Chief of Joint Staff.

The strategic cultural shift to proactive antimilitarism can also be observed through the lack of backlash to Abe's very public displays of appreciation for the SDF. He has in several diet

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<sup>391</sup> Jimbo and Tatsumi, "From The JDA To The MoD—A Step Forward, But Challenges Remain."

<sup>392</sup> "DEFENSE OF JAPAN 2015," 219.

<sup>393</sup> "Defense of Japan 2019," chap. 2; Aoi, "Japan: Separation, Control, and Effectiveness," 74.

<sup>394</sup> Koide, "Civil-Military Relations in Japan: Defense Policy and Organization of Defense."

sessions highlighted that the SDF performs difficult missions for national security and protecting the lives of Japanese citizens.<sup>395</sup> At the graduation ceremony of the National Defense Academy in 2013, he told the graduates, “The Japanese people and I are always on your side. I expect that every one of you will do your duty wherever you are with this spirit of self-confidence and pride”.<sup>396</sup> He also expressed that “[t]he Self-Defense Forces have earned the priceless trust of the Japanese people. They are a point of pride for me as they silently carry out their duties”.<sup>397</sup> The National Defense Academy develops personnel to become officers in the three branches of the SDF and the enrolled cadets receive a salary from the Ministry of Defense.<sup>398</sup> After graduation, they receive further education to become top senior officers. This means that Abe was publicly expressing recognition and confidence in the uniformed military officers of Japan, which demonstrates a substantial change in the SDF’s perceived role in national security and the distance that politicians traditionally liked to ensure between themselves and the SDF.

#### 4.1.4. Discussion

Prime Minister Abe’s implementation of security reforms such as the establishment of the NSC and the NSS has produced robust scholarly debate on whether Abe is taking Japan on a radical trajectory away from its traditional antimilitarism.<sup>399</sup> Indeed, as the newly established unified military leadership under the JSC’s ‘joint operation system’ developed authority and cohesion

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<sup>395</sup> “Policy Speech by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to the 183rd Session of the Diet”; “Policy Speech by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to the 185th Session of the Diet.”

<sup>396</sup> “Address by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe at the Graduation Ceremony of the National Defense Academy (2012-2013 Academic Year).”

<sup>397</sup> “Policy Speech by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to the 186th Session of the Diet.”

<sup>398</sup> Matsuyama, “15% of Defense Academy Grads Say No to Career in SDF | The Asahi Shimbun.”

<sup>399</sup> See Envall, “The ‘Abe Doctrine’: Japan’s New Regional Realism”; Liff, “Japan’s Security Policy in the ‘Abe Era’: Radical Transformation or Evolutionary Shift?”; Hughes, *Japan’s Foreign and Security Policy under the ‘Abe Doctrine.’*”

that was nonexistent during the Cold War period of bureaucratic civilian control, it raised concerns about a resurgent military eroding civilian control.<sup>400</sup> Some observers have argued that the passage of many of Abe's security reforms demonstrates the subjugation of antimilitarist strategic culture under the intensifying threat environment. I agree that China's rapid militarization has heightened Japanese policymakers' threat perception and provided an impetus to strengthen the SDF's capabilities. But this indicator has shown that Abe's reforms were not catalyzed by Japan's threat environment but arose from long-term changes in policy actors' attitudes and perceptions towards the SDF and beliefs about the use of force as a tool of statecraft.

This section demonstrates how the principles within the traditional reactive antimilitarist strategic culture have receded as the end of the Cold War stimulated discourses about the military, militarism, and civilian control, giving a concrete shape to exactly what about the military should be feared and how that fear should be controlled. While the understanding of the military and militarism was confounded during the postwar years, the end of the Cold War highlighted the need for military expertise that convinced policymakers to disentangle the military's professionalism from an assumed inclination toward militarism. This sparked a series of administrative and legal reforms that transformed the social structure that had governed policymakers' perceptions, attitudes, and relationships with the military. These reforms signify the dismantling of the practices and institutions that disseminated and perpetuated the tenets of reactive antimilitarist strategic culture. By overhauling the observable and tangible manifestations of reactive antimilitarist strategic culture to reflect new attitudes toward the use

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<sup>400</sup> Schwenke, "Changing Civil–Military Relations in Japan," 710.

of force, these reforms of establishing the JSC, NSC, and NSS, and bringing the SDF closer to policymaking consolidated the lessons from the various external shocks.

During the postwar and Cold War years, civilian control was exercised by civil servants rather than politicians and focused on suppressing the SDF's policymaking abilities. The civilian 'control' system functioned simply by detaching the SDF from the political decisionmaking center. But the proliferation and diversification of threats after the end of the Cold War required the military operational expertise of the SDF and necessitated their participation in the chain of decisionmaking for politicians to respond effectively to threats. But this section has consistently argued that the reforms in the civilian control over the military were attempts to reconfigure the discourse of reactive antimilitarism rather than erode antimilitarist strategic culture as a whole. It is important to realize that the shift in control from civil servants to politicians, which brought the military closer to the center of decisionmaking, did not mean that the military itself acquired greater *political* influence or responsibility. It was an administrative reorganization to strengthen political oversight and control over the military and more effectively utilize it as a tool of statecraft. Thus, while the overstated fears of the military's disposition characteristic of postwar antimilitarist strategic culture subsided, the government's strong emphasis on civilian control implies a continuing awareness of the military's historical legacy and efforts to take precautions.

Scholars such as Amy Catalinac argue that the 1994 electoral reforms heightened Japanese politicians' attention to national security by changing the incentive structure for candidates to pursue broad policy issues like national security to appeal to a broader group of constituents

rather than focusing on special interests.<sup>401</sup> But this systemic theory does not specifically explain the politicians' changed preference to take back civilian control from civil servants and to formally include uniformed officers in the security policymaking process. I argue that politicians not only recognized the broad need to care more about security policy in general but also recognized the specific need to restructure the security policymaking apparatus that was built on postwar antimilitarist sentiment of opposing the military as a dominant force in governance. Still, this restructuring could not have been possible without a fundamental rethink of the relationship between politicians, civil servants, and uniformed officers. Japan's postwar antimilitarist strategic culture of an overstated fear of the military's predilection for militarist policies gave way to a recognition that the military is a tool, not an enemy, of statecraft. I emphasize that Japan's post-Cold War policy reforms were produced by this change in policy actors' motivation not the system.

Interestingly, Oros designates the creation of a security council that includes SDF officers to advise the prime minister as one of three indicators for possible breaches of what he calls Japan's security identity of domestic antimilitarism.<sup>402</sup> He believes that the adoption of the National Security Strategy and establishment of the NSC "mark potential turning points in Japan's evolving strategic culture, and may signal deeper changes ahead".<sup>403</sup> It is indeed a significant deviation from the original manifestation of Japan's postwar antimilitarism but what it implies for the future of Japan's security policy should be contextualized within Japan's strategic culture. Here, Oros is also making the mistake of confusing antimilitarism with pacifism. I have argued that antimilitarism is not about a blanket opposition to the use of force

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<sup>401</sup> Catalinac, *Electoral Reform and National Security in Japan*.

<sup>402</sup> Oros, *Normalizing Japan*, 18.

<sup>403</sup> Oros, "Japan's Strategic Culture: Security Identity in a Fourth Modern Incarnation?," 227.

and the military establishment but how much and under what conditions the military establishment is able to use force.

Therefore in response to Oros, we must think about whether this ‘breach’ is consistent with a clean departure from antimilitarism, or if it signals a reconceptualization of how observers should understand Japan’s antimilitarism. I agree that the integration of SDF officers in a centralized security policy and decisionmaking institution helps normalize the role of SDF officers as a more traditional military. But I would argue that this does not signify the demise of Japan’s antimilitarism, as the empirical data in this section consistently shows meaningful resistance. Moreover, I have argued in this section that politicians’ moves to consolidate their control and institutionalize the SDF in government do not necessarily demonstrate an increased willingness to allow the SDF to use military force. These reforms primarily show changes in the politicians’ attitudes about how the SDF as a military organization could serve as part of statecraft and how a new system of control should be developed to utilize this potential.

## 4.2. SDF and the public

In this section, I focus on the changing trends in the public’s attitudes towards the SDF from Cold War period to 2020. I use various public opinion polls conducted by Japan’s Cabinet Office, Japan’s domestic newspapers, and international research institutions. I believe that public perception of the SDF provides important context for the security disposition of the public, as Japan’s postwar antimilitarism was primarily based on a strong opposition to the dominance of the military over the government institution. I focus on how favorably the public views the SDF, what the public perceives the role of the SDF to be, and whether the public desires a stronger SDF.

The question I want to answer here is not whether the Japanese public has become less antimilitarist in the sense that they are less opposed to militarist domination of government. This would be an unrealistic expectation for measuring the public's security disposition in a democracy such as Japan, and one that would be much criticized by realists.<sup>404</sup> I seek to find out whether the public recognizes the importance of the SDF as a provider of security and participant in security policy decisions in line with the shift in the strategic culture that accords more credibility and legitimacy to the SDF. Thus, I argue that a shift from reactive antimilitarism to proactive antimilitarism should generate a much more positive public perception of the SDF and greater awareness by the public of the SDF as a *military* organization while still prioritizing the exclusive self-defense orientation.

#### 4.2.1. The SDF's rebranding

To have a clear understanding of how proactive antimilitarist strategic culture structures the public's security-related attitudes, it is important to understand what kind of a relationship the public has with the SDF and how they think the SDF should be involved with national security affairs. This section aims to explain the complexity of what the public perceives the SDF's purpose to be and how useful they perceive the SDF to be for that purpose. I detail how the SDF's own efforts to shed its WWII legacy gradually improved its relationship with the public but how this particular relationship might hinder the SDF's functions as a military organization.

During the postwar and Cold War period, the SDF was burdened by its legacy from the IJA as a perpetrator of war crimes and oppressor of ordinary Japanese people.<sup>405</sup> They were unappreciated in government and particularly among the public, being thought of as tax thieves

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<sup>404</sup> Hughes, "Japan's Decaying Antimilitarism Ecosystem," 174–75.

<sup>405</sup> Frühstück, *Uneasy Warriors [Electronic Resource]*, 43.

