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AWAKENING MILITARISM IN JAPAN

by Schwarcz Emese Anna

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1. INTRODUCTION

Long have the days gone, since Japan was considered a country of wonder, both politically, economically, and socially. A country, that was able to transform itself from a deeply imperialist power, to the very top pioneer of pacifism. The turbulent events of the mid-19th and 20th century brought up many generations of Japanese, who were taught to have pride for their nation, for their emperor, and eventually for their alleged superiority over other Asian nations. The pride and sense of supremacy was rooted deep in their culture, just as well as the Confucianist patriarchal structure in their society, which eventually was exploited by the leaders of their time, and inflicted horrible things not only upon themselves, but also on several other nations in the Far Eastern region. The closure of these developments was just as terrifying as the World War II itself, with the unspeakable destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The unforeseen American occupation shook the Japanese by their core. Not only was any foreign occupation unprecedented before, but everything they were certain about was destroyed in a heartbeat. As strong as the American grip was on the country, and as devastating the nuclear destruction was, the Japanese had learned to convert their sorrow into productivity and hard work. For what it is worth, all the work was not in vain, for Japan became known for performing an economic miracle. The recovery was rapid and big scale, and it was accompanied by political silence from Japanese foreign policy point of view. The Yoshida Doctrine, which determined most of Cold War Japan's domestic and foreign policy strategies, was able to lift the country from destruction to a leading economic position. But this position became harder and harder to hold as the oil crisis kicked in in the '70s, revealing deeper institutional obsolescence and escalating social unease. As the economic fortunes of Japan has started to dry up, the leading politicians discovered new ways to interact with the global community. The opening and slightly more active participation in the international scene has brought up several identity questions, which Japan is yet to answer. The economic breakdown and the two decades of economic and political failure called upon the oh-so-Japanese hard line pragmatism, pushing forward stronger leaders like Koizumi Jun'ichiro and Abe Shinzō, enforcing more intense focus on Japan's domestic and foreign policy strategies, which we will discuss in the following chapters.

This study aims to be a comprehensive work about Japan's contemporary foreign relation issues, including a historical overview of how the relations with the regional

actors have changed, what foreign policy does she applies, and what changing trends were born regarding security policy in the past couple of years (and decades). Analyzing Prime Minister Abe Shinzō's domestic politics, the political system itself and the impacts it causes in international relations, this paper tries to pinpoint the current (and long existing) political problems in the Far East region, defining Japan's role and position in the Far Eastern community today. In order to do that, there are several aspects one must examine. I chose to first identify the foreign and security policy trends and customs, that Japan decided to apply throughout the 20th century. After a wider context is given, I find it necessary to walk through the major events in domestic politics regarding the post-Cold War period, because then it will be easier to understand the motives and emerging ideologies surrounding the current Prime Minister. As the title of this thesis shows, this includes the phenomenon of emerging militarism. Although recently, this word (or more so the word *remilitarization*) became quite a buzzword when mentioning the current Prime Minister's views, I would be careful with making a statement as such. In a sense, we can form the question of this research from the title: will there be any remilitarization soon in Japan? This study will try to show the progress towards it and the signs that Japan may need to internalize some aspects of militarism. To showcase these signs, I will analyze Japan's foreign relationships.

Among the actors of the Far East region, China and South Korea are always the ones, that cannot be disregarded, when talking about Japan. The two countries have long existing bonds with the island nation, even if they are not necessarily filled with positive feelings. The dynamics between the three have a tendency to shape the power relations not only in the region, but they have historically influenced the regional policies of the Western nations too. However, when analyzing the details of these dynamics, we must not forget to inspect China and the Koreas separately. In this analysis, I will put a heavier emphasis on the territorial issues in the case of China, and the wartime comfort women issue in the case of (mainly) South Korea. The two issues are essentially different, as they have different causes and different implications for Japan. While the territorial dispute is based on the changing power balance of the region, the comfort women issue is a rather bilateral affair, but equally important nonetheless. The contrast of these struggles gives a perfect opportunity to reflect on how the historical differences can come to haunt and alter the stability of the East Asian region.

Emerging from that thought, we cannot forget to link Russia to the overall picture, for it is very well part of the events in this part of the world. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the end of the bipolar world order, Russia started to take advantage of the globalization and venture to the East. Nowadays it seems like Russia is a determining factor in the Eastern power relations, and as such, it is only obvious to think that it has an influence on Japanese foreign policy. We need not to search long for an example, as there is the Kuril Islands conflict at hand. This dispute is similar to the ones related to the other neighbours in a sense, that it is also a remnant of the World War II period. However, unlike in the case of the Korean or Chinese issue, the negotiation strategies and general attitudes have the possibility to wreak havoc in the U.S.-Japan relations, especially after the surprising outcome of the U.S. Presidential Elections and its implications to the policies toward the Asian-Pacific.

The analysis itself will be based on a thorough research, which was focusing on contemporary policy papers, news reports, government proclamations, official reports, and studies from foreign policy experts. These sources contain insight in regional and domestic trends and events, connecting them to social and economic aspects. In the study, I will use the Japanese order of the names, meaning that the family name comes first. Although the research concentrates on Japan's role *now*, I find it unavoidable to put everything in historical context. Given the recent conflicts in Japan's foreign relation net, this is more so true. To sum it up, the study tries to find answers to questions such as what foreign policy does Japan forms, how do domestic events shape the relationship with neighboring countries, how did Japan's inner leadership system changed throughout the ages, what issues are lingering recently, and how they will (presumably) shape the future of Japan. The ultimate question of this research would be: how will Japan's regional role change? Obviously, this question cannot be answered yet, but we can (and I will try to) make projections for the future based on Abe Shinzō's policies and the general trends taking flight globally in the recent years, emphasizing the pragmatic turn in Japanese foreign policy.

2. JAPAN'S FOREIGN POLICIES

Japan, being an island nation, has a long history of keeping the pattern of isolation from other countries. This isolation had a great role in shaping the culture and the national identity of the Japanese, initially getting reflected in the foreign policies throughout the

history. If we think of island nations, Great Britain is often considered as point of comparison, but in fact, Japan might be even more of a pioneer of isolation. Although there had been times of total isolation in the West, when England declared the “splendid isolation” or the United States implemented the Monroe Doctrine, Japan was a country, which was strictly consistent in avoiding interaction with other countries politically. As for the closest neighbours, Japan maintained trade relations with China and the Korean Peninsula throughout the centuries, even if most of the time they were considered either rivals, either enemies. The first encounter with a European nation happened in the 16th century, when Portuguese Jesuit missionaries were drift ashore. Although the missionaries came for the sole purpose of trading and to convert Japanese to the faith of Christ, their attitude, and the difference between the norms urged Toyotomi Hideyoshi to close off the country from all European countries, and to ban them from even entering the soil of the Land of the Rising Sun. The first encounter was not exactly useless for the Japanese though, as the Europeans brought firearms with them, enabling Hideyoshi (and before him, Oda Nobunaga) to unify Japan (Perez, [1998]). For centuries thereafter, the country exercised the policy of *sakoku*¹, until the Americans arrived in 1853 with the demand of opening up the country for trade purposes. The intensive industrialization that followed, familiarized the Japanese with the world, and thanks to the newly advanced military power, the Emperor Meiji could manage to venture to foreign lands and form a new foreign policy. In this paper, I will not cover the military campaigns and achievements of the Meiji era², but focus on the closer part in time, which have a more direct impact on the lives of the politicians today. These past events – the intrusions of foreign forces – give a perfect idea about the nature of the Japanese isolation: farm everything that can be useful for the development, and avoid any influence on culture. Henry Kissinger was one to sum up Cold War Japan’s foreign policy in just a few words, which shows the longevity of this mindset:

“it seemed as if Japan had a finely calibrated radar that enabled it to gauge the global balance of power and to adapt its institutions to its necessities, confident that no adaptation could disturb the essence of Japanese society.” (Kissinger, [1979]), p. 323.)

¹ 鎖国(sa-koku): literally means closed country, national policy in force between 1635 and 1866.

² 明治時代 (meiji-jidai): time period between October 23, 1868 and July 30, 1912. An era known for the transformation from feudal society and the overall modernization of Japan, with the help of the massive inflow of foreign technology and culture (Nussbaum, [2005]).

A harsh response for the “intrusion” of the West was the uprising of the samurai clans in Western Japan. They were embracing the industrial developments, performed a coup, and restored the Emperor Meiji into power, re-establishing sovereignty and autonomy from the Western powers. We can see, how the past had repeated itself this time, but with a bigger blast, and this time allowing the sovereign to implement bolder foreign policy with the newly modernized army and navy (Stratfor, [2012]).

There are still quite a lot of uncertainties of how the inflow of the West resulted in the terrors of the 20th century, but it was a high time for nationalism and competition between the countries, and Japan saw this as an opportunity for realizing the historically ingrained desire to conquer the mainland, and defeat two of the oldest rivals, China and Korea. There is even more controversy around the role of Emperor Hirohito, whether he was the mastermind behind the ideological blinding of the nation or just a puppet controlled by military generals. The role of the emperor has never been too consistent in Japan. For long centuries, the emperors were vulnerable and powerless compared to the Shoguns, and sometimes they were even living off of donations. And there were other times, like the Meiji period, when they were at the top of the decision-making pyramid, determining the fate of Japan. In the case of Hirohito, the ruling emperor at the time of the World War II, many believe that just like centuries before, he was used for forcing the population to participate in the war. The political leadership established the State Shinto, which strengthened the belief, that the Emperor is one of the gods, therefore no mortal can question his views and orders. This helped to facilitate the institution of *kamikaze*, and to overall fanaticize the army. Interestingly enough, not even the Japanese society knew the measure of Hirohito’s involvement. Therefore, the Tokyo Trials were the most anticipated event by both the Japanese and the international actors, but disappointingly enough, the Emperor did not show up to take responsibility for the horrors carried out by his name (Kingston, [2012]). The American occupying forces did not wish to force him to take responsibility after that, for they realized how important tool can a dethroned emperor be. Because it was not even the question to dethrone him: the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers (SCAP), Douglas MacArthur had to make sure, that the occupying forces extinguish every element that helped to establish the imperialistic and exceptionalist tendencies. This meant banning State Shinto and forcing Hirohito to renounce his divinity, and to put up only a symbolic role. This new symbolic role constituted activities that promote constitutional democracy, pacifism, and Japanese traditions. The emperor was

banned from taking part in any type of political activity or leadership role any other, then that of a spiritual leader (Japan Kantei, [1946a]). With this deprivation of power, Japan ended up in the hands of the United States, but as Jeff Kingston argues, this occupation was very different from the other one in the divided Germany. The SCAP eliminated the guilty military leaders and contributors in the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, but left the administrative body untouched (Kingston, [2012]). This administrative body became the prime engine of the post-war reconstruction, making the American occupation only an indirect ruling power. The SCAP scrutinized and censored every aspect of post-war life, but the U.S. forces let the Japanese lead the renewal of the country (Kingston, [2012]). Throughout the 7 years of occupation (1945-1952), the war-shaken Japanese society became extremely pacifist, and produced a new political elite thusly. The main anchor of this pacifism was the new, SCAP-constructed Pacifist Constitution, which embraced one of the most controversial problem source, the Article 9. The Article 9 of the constitution (still in force) states, that *“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.* (Japan Kantei, [1946b])”