(税金泥棒 *zeikindorobō*) – a useless burden on the national budget.<sup>406</sup> Because the public perceived the SDF through the lens of their prewar and wartime memories of being victimized by an aggressive and domineering military rather than accepting the SDF in their current form and status, the SDF attempted to efface all possible connotations of being a military organization. It has therefore made consistent effort to present itself as a non-military force, instead promoting an image of a non-violent, friendly, and peaceful organization. The SDF frequently engaged with the community for a broad number of causes that had no relevance to their role as a military force. For example, the SDF built snow statues for Hokkaido’s annual snow festival and plowed snow to prepare ski courses during the Nagano Olympics.<sup>407</sup>

In 1993, the JDA established the Department of Public Relations within the Division of Personnel Training to provide public relations training for its officers.<sup>408</sup> This was directed inward to raise troop morale and create a positive military identity but also outward to build trust and appreciation within society. The SDF created recruitment posters that featured pop singers and comics, created its own cartoon character and series called “Prince Pickles: The Journey to Peace”, and held open house days inviting the public to observe SDF exercises.<sup>409</sup> These efforts offered the image of the SDF as an ordinary government organization fulfilling the important duty of providing security while downplaying its potential for violence. SDF recruitment posters and public relations efforts featured service members in civilian clothes

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<sup>406</sup> Bosack, interview; Frühstück, *Uneasy Warriors [Electronic Resource]*, 28.

<sup>407</sup> Feaver, Hikotani, and Narine, “Civilian Control and Civil-Military Gaps in the United States, Japan, and China,” 252.

<sup>408</sup> Frühstück, *Uneasy Warriors*, chap. 4.

<sup>409</sup> See Samuels, *Securing Japan: Tokyo’s Grand Strategy and the Future of East Asia*, 73.

resembling ordinary citizens in a happy atmosphere, rarely in uniform with weaponry.<sup>410</sup> This contrasts with recruitment posters of other countries such as the United States, which typically indicate military action including strenuous activity.

For the public, the SDF's most important function was disaster relief. Responding to the November 1991 Unzen volcanic eruption on Kyushu which killed 43 people was the SDF's first high-profile disaster relief mission in the post-Cold War era. The SDF was tasked with gathering information and monitoring the pyroclastic flows because it had high-tech devices for reconnaissance that volcano observation organizations lacked. SDF personnel provided frequent aerial photography and real-time pictures, which were publicly made available and effectively prevented panic by rumors.<sup>411</sup> The SDF also responded to the July 1993 Hokkaido Nansei-Oki earthquake, the Great Hanshin earthquake in January 1995, and the Great East Japan Earthquake in March 2011. The SDF's conduct of disaster management and relief has helped improve its public perception since disaster dispatch is a relatively uncontroversial mission that does not threaten the civil-military power balance or involve the use of military force.<sup>412</sup>

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<sup>410</sup> Matthew Brummer and Eiten Oren trace how MOD public relations materials (manga) have evolved to promote the SDF's ability to use force. They explain that since the end of the Cold War, the SDF has been portrayed not as an organization that should defend Japan when it absolutely must, but one that must absolutely defend Japan. See Brummer and Oren, "We Must Protect This Peace with Our Hands."

<sup>411</sup> Sugimoto, "Volcanic Disaster Management at Unzendake," 145.

<sup>412</sup> Malešič, "The Impact of Military Engagement in Disaster Management on Civil–Military Relations," 984.

		1972	1975	1978	1981	1984	1988	1991	1994	1997	2000	2003	2006	2009	2012	2015	2018
National security	Purpose	56.1	56.5	56.6	59.6	63	64.5	58.3	48.9	56.6	59	68.6	69.4	70	78.6	74.3	60.9
	Utility	4.9	7.9	7.8	9.3	9.2	8	7.5	6.7	19.1	19.1	26.7	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
	Prospect	23.9	30.4	38.1	45.4	44	38	33.3	23.7	41.6	44.7	57.6	54.9	60.1	71.5	69.9	NA
Domestic security	Purpose	20	20.8	20.6	19.1	17.2	18.6	17.5	15.1	25.7	24.3	26	42.8	41.8	47.9	52.8	49.8
	Utility	5.7	7	5	6.3	3.1	5.2	5	5	11.2	11.8	17.6	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
	Prospect	15.5	18.4	14.4	15.3	13.2	12.2	15.6	9.4	20.8	20.4	31.4	34.4	39	41.7	48.8	NA
Disaster response	Purpose	10.3	13	13.3	13.2	13.6	10.8	15.7	23.8	66.99	67.1	71.8	75.3	78.4	82.9	81.9	79.2
	Utility	74.4	73.9	76.9	72.8	80.9	77	75.8	72.7	88.4	87.2	85.6	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
	Prospect	37.9	34.4	32.8	27.1	31.7	36.9	39.2	33.8	71	67.5	67.8	67.1	73.8	76.3	72.3	NA
Civil cooperation	Purpose	1.2	1.2	1.5	1.3	1	1	1.6	1.6	9.3	7.6	20.1	22.1	24.7	26.8	26.2	26
	Utility	5.3	4.3	4.3	4.1	2.4	4.3	5.5	4.3	18.7	17.7	21.5	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
	Prospect	7.2	5.2	3.6	3.3	3.7	4.9	4	3.7	12.1	9	19.5	17.3	21.4	20.2	19.8	NA

**Table 3. Poll on perceived purpose, utility, prospect of SDF (in %).**

Source: Cabinet Office Poll, table prepared by author.

I organized the polling results polling conducted by the Cabinet Office on the public's perceptions of the SDF's role in Table 3. I collated responses for three questions – “What do you think is the main purpose of the SDF?”, “What do you think the Self-Defense Forces have been most useful to date?”, and “What aspects do you think the SDF should focus on in the future?”<sup>413</sup> I have selected to display these four main roles of the SDF out of other suggested roles in the original questionnaire for relevance and consistency of data. According to this polling data, the response ‘national security’ involves the SDF’s activities to ensure Japan’s national security including Japan’s surrounding sea and airspace, and the remote islands. The response ‘disaster response’ refers to the SDF’s rescue activities in the event of disasters including emergency patient transportation. The response ‘civil cooperation’ refers to the SDF’s

<sup>413</sup> “世論調査 - 内閣府 [Cabinet Office Public Opinion Poll].”

activities such as support for the national policy and the Olympics, disposal of unexploded bullets, and civil engineering in peacetime.

There are three key observations I want to make about the public's perception of the SDF's activities from this table. First, throughout the available data, a substantially higher percentage of respondents believed that the SDF was useful for disaster response than those who believed that disaster response was the SDF's main purpose. Respondents who believed that disaster response was the SDF's main purpose surged from the 1997 poll but even then, 'main purpose' respondents remained in the 60-70 percent range while the 'utility' respondents remained in the solid 80s range. This indicates that the respondents did not necessarily associate utility with perceived purpose and recognized that the SDF was *not* primarily and fundamentally an organization designed for disaster response. This resulted in a significant gap between the perceived function and utility of the SDF. Second, from 1997 and onwards, a higher percentage of respondents believed that disaster response was the SDF's main purpose rather than national security. The SDF's response to the various natural disasters mentioned above was noticed and highly appreciated. In the 1994 poll, 48.9 percent of respondents thought that national security was the SDF's main purpose while 23.8 percent thought it was disaster response; in 1997, it was 56.6 percent and 66.99 respectively. This suggests that the SDF's disaster response activities throughout the 1990s were ingrained in the public's mind to the extent that their perception of the SDF's *raison d'être* had been crowded out. Third, from 1991 onwards without exception, a higher percentage of respondents consistently believed that the SDF should focus more on disaster response in the future than on national security. Not only did respondents believe that the SDF had been most useful at disaster relief but also that it should be more committed to that purpose.

I gather from these observations that the SDF has been successful in rebranding itself as a friendly community-oriented organization as it had intended by providing disaster relief and performing volunteer service-like activities. In a country such as Japan which is frequently hit by earthquakes and typhoons, gaining public appeal by disaster relief seems easy and natural. Of course, military organizations of other states also provide disaster relief. The military serving this purpose is not by itself unnatural. But I would argue that in the context of the SDF, disaster response has been inextricably built into the essence of the organization as it was undergoing a process of rebranding and unloading its unfavorable legacy. In its attempt to find purpose in a suppressive environment created by reactive antimilitarist strategic culture, being unable to transform the governing structure of its social status, the SDF pursued an alternative identity. The SDF's attempts to rebrand itself and transform its relationship with the public was specifically oriented towards painting itself as not a military organization that ensured national security but a friendly organization that helped everyday lives.

This shows the push and pull factors within the different levels of reality – as the shifting reactive antimilitarist strategic culture allowed an opening for the public to perceive the SDF more favorably, the SDF's attempt to establish a new relationship with the public based on humanitarian relief rather than national defense became successful. The SDF's image as a military organization and a humanitarian relief organization are distinct but of course related. This is why I explain that shift in the strategic culture was still an important opportunity that allowed the SDF to rebrand – without strategic cultural change, it would have been much more difficult for the SDF to even approach the public so closely and frequently. For example, the governor of Hyogo Prefecture was blamed for being slow in requesting GSDF dispatch to

respond to the 1995 Great Awaji-Hanshin earthquake because he was anti-SDF.<sup>414</sup> The GSDF at the time was also criticized for being inexperienced and inadequate for the large-scale mobilization necessary. Thus, even though the SDF's HADR activities improved its image, without having been called for to respond opportunely, the SDF's rebranding may not have been as successful.

There are opportunity costs to the time and resources spent for one type of mission, and disaster relief requires a different set of skills, training, and equipment than traditional military tasks.<sup>415</sup> Former ASDF Lieutenant General Araki Junichi laments that the hurdle to calling the SDF for assistance is too low. He explains that after providing so much disaster response and community service, the SDF is now utilized as much as possible without consideration of their true military purpose, which results in diverting focus from training and exercise.<sup>416</sup> The SDF is overly engaged in community service to the extent that they are not as well prepared to confront external security challenges. Thus, excessive public perception and expectation of the SDF to provide disaster response have opportunity costs that weigh on their ability to provide national security. Consequently, the fundamental purpose of the SDF to provide national security by addressing external threats is overshadowed. This raises doubts about whether the public will support the SDF as a military organization and their exercise of force, which is an increasingly important issue as Japan's threat environment intensifies.

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<sup>414</sup> Midford, "The GSDF's Quest for Public Acceptance and the 'Allergy' Myth," 313.

<sup>415</sup> Malešič, "The Impact of Military Engagement in Disaster Management on Civil-Military Relations," 984.

<sup>416</sup> Araki, interview.

#### 4.2.2. Recognizing the SDF as a military force

The SDF's role in disaster response is indeed greatly appreciated and likely, as a result, the public believes the SDF to be the most trustworthy public institution in Japan.<sup>417</sup> However, the fact is that the *raison d'être* of the SDF is not a law enforcement organization or a disaster responder. The SDF is Japan's *armed* forces that should enforce security against external threats. But does the public appreciate this function of the SDF and recognize it as a military force?