This means, that Japan had given up the right to have and maintain an army, creating an awful amount of vulnerability towards the international arena. In the 1950s though, it did not seem so dramatic as today. In the years of the occupation, the American forces provided just enough defense, and even after it ended, the Japanese felt like it was necessary to pay the price of losing the war. Or did not have other choice either way. But the peace constitution stripped Japan from some of its sovereignty nevertheless, which is why most of the post-war politicians had a wish to amend the Article 9. This desire was pushed back for decades, mostly due to the widespread pacifism of the public, but also because of the political priorities at the time. These political priorities were collectively called the Yoshida Doctrine, that was established by Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru. Yoshida was first elected in 1946, and he laid down the country’s policy framework lasting for decades, right after the World War II. Yoshida was the best possible choice for Japan for several reasons. He was an expert of diplomatic history, a veteran diplomat himself, and therefore a hard-liner pragmatic (Pyle). The Yoshida Doctrine constituted of three main course lines:

1. Rebuilding the economy must be the most important, while strengthening the political and economic cooperation with the United States.
2. Japan should keep itself to Article 9, and avoid rearming itself. Avoiding involvement in international political or strategic issues is a priority.
3. In order to secure the country, Japan must allow the U.S. to install army, navy and air force bases (Pyle).

These points established the unique position of Japan in the international order: an incredibly passive, inward oriented actor under the United States' protection, but not politically dependent on it. This low profile foreign policy allowed the Japanese to reach high rates of productivity, because without meddling in international issues, the Japanese could concentrate on solely to rebuild the country, and as a result, to become an economic superpower. According to Kenneth Pyle, the reason for this unwillingness to get involved in any political-strategic issue was the trauma of the war, the “*nuclear allergy*” resulting from it, and the overall pacifism among the population (Pyle). The Yoshida Doctrine thus contributed to the economic miracle Japan had performed in the ‘50s, but the real accelerator was the Korean War, and the war-related purchases by the U.S. It is important to emphasize, that Prime Minister Yoshida had the chance to revise the Pacifist Constitution at one point, an opportunity that almost no one else received later in history. The opportunity was given during the Korean War, as the United States urged Japan to rearm itself, but PM Yoshida was able to carry out his doctrine by arguing, that Japan is still very poor, and needs to recover economically first (Kingston, [2012]). At that point, the United States made it obvious, that they regretted deeply the enforcement of the Article 9, and made several attempts later too, to pressure Japan to contribute more to the security of the U.S. and its allies. Despite Yoshida’s attempt to defy the Americans, some changes still had to be done security-wise. In 1950, the Self-Defense Forces were established, backed by the Defense Agency, based on a volunteer system. The existence of the SDF was heavily frowned upon by the society in the beginning for obvious reasons. The pacifism rooting deeply in the people prevented the SDF to rise into high numbers or significance, but nowadays it is not something to disregard. As time progressed, and the international relations became much more complicated due to the globalization, the SDF’s role and scope of action widened greatly. Today, the SDF has three main branches: Ground, Maritime and Air forces, with roughly 250 thousand troops. As for scope of

action, a long time has had to pass to implement legislation that actually lets the SDF exercise any action. The first legislation like that was the Peace Keeping Operations legislation in 1992, which enabled the SDF to operate overseas, but in a very limited and strictly scrutinized manner (Kingston, [2012]). This PKO legislation made the participation in the Iraq War possible. This event was special in several ways. First and foremost, it was the first engagement not under United Nations authorization, but purely as an answer to U.S. pressure. And secondly, it was a perfect demonstration of the weaknesses and shortcomings of the SDF, as the limited scope of action prevented the troops to truly engage in action, and they were also required to be protected by other nation's soldiers, distracting necessary resources from important places. In this respect, the SDF troops were rather a burden, than help. But Japan's defense limitations did not only consist of scope of action, there is also a voluntary restriction on the government defense spending, namely a limit of 1% of the annual Gross Domestic Product (Kohno & Rosenbluth, [2008]). This decision was never required by the constitution, but it was a choice by later PMs to implement, in order to stay true to the Yoshida Doctrine, and to emphasize Japan's pacifism.

In the Cold War period therefore, Japan had no choice but to counterbalance the military shortfalls with stable economy and with maximizing growth. Due to the protectionist policies and extreme productivity, the economy doubled in size between 1960 and 1967 (Stratfor, [2012]). The first leader, who was trying to challenge the Yoshida Doctrine was Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro. He was one of the few PMs, who was carrying true leadership qualities, and therefore was able to reflect his visions in the country's foreign policy. Nakasone, leading the country between 1982 and 1987, set the trend of nationalist and revisionist views in Japanese politics (Japan Kantei, [2017]). He was notorious of his expressive attitude towards the neighboring nations, which was visible in his regular visits at Yasukuni shrine, and his occasional remarks about his wish to amend the Article 9.

In Nakasone's time, the Yasukuni controversy was just about to unfold. Today, it is still the most important point of impact for the Far Eastern region. The reason why this Shintoist shrine in Tokyo holds such importance is related to the souls enshrined in it. The shrine itself was built in the Meiji era, representing and commemorating those who died in wars since 1853 (The Economist, [2005]). The problematic point is, that in 1978, the current high priest decided to add the names of 14 A-Class war criminals convicted and

executed in the Tokyo Trials to the names of all the other war dead. These criminals were responsible for crimes against the Chinese and (North and South) Korean people in the World War II. The enshrinement of these 14 criminals triggered the Chinese and Koreans, as they interpreted the act as if Japan does not want to acknowledge the wrongness on the Japanese side. This type of revisionism that the Yasukuni represents, and the high priests being reluctant to reverse the enshrinement, forces the two countries to not to cooperate with Japan on any political matter, and to put a hold on the true normalization of the relations. When PM Nakasone took his office, the enshrinement was already done, and he was not afraid to fuel the Chinese and Korean wrath with visiting the shrine from time to time. This type of behavior eventually became a staple of revisionist politicians. Cabinet members, ministers or prime ministers visiting Yasukuni creates the same amount of harsh and negative feedback every time, even to this day. Another side of the controversy is Nakasone's position when visiting the shrine. The fact that he wore his official attire every time, did considerably violate the secular order of Japan (Gannon & Sahashi, [2015]). Shinto being strictly separated from politics and government would not permit any prime minister to visit the shrine in his official position, thus making a political statement. With Nakasone's view on Article 9 of the constitution, he created the archetype of revisionists. The foreign relations throughout his "reign" finally changed from the Yoshida-era, and not for the better.

The interesting aspect of Nakasone's legacy is that he was originally holding nationalist views, rather than revisionist. The main reason he opposed the existence of the Article 9 is because he found it unfair to cripple the defense system of a country, most of all in an era filled with conflicts. He did not openly state that he refuses to believe that Japan was at fault in the WWII, but instead he was trying to point out the unnaturalness in Japan's current state. He said,

"It is considered progressive to criticize pre-war Japan for its faults and defects, but I firmly oppose such a notion. A nation is still a nation whether it wins or loses a war."
(Harvey, [1994], p. 368)

But this is not sufficient reason to separate him from revisionists. Another usual revisionist goal is to reform education. Nakasone tried to push through a history textbook legislation, which would focus more on educating the young generations to patriotism and Confucianist family values, such as respecting the elders (Gannon & Sahashi, [2015]). But

the most decisive moment was when he relieved his education minister from his office as a response for his highly offensive comments about justifying the Japanese occupation in Korea (Harvey, [1994]). This could have been a strong indicator of him being separated from the revisionist crowds. Nevertheless, Nakasone introduced several views and behavioral norms, that was unknown before, but eventually became key elements in expressing certain ideological standpoints in the political life. It is important to keep in mind though, that especially in Japanese politics, one should be aware of official foreign policy, and perceived foreign policy based on behavior. This latter usually manifests in these Yasukuni visits; although we will see how politicians later in time became a bit more sophisticated about it, compared to Prime Minister Nakasone. Regardless of the nature of it, the perceived foreign policy has a remarkably bigger role in Japanese foreign relations, than in other regions of the world. This might be tied to the fact, that Asian cultures do not usually appreciate directness in the way they communicate, therefore there is a bigger emphasis on the symbolic behavior of the politicians. Visiting the Yasukuni is definitely one of those symbols. Due to the negative feedback on Nakasone's visits, the politicians coming after him were starting to put more effort into subtleness on this part. Most of them argued, that they only visited the shrine as a private citizen, to honor the souls of the fallen. As one could guess, this matter is not as black and white as these politicians would suggest, but I will dedicate a whole other chapter for the different features of Japanese domestic politics.

Concluding all being said, we can divide Cold War Japan's foreign policy into two set of patterns. From the end of the WWII, until the oil shocks of the 1970s, we can say that the main course line was the Yoshida Doctrine. This meant maintaining minimum military capability, while relying on the United States security-wise. Meanwhile, the prime ministers carried out a very low-profile foreign policy, avoiding interaction in the international arena, as much as they could. This era rendered Japan into a politically passive background power position, all the while the economic programs pushed it into a leading economic power. The Yoshida Doctrine made it possible for Japan to hide in an over-protected environment. In the post-war reconstructions, Japan was the only one that had the opportunity to focus entirely on internal renewal and development, thanks to the U.S. security umbrella. This did not only mean that the U.S. provided tangible military security, but also let Japan into the intricate American security web, transforming long-time rivals like South Korea or Taiwan, into allies. This security system, and the inactivity

in international affairs ensured that Japan is not forced to dedicate neither personnel or financial instruments at any relevant rate. By preserving these resources, Japan came out in a much better position, than all the other WWII loser countries.

The second set of patterns in the Cold War era was the Nakasone-led, more assertive foreign policy. After decades of “apology diplomacy”, the Japanese politicians got fed up with the image of Japan being a powerless, and most of all guilty nation. The elimination of Japan’s military and defense systems made the country so vulnerable, that the actual foreign policy became highly affected by external forces, more than in any other Western country’s case. And here comes a very important expression, used constantly in Japanese politics ever since the implementation of the Pacifist Constitution: *gaiatsu*.³ *Gaiatsu* became one of the most important shaping factor in Japanese foreign policy after the World War II (Pyle, [2006]). Not only one external force, like a country, but also the external power balance. This was exponentially true in the bipolar world order, but today’s emerging regionalism, it is even more so true. Due to the globalization, this phenomenon is not stranger for other states, but in Japan, foreign policy seems to consist of mostly reacting to outside pressure. Nakasone was one to try and challenge this phenomenon, but he was not alone in this attempt. Nakasone’s Minister of Foreign Affairs was Abe Shintaro – the current Prime Minister’s father. And Abe Shintaro’s father was post-war Japan’s one of the most controversial political figure, Kishi Nobusuke. Kishi served as the Minister of Munitions under Prime Minister Tōjō⁴, and he was also responsible for the industrialization of colonized Manchuria during the WWII (Simigh, [2016]). After the war, the SCAP suspected him to be a Class A war criminal, but for unknown reason, he was released and was never indicted (Kingston, [2012]). This event left the Japanese public much unsatisfied, as Kishi was earlier known to be an admirer of the Nazi state building model. Later in 1957, when he became prime minister, he tried to reform the U.S.-Japan security alliance in a way, that puts Japan into equal terms, and gives back Japan’s diplomatic independency (Encyclopaedia Britannica, [1998]). This achievement was quite important in the normalization of post-war Japan’s position, but it was still unable to save Kishi from the public’s general resentment. Nevertheless, Abe Shinzō’s grandfather paved a way for Nakasone to the possibility to start a more assertive foreign policy, even if he did not succeed just yet. He was however, quite successful in

³ 外圧 (*gai-atsu*): literally meaning foreign pressure.

⁴ Tōjō Hideki: Tōjō was Prime Minister from 1941 until 1945. He was partially responsible for pushing Japan to the alliance with Nazi Germany and Italy during the WWII (Theodore F. Cook, [1996]).

promoting Japan's increasing need for proper defense capabilities, even if his reasoning was based on the fear of a Soviet aggression, and aimed at taking control over the strategic points of the Sea of Japan (Pyle, *Changing Conceptions of Japan's International Role*). Overall, his goal of getting rid of the taboo nature of amending the Constitution slowly became reality, thanks to his eloquence.

Another important aspect of Japanese foreign policy, that Kenneth Pyle put a heavy emphasis on, is the lack of any ideological principle in it throughout the history (Pyle, *Profound Forces in the Making of Modern Japan*, [2006]). One possible explanation for that is the fact, that in Japan, religion was never really in a prominent position around the leadership (except in the 20th century, when State Shinto was institutionalized). There is a very straightforward reason for that. For starters, there is a different kind of appreciation towards both Shinto and Buddhism. Both of these religions have more like an influence on lifestyle and the way of carrying out everyday life, rather than putting emphasis on worshipping the deities and enforcing certain rules and principles. As Pyle argues, these religions did not create transcendental values to be forced on the secular authority (Pyle, [2006]). Another decisive element regarding the lack of ideology is the aforementioned isolation of Japan. With being physically isolated from the West, cultural, philosophical, and ideological thoughts and values did not get in touch with the Japanese society. The lack of enlightenment or liberal and nationalist currents does not mean, that these ideologies cannot be found in Japan, but the scale and the decisive effect of them is incomparable to Europe. This longtime isolation (and the lack of resources, from geopolitical point of view) is also responsible for Japan's vulnerability to the shifts in the international relation system, which is one of the main reason for taking up a more conformist posture (Pyle, [2006]). Now, that we are aware of the reasons of this conformism in the Cold War era, let us continue with the Heisei era (1989-), following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and the death of Emperor Hirohito. In order to understand completely the dynamics of the new era, particularly the pragmatic turn in Japanese foreign policy, I will try to list all the aspects and trends in domestic politics, that made it possible to shape Japan to its current image.

2.1. Domestic politics

The Heisei era, and the end of the bipolar world order brought about radical changes not only in the Western world, but also in Japan. These changes affected the country in

several points: in foreign policy, domestic political culture, society, and international position. The first determinative changes happened regarding the economy. After the oil crisis in the 1970s, the exponential economic growth, that allowed Japan to quadruple the GDP within a decade, had lost its impetus, and slowly started to turn into recession. There are several explanations for this phenomenon, but the most obvious are the demographic changes, that started around the '80s.

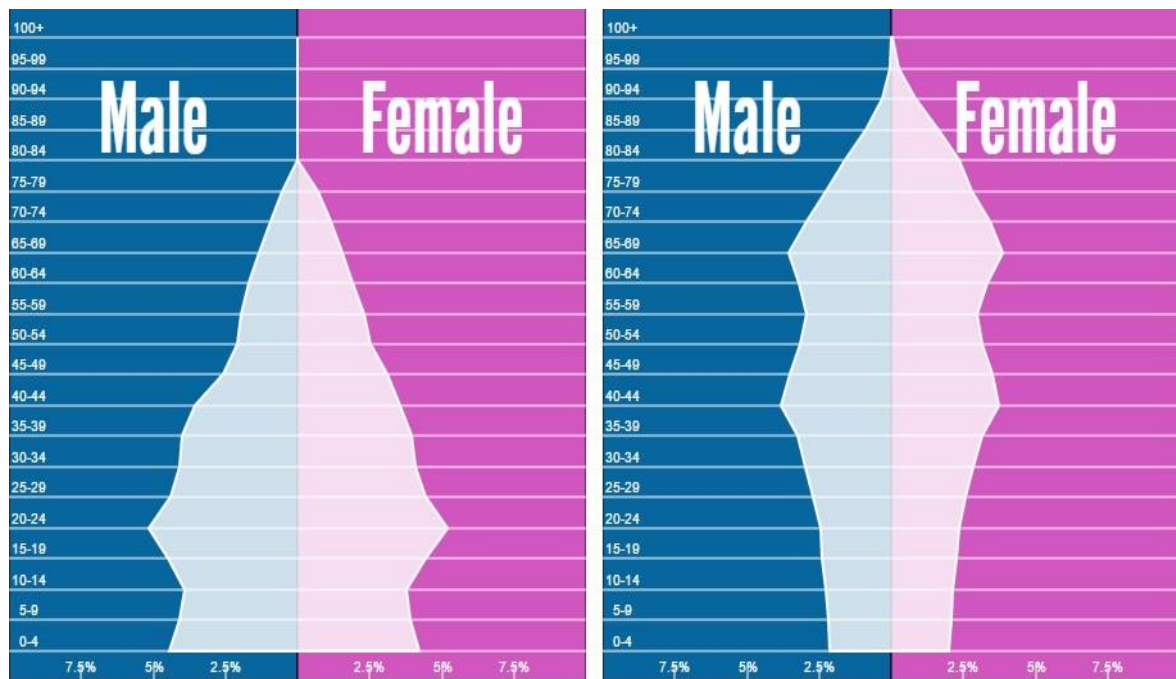


Chart 1. Japan's age pyramid in 1970 and 2016 (Population Pyramids, [2017])

Here on Chart 1, we can see a side-by-side comparison of Japan's population pyramid, showing the age dispersion in 1970 (left) and 2016 (right). It is clearly visible, where the problem lies. In 1970, the chart shows a relatively healthy society, with high amounts of young people and slowly decreasing number of older people. This is definitely the result of the successful economic prosperity and perception of security provided by the pacifist nature of the country, which encouraged the population to reproduce at the normal rate. In 2016 on the other hand, the chart shows a desperate situation. First, the population is shrinking, especially the young generations, which is highly contra-productive for any society. A sub-reason for that is the declining fertility rate, resulting from various socio-economic factors, like the growing population density, divorce rates, and the high costs of raising a child (Stratfor, [2012]). Second, the number of people aged between 64 and 69 is unnaturally high, placing an extra amount of burden on the country. Not only does that mean, that there is not enough labor force, smaller tax revenues, reducing productivity, but

also it affects the pension and healthcare systems in a negative way. The few young workers therefore must provide for the elderly, thus slowing down economic growth, first inflicting stagnation, then turning into recession. But that is not the only problem. Thanks to the highly advanced medical knowledge and sophisticated healthcare system, life expectancy is one of the highest in Japan compared to other parts of the world, and that is why people live an exceedingly long life in Japan. This means, not only is the number of old people terribly high, they also live longer, relying longer on the economically active part of the society. This burden creates a population trap. The heavier the economic burden is, the more defects. As the wages are lowered and the taxes are increased, the younger generations find it harder and harder to start a family, and therefore the population is doomed to shrink even more. And this is more so true for women in Japan.