This question is important to understanding the state of the antimilitarist strategic culture because even if the public appreciates the SDF, if the SDF is not appreciated as a military institution, it would be difficult to say that antimilitarist strategic culture has completely transitioned into proactive antimilitarist strategic culture. Such a phenomenon would simply imply that the SDF successfully rebranded itself to be a disaster responder, gaining acceptance not by changing attitudes towards the military but by downplaying its role as a military force. The distinction I am trying to make here is whether the SDF has relieved the concerns of reactive antimilitarism that the SDF or any Japanese military organization is an heir to the Imperial Japanese Army (strategic cultural change of reactive antimilitarism) or the SDF has sidelined this core concern to disentangle itself from national security-related issues (preservation of reactive antimilitarism). As I have established at the beginning of this section, reactive antimilitarist strategic culture could be said to have changed when the public supports the SDF's contributions to national security without doubt or concern that the SDF will abuse its position in the security policymaking process or gain too much political influence. Thus,

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<sup>417</sup> "Self-Defense Forces Day Annual Reception (The Prime Minister in Action)."

while gaining public appreciation in general is an important first step, gaining public appreciation for its *national security* function is the more important hurdle to being able to exist as a legitimate military.

The public's favorable perception of the SDF for its disaster relief services did not necessarily imply a greater public approval for the normalization of military force. Midford found that "the growing popularity of the SDF's domestic disaster relief operations made the Japanese public more receptive to the idea of making this domestic disaster relief organization go international", which gathered support for the SDF's overseas deployments beginning with the Gulf War.<sup>418</sup> But the public's approval was predicated on involvement only in noncombat operations.<sup>419</sup> Even regarding the transition of the JDA to the MOD, polls in 2006 showed that a stable majority of respondents still preferred the status quo of the organization. The public's positive perception of the SDF is separated from the public's support for defense institutionalization or strengthening of the SDF. A broader positive image of the SDF does not translate into support for institutional or budgetary change. This is despite the SDF accumulating years of improved public image and credibility by conducting disaster management and contributing to international security through PKOs.

However, an important development for the military purpose of the SDF has been the increase in Chinese military aggression in Japan's territorial waters and seas. The collision near the Senkaku Islands between the Chinese fishing trawler Minjinyu 5179 and two Japan Coast Guard vessels on September 7, 2010 was a turning point for Japan's security policy outlook.<sup>420</sup>

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<sup>418</sup> Midford, *Rethinking Japanese Public Opinion and Security*, 67.

<sup>419</sup> Midford, "The GSDF's Quest for Public Acceptance and the 'Allergy' Myth," 326.

<sup>420</sup> Hornung, "Japan's Growing Hard Hedge Against China," 104.

It was a highly publicized and antagonizing event in bilateral relations, as China reacted with the full force of diplomatic and economic retaliation. China canceled official meetings and cultural exchanges with Japan, demanded apology and compensation for Japan's detention of the trawler's Chinese captain, ceased rare earth exports to Japan, and imposed burdensome customs inspections on Japanese imports. Previously, Japan had still pursued engaging with China with the reactive antimilitarist belief that it could embed China into the existing international order as a responsible stakeholder despite continued suspicions throughout the 2000s about China's militarization and increasing military spending. But the 2010 incident induced a deep shock for the Japanese public who witnessed the military and nonmilitary hostility from the Chinese. This fractured the Japanese public's antimilitarist belief that peace and stability could be maintained through the lack of military action and that Japan's avoidance of military force would ensure peace with its neighbors. The 2010 incident was an important event that changed the Japanese public's perception about the purpose of the use of force.<sup>421</sup>

In this section, I consider these trends to explain how the public's perception of the SDF's military role has changed over time. Through polls, I explain that the Japanese public shows greater appreciation for the use of military force and the SDF's contribution to national security yet show some reservation about the SDF being involved in conflict or using force itself.

The public seems accepting of the usefulness of military force in maintaining peace and stability for both Japan and the international community. Table 4 shows a poll conducted by the Pew Research Center asking Japanese individuals to rate their agreement with the statement of whether military force is necessary to maintain order in the world.<sup>422</sup> It shows that the

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<sup>421</sup> Koda, interview; Sahashi, interview.

<sup>422</sup> NW, Washington, and Inquiries, "Pew Global Attitudes & Trends Question Database."

percentage of respondents who agree (either completely or mostly) has become almost double the percentage of respondents who disagree (either completely or mostly) with the statement since the late 2000s. While this poll by itself does not clarify whether respondents believe *Japan* should use military force to maintain international order, Table 5 more specifically addresses whether respondents think Japan should be able to legitimately use military force. It shows more than a third of respondents favored the elimination of a longstanding component of Japan’s constitution that embodied Japan’s postwar peace-loving identity. This indeed demonstrates a significant erosion of reactive antimilitarism. Still, most respondents oppose the legalization of the SDF and the possibility of being able to declare war. A more recent poll that is relevant to this question of force projection is a July 2020 Nikkei poll which asked whether respondents are for or against a bill for Japan to have the ability to attack the bases of other countries to deter their missile attacks against Japan. The poll showed that the Japanese public opposed preemptive attacks with 37 percent of respondents for, 55 percent against, and 9 percent unsure.<sup>423</sup>

	2007	2010	2011	2019
Completely agree	10	13	25	21
Mostly agree	50	44	46	43
Mostly disagree	26	25	19	20
Completely disagree	8	17	8	14
Don't know/ Refused to answer	0	0	0	2

**Table 4. Responses to the statement: It is sometimes necessary to use military force to maintain order in the world (in %).**

Source: Pew Global Attitudes & Trends Question Database, table prepared by author.

<sup>423</sup> Nihon Keizai Shimbun, “支持率を追う 日経世論調査アーカイブ [Nikkei Public Opinion Poll Archive],” July 2020.

	2006	2008	2013
Favor	27	31	36
Oppose	67	57	56

**Table 5. Responses to the question: Do you favor or oppose changing article nine of the Japanese constitution so that Japan could officially have a military and could declare war? (in %).**

Source: Pew Global Attitudes & Trends Question Database, table prepared by author.

At the same time, while the threat of Chinese aggression has intensified the public's threat perception and therefore increased support for the SDF's purpose of national defense, the public at any given point in time seems to believe that maintaining the SDF's capabilities at status quo is much more preferable to strengthening them.

	1972	1975	1978	1981	1984	1988	1991	1994	1997	2000	2003	2006	2009	2012	2015	2018
Better to strengthen	13.07	16.80	22.57	23.13	15.40	12.97	7.53	7.33	8.50	13.50	15.80	16.50	14.10	24.80	29.90	29.10
Current level is fine	47.93	52.63	50.40	51.03	58.33	61.33	59.40	62.03	60.27	66.10	61.80	65.70	65.10	60.00	59.20	60.10
Better to reduce	18.00	10.23	6.17	9.47	11.67	12.23	17.87	13.60	14.83	8.70	8.40	9.40	10.70	6.20	4.60	4.50
Do not know	21.00	20.30	20.90	16.33	14.60	13.43	15.23	17.00	16.47	11.60	14.10	8.30	10.10	9.00	6.30	6.20

**Table 6. Poll on desired level of strength of SDF (in %).**

Source: Cabinet Office of Japan, table prepared by author.

Table 6 shows responses to the question, "Overall, do you think the Japanese Self-Defense Forces should be strengthened, at the current level, or reduced?"<sup>424</sup> Along with the question,

<sup>424</sup> From 1972 to 1997, respondents were asked about the three SDF branches separately, but I averaged the responses to present a more coherent figure here. I do recognize that the public's perceptions of the three branches may be different based on their respective histories and their contemporary roles. Thus, the original responses are included in the appendix.

respondents were shown a comparison of the number of Japan's officers, ships, and jets with neighboring countries such as Korea, China, North Korea, and the United States. The data shown are from the Cabinet Office of Japan's public opinion poll website.<sup>425</sup> Since the question includes an information card that compares Japan's military capacity with that of other countries, this poll reflects the public's opinion of the SDF's *military* capabilities rather than its other functions.

The data shows support for strengthening the SDF peaked in 1981 during the Cold War before dropping after the end of the Cold War in 1991 to one-digit levels. It must be noted that even though it "peaked", the percentage itself is not very high and most respondents favored maintaining the status quo level of capabilities. The drop in the 1990s is despite my central argument that Japan's security policy increasingly became more proactive from the end of the Cold War and my previous discussion on how the SDF became more enveloped in the security policymaking process from the end of the Cold War. I believe that this is because of the end of the U.S.-USSR rivalry and the perceived demise of the most dangerous enemy for Japan, in addition to the economic downturn from the early 1990s. For Japan, the Soviet Union was not only a threat to the U.S.-led order but also a clear and immediate threat in its own backyard of the Northern territories. Therefore, even as Japan experienced Gulf War trauma and recognized the proliferation of threats in the post-Cold War world, the public seems to have perceived them as lesser or more conceptual threats that do not necessitate military consolidation.

The next time that the support to strengthen the SDF begins to rise is from 1994. There were many intensive threats in Japan's security environment in the late 1990s including the 1994

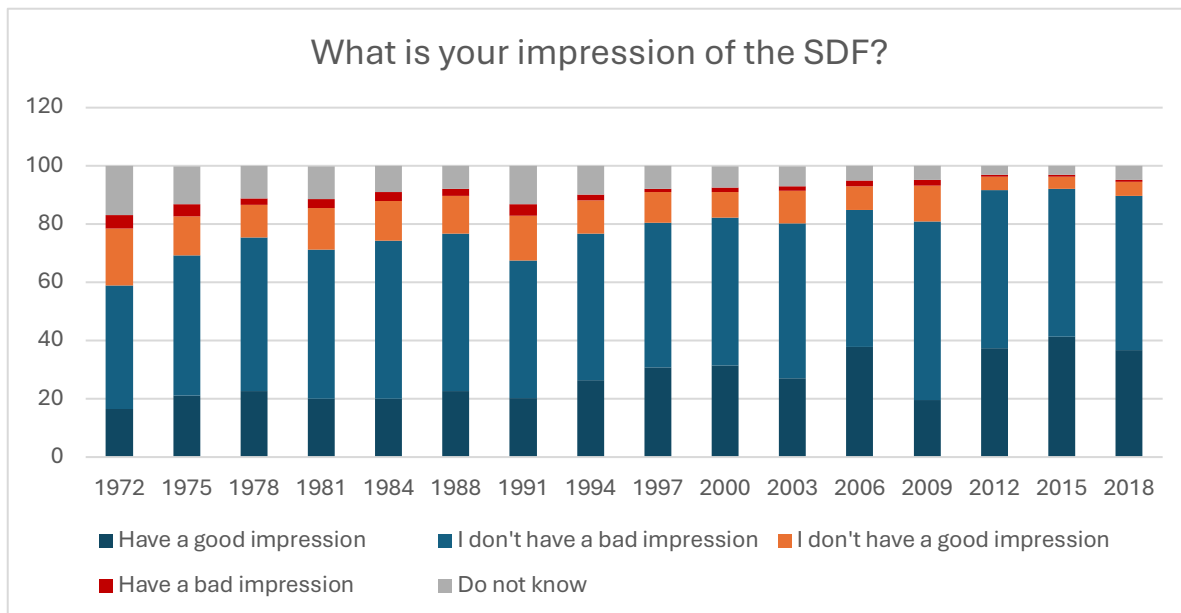
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<sup>425</sup> “世論調査 - 内閣府 [Cabinet Office Public Opinion Poll].”