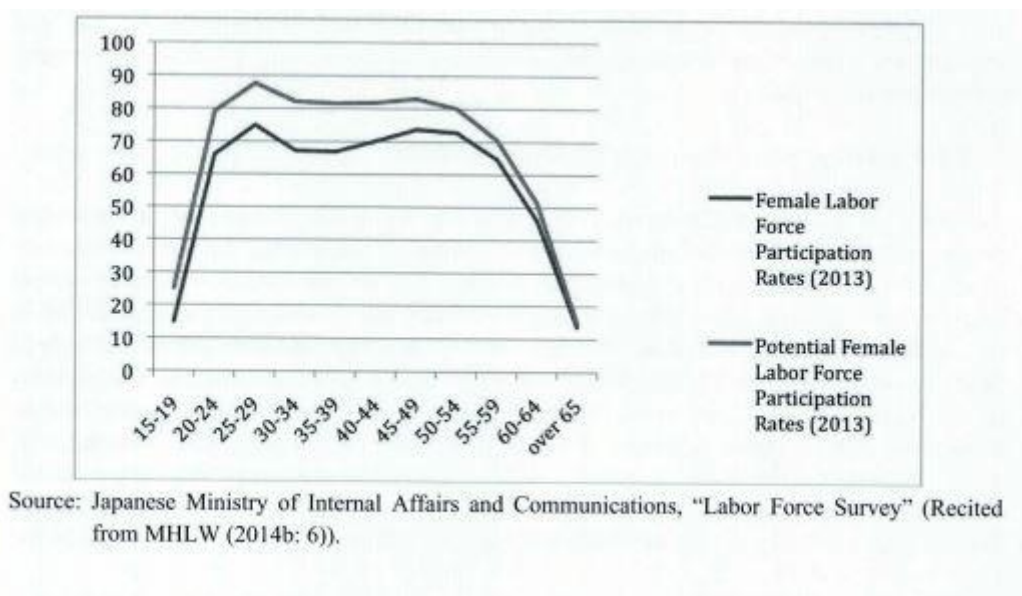


Chart 2. Female labor force participation in 2013 (Simigh, [2016])

Being quite a male chauvinist country, women have it already hard to take an active part in the economic activities, but cultural roles help to create an environment, where companies does not offer family friendly measures, daycares are overfilled and expensive, therefore for a woman, it is close to impossible to have a family and a career at the same time. And let us not forget, that in Japanese corporate culture, once you start a family, and you want to go back to the employment market, no company will take you back. Therefore, the higher the number of the elderly, the more the family patterns and social cohesion are inflicted. One could argue, that in many countries, pensioners stay active, even if only for part-time employment. This is also true for Japan, but according to studies,

these elderly people are lacking entrepreneurship and creativity, which makes them uncompetitive (Kingston, [2012]). And that is not all. More than anything else, these older generations are politically quite determinative and active, with an 80% voting rate. In Japan, this has a tangible effect on the politics, for the older generations have more vivid memories of the war and the following American occupation. Most of the time, this steers them to nationalistic, or even revisionist orientation.

Per James Gannon and Sahashi Ryo, there are several reasons for the rise of nationalism in Japan. Primarily, those having nationalistic views are very well aware of the emerging neighbours, more specifically China and North Korea (Gannon & Sahashi, [2015]). This emergence does not only mean, that they are getting into more prominent positions in the regional order, carrying more influence, but also shows how the power relations are balanced between these countries and Japan. The emergence of these two countries gradually developed an increasingly visible threat to the security of Japan. Not only do these countries challenge the regional order, but this challenge means physical damage to Japan. This emergence created quite the paradox in Japan. First, there is the obvious pacifism that the society still stands up for. The Article 9 has been so ingrained to the society, that even after 60-or-so years, the majority of the Japanese are still pacifists. In other words, the principle of Article 9 seeped in the traditions and the culture, making it a major characteristic of what we call “Japanese” today (Pyle, *Changing Conceptions of Japan's International Role*). A valid question would be: so then how is rising nationalism connected to the growing security threat by China and North Korea? Why is awakening militarism mentioned so often?

The contrast lies somewhere in the struggle of adapting to the new age. The Japanese virtue in general, has a tendency to like conservatism. Not the ideologic wave, but sticking to the old ways, and avoiding change as much as it is possible. If we think in a Hegelian way, the thesis might be pacifism, while the antithesis is the need for national security. Here, the obvious clash of interests is given: how can a nation stay pacifist, when remilitarization is at hand? While the majority of the public is torn, mainstream Japanese politics have taken up the views of the older generations. Let us not wonder why: they are higher in number, which gives a good reason for politicians to appeal to this voter base. Obviously, nationalist views do not necessary go hand-in-hand with militarism, but the progress in international politics in the last 20 years led to more pronounced taste of

militarism in Japanese politics. I shall walk through this process and try to identify the key turning points.

After PM Nakasone's term ended, Japanese politics has also changed radically with the rest of the world. The end of the bipolar world order shaken up the Far Eastern regional order. As the Chinese economic growth has started to increase exponentially, so did its regional influence and military assertiveness. China's image as a background power was no more, and that became another accelerator for Japanese to consider military buildup. This development was followed by the slow diminishing of the United States' regional role, due to the various new challenges, like the rise of terrorism. In the 1990s, Japan was already stricken by domestic struggles, like economic stagnation and the aforementioned demographic troubles. And how did the politics respond to that? For quite a while, Nakasone Yasuhiro was the last PM who was able to exercise true leadership, and steer the country one way or another. After his term, Japanese politics produced a decade of interregnum, attached with short-term premierships, and ineffective policies. This leadership deficit, as Gannon and Sahashi argues, was closely related to the economic troubles of Japan. Most of the PMs after the start of the Heisei era were elected in trust of their promised economic salvation plan, which they did not brought about, or did not work after all. This period of time was filled with premiers, who failed very soon because of corruption or scandals, with a very active background full of interest groups (Gannon & Sahashi, [2015]). In these turbulent times, there are a couple of aspects of Japanese politics, that evolved to be beacons for the decision makers.

1. Rise of summit diplomacy (Gannon & Sahashi, [2015]). The 1990s introduced a new global phenomenon, specifically the extended scope of diplomatic role in case of head of states. This trend became quite the burden for Japanese politicians, for the short-term premierships did not allow them to efficiently deal with the problems of economy or the population, let alone to perform diplomatic duties. This became detrimental for foreign policy, leading to once again stagnating foreign relations (or issues).
2. Disadvantageous political system. Even though the 1990 administrative reforms had given the PM and his cabinet bigger influence over the decision-making procedures, the Upper House was still stronger than it could help to smoothen law-making. This means an environment, where the leaders have little power to direct the legislative

agenda, creating a situation, in which the prime minister might have very few chances to advance his (in Japan's case, only *his*) priorities (Gannon & Sahashi, [2015]). It is apparent, how this is an even bigger problem in case of shorter premierships.

3. Lack of party loyalty and character-based voting. Without party ideologies, the reasons for staying in or entering a party is differing from other countries. This factor inspired two elements to develop. First, there is a tradition of changing political parties. Secondly, the rise of personality-based voting, rather than party-centrism. This tendency paved the way to favoring populism (Gannon & Sahashi, [2015]). Rather than sticking to either ideologies, the campaigning politicians are trying to take up issues close to a certain voter base, that can evolve to be harmful to foreign relations. Although in the '90s, most politicians appealed to domestic issues, such as the economic stagnation, the early 2000s with the rise of China's assertiveness inspired politicians to include foreign relation issues in their campaigns (such as the current Prime Minister, Abe Shinzō), more often than not inducing hostility towards the neighboring nations. This can be regarded as an important factor in the rise of nationalism and revisionism. Although some experts argue that Japanese nationalism is milder compared to the global scale, it is important to note that in Japan, nationalism is induced on multiple platforms, not only by the political life.
4. Bureaucrat politics. Due to the high fluctuation in premierships, a bigger emphasis has been placed on the permanent bureaucrats, who keep the wheels turning. It is the bureaucratic bodies, comprised with experienced experts, that keeps the continuity of foreign policies, namely the main courseline of United Nations and U.S.-centered diplomacy (Gannon & Sahashi, [2015]).
5. Political dysfunctionality and apolitical attitude. The long years of inconsistency caused quite a distrust towards politicians in the younger generations, driving them away from being politically aware. Behind this, there is the lack of accountability when it comes to Japan's participation in international issues, or trade agreements. The fluctuation made it harder to deliver on the Kyoto Agreement or to calm the tensions around the U.S. Marine Corps Air Station in Okinawa (Gannon & Sahashi, [2015]).

6. Polling politics. With the age of IT revolution, and changing role of media, the dynamics of Japanese politics had shifted to the reliance on polls measuring the popularity of, and satisfaction towards the leading cabinet. Relying on cabinet support came to be a powerful tool for pushing through legislations or policies, that might be risky or controversial otherwise. Not only does this avoid public dissatisfaction, but other party members might not object as bravely, when the PM and his cabinet is high on the polls.
7. Finally, but equally importantly, apology diplomacy. This strategy has actually been transformed into a foreign policy custom, by which the general attitude and rhetoric towards China and South Korea consists of remorseful statements and declarations. Ever since the end of WWII, Japanese politicians felt it right to show repentance⁵ for the horrible acts (the invasions and the colonial rule) of the early 20th century, in order to normalize diplomatic relations. This custom then gradually became a burden, as the two nations did not seem to be content with only this type of communication. Later party leaders, such as Nakasone, Koizumi, or even Abe Shinzō, found this highly embarrassing and unfair, that lead them to change this type of dialogue. The result of this change will be highlighted in the chapter concluding the Korean relations. But the “humility” of Japan this way thought to be a cornerstone for the rise of nationalism, and especially revisionism, for the constant apologies motivated a certain cohort to find ways to justify the acts of the Imperial army, or at least find the demands and accusations of the neighbours unjustified.

Now, that some of the base of nationalism is apparent, an analysis of the political history is at hand. The political system of Japan has been put into a strictly democratic order by the SCAP after the war. Even though the official form of government is constitutional monarchy⁶, the emperor has no true power over the political life. Despite an important feature of democracy being multiple party system, in practice, Japan has been mostly⁷ ruled by one single party since its formation in 1955. This party is called the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), and its hegemony is nicknamed the “1955 system” (Kingston, [2012]). The LDP most often defines itself as a conservative party, but due the high number of members, there are sophisticated differences between the detailed orientation

⁵ Felt like it is the right thing – or were influenced by *gaiatsu*.

⁶ Japan has a unitary parliament, with the elected legislature being the National Diet (Japan Kantei, [1946a]).

⁷ The only time periods, when LDP was not ruling: 1993-1994, 1994-1996, 2009-2012 (Japan Kantei, [2017]).

of the members. Again, with the lack of ideology, conservative orientation is rather a vague term. A convincing fact is the duality of the party in the '50s. When the American occupation started, the U.S. authorities banned every politician from the political life who was active in the years of the War. This ban was later abolished, enabling these war-time politicians (some extremist) to return, drawing a clear line of conflict within the party. One of the leading figures of this war-time faction was the above mentioned, highly controversial figure, Kishi Nobusuke (Encyclopaedia Britannica, [1998]).

There are different elements to explain why the LDP has been so successful for such a long time. Even right in the beginning, the foundation of LDP was grounded upon public approval, as one of the two merging parties was the party of Yoshida Shigeru (Encyclopaedia Britannica, [2015a]). In this sense, LDP was linked to the successful foreign policy and economic prosperity of the Cold War era. Likewise, the post-war development and technological progression was contributed to the party. Another element, which is still very much a current issue, is the weakness of the opposition. It is soon becoming a historical tendency, that the Japanese opposition is unable to organize their offensive. Lack of ideologies aside, their only driving principle was always their opposition to the LDP, and it is a tangible fact, that this was the reason why the Democratic Party won the elections in 2009 (The Diplomat, [2016g]). But as a sole quality of a party, standing against another party cannot be always an engaging attribute. In 2009, when this attribute was enough to get elected, the DP failed miserably in the eyes of the public. And the leading cause for that is quite complex. For the LDP ruled the political arena for so long, the DP had no opportunities to take on the leadership, hence the inexperience and incompetence. Certainly, there are other background components that helped degrading the DP's competency. Throughout the long years, the LDP had built up a system of structural corruption with the close cooperation of big businesses and the bureaucrats, fortifying the so-called "*Iron Triangle*" of Japan, leaving out the opposition (Kingston, [2012]). This Iron Triangle of corruption is very visible for the public too, but as long as the LDP could secure economic growth and pacifist policies (ensuring the non-nuclear principles and adopting the 1% GDP cap on defense spending), the voters turned a blind eye on it. But without the necessary political capital and experience with the Iron Triangle, the DP must have bumped into walls in the ruling years. In this respect, the DP's unsuccessfulness seems to be the LDP's success, and vice versa. And certainly, in other areas as well. The lengthy rule of the LDP is also thanks to the periodical reinvention of

the party and the successful incorporation of opposition policies and ideas (Kingston, [2012]). Not only the economic prosperity and insured pacifism secured the power of the party, but the 1972 negotiations with the United States to get back Okinawa under Japanese administration has also reassured the competence in representing national interests.

Aside from the Iron Triangle, the Liberal Democratic Party established a deep sprawling system, in which clientalism is essential, and the centralized financial networks can limit the opportunities of those emerging politicians, who wish to belong to the opposition parties (The Diplomat, [2016a]). Therefore, it is complementary for the LDP to be a collective party with diverse views in the context of conservatism. By closing off the financing routes for the opposition, the reign of the party is ensured with strict scrutiny and control in the ranks. This network nature of politics is rather a specialty to this country. On a sociologic note, this tendency is no wonder, if we think of Japan's collectivistic society structure (Geert Hofstede, [2017]). This collectivism stands for the advanced interdependence among the member of the society or groups, which eventually places the interest of the whole group above those of the individual. Some sociologists might rightfully argue, that the degree of this interdependency is considerably lower than other Asian countries like China. This comparison shows the theoretical background of the breaches in party loyalty by swapping allegiance to other parties.

If we analyze Japanese politics on this deeper network level, we can find a peculiar political lobby group, the Nippon Kaigi⁸. The Nippon Kaigi is Japan's largest right-wing organization, that gathers individuals with ultranationalist and revisionist views. The group has over 38.000 fee-paying members throughout all of Japan, most of them being politicians and/or public figures (The Diplomat, [2016e]). The lobby group has very clear objectives and principles, that can be read in its founding charter:

„1. Respect the Imperial Family, the center of a unified Japan, and nurture compatriotism.

2. Promote a new Constitution based on our nation's true characteristics.

⁸ 日本会議 (ni-ppon kai-gi): literally means Japan Conference.

3. *Protect the sovereignty and honor of our independent state and realize responsible politics that serve peace and order.*

4. *Revive tradition in education and nurture young people to grow up with pride and love for their nation.*

5. *Cultivate a spirit to protect the nation and to provide it with enough defensive power to secure its safety and contribute to world peace.*

6. *Widen the understanding of the world, aim to co-exist (with others) and contribute to promoting the nation's status in the global community and (to building) friendship (with other nations)."* (Tokyo Progressive, [2016])

These points summarize rather “classic” issues and aspirations, which were emphasized by several politicians in various points of the post-war era. The difference between these politicians and the Kaigi is often the theory behind carrying out these aspirations. For example, the first point implies simple respect for the Imperial Household, but in reality, the Kaigi members are known to aggressively promote the restoration of the Emperor into his role of highest political decision-maker, bringing back State Shinto (The Economist, [2015]). But that is not all. The organization wishes to restore the pre-war order, along with abolishing the 1999 gender equality law and the ban of foreign people (The Diplomat, [2016a]). And this is very important. While some journalists define Kaigi as a lobby group with Shinto religious foundations, it is necessary to spot the difference between religious groups and what the Kaigi stands for. To start with, the Kaigi advocate State Shinto, rather than the already current Shinto religion. Using Shinto as a tool of the state, and believing in Japanese ethnic superiority was an essential part of late 19th and early 20th century Japan. The *hakko ichiu*⁹ slogan was even incorporated on governmental level in the ‘30s, but it seems like it does not stand too far from the Kaigi’s ideology. But why would a lobby group build upon such sensitive topics? The organization consists of members, such as former executives of large corporations, Self-Defense Forces chiefs of staff, university presidents, and other prominent and influential members of the society. It has been

⁹ 八個一字 (ha-kko ichi-u): roughly translates to all 8 corners of the world under one roof. In the extreme nationalist WWII Japan era, this meant all the world under one *Japanese* roof, implying Japanese superiority and a base for expansionist ideologies (The Diplomat, [2016a]).

confirmed, that a former chief justice is also among the leaders of the Nippon Kaigi (Tokyo Progressive, [2016]). But the biggest issue is the fact that majority of the Kaigi leaders are the descendants of war-time political and military leaders. This means, that there is a layer in Japanese society that even in this pacifist era, keeps on passing down these outdated and dangerous ideologies. These ideologies also consist of the viewpoint that the Tokyo Trials were illegitimate, and overall denying that the Nanking Massacre had happened (The Asia-Pacific Journal, [2016]). According to an ex-member of the organization, the other members find it hard to accept the defeat of Japan, and all the shock it caused in the Japanese national identity and Japan's position as a great power (Tokyo Progressive, [2016]). This would be a lesser problem, if this layer would be insignificant both in size and social position, but that is not the case. An even more serious circumstance is the degree of political involvement of the group. The Kaigi gathers approximately 1700 assembly members, and maintains a non-partisan parliamentary league, the Japan Conference Diet Members, containing 281 members (The Diplomat, [2016e]). This makes up circa 39% of the Upper and Lower House, and half of the current cabinet, along with the Prime Minister and the Minister of Defense.

If we turn again our attention to the charter of the group, we can grasp the significance of this amount of governmental involvement. The second point of the charter states aspiration to constitutional amendment based on the “true characteristics” of the Japanese spirit. This clearly points at the infamous Article 9, and the strip of sovereignty, along with the defense deficit. Restoring the national defense systems can be considered sustainable in today's political environment, but aligning with ideas, such as the justification of the “*liberation*” of East Asia during the war puts the pursuit into highly controversial position (The Economist, [2015]). However, the secretary-general of the Kaigi argues, that “*the Constitution of the Great Empire of Japan has the preamble to explicitly show respect to the ancestors of the Imperial family and the Japanese deceased. However, the preamble of the current Constitution never respects Japan's traditions, the Emperor, or the ancestors of the Imperial family.... the Japanese people have become the non-Japanese people [due to the current Constitution]. Therefore, revising the Constitution is the pillar [of our movement].*” (The Diplomat, [2016e]) Other Kaigi members insist, that the constitution must be reformed to match the standards of the 21st century (Tokyo Progressive, [2016]). In case of defense capabilities, this might be justified, but regarding cultural aspects, Nagai Yōnosuke, a highly esteemed international

relations expert concluded, that despite the origins of the constitution, its pacifist characteristics had incorporated into the Japanese culture over the time, and became a part of what makes someone Japanese (Pyle, Changing Conceptions of Japan's International Role).

Whichever is truer, the Nippon Kaigi still utilizes every resource in its possession to facilitate the amendment of the Article 9. For that to happen, two conditions must meet¹⁰. First, the ruling political party must have two-thirds majority in both the Upper and the Lower House of the Diet. This condition was a distant goal of PM Abe Shinzō for long, but last year's election finally brought him success, as in 10 July 2016 he scored two-thirds majority in both houses. The second condition is a national referendum with a positive outcome in the question of whether to amend the constitution or not. So far there has been no decision on the part of the government to initiate a referendum in this question, which is why the Kaigi has been mobilizing its forces even on the very deepest levels of the society. The Kaigi's aim is to collect 10 million signature for a petition to initiate such a referendum. This movement is targeting the older generations first, and a decade ago a remarkable amount of 3.6 million signature has been collected (The Economist, [2015]). The Kaigi is a genius at organizing national rallies to raise awareness and collect signatures, which happens to be rather achieving.

The constitutional amendment however is not the only tool the Kaigi aims to utilize to create a Japan reminding more of the imperialist era. The fourth point of the Nippon Kaigi's charter mentions education. In Japan's foreign relations in the post-war period, there is a recurring element of a history textbook issue. The lobby group has been taking an active part in propagating the revision and reform of the national history textbooks. It should not strike as a surprise, that the Kaigi aims to revise the books to give a slightly less subtle nationalist taste to the young generations. Patriotism and teaching the young to love their country in itself is not despicable by any means, but the Kaigi proposals have been targeted multiple times for bending historical truth to their revisionist image, or completely denying some of the crimes and atrocities the Imperial Army had committed (The Asia-Pacific Journal, [2016]). Such ambitions indicate, that the Nippon Kaigi is very effective in influencing from multiple spheres. The revised textbooks would brainwash the young generations into a solid revisionist base of the society, while the petition could be

¹⁰ Defined by Article 96 of the constitution (The Daily Beast, [2016]).

an effective helping hand for the Abe administration, avoiding the obstacles raised by the opposition and other binding elements inside the party.