North Korean nuclear crisis, the 1996 Taiwan Straits Crisis, and the 1998 Taepodong ballistic missile test firing, which exposed the vulnerability in Japan's defense system. Then the percentage of respondents who support strengthening the SDF jumped ten points between 2009 and 2012. I attribute this to increasing Chinese aggression in Japan's territorial waters and air, as has already been discussed regarding the 2010 collision incident. But even in this period, only one-third of respondents supported strengthening the SDF.

I argue that these observations have two implications concerning Japan's antimilitarist strategic culture. They show that the Japanese public is indeed sensitive to external threats yet there is a limitation on how supportive they will be for military buildup. The public had a worse perception of the SDF during the 1980s when there was relatively high support for strengthening the SDF. The public also had a better impression of the SDF in the mid to late 1990s when they expressed the lowest support for strengthening the SDF. These observations support my idea that the public's general perception of the SDF cannot be easily translated to support for the SDF's militarization. This suggests a dissociation between a sense of threat and what the SDF could or should do to respond to that threat and assure to national security.

### 4.2.3. Discussion



**Figure 3. Poll on impression of SDF (in %).**

Source: Opinion Polls by the Cabinet Office of Japan, figure prepared by author.

As seen in Figure 3, the public’s impression of the SDF has incrementally improved since the end of the Cold War, with an overwhelming majority now having a good or not bad impression of them.<sup>426</sup> However, as discussed in this section, “impression” is a product of various incidents, events, and activities that the SDF has carried out. Thus, it is important to study the anatomy of this perception as has been done under this indicator.

In this indicator of the public perception of the SDF, I discussed how the SDF cast off the troublesome legacy of the imperial army by promoting their nonmilitary activities centered on community service. While this has successfully rebranded the SDF as a friendly force, it also became a straitjacket for its image and activities, by overly committing it to disaster relief and

<sup>426</sup> “世論調査 - 内閣府 [Cabinet Office Public Opinion Poll].”

community service activities, which diverted its attention and capabilities away from national security. Moreover, while the public's heightened external threat perception from Chinese military modernization has increased support for strengthening the SDF's capabilities, the public's support for the SDF as a military force is still tentative.

I point to the responses to two 2018 Nikkei poll questions to support this argument. In January 2018 the Nikkei asked, "Regarding amending the Constitution to clearly state the existence of the Self-Defense Forces, the Liberal Democratic Party is considering two options: maintaining Paragraph 2 of Article 9, which stipulates that the Self-Defense Forces have no military capabilities or eliminating Article 9(2). What do you think about this?" For reference, Article 9(2) of the constitution reads, "In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized".<sup>427</sup> 47 percent of respondents believed that Article 9(2) should be maintained, 15 percent believed that it should be deleted, 24 percent believed that the existence of the SDF does not need to be specified in the constitution, and 13 percent were unsure. In a February 2018 poll, the Nikkei asked, "The Liberal Democratic Party is aiming to gather opinions on the idea of adding a clause that clearly states the existence of the Self-Defense Forces, without changing the current clause in Article 9 of the Constitution. Do you agree or disagree with this idea?" 47 percent of respondents agreed, 33 percent opposed, 5 percent neither agreed nor disagreed, and 15 percent were unsure.<sup>428</sup> Interestingly, the January 2018 poll shows 47 percent of respondents wanting to maintain Article 9 and the February 2018 poll shows 47 percent of respondents wanting to legalizing the existence of the SDF (without

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<sup>427</sup> "The Constitution of Japan."

<sup>428</sup> Nihon Keizai Shimbun, "支持率を追う 日経世論調査アーカイブ [Nikkei Public Opinion Poll Archive]."

affecting Article 9). Taken together, these polls remind us that a significant portion of the Japanese public has warmed up to the existence and usefulness of the SDF and believes it to be a legitimate government institution. Yet there is a cognitive barrier against deleting Article 9 even if formalizing the SDF may practically have the same effect. As I stated in the introduction, while the transition to proactive antimilitarism has allowed the public to trust and appreciate the SDF, they still firmly adhere to the self-defense orientation of antimilitarism. The evolution in the public's perception of the SDF demonstrates both how proactive the public has become toward defense issues and yet how proactive antimilitarism is still a variant of antimilitarism.

### 4.3. Conclusion

I find a slightly divergent path of change in Japan's antimilitarist strategic culture for these two groups. For policymakers, the change in antimilitarist attitudes was derived from their experience of external threats and the newfound recognition of the need for political control and rapid and efficient decisionmaking. The end of the Cold War produced shocks that the existing system constrained by antimilitarist strategic culture was unable to respond to appropriately. The distance that political leaders had intentionally maintained from uniformed officers by delegating civilian control to the bureaucracy created gaps in information and decisionmaking hierarchy. This led to various reforms such as the removal of the defense councilor system, the transition of the JDA to the MOD, and the establishment of the NSC and NSS. I analyze that political representatives were more open to accepting the military as part of the decisionmaking process because they had the power to reform the system. They were positioned to create the rules of engagement with the military, which gave them more confidence in their new relationship with the military and in the strength of civilian control.

In contrast, the public's perception of the military changed mostly by benefiting from the SDF's disaster relief and community service activities. The public recognized the value of the SDF and appreciated its existence, but the SDF's new image was anchored in the source of this value – nonmilitary activities. More importantly, the public is mostly on the receiving end of the transformation of the SDF. They have no direct control over the new rules of engagement with the SDF, unlike the political elites. This means that the public's antimilitarism is satiated indirectly through the credibility of civilian control by political elites. I believe that the public was more resistant to strategic cultural transition to proactive antimilitarism because they were not fully convinced that the new strategic culture would adhere to the same fundamental principles of the existing reactive antimilitarism. Therefore, even as the public perceives the SDF more favorably in general, their concerns about the SDF's oversight of military force remain. Despite these differences, I believe that reactive antimilitarist strategic culture as an opposition to militarism in government has subsided significantly. There is greater appreciation for the SDF's role in national security and less fear of military domination of the policy process. I suggest that the varying effect of the strategic cultural transition on these actor groups is acceptable under a critical realist approach to strategic culture, where strategic culture is a social structure that exists and can change whether or not actors recognize or interact with it. This is in contrast to a constructivist approach to strategic culture, for example, wherein actors and strategic culture are co-constitutive.

Japan's antimilitarist strategic cultures remain anchored in upholding Article 9 of the constitution, which renounces war. As I have clarified in Chapter Two, most of the Japanese public's opposition to amending Article 9 is not derived from a pacifist ideology that absolutely opposes war and the use of military force, but a reactive antimilitarist strategic culture that

opposes superfluous use of military force that may strengthen the military establishment. It is the weight given to how necessary the use of military force is perceived to be that creates the spectrum from reactive to proactive antimilitarist strategic culture.

# Chapter 5. Charting Japan's Post-Cold War Security

## Policy Evolution

In this thesis, I have studied how the change *within* Japan's antimilitarist strategic culture affected Japan's security policy after the end of the Cold War. By questioning the prevalent materialist narratives of Japan's security policy and dominant understanding of key normative concepts, I have argued that strategic cultural analysis could enrich our understanding of the deeper structures of Japanese policymaking. I conducted two hard cases studies for strategic cultural analysis on Japan's military doctrine and the SDF's place in politics and society to demonstrate the shift in dominance from reactive to proactive antimilitarism in Japan's security policymaking process. While I have laid out the necessary qualifications for strategic cultural influence, I have attempted to argue, as Seppo does in his work on German strategic culture, that "this is not a leap of scholarly faith but rather a refined methodological posture that enables us to grasp the socio-cognitive aspects of strategic culture as meaningful and causally significant".<sup>429</sup>

An important contribution of this thesis is the exploration of Japan's antimilitarist strategic culture as a dynamic – not static – entity, unlike in the existing literature which does not provide a clear theory of change for strategic culture or how it interacts with other decision-making variables. I argue that the concept of antimilitarism has been undertheorized within the study of Japan's security policy because first, there was an intuitive understanding of the origins of antimilitarism from Japan's devastating defeat in WWII that became the conventional wisdom.

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<sup>429</sup> Seppo, *From Guilt to Responsibility and Beyond | The Evolution of German Strategic Culture after the End of the Cold War*, 295.

Fear, resentment, and anger at the imperial army for reckless and expansionist military policy during the Pacific War were easily understood reactions at the end of the war. However, the process through which this experience would produce relatively specific guidelines on security-related behavior should have been examined over time. While Japan's antimilitarism has been studied by constructivists like Thomas Berger, it has largely been constructed as a fixed, monolithic variable. This rigid perception of antimilitarism became particularly perplexing as memories of the war and the imperial army faded and were crowded out by the perception of new security threats and appreciation of the SDF. Japan's postwar antimilitarism has not been properly contextualized.

I posit that this is because the focus on the epistemological understanding of antimilitarism as a normative 'variable' diverted scholars' attention away from the ontology of antimilitarism and how the Japanese people's antimilitarism has varied over time. Thus, the scholarly debate focused on whether policy decisions were influenced by material or normative variables, rather than the *substance* of the normative variables and their change over time. Thus, I deconstructed the monolithic idea of 'antimilitarism' and categorized it into two distinct concepts: "reactive antimilitarism" (prevalent during the Cold War) and "proactive antimilitarism" (prevalent in the post-Cold War era).

I applied critical realism as an analytical framework to cogently analyze strategic cultural influence in the context of a stratified reality, which includes the deeper layer of reality, the observable actual outcomes, and the understandings and interpretations of the people. This approach allowed me to go beyond what is empirically directly observable to examine the unobservable but detectable influences on policymaking processes. The critical realist approach has also clarified the influence mechanism of strategic culture as generating or giving rise to

events, by abandoning the rigid deductive-nomological logic of ‘if A, then B’. As elaborated in Chapter 2, it is the adoption of the critical realist approach that allowed me to overcome the problem of finding conceptualizing actor agency within strategic culture that has hindered the formulation of an adequate theory of change in the existing literature. Moreover, without the critical realist methodologies of abductive reference and retroduction, the examination of Japan’s security policy would revolve around material variables, institutions, or norms, without a full understanding of how and why some practices and norms change and why some do not, and at different speeds, under various conditions. Critical realism is the worldview that coherently structures this analysis together.

In this concluding chapter, I review my conceptualization of antimilitarism and explain how it has proven useful as an analytical tool in examining my two case studies on Japan’s military doctrine and SDF’s place in politics and society. Subsequently, I discuss the continuing importance of cultural analysis of security policy and lay out standards that would help track the end of Japan’s antimilitarist strategic culture. I then discuss the most recent changes in Japan’s security policy – namely, the Kishida administration’s three security documents – as an afterword. I examine how they fit into my framework of proactive antimilitarist strategic culture. Finally, I conclude the chapter by outlining the limits of this thesis and laying out recommendations for future research.