The relations between the government and the Kaigi seems to be quite close. As mentioned, more than half of the Abe cabinet is the member of the group, but the most alarming is the fact, that even the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Defense is a member (Abe and Asō Tarō as a special advisor for the group). To have the three most powerful persons in the league implies a rather distressing future for Japan (The Diplomat, [2016e]). It is widely known, that PM Abe's longest dream is to amend said Article, which together with his Kaigi membership is worrying at least. But even with these facts, Abe's premiership shows signs of deterioration from the group.

2.2. The political agenda of Abe Shinzō

The premiership of Abe Shinzō is quite unique in several ways. The turbulent decade after the dissolution of the Soviet Union left its mark on the country. At the beginning of the 2000s, the line of insignificant prime ministers (almost) ended with Koizumi Jun'ichiro's entry. Koizumi was the first in a long time to rule for a longer period (5 years), and with a rather memorable term too. He is known to be a maverick of the LDP, who could steamroll both the Diet and the party with his ideas. He was the one, who could steer the economy to safer waters by introducing harsh economic reforms. Also, Koizumi was the one to revise the decision-making processes in the Diet by eliminating the faction system (The Economist, [2006]). This step was one of the attempts to break the power of the by-then-corrupted and corroded Iron Triangle. He was excellent at utilizing the new elements in Japanese politics, such as the personality-based voting phenomenon and an appeal to populism. Koizumi's political behavior serves as a source of inspiration for many politicians nowadays, especially Abe Shinzō himself. But what Abe does brilliantly is not blindly following his footsteps, but learning from his mistakes. Koizumi was criticized for countless of his policies and actions, that eventually drove him to retire as his term ended in 2006 (Gannon & Sahashi, [2015]). He was most criticized for his economic policies, which were able to raise the country from recession, but were rather risky as they crippled the social safety net (Kingston, [2012]). In contrast to the reforms that can be debated based on different interpretations, he did commit several political mistakes, especially regarding foreign affairs. Right from the start of his premiership, Koizumi did not conceal his feelings towards the neighbours, as he became infamous of

visiting the Yasukuni shrine regularly. He visited the shrine a maximum of 6 times during his term, which contributed to fairly bad relations with China and the Koreas (The Economist, [2006]). There are a couple of reasons for his recklessness. For one, he was later also identified as a member of the Nippon Kaigi. The second reason has to do with the then-recent regional developments. The beginning of the 2000s was a time when China's economic and regional hegemonic emergence became apparent, slowly reaching a point of military and naval power. Koizumi did not aspire to lead a "good neighbour" policy towards the region, thus derailing Japan's standard foreign policy direction. His sole ambition was to stop the economic decline and reform the inner political structure in order to assign more power to the actual leaders of the country. With eliminating the faction system, Koizumi paved the way for Abe Shinzō, making the process easier to carry out his policies and political frameworks. More so is this true in the case of the Article 9. Similarly to PM Nakasone Yasuhiro, Koizumi too was keen on amending the pacifist clause to raise Japan's defense, this time as a response to China's assertiveness (rather than in Nakasone's time, against the Soviet threat). The difference between the two is the then-current public sentiment. While the '80s were the time of elevated pride in the country's pacific nature, the years following the death of Emperor Hirohito were full of concerns towards the North Korean nuclear emergence and China's rising ambition. This public frame of mind resulted in unusual degree of support towards the idea of remilitarizing Japan. Up until the 2000s, per the Yomiuri Shimbun's polls, roughly 60% of the population would have said yes to whether to amend the constitution or not (Fábián, [2015]). As suspected, no amendment was done under Koizumi's leadership due to his retirement, but he became a pioneer by being probably the first prime minister, who could raise the question of the revision without public uproar.

In many ways, Koizumi served as an example and an inspiration for the current cabinet. His successful, but eventually detrimental economic reforms showed that indeed, Japan must set fixing the economy as a priority before starting a more pragmatic foreign policy. Secondly, a Prime Minister should always be aware of the manifestation of his own ideologies, especially in the Far East. Third, populist sentiments never give enough influence to secure one's power. These three conclusions could have been the basic tenets for the second term of Abe Shinzō. But Abe did not only learn from Koizumi's success, he also learnt from his own mistakes. He was elected in 2006, right after Koizumi's retirement, as the youngest Prime Minister (age 52) after World War II (Simigh, [2016]).

Jeff Kingston calls him being elected a generational shift in political leadership (Kingston, [2012]). So far, the Japanese political scene was filled with politicians and experts only with advanced age. This can be a result of the patriarchic social roots, that emphasizes the utmost respect and obedience towards the elders. With Abe Shinzō's election victory, especially after being elected for his second term, we can spot some injections of middle aged politicians, and not only in his cabinet. In political analyzes nowadays, it is rare to find references to Abe's first term. I find it important to take it into account, as it seems like the first "try" gave a lot of clues of how he was mistaken in his policies, that eventually helped him shape Japan to its current image. The first mistake the newly elected PM made was the unvarnished promotion of Kaigi-esque policies. It was never a secret, that Abe's orientation is somewhat aligned with the Nippon Kaigi's ambitions, but just as Koizumi earlier, Abe also could not sense the nuances of what angers the public (not to mention the international community). During his first premiership, he presented his feelings toward China clearly by visiting Yasukuni shrine. This automatically summoned disapproval from the public, decreasing his popularity and increasing the discontent towards his cabinet. He also pushed forward a rather controversial legislation about a Kaigi-related textbook reform, that also met with considerable opposition from both the public and the teachers' union. The reform created a textbook designed to teach the young ones to "*nurture love for the country*" (Kohno & Rosenbluth, [2008]). The timing could have not been worse. The textbook controversy inflamed in 2001, when Koizumi Jun'ichiro initiated a reform process. It goes without saying, that as a member of the Nippon Kaigi, his newly developed textbook included considerable understatements regarding the WWII, the occupation in Korea and Manchuria, the Nanking Massacre, and the military rape camps in Korea (Kohno & Rosenbluth, [2008]). The contents of the book also handled Japan's aggression with a defensive attitude. The feedback for this reform was once again condemning. And not only from the international community. Out of 40.000 schools, only 18 agreed to utilize this book, but even in these 18 municipalities, the parents and other civilians joined forces against it and organized a signature collecting for a petition (Kohno & Rosenbluth, [2008]). Kohno and Rosenbluth identified the resistance from the society as a proof for the Japanese nationalism being milder than the media would suggest. Abe Shinzō was the Secretary-General of the cabinet at that time, which is probably why later he deemed it important to take this matter further, even after Koizumi had retired.

Besides education, Abe also started to immensely promote the amendment of Article 9, while the mistakes and failures in his economic policies slowly damaged his popularity.

Government approval ratings, 1st Abe cabinet: in percent

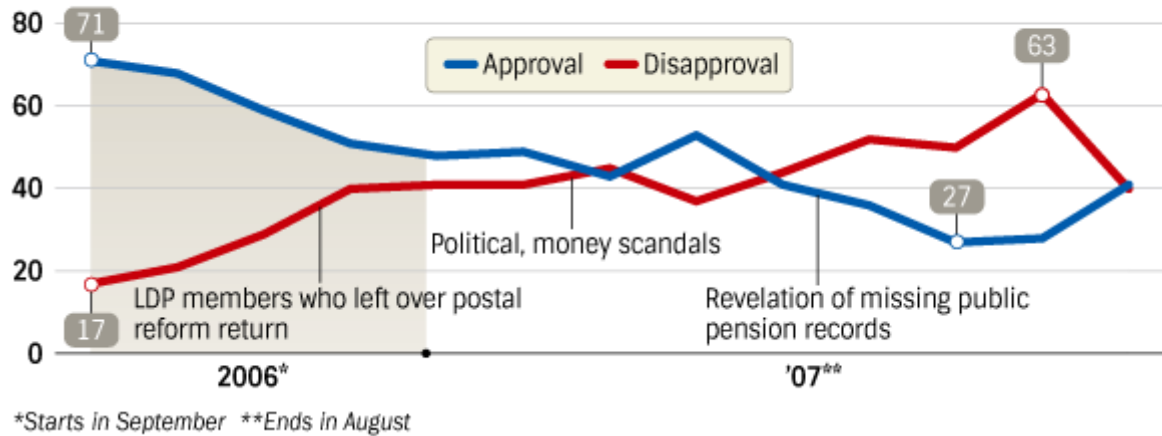


Chart 3. Popularity poll of the first term of the Abe cabinet (Simigh, [2016])

The scandals and signs of corruption made the disapproval take over the polls, and by 2007, even in the Diet he lost majority, forcing him to step down as a Prime Minister (Simigh, [2016]). We can conclude, that in the first term of Abe Shinzō, he followed the footsteps of his predecessor, only with more poorly orchestrated policies. Besides the economic failures and the carelessness towards the international community, we can detect a recurrence of the Nakasonian political turn. Abe Shinzō was the first during the two “lost decades”, who won the elections in a unique manner: Instead of promising economic salvation, he took on the case of Japanese citizens abducted by North Korea. This prioritization of a non-economic-related issue, and the fact that he won the election by it is alone a shift in Japanese politics.

Between 2007 and 2012, it almost seemed like the political order is back to being as inconsistent as before. The leadership deficit came back as a major problem. Right around 2009 did the voter base get to the point, where the burden of the two lost decades became so unbearable, that the society finally decided on electing the opposition party, the Democratic Party of Japan (later renamed to Democratic Party). As mentioned before, this victory was more the failure of the LDP, rather than the victory of the DPJ (Kingston, [2012]). After a couple of years of unqualified leadership, Abe Shinzō took the chance again to grab power in 2012, but this time, in coalition with the Nichiren Buddhist, center-

right positioned Kōmeitō¹¹. During his second campaign, he was more prepared in a sense, that he corrected his political aims. This time, he did not emphasize objectives related to the Nippon Kaigi (except the amendment of Article 9), but he introduced a massive economy-saving program, the so-called “*Abenomics*”¹². This time, Abe realized, that the economy must be of highest priority. After the farce of the first term, he must have realized, that in a Yoshida-like sense, Japan needs to recover economically, before any PM can make any kind of foreign policy course line. And so to stay in the position for a long time, he needs to tone down any revisionist sentiment, and concentrate on revitalizing the country. This pragmatic thinking gave birth to the three “arrows” of the Abenomics:

1. The *first arrow* constitutes of an aggressive monetary policy: the Japanese central bank¹³ initiates massive purchase of government bonds to reach 2% deflation, while keeping the interest rates low, in order to encourage investment.
2. The *second arrow* is expansionary fiscal stimulus: increasing public investment and various taxes to boost growth.
3. The *third arrow* is supposed to be structural reforms: revitalizing the industry, employment reform, and the increase of the economic activity of women with the “*Womenomics*”¹⁴ program (Simigh, [2016]).