## 5.1. From reactive antimilitarism to proactive antimilitarism

In this section, I review the distinction between reactive and proactive antimilitarist strategic cultures and how my two case studies demonstrate the transition from one to the other. As explained in the introductory chapter, I have refined antimilitarist strategic culture into reactive

and proactive to note the nuanced shift of the Japanese policy actors' attitude towards security-related issues. Notwithstanding their shared foundation of antimilitarism, the policy influence of reactive and proactive antimilitarism should be distinguished to fully understand the normative structure of Japan's security policymaking landscape. Clustering them into antimilitarism or together with pacifism has led to imprecise analyses and expectations about Japan's level of militarization.

Japan's crushing defeat in WWII and what that entailed for the lives of ordinary Japanese people served as the background to everything that unfolded in the following years within Japan's society, economy, politics, including the establishment of reactive antimilitarist strategic culture. Historian John Dower details the aftermath of Japan's defeat and how that affected the physical, psychological, and emotional state of the Japanese people. 2.7 million – or approximately 3 to 4 percent of the population in 1941 – Japanese servicemen and civilians died from the war and with many of its cities destroyed, living standards for the survivors fell drastically.<sup>430</sup> But even these numbers do not fully represent the magnitude of the Japanese people's exhaustion and despair or *kyodatsu* (虚脱).<sup>431</sup> Although the Allied victory swept in a wave of shock and an overwhelming sense of relief from being liberated from war and death, this initial respite was followed by a deep sense of despondency. For years, the Japanese had been told that they were a great country of a leading race and now they were forced to surrender unconditionally. Dower attributes this not only to the shock of defeat but the Japanese public's built-up fatigue and disappointment in the leadership. This hurt was concentrated at the military and “just the unexpected fact that a repatriated soldier was still alive could cause consternation”.<sup>432</sup> It did not

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<sup>430</sup> Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 45.

<sup>431</sup> Dower, chap. 3.

<sup>432</sup> Dower, 60.

help that in 1946, as the soldiers and sailors were returning, information about the range of atrocities committed by the imperial forces abroad was already reaching those at home. The ex-servicemen thus were not only men who disastrously failed their mission but also committed unspeakable acts. Thus, the post-World War II reactive antimilitarism began as a complex reaction to the war and the assumed evils of the military – the public was uncritical (or unable to be critical) of the specific source, conditions, or limits of their fears.

I say ‘assumed’ evils because as demonstrated by the public’s opposition to any discourse regarding military and defense policy after the war, the backlash against the military was not limited to the responsible officers in the Imperial Japanese Army but included all members of the military by association. At this stage, there were indeed some pacifist and socialist influences that mobilized public bias to direct antipathy against security-related issues.<sup>433</sup> But as discussed in the introductory chapter, the domain of antimilitarism expanded to include various groups of Japan’s policy actors rather than remaining a leftist political rallying tactic. This sublimated the collective postwar experience and generated a consolidated antimilitarist strategic culture across actors over time. This antimilitarist strategic culture began to function as a structure of society that conditions behavior – whether individual actors accept the antimilitarist principles or not – rather than just a fleeting reaction at the end of World War II. The critical realist approach labels this the real level of reality.

Reactive antimilitarist strategic culture fundamentally stemmed from the fear that Japan itself could become again the victim of the Japanese military and that the military is naturally inclined toward aggression. But the proliferation of threats after the end of the Cold War raised the

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<sup>433</sup> Onoda, interview; Miyake, interview.

possibility that the military could protect Japan from outside threats and that the use of force could be directed toward defending the country. The Japanese people had believed not only that they needed protection *from* their military rather than *by* the military but also that Japan's abstinence from using military force will be shared by other countries – former Rear Admiral Yamamoto Katsuya described it as an “almost religious belief” the prevailing postwar idea that if Japan was a peaceful country, then other countries would likewise act that way.<sup>434</sup> But the experience of the Gulf War, Iraq War, and the rising tensions with the Chinese military led Japan's policy actors to believe that peace is not a naturally preexisting condition of international society but something that must be actively created. This realization improved Japanese policy actors' perception of the SDF's organizational disposition and the role it should play in ensuring national security. Thus, reactive antimilitarist strategic culture transitioned into a proactive strategic culture.

It is important to remember that the fundamental objective of both antimilitarisms is Japan's self-defense and therefore the key difference between the two is how Japan's peace-loving defense-oriented identity should be kept rather than how to direct Japan towards an internationalist-oriented mindset. The change in Japan's strategic culture is not fundamental, but regulatory. The current location of Japan's security policy on the very narrow ground between attempting to militarize and still being reluctant to use force suggests that proactive antimilitarism is still firmly an offshoot of antimilitarism. Prewar and wartime memories of military unilateralism and aggression continue to underlie the reluctance toward permitting the use of military force. However, I conceptualize proactive antimilitarism as a rationalized antimilitarism that alleviates the dissonance between the occurrences in Japan's actual level of

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<sup>434</sup> Yamamoto, interview.

reality and the principles held in the real level of reality.<sup>435</sup> An important aspect of the reactive to proactive transition is the policy actors' ability to partition this historical mindset from the newfound perception of the SDF in formulating national policy. The concept of proactive antimilitarist strategic culture helps understand the constrained shift of Japan's policymakers and the public being more willing to permit the use of force while being wary about how much and under what conditions force should be used or would have to be used in the long run.

In the first case study on Japan's military doctrine covering the defense capability concept, defense budget, and overseas deployment, I discussed how Japanese policy actors invested resources to make the military more adaptable to Japan's external threat environment, granting it a broader scope of activities and capabilities. I found that the government began acknowledging the efficacy and many uses of military force. Thus, the government's security policy increasingly shifted from a focus on the utilization of the SDF within Japan's legal and normative limitations rather than suppression. These reforms were in the context of Japan's perceived need for international responsibility and cooperation for security.

In the second case study on Japanese politicians' and the public's perceptions of the SDF, I discussed how strategic cultural change created an environment that motivated Japanese policy actors to remove the barriers between the military and the center of decisionmaking. During the Cold War, the objective of (bureaucratic) civilian control was the suppression of the military and maximizing the distance between the military and elected leaders lest their decisions be tainted. Throughout the almost five decades of strictly practicing antimilitarism and without serious incident that necessitated further suppression of the military as a whole, Japanese policy

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<sup>435</sup> As explained in the theoretical framework (Chapter Two), the real level of reality contains the causal structures that give rise to observable social phenomena and events while the actual level of reality is where events occur whether or not people observe or interpret them.

actors gained confidence in the effectiveness of civil-military control and administration, which motivated them to formalize the military's inclusion in security policymaking processes.

While the case studies largely reflected strategic cultural change, reactive antimilitarism was more resilient in some domains than others. For example, I explained under the 'Defense budget' indicator in Chapter Three that despite the long-term discourse on the need to abolish the one percent cap on defense spending, no Japanese leader has actually done so (with few short-lived exceptions). I also explained under the 'SDF in society' indicator in Chapter Four that while the public views the SDF favorably, it is reluctant to fully recognize the SDF as a military organization and allow it to exercise military force. More importantly, I found that Japan's security policy is still constrained by the exclusive defense-orientation and reluctance to use force across all the indicators, confirming that proactive antimilitarism is a derivative of Japan's postwar antimilitarism rather than the beginning of a new normative security framework.

I draw two main implications from the strategic cultural transition from reactive to proactive antimilitarism and the continuing influence of proactive antimilitarism on Japan's security policy. First, as mentioned above, it is important to be realistic about how much change it has brought and will bring to Japan's security policy. While the case studies demonstrate that Japan's security policy has become much more permissive toward militarization, this is in comparison to postwar reactive antimilitarism as the benchmark. Most Japan scholars – even the realists – comment that Japan's security policy changes have been evolutionary, not revolutionary, because the change has been slow and incremental despite the intensification of Japan's threat environment. Indeed, Japan has been increasingly more willing to employ the SDF rather than economic or diplomatic means to build deterrence or fend off physical threats. Still, the main objective of Japan's security policy will be self-defense as long as policymaking

remains inside the frame of antimilitarism. Second, the transition confirms that strategic culture can change by dismantling the cause-and-effect beliefs about the military and security, values placed on the use of force, and patterns of relationships that structure social interaction and policymaking processes. This means that proactive antimilitarism could also change into a strategic culture that would abandon antimilitarist beliefs altogether. I provide guidelines for how to identify such a change in a later section.

## 5.2. Why focus on antimilitarist strategic culture now?

The normative antimilitarist strategic cultural explanation was popularized during the Cold War when Japan seemed to be defying realist expectations of becoming a great military power in conjunction with becoming an economic powerhouse. Thus, my study of antimilitarism may seem curious at a time when Japan's security policy seems to be moving in a more "realist" direction, particularly since the second Abe administration.

Indeed, after he made an unprecedented return to the prime minister's post in December 2012, Abe Shinzo declared that "Japan is not, and will never be, a Tier-two country".<sup>436</sup> He affirmed Japan's role as a rules-promoter for the prosperity of the Indo-Pacific region and implemented significant policy changes to actualize this role. Under Abe, Japan's defense planners adopted the Multi-Domain Defense Force in the 2018 NDPG, which integrates the new military theaters of space, cyber, and electromagnetic domains. Abe also indicated in the National Diet in 2017 that his government would be willing to push military expenditure above one percent of GDP, essentially renouncing the budgetary constraint policy. Moreover, the missile defense and

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<sup>436</sup> "MOFA: 'Japan Is Back', Policy Speech by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)."

counterstrike capabilities that were officially adopted by the Kishida administration had been recommended in a report by the LDP's Subcommittee on National Defense in 2020.<sup>437</sup> Overall, Japan at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century possesses a formidable military power with a highly professional JSDF and a wide array of technologically advanced equipment and capabilities.

Japan's policymakers may seem to be responding directly to the threats to Japan's physical security, making strategic culture seem less urgent and influential on the policymaking process. However, a strategic cultural analysis is still important for two main reasons which are to explain the lag between the changes in external structure and in security policy; and to provide a richer understanding of the domestic political landscape under structurally indeterminate situations.<sup>438</sup>

First, Abe's security policy reforms did not happen overnight. Abe has the image of a strong, nationalist, and revisionist leader who implemented radical changes, but his reforms evolved out of a long and continuous path of change in Japan's government and security policy. Furthermore, as written in the previous paragraph, Abe made many policy announcements to phase out the constraints on Japan's antimilitarist security policies such as the 1 percent ceiling on defense spending, permitting limited collective self-defense, and expanding the domains of the SDF. This attitude toward security policymaking has been continued by Prime Ministers Suga and Kishida. And yet, Japan's security policy and policy discourse are still constrained to a certain extent by the postwar adherence to exclusive defense-orientation and a peace-loving identity. This lag between the speed at which Japan's security environment has been changing and the delayed progress in Japan's security policies to meet the security challenges can best be

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<sup>437</sup> Hughes, *Japan as a Global Military Power*, 37.

<sup>438</sup> Desch, "Culture Clash," 166–69.

explained by the deeply entrenched strategic cultural influence on Japan's security policymaking.

Second, the international structure – however severe – never directly determines policy outcomes. Rather, it operates through a variety of mechanisms within the domestic policymaking processes and among domestic policy actors. Strategic culture provides an important historical and normative context for these components of security policymaking in Japan. As the social structure that guides policy actors' attitudes toward the use of force and the relationships between them, strategic culture helps understand the collective motivations and deeply entrenched institutions within policymaking. This provides a comprehensive understanding of Japan's security policymaking landscape, particularly when the international structural conditions are complex and indeterminate that realist predictions are unreliable.

While the contours of antimilitarism in Japan have shifted profoundly, it is still founded on deep-seated reluctance to wield military force and a restrictive definition of what constitutes national security. So what indicators could lead researchers and practitioners to finally conclude the demise of antimilitarist strategic culture in Japan? I suggest some courses of action that would suggest that antimilitarist strategic culture is finally giving way to another set of strategic thinking, lest there be accusations of the unfalsifiability of cultural analysis.

I defer to Andrew Oros's indicators for possible breaches of what he calls the "security identity of domestic antimilitarism".<sup>439</sup> Oros identifies the three tenets of this identity as Japan having no traditional armed forces, not exercising military force except in self-defense, and not participating in foreign wars. He then outlines three courses of action that would suggest a

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<sup>439</sup> Oros, *Normalizing Japan*.

breach of each of these tenets, which are the centralization of defense policy management such as the creation of a national security council; statements of threat or use of force in security discourse and development of explicitly offensive military capabilities; and the creation of offensive military plans or posture and commitments to the employment of the SDF in active overseas conflicts.<sup>440</sup>

By this standard, the first indicator of a breach has already been achieved through the establishment of Abe's National Security Council and National Security Secretariat in 2013. I would stretch the first indicator and to say that that the adjusted standard for a breach should be the legal legitimation of the SDF either through constitutional addendum or amendment, as currently the constitution does not comment on the existence of the SDF. I make this adjustment not simply because Oros's original indicator has already been breached, but because I believe that the new indicator better reflects the boundaries of proactive antimilitarism, which accepts and appreciates the SDF's policymaking expertise but is wary of fully permitting its capability to use force.

Based on Oros's indicators and my own adjustment discussed above, my standards for the breach of antimilitarist strategic culture are first, the legal or constitutional recognition of the existence of the SDF; second, permitting the SDF to use force for non-self-defense purposes such as renouncing the exclusive self-defense orientation or committing Japan to collective security; and third, deploying the SDF to active overseas conflicts. Given these standards, I conclude that antimilitarist strategic culture has not yet been breached, although recent developments in Japan's security environment and policy announcements make it seem that the

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<sup>440</sup> Oros, 18.

government is inching closer to breaching them. By this, I am referring to the Kishida administration's proposed adoption of counterstrike capabilities and the widely discussed possibility that the SDF would be deployed overseas in a Taiwan contingency.

It is important to repeat that I do not think the demise of antimilitarist strategic culture (of any type) indicates a return to Japan's prewar militarism pervaded by the imperial army. Japan has heretofore demonstrated enough evidence of commitment to being a responsible contributor to international peace and security and a reliable U.S. ally. Rather, the new strategic culture (how influential it would be in the security policymaking process being another question) is likely to embody the Japanese policy actors' strengthened belief that the necessity to use military force in a wider scope of applications outweighs any remaining fears of excessive military influence in policymaking and the undesirability of entanglement in foreign security conflicts.

To add, I have adopted a critical realist approach to strategic cultural analysis throughout this dissertation. Critical realism has not often been applied to studies of international relations due to the complexity of its philosophization. Some may argue that this study could have used a constructivist or neoclassical realist theory instead. But this misses the point of critical realism entirely. Critical realism is not a research tradition or theoretical framework like Realism and neoclassical realism. It is a metatheory that informs the nonlinear causal relationship between various entities in the policymaking process and helps overcome the epistemological impasse existing studies face on strategic cultural analysis.<sup>441</sup> I argue that it has the added benefit of resolving the forced dichotomy between material and normative variables that creates a gulf between the existing research traditions.

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<sup>441</sup> Seppo, *From Guilt to Responsibility and Beyond?*, 28.

In this section I explained the continuing relevance of a strategic cultural analysis of Japan's security policy. Despite the longstanding rhetoric on greater militarization that was particularly noticeable during the second Abe administration onward, Japanese leaders have yet to be able to fully eliminate the policy restraints on the SDF's use of force. There has consistently been a lag in the security policy changes to respond to the exigencies in Japan's threat environment. This shows that policy outcomes are not directly determined by the international structure but are complex results that arise from the various normative structures underlying Japanese society and policymaking processes. The deeply embedded nature of strategic culture makes its influence resilient. But strategic culture *has* and *can* change. I have provided three standards by which we can proclaim the end of antimilitarist strategic culture, which are the legal authorization of the SDF, permission for the SDF to use force for non-self-defense purposes, and the SDF's deployment to active overseas conflicts. When Japanese policy actors fulfill these three standards, antimilitarist strategic culture of any type would likely have receded, giving way to possibly another type of strategic culture or being sidelined by other policymaking variables.

### 5.3. The future trajectory of Japan's security policy

The purview of my thesis is from the end of the Cold War around 1989 to the end of the Abe administration in 2020. But since Abe, both Japan's security policy and the international security environment have experienced significant changes. How do the findings of my thesis apply to these recent developments? Thus, I discuss in this section the impact of the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine and the three new security documents published in December 2022 by the Kishida administration on Japan's security policy. The examination of these events is

intended as an afterword to estimate the possibility that Japan's security policy will breach any of the three standards I suggested in the preceding section.

### 5.3.1. The Russian invasion of Ukraine and Kishida's new security documents

The Kishida administration published three new strategic documents – the National Security Strategy, the National Defense Strategy, and the Defense Buildup Program on December 16, 2022. While they indeed deserve attention as serious signals of the Kishida government's policy intent, we must note that the three documents were approved by the National Security Council and Cabinet, which are appointed by the prime minister. Thus, they are not legally binding commitments supported or authorized by the Diet.<sup>442</sup> These three documents formulate a defense strategy assuming a very real possibility of a military attack against Japan's territory and recognize the role of military capabilities in deterring potential aggression. With Russia invading Ukraine on February 24, 2022 during the drafting process of these three documents, the shock of the conflict deeply affected Japan's policymakers and lessons from the Ukraine War shaped the reorientation of Japan's national security policy.<sup>443</sup> Therefore, these documents aim to strengthen Japan's defense capabilities that have been heretofore much neglected.

To support this objective, the Kishida administration announced a defense budget increase to 43 trillion JPY by 2027, raising spending from 1 percent to 2 percent of GDP. Abe renounced the 1 percent ceiling on defense spending, followed by Suga but neither administration spent beyond it. If actualized, Kishida would be the first to officially break the taboo since Nakasone in the late 1980s. More importantly, the strategy documents announced the planned acquisition

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<sup>442</sup> Liff and Hornung, "Japan's New Security Policies: A Long Road to Full Implementation."

<sup>443</sup> Tatsumi, "How Russia's Invasion of Ukraine Changed Japan's Approach to National Security"; "How the War in Ukraine Has Spurred Japan's Defense Overhaul | The Asahi Shimbun."

of counterstrike capabilities. Recognizing the threat of missile attacks and the inadequacy of the existing ballistic missile defense network, the National Security Strategy emphasized the need for counterstrike capabilities to leverage stand-off defense capability.<sup>444</sup>

The government has assiduously legitimated the acquisition of counterstrike capabilities, using the term “counterstrike” instead of “strike” to emphasize the reactive not preemptive nature of the capability as preemptive strikes would be illegal.<sup>445</sup> Legally, the justification is based on a 1956 government statement that deems counterstrike capability for self-defense as permissible. The government concludes in the National Defense Strategy that counterstrikes in accordance with the three new conditions for the use of force set by the 2015 Legislation for Peace and Security would be constitutional and not violate the concept of exclusive self-defense.<sup>446</sup> As such, the security documents walk on an ever-thinning line of exclusive self-defense provided by Article 9. My interviewees generally agreed that the security documents continue to make evolutionary – rather than revolutionary – changes that are extensions of prior attempts to strengthen the military’s role in national security, notably by Nakasone and Koizumi. However, an anonymous interviewee commented that Japanese politicians have long been struggling to make security policy advances compatible with the conventional exclusive defense-oriented policy and that the prolonged struggle demonstrates the huge discrepancy between the two.<sup>447</sup> He thus suggested that constitutional revision to legitimize the SDF and legalize the possession of war potential is necessary to resolve the dissonance.

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<sup>444</sup> “National Security Strategy of Japan,” 18–19.

<sup>445</sup> Narushige, “Japan’s New National Security Strategy.”

<sup>446</sup> “National Defense Strategy,” 14.

<sup>447</sup> Anonymous 1, interview.

I draw several lessons from his analysis that demonstrate the complex persistence and erosion of normative influence of Article 9-based antimilitarist strategic culture. First, the recent policy changes are not revolutionary but as a whole, the trajectory of Japan's security policy has been veering away from the original conception of reactive antimilitarism. There is a significantly lower level of military moderation and greater threat perception that has forced Japan's policy actors to accept the military as an invaluable asset for national security. Second, despite the changing attitudes towards the utility of force and the solution to peace, Article 9 ensures that Japan's security policymaking is rooted in antimilitarist principles. Dr. Sahashi Ryo, who specializes in international politics in East Asia at the University of Tokyo, says that the JSDF's scope of capabilities and operation is constrained by policymakers' interpretation of the legal and constitutional constraints, binding security policy to legalistic rather than strategic discussions.<sup>448</sup> Third, I would argue that policymakers' prolonged struggle to simultaneously expand and conform to the principles of Article 9 demonstrates the successful and persistent normativization of legal principles as a deeply underlying social structure that influences Japanese attitudes towards the use of force and questions of peace and war. Yet, despite Article 9's position as a bulwark of antimilitarism, the intensifying struggle to expand the SDF's capabilities in response to Japan's threat environment shows how reactive antimilitarism has evolved into a proactive antimilitarism that is more confident in the utility of the SDF. This is supported by a Nikkei poll that shows 63 percent of respondents supporting Kishida's three

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<sup>448</sup> Sahashi, interview.

defense documents.<sup>449</sup> The level of public support was in stark contrast to the protests against the 2015 legislation to permit limited exercise of collective self-defense.<sup>450</sup>

The need for reinforced military capabilities is based on a more acute perception of the security environment. As mentioned in the previous section, the Ukraine War awakened Japan's policymakers and the public to a blatant violation of international law and order. In response, the National Security Strategy highlighted the possibility that a militarily strong state may always develop the intention to use its capabilities for aggression, stating "When a state's decision-making process is opaque, there always exists conditions under which threat may materialize".<sup>451</sup> This lesson resonates particularly strongly for Japan in its relationship with China because Japan has long believed that the processes and motivations surrounding China's militarization – its military strategy, planning, and budget process – are not transparent. Accordingly, the National Security Strategy identifies China as "an unprecedented and the greatest strategic challenge in ensuring the peace and security of Japan and the peace and stability of the international community, as well as in strengthening the international order based on the rule of law".<sup>452</sup> A Nikkei poll in February 2022 found that 77 percent of respondents were concerned about the possible spillover of the use of force – if the international community failed to stop Russia from invading Ukraine, China might use violence against Taiwan.<sup>453</sup> Indeed, many observers have drawn parallels between Russia-Ukraine and China-

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<sup>449</sup> Nihon Keizai Shimbun, "支持率を追う 日経世論調査アーカイブ [Nikkei Public Opinion Poll Archive]," December 2022.