The introduction of Abenomics in 2013 brought about great success. For a short time, the economic growth was increasing, even though Abe only initiated the first two arrows. The third arrow, a.k.a. the structural reform package is the most important of all for the sake of long-term growth, and for a more sustainable economic activity. As it would increase women employment, thus helping the demographic disaster Japan is currently experiencing, the institutional and structural changes would call upon the opposition of many different spheres, which is why it is the hardest of the three arrows to shoot (The Economist, [2014]). No wonder, PM Abe waited for its introduction, while he worked on strengthening his position. This was no easy task considering the opposition towards the

¹¹ The members of the Kōmeitō party are part of the Sōka Gakkai movement, which promotes ideas of the 13th century monk, Nichiren, such as centering peace, culture, and education (Soka Gakkai International, [2015]).

¹² Portmanteau of Abe and economics.

¹³ Bank of Japan, or BOJ

¹⁴ Portmanteau of women and economics.

Abenomics, but he did successfully secure majority in the Upper House elections in 2013. The election victory was followed by his first mistake since the start of his second term. Interestingly enough, until the elections, he toned down his revisionist sentiments considerably by avoiding any Kaigi-related rhetoric and visiting the Yasukuni shrine. After the elections though, he allowed himself to celebrate his one year in office with an unofficial visit. I should emphasize here, that a pragmatic politician of this caliber, coming from a political dynasty, learning under a mastermind mentor like Koizumi Jun'ichiro, it is no sheer coincidence, that he chose that time to visit the condemned shrine. During my research, I found a traceable parallel between Japan's polling politics and "*Yasukuni politics*". Just as the domestic politics relies on the cabinet approval rates, Yasukuni politics have become a tool for background foreign policy maneuvers, more precisely a channel to express certain standpoints about international developments in the region. In Abe's case, Yasukuni politics went through a makeover compared to Koizumi's time. Aside from this one visit, Abe had never again risked angering the neighbours to this degree, but instead, he still sends offerings to the shrine, and either allows or sends other cabinet members regularly. Naturally, at carefully selected dates. This time, in 2013, Abe was most probably trying to react to the aggressive Chinese naval movements in the South China Sea, especially around the much disputed Senkaku islands. The question is, why did Abe only visit the shrine once? First of all, he learned from Koizumi's example. Second of all, he additionally learned it the hard way, as his visit summoned not only international blowback, but economic too.

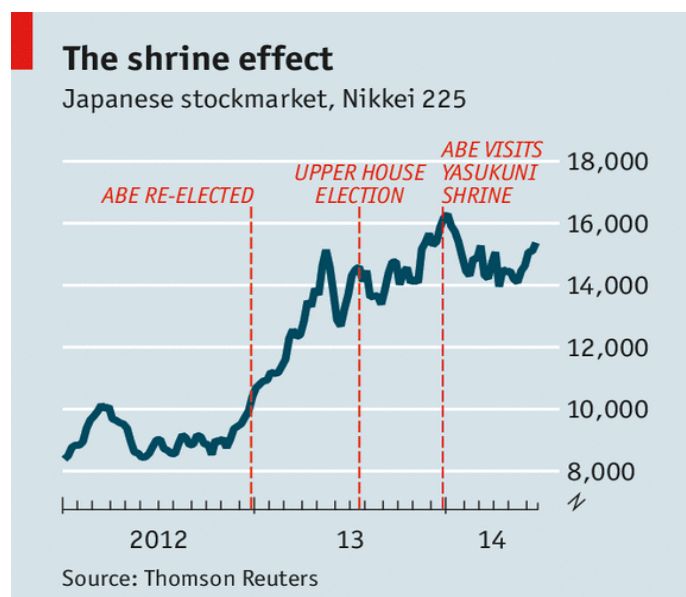


Chart 4. Stock market changes upon political events 2012-2014 (The Economist, [2014])

On Chart 4, we can see how the visit damaged the stock market, which could have been a major warning signal for Abe to be careful. Naturally, the Yasukuni visits and offerings always trigger explanations like “it is not a political statement”, and that it is just for honoring the dead. But over the time, it has become clear, that creating a political standpoint with the visits is unavoidable. The blowback after Abe’s visit was major enough to tone down controversial activities for the sake of keeping his position.

Government approval ratings, 2nd & 3rd Abe cabinets; in percent

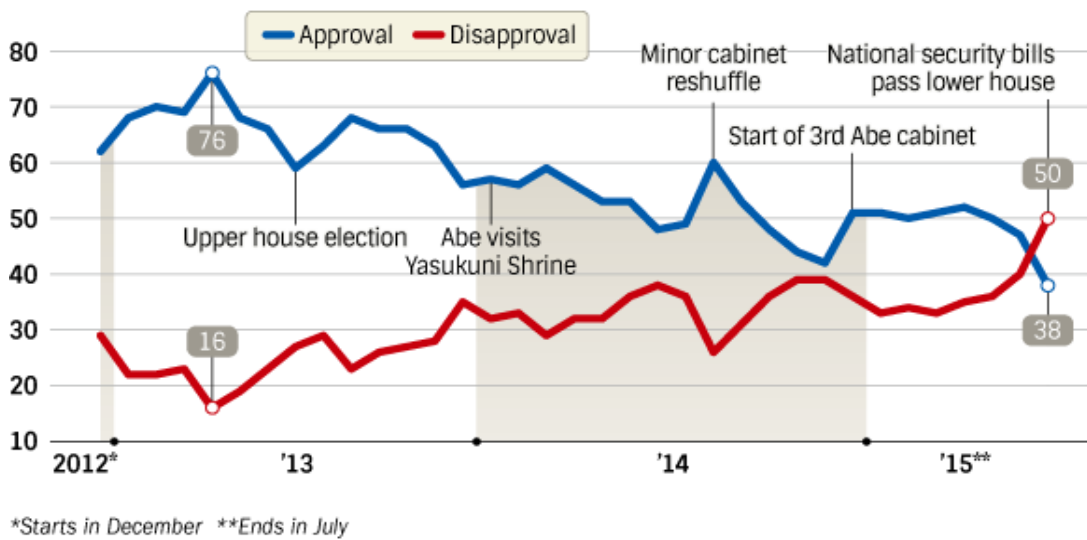


Chart 5. Approval ratings throughout Abe Shinzō’s 2nd and 3rd term 2012-2015 (Simigh, [2016])

After this fiasco, Abe concentrated on continuing his strategy, namely to strengthen the economy first (along with his position), and then to put more emphasis on nationalist agenda.

2015 was a year of several radical changes in Japan since the Yoshida-era. PM Abe, previously known to be an economic reformer, decided to finally reveal again his nationalist side, and start preparations for the realization of his pet project, the constitutional amendment. Here, I should emphasize his *nationalist* side, rather than *revisionist*, even though many experts are continuing to argue about this. In 2015, Abe delivered a speech on the 70th anniversary of the end of WWII, that received quite a lot of heat, billing Abe a hawkish revisionist and a Kaigian politician. The controversial point he brought up in this speech was the following:

“In Japan, the postwar generations now exceed eighty per cent of its population. We must not let our children, grandchildren, and even further generations to come, who have nothing to do with that war, be predestined to apologize.” (Japan Kantei, [2015])

China and the Koreans interpreted this sentence as a lack of remorse regarding the atrocities committed by the Imperial Army, triggering condemnation from their part. But if we take a closer look on the full script, we might find some ideas familiar. Abe precisely emphasized his deep condolences towards both the fallen Japanese, and those suffering from them. He did acknowledge the aggression Japan performed (denied by most historical revisionists), the *“immeasurable damage and suffering”* inflicted by the army, and the unacceptable fate of the rape camp victims too (Japan Kantei, [2015]). But it seems like, just as his predecessor, Nakasone Yasuhiro, Abe too became weary by the long tradition of apology diplomacy. This is especially relevant considering that Abe is the first PM to born after the World War II. The other side of the coin however is his past actions, that raises concerns. Those, who had accused him being revisionist after this speech brought up his education reform from Abe’s first prime ministerial term. The textbook reform is undoubtedly a revisionist notion, but since Abe did not push that legislation in his second and third term, we should not exclude the possibility of a cooperative or unwanted influence from the Nippon Kaigi’s part. Whichever is true, this speech alone does not testify the denial of the Imperial Army’s responsibility. Some however, did find a part in the speech that indicates justification of the war, which quickly drew the disapproval of China (The Japan Times, [2015a]). He did argue, that what is done, cannot be undone, but the peace-loving country of today resulted from all the horribleness of the war.

Naturally, official statements usually go through political filters and it is often hard to grasp what the speaker might really think, but this speech was the first groundbreaking change in foreign policy rhetoric since Nakasone Yasuhiro. Many drew contrast between the 50th and the 70th anniversary speech, describing the latter as a break from the Murayama Statement (The Guardian, [2015]). The Murayama Statement is tied to Prime Minister Murayama Tomiichi¹⁵, who gave a speech on the 50th anniversary of the end of the war in 1995. This statement has become the official standpoint of the Japanese governments on the wartime aggression, as it condemns all that has been done by the

¹⁵ Murayama Tomiichi was the first Socialist prime minister, in office between 1994 and 1996 (Encyclopaedia Britannica, [1998]).

army, and offers “*heartfelt apologies*” to all the Asian nations affected in the early 20th century (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, [1995]). Surprisingly, even PM Koizumi echoed this standpoint to maintain the standard Japanese foreign policy (The Guardian, [2015]). With this statement (and many other pronouncements throughout the years), Abe Shinzō has made it clear, that he wants to lead a foreign policy, that deteriorates from the past decades’ apology diplomacy. Japan stays humble and condemns the terrible acts, but wants to move forward, toward a more active regional relation system, that aspires to establish closer cooperation.