<sup>450</sup> Takenaka, "Huge Protest in Tokyo Rails against PM Abe's Security Bills."

<sup>451</sup> "National Security Strategy of Japan," 8.

<sup>452</sup> "National Security Strategy of Japan," 6–7.

<sup>453</sup> Nihon Keizai Shimbun, "支持率を追う 日経世論調査アーカイブ [Nikkei Public Opinion Poll Archive]," February 2023.

Taiwan, forcing the Japanese public to envision military aggression on Japan's doorstep.<sup>454</sup> As such the Russian invasion and continuing Chinese aggression in the Indo-Pacific extend and expand the lessons for Japan from the end of the Cold War that peace must be actively created and that Japan's military moderation will not necessarily be reciprocated by neighboring states.<sup>455</sup>

### 5.3.2. Limitations on further military policy expansion

Despite the attention paid to the new security documents that may seemingly portray the fragility of Japan's antimilitarist strategic culture, there are major potential problems in the normalization of Japan's security policy that raise doubts about Japan's complete break from antimilitarism. As an afterword on the future trajectory of Japan's security policy, I briefly list here three categories of hurdles that are likely to constrain the Japanese government's choice and ability to expand its military policy, using the critical realist approach of leveraging three differentiated realities.

On the empirical level of reality wherein the members of society interpret the events they experience, thereby producing social ideas, norms, and actions, the greatest hurdle is the Japanese public's low prioritization of strengthening the SDF's capacity for force. This is most prominent in the public's unwillingness to make sacrifices to secure the fiscal resources to increase the defense budget from 1 percent to 2 percent of GDP, which is a historically significant commitment for Japan. The Diet has discussed a combination of fiscal sources such as tax increases, debt financing, bond issuance, spending cuts, and budget reallocation but continues to struggle with finding a sustainable funding source while accommodating other

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<sup>454</sup> Taylor Fravel, "China's Potential Lessons from Ukraine for Conflict over Taiwan."

<sup>455</sup> Rossiter, Heng, and Cannon, "Looking under the Hood of Joint Naval Exercises."

budgetary necessities such as welfare spending.<sup>456</sup> The Kishida administration faces opposition from within the LDP and the public on the source of funding. In particular, a Kyodo News poll found that 64.9 percent of respondents disapproved of funding the defense budget increase through tax hikes and a Nikkei poll found that 51 percent of respondents opposed the increase in defense spending as a whole.<sup>457</sup> The same Nikkei poll found that 84 percent of respondents thought Kishida's explanation regarding the funding for the new defense policy to be insufficient.

Another challenge is whether the Japanese public is willing to accept lethality as an inevitable aspect of the use of force and continue to support SDF activities given the potential for casualties.<sup>458</sup> The rejection of lethality being the consequence and sometimes even the purpose of using force is symptomatic of the public's consciousness of the SDF as existing for defense only. An overwhelming portion of the Japanese public still wants their country to limit its military role in regional affairs.<sup>459</sup> We must also remember that as mentioned in the second case study, the public overwhelmingly thinks of the SDF as a disaster response organization rather than a security/military organization. Given that the SDF has never experienced casualties in its overseas dispatches – because deployment to combat sites is itself not legally permitted – and very few incidents where the SDF even encountered serious exchange of fire, it is unclear

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<sup>456</sup> Hanada, "Fighting to Fund Japan's Historic Defence Budget Increase."

<sup>457</sup> Kyodo News, "Poll Shows Nearly 65% Disapprove of Tax Hikes to Cover Japan's Increased Defense Budget"; Nihon Keizai Shimbun, "支持率を追う 日経世論調査アーカイブ [Nikkei Public Opinion Poll Archive]," December 2022.

<sup>458</sup> "Lethality" is defined in the US Army's field manual as "the capability and capacity to destroy... enemy forces or place them at risk of destruction". "U.S. Army Field Manual 3-0 Operations," 1-5.

<sup>459</sup> In a Pew survey conducted in 2016, "Some people say that Japan should play a more active military role in helping to maintain peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region. Other people say that, given its history, Japan should limit its military role in regional affairs. Which view is closer to your own?" 62 percent of respondents wanted Japan to limit its military role while 29 percent wanted Japan to play a more active military role. See NW, Washington, and Inquiries, "Pew Global Attitudes & Trends Question Database."

whether the Japanese public will accept the risks of the SDF's activities that do not directly concern national territory.<sup>460</sup> Another example of the reluctance toward "lethality" is a Nikkei poll that shows 51 percent of respondents opposing Japan expanding its weapons export while 72 percent opposed the export of lethal weapons at all.<sup>461</sup> This suggests that even as the public warms up to the idea of expanding the military industry and partnership to expand arms exports, the lethal consequence of military activities weighs on another dimension of consideration.

On the actual level of reality wherein events simply occur untouched by perception or interpretation, Japan faces socioeconomic problems that constrict the government's ability to realize its security objectives and needs. For example, in contrast to the 64.9 percent of respondents who opposed paying higher taxes for defense spending, 63 percent of respondents answered that a tax increase is the most appropriate means of funding the efforts against Japan's declining birthrate.<sup>462</sup> I would argue that this shows the public's spending priorities and for which national causes they are willing to sacrifice. Public support for the defense documents indeed diverges from past antimilitarist sentiment, but not as acutely as necessary to institute new policy attitudes. SDF expansion is muted by sociodemographic problems such as a low birth rate and fast aging, which reduces the number of potential recruits, increases the dependency ratio, and demands greater welfare spending. As such, despite the lack of opposition to the new security documents, the public's reaction toward the new security policy

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<sup>460</sup> Yasutomi, "Combat-Related Death of Soldiers and Public Support for Military Missions Abroad: The Case of Japan."

<sup>461</sup> Nihon Keizai Shimbun, "支持率を追う 日経世論調査アーカイブ [Nikkei Public Opinion Poll Archive]," April 2023; Nihon Keizai Shimbun, "支持率を追う 日経世論調査アーカイブ [Nikkei Public Opinion Poll Archive]," July 2023.

<sup>462</sup> Nihon Keizai Shimbun, "支持率を追う 日経世論調査アーカイブ [Nikkei Public Opinion Poll Archive]," April 2023.

direction is more nuanced because they weigh their external risk perception lightly against the more quotidian livelihood frustrations.

Finally, I point to some lagging changes in Japan's security policy as manifestations of the resilience of antimilitarist strategic culture, which lies on the real level of reality. I categorize these lags as limitations at the real level because they reflect the resilience and path dependency of the antimilitarist structure of society. Former MSDF Rear Admiral Yamamoto Katsuya explained that while interoperability and logistical capabilities are easy to change, problems of domestic law are not because they are constrained by culture and the Japanese people's perception; former ASDF Lieutenant General Nagaiwa Toshimichi lamented that despite the Kishida administration's recent changes, "policy is still lagging due to the strong antimilitarist will of the public" and that the public's outstanding aversion for military-related issues restrains politicians from fully explaining the need for military expansion.<sup>463</sup> This I believe has created a vicious cycle wherein political leaders do not openly discuss military affairs and security policy due to the public's aversion, which only furthers this attitude and deepens their lack of understanding and care.

Thus, the antimilitarist public is the social condition for critical policy lags that impede the full realization of Japan's security objectives. One example repeatedly voiced by my interviewees is the lack of interservice, interministerial, and subnational cooperation on issues related to the SDF and security such as the military usage of civilian infrastructure.<sup>464</sup> Facing increased pressure to enhance readiness after the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the growing risk of a

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<sup>463</sup> Nihon Keizai Shimbun, "支持率を追う 日経世論調査アーカイブ [Nikkei Public Opinion Poll Archive]," April 2023.

<sup>464</sup> Yoshitomi, interview; Akita, interview; Kanehara, interview.

Taiwan contingency, the government plans to enhance public infrastructure for SDF usage while making it easier for the SDF to obtain usage permits during peacetime.<sup>465</sup> Currently, the SDF can use ports and airports on a priority basis during an armed attack but there is no legal provision for peacetime usage. But gaining the support of local residents for these projects and permits remains challenging for the local governments managing the infrastructure to approve the expansions.<sup>466</sup>

#### 5.4. Limits and future research

This thesis has attempted to understand the collective security inclination of Japan, which admittedly has conceptual and practical limitations and weaknesses. Conceptually the limit lies in deciding which actors constitute and hold the strategic culture – civil servants, political representatives, subject matter experts, military officers, ordinary citizens? In this study, I have opted to assume that strategic culture is held by all policy actors of the state – which would include policymakers and the public – due to my critical realist conceptualization of strategic culture as a deep underlying structure of society.

However, in reality, each group of policy actors has different motivations, incentives, objectives, and levels of influence on the policymaking process, which may interact with the effect of strategic culture on their behavior. Some groups of policy actors may have their own culture as well, such as military organizational culture, political culture, or business culture. This thesis did not conduct these queries due to the time and space needed to disaggregate the population according to their various segments, demographics, and other meaningful categorizations. I also

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<sup>465</sup> “National Security Strategy of Japan”; “Japan to Facilitate Use of Ports, Airports by Self-Defense Forces.”

<sup>466</sup> “Japan Identifies 38 Airports, Ports for SDF Use after Upgrades Made | The Asahi Shimbun.”

believe that strategic culture is a unifying set of thoughts and practices that generates effect across all policy actors. Finally, I would argue that the methodology of retroduction (identifying the INUS complex) helps alleviate this problem by identifying the specific context in which strategic culture generated effect, thereby taking into account the particularities of the policy actors at that point in time.

A related problem with assuming strategic culture as a collective phenomenon – possibly a Japan-specific problem – is that some experts argue that Japanese politicians are not largely swayed by public opinion and therefore the Japanese people have never led security policy discussions. This would mean that my citation of polling, social protests, and social discourse to support my argument is invalid and the public’s perception of the SDF is also irrelevant to the SDF’s status in security policymaking. However, I argue that even though public opinion may not have *led* security policy discourse, it certainly has *influenced* the discourse, even in Japan where policy communication has not been vibrant. Indeed, some experts do admit that while the public may not be well-informed or influential over the security policymaking process, their opposition to certain policy initiatives has affected the speed of policy change.

This strategic cultural analysis of Japan’s security policy has implications for future research. First, a cultural perspective of peace and war could provide lessons that transcend the immediate findings related to the use of military force, which makes it a valuable analytical tool beyond security policy analysis. It could yield lessons about the evolving social and political processes that contributed to the formation of a cultural perspective of a norm. In effect, while this particular study examined how the changing strategic culture connected to policy change, examining the changes in the strategic culture and other structures in the deeper layer of reality itself could be valuable. Second, while it may seem that Japan is a tailor-made case for strategic

cultural analysis given the importance attributed to the significance and lasting impact of Japan's past and its related normative claims, the analytical tools presented in this thesis can be valuable for other country cases as well. Lastly, I would argue that the contribution of this thesis evidences the need to continue strategic cultural analyses of Japan's security policy and those of other country cases for that matter. This study has effectively shown the possibility of theoretically and empirically consistent strategic cultural change and its potential effect on security policy processes and decisions. While I have largely described the transformation between the broad categorization of 'reactive antimilitarism' and 'proactive antimilitarism', the change between them has not been linear or instantaneous.

The change in Japan's strategic culture also does not stop here. As I have argued above, proactive antimilitarism may transform to adopt the Abe Doctrine as Japan increasingly relies on reinforcing its military capabilities to send deterrence signals and protect itself within an intensifying threat environment. Rising threats would also necessitate expanding the legal and administrative scope of the SDF's abilities. In a constantly evolving empirical reality, change "is something that is never totally complete, or locked temporally or spatially to a certain context *ad infinitum*... as a process, it is constantly evolving into something new that goes beyond any particular instantiation of 'change' at any given time, place or context".<sup>467</sup> Thus more, and continuous research needs to be done to accurately capture this process.

In my theoretical chapter, I briefly mention that since the end of World War II Japan has not undergone experiences of warfare that provided transformative shocks to its strategic culture, in contrast to what Seppo has found in his study of German strategic culture. I have found

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<sup>467</sup> Seppo, *From Guilt to Responsibility and Beyond?*, 270.

strategic cultural change in Japan has been slow and incremental. This is consistent with the general observation of Japan's security policy reform, which most scholars describe as evolutionary. For example, Richard Samuels who studied the effect of the March 11, 2011 Fukushima triple disaster on military policy – among other areas of governance, government, and policy – found that despite the shock of the event, he “found no shift that was not already under way, or at least not already in dispute” in the balance of power between various policy actors.<sup>468</sup> He offers that although “much of our theory insists that change is most likely after a major perturbation to the system...[such as] war, economic collapse, and natural disasters”, the accumulation incremental and routine changes part of normal politics can transform institutions, citing the work of Kathleen Thelen and James Mahoney.<sup>469</sup>

This is not to argue the insignificance of large exogenous shocks – indeed, the various instances of psychological shock and realization from the experience of the Gulf War Trauma, North Korean missile crises, Chinese incursions into Japanese territory have been influential in the strategic cultural change process. Such shocks can nudge and expedite ongoing and slow-moving changes. I simply want to point out, as Samuels does, that “[e]ven without a major crisis, existing rules may be displaced by new ones, new rules may be layered atop existing ones, there may be drift in the application of rules, or leaders may apply new meanings to existing rules”.<sup>470</sup> Therefore, I believe that future research help clarify build an analytical framework for the categorization of sources of change in Japan's strategic culture, as Japan's strategic culture may draw different lessons from different contemporary events.

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<sup>468</sup> Samuels, *3.11: Disaster and Change in Japan*, 184. See Mahoney and Thelen, *Explaining Institutional Change*.

<sup>469</sup> Samuels, *3.11: Disaster and Change in Japan*, 183.

<sup>470</sup> Samuels, 183.

The last potential area for future research to improve on this thesis is the intersection of demographic and economic trends and their constraining effects on security policymaking. Tom Phuong Le has studied the process of aging in Japan and its consequences on security policy, pointing out that Japan's declining demographic conditions significantly constrain the JSDF.<sup>471</sup> Scholars have noted this for some time, with Japan being the oldest and most quickly aging society in the world in addition to having a declining birth rate.<sup>472</sup> This does not only indicate a shortage of SDF recruits – which has been a chronic problem for more than a decade – but has widely reverberating socioeconomic effects that indirectly constrain security policy choices as well.<sup>473</sup> A rapidly declining and aging population leads to an increasing dependency ratio, strain on the government's tax and pension systems, and challenges to work productivity and long-term economic growth.<sup>474</sup> Concerning security policy, this means that defense expenditure would be pitted against social security expenditure. Similarly, economic livelihood conditions affect public opinion on defense expenditure as well, which was starkly represented by polling that showed that a majority of respondents supported bolstering national defense capabilities but opposed financing the Kishida administration's defense buildup plan through a tax hike.<sup>475</sup> This snapshot represents the push and pull factors within Japan between an increasingly popular perception of needing stronger military capabilities and the realities of the public having to face rising prices and stagnant incomes. While a declining and aging population and poor economic outlook have always existed in Japan, what has changed is the perceived need to reform and pour greater resources into security policy. Now, as the Japanese people begin to perceive and

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<sup>471</sup> Le, *Japan's Aging Peace*.

<sup>472</sup> "Japan's Ageing Society."

<sup>473</sup> "EDITORIAL: Shortage of SDF Personnel Hurts Push to Bolster Japan's Defenses."

<sup>474</sup> Hong and Schneider, "Shrinkanomics."

<sup>475</sup> Isobe, "Survey: Record 64% of Japanese Want National Defense Bolstered"; NEWS, "80% in Japan Oppose Tax Hike Plan to Cover Defense Outlay."

support the SDF as a military force, the real question is whether they will allocate scarce resources to realize this in practice.

## 5.5. Conclusion

Despite the above limitations, this thesis is an important contribution to the literature on Japan's security policy because it fills the explanatory gap between the exigencies of Japan's threat environment and the pace of its security policy changes. Without a clear understanding of the normative structure that generates the dominant guidelines for security-related behavior and preferences in Japan's society and politics, any analyses of Japan's security policy would be incomplete and circumstantial. By clarifying reactive and proactive antimilitarist strategic cultures, militarism and militarization, and antimilitarism and pacifism, this thesis untangled the many concepts that the existing literature has confounded and misused. Presenting hard cases on military doctrine and the military's relationships using a wide array of sources rich with details, this thesis provides an alternative and complementary way of interpreting the empirical evidence of Japan's security policy changes.

## Appendix

Poll on desired level of strength of SDF (in %)

		1972	1975	1978	1981	1984	1988	1991	1994	1997
Better to strengthen	GSDF	11	16.6	21.6	22.3	12.6	10.4	6.5	6.9	8.8
	MSDF	15	18.4	22.9	22.9	15.4	13.3	7.4	6.8	8.4
	ASDF	13.2	15.4	23.2	24.2	18.2	15.2	8.7	8.3	8.3
Current level is fine	GSDF	51.2	54.5	53.5	52.2	61.4	64.4	61.4	63.6	61.9
	MSDF	46.1	50.7	49.2	50.9	57.8	60.8	58.9	61.6	59.6
	ASDF	46.5	52.7	48.5	50	55.8	58.8	57.9	60.9	59.3
Better to reduce	GSDF	18.4	9.9	5.8	9.6	11.8	12.6	17.6	13.5	14
	MSDF	16.9	9.8	6.2	9.2	11.7	11.7	18.1	13.9	14.9
	ASDF	18.7	11	6.5	9.6	11.5	12.4	17.9	13.4	15.6
Do not know	GSDF	19.4	19	19.1	15.9	14.2	12.5	14.5	16	15.4
	MSDF	22	21.1	21.8	16.9	15.1	14.2	15.6	17.6	17.2
	ASDF	21.6	20.8	21.8	16.2	14.5	13.6	15.6	17.4	16.8

List of interviewees

#	Name	Affiliation and position at the time of interview	Meeting date
1	Michael M. BOSACK	Deputy Secretary of UN Command Military Armistice Commission	22.07.14
2	SHINODA Tomohito	Professor and Director, International University of Japan Research Institute	22.07.15
3	YAMAGUCHI Noboru	Senior Visiting Fellow at Sasakawa Peace Foundation; Professor at International University of Japan	22.07.21
4	Grant NEWSHAM	Senior Research Fellow at Japan Forum for Strategic Studies	22.07.26
5	WATANABE Tsuneo	Senior Research Fellow at Sasakawa Peace Foundation	23.07.04
6	NAGAIWA Toshimichi	Senior Advisor at CISCO Systems	23.07.13
7	YOSHITOMI Nozomu	Professor, College of Risk Management at Nihon University	23.07.18
8	YAMAMOTO Katsuya	Senior Research Fellow at Sasakawa Peace Foundation	23.07.19
9	AKITA Hiroyuki	Commentator at Nikkei	23.07.21
10	MICHISHITA Narushige	Professor, Executive Vice President, Director of Global Leadership Development Program at National Graduate Institute of Policy Studies (GRIPS)	23.07.24
11	BANSHO Koichiro	Advisor at Marubeni	23.07.26
12	KAWANO Katsutoshi	Strategic Adviser at Kawasaki Heavy Industries	23.07.31
13	ARAKI Junichi	Strategic Adviser at Kawasaki Heavy Industries	23.07.31
14	ONODA Osamu	Senior Researcher at Security Strategy Research Institute of Japan (SSRI-J)	23.08.01

15	SAHASHI Ryo	Associate Professor of International Politics at Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia, The University of Tokyo	23.08.01
16	KODA Yoji	Adviser at Japan Marine United Corporation	23.08.04
17	KANEHARA Nobukatsu	Executive Director at Sasakawa Peace Foundation	23.08.17
18	MIYAKE Kunihiko	Research Director at The Canon Institute for Global Studies	23.08.18
19	Anonymous 1	NA	23.08.23
20	KOTANI Tetsuo	Senior Fellow at The Japan Institute of International Affairs; Professor at Meikai University	23.08.25
21	JIMBO Ken	Managing Director at International House of Japan; President at Asia Pacific Initiative; Professor at Faculty of Policy Management, Keio University	23.08.29
22	TAKAMIZAWA Nobushige	Visiting Professor, The University of Tokyo	23.09.04
23	MUSASHI Katsuhiko	Professor, Faculty of Policy Studies Department of Policy Studies, Doshisha University	23.10.30

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