In conclusion, Japan’s post-war foreign policy had formed into two defining course line: the Yoshida-based passive diplomacy mixed with the Murayaman apology diplomacy; and the post-millennial emerging nationalism built by Koizumi Jun’ichiro and perfected by Abe Shinzō with a revisionist subfamily. The portrayal of these emerging trends with their reasoning and ideological background gives a stable base for backing and explaining the reasons behind the possible militarization Japan is currently may or may not be going through.

After the 70th anniversary statement, Abe finally made the first step towards realizing this possible militarization. A very unusual situation was starting to form, when just a month later, he announced the renewal of the security law system, causing quite an uproar among the experts, and of course the Japanese society. Abe’s reasoning for enacting the legislation pointed at the fact, that „*the changes are needed to address new challenges, including China’s growing military assertiveness*” (The Japan Times, [2015b]). The new security legislation package consisted of one new law, and a revision of 10 old. The emphasis is on the new one, as it now allows deploying military forces in a friendly foreign country, and also enables the Self-Defense Forces to provide logistic support for other countries to „*secure international peace if a UN resolution has been adopted*” (The Japan Times, [2015b]). Experts say, that this move will have a crucial impact on the relationship with the United States, because it can allow the American administration to utilize Japanese troops for conflicts relatively unrelated to the island nation, prioritizing U.S. interests. In a press conference in 2015, ex-Prime Minister Murayama expressed his deep concerns, and listed the reasons why the legislation is problematic. In his summary, he argued, that many experts of the constitution find the legislation downright unconstitutional, because according to the Pacifist Constitution, Japan is allowed to

perform self-defense, but not *collective* defense (Murayama, [2015]). The word *unconstitutional* was not mentioned for the first time though. There has been room for debate since the revision of the U.S.- Japan Security Treaty, led by the infamous Kishi Nobusuke in 1960. This revision met a similar amount of opposition, forcing Kishi to recede from leadership. The now revised Article 5 of the treaty ensures American-Japanese joint military intervention in case of a foreign assault on Japanese soil (Fábián, [2015]). It is clearly visible, how the Article 5 of the U.S.-Japan Treaty and the Article 9 of the Japanese constitution contradict each other. Some experts call this cognitive dissonance, still unsolved to this day (Fábián, [2015]). From time to time, but especially regarding this legislation, the question of prioritization is brought up. This bill was a clear attempt from Abe's side to modify Japan's security policy without going through the legal measures of constitutional amendment. Long has been known, that Abe aspires to amend the Article 9 since at least the start of his political career, but it is no wonder, that no other party leader has got even close to realizing this goal. As mentioned before, to amend the constitution, there are two steps to be taken. First, a two-thirds majority is needed in both the Lower and the Upper House. Second, a national referendum is to be initiated, where a simple majority is behind amending the constitution (The Daily Beast, [2016]). In 2015, these conditions were just as undoable for Abe, as the leaders before him, which is why he pulled the card of "*interpretation*" (Murayama, [2015]). Many before him had referred to the Article 9 being too vague, that might open the door to different interpretations of it, if only even by a nuance. This is especially often brought up regarding the question of defense spending. As mentioned before, the constitution does not put any constraint on defense spending, but in the Yoshida-era, many felt the obligation to limit the possibility of even a slight rearmament with the installation of the Self-Defense Forces. By limiting the defense spending to 1% of the GDP, Japan was able to stand apart from any international conflict, that either allies or international organizations might have force to. However, throughout the times, the defense budget has been raised many times, slowly and quietly.

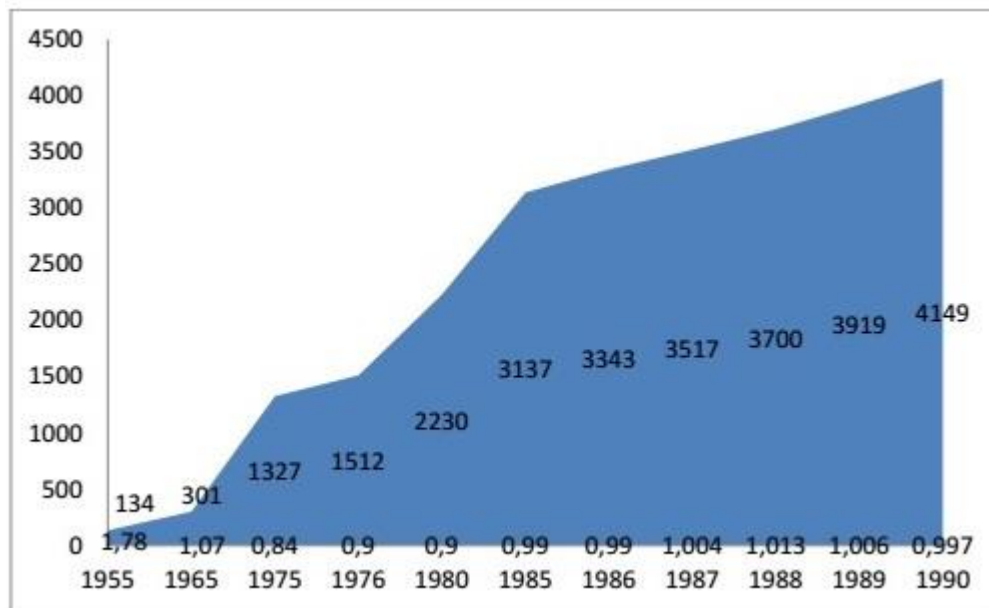


Chart 6. Japan's defense spending 1955-1990, in billion yen versus GNP percentage (Fábíán, [2015])

The new security bill called forth mixed emotions. While there were many supporters lining up behind the legislation, the public and the opposition was enraged. The government justified the bill arguing, that it is thus a step on a long road towards Japan's normalization. The word *normal country* is brought up often by nationalists, who try to indicate that a country without any real army or ability to defend itself is just a crippled one. Although the opposition dubbed the legislation "*war bill*", in reality, it still does not allow Japan to use force to settle international disputes (The Diplomat, [2015]). It is however, a step toward an even stronger alliance with the United States. The fears of this step are two-fold. Internationally speaking, there is the fear, that with the enhanced capabilities of the SDF, Japan could get entangled in conflicts unrelated to Japan's interests, or taken advantage of the still existing limitations regarding its military. Domestically speaking, this legislation raised the fear of radicalization of the current cabinet's nationalist agenda. Ultimately, the one thing agreed upon is, that this bill is a very tangible manifestation of the pressure from the United Nations and the United States on Japan to be more engaging in international matters, and nevertheless the aforementioned regional changes summoned by China and North Korea. In other words, this bill was an attempt by the Abe administration to answer the security challenges of the new century.

And what is the reality of today's security prospects of Japan? A definitely noticeable change had happened in 2015, that kept on (or even keep on) escalating ever since. Prime Minister Abe had gained enough domestic confidence to launch initiatives, that might strengthen Japan's security, despite the formidable domestic opposition. In 2016, Abe had to face another election, this time a House of Councillors election, where he pulled through a remarkable electoral success, with reaching two-thirds majority in both houses (Serikawa, [2016]). This benchmark accomplishment opened the way for the leading party to finally amend the constitution – but only after a national referendum. The electoral success made quite a lot of experts draw a conclusion, that the nation is down on the way towards remilitarization, but Serikawa Yoichi elaborated on the observation, that the political climate is not yet ready for a constitutional amendment. The ground for this observation is the fact, that even the coalition party, Kōmeitō is an advocate for leaving the Article 9 as it is, especially since the 2015 security legislations gave enough wiggling room for the Self-Defense Forces (Serikawa, [2016]). But the June 10 elections are not the only indicators for the possible militarist future.

August 3 was the second instance for Abe to reshuffle his cabinet. Despite the heightened expectations, there were not as much changes, but those few were meaningful nonetheless. As seen on Chart 6, defense spending is constantly changing with every administration, but keeping it around 1% of the GDP became a dogma for Japanese politics. The Abe administration has longed to increase the spending since its inauguration, but before the reshuffle, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry counteracted the notion on every turn. From August, the new Abe crew did not include the responsible Economy Minister, as Abe switched him for Seko Hiroshige, an obviously close ally (Financial Times, [2016]). And thus the aftermath is evident. Just a few months later, a new defense spending plan was introduced, with a record breaking 5 trillion yen (42,5 billion USD) of annual spending, increasing it with 1,4% (Bloomberg, [2016]). The budget increase involves increasing the coastal guard budget, aiming at improving security around the much disputed Senkaku islands. This amount was further extended with a special spending package directed exclusively to ballistic missile defense. While the former was explained with the tensions over the island disputes with China, the latter was justified by the government with the North Korean threat.

Another controversial change was the shift in personnel regarding the post of Defense Minister. The position was filled by Inada Tomomi, former lawyer, chairman of the party's Policy Research Council and Abe Shinzō's close aide (Japan Kantei, [2016]). This development came under scrutiny for the political orientation of Inada. Not only is she considered rather inexperienced for this post, but she is also known to be a hawkish conservative sharing Kaigi-ish opinions about the World War II and other key conflict inducing historical standpoints (Financial Times, [2016]). She is one of the most regular visitor of the Yasukuni shrine in the current administration. Placing such questionably opinionated politician into an (especially in Japan's case) increasingly important position signaled an alarming impression for China and South Korea. There have been additional speculations going around about Inada being Abe's candidate as his successor. Aside from her ideological and political closeness to the Prime Minister, another proving fact is the rule, by which Japanese political life goes, that no politician can become a prime minister without experience in international affairs. A defense ministerial post could be the perfect "training" for Inada. It is clear why the neighbouring countries find this problematic. As an answer to the heightened sentiments, the government chose to pull through a political maneuver by sending the Defense Minister to the naval base in Djibouti on the anniversary of the end of WWII, avoiding the possible scandal emerging, should Inada visit the Yasukuni shrine on this critical date (Financial Times, [2016]). Not to mention the manipulative dimension of this step on the cabinet approval polls, once again utilizing polling politics to prove the cabinet's capability in keeping international disputes at bay. The government handling the situation this way put the concerns to sleep for a short time, but tensions were rising again, when Inada chose to visit the shrine right after Abe Shinzō taking a trip to Pearl Harbor with then-President Barack Obama. This event brought forward a never-before-so-serious backlash in diplomatic relations with South Korea. In order to see the whole context of this backlash, a more detailed analysis of Japanese-Korean relations is in order.

3. THE RELATIONS WITH THE KOREAS

Historically, Japan and Korea had always had a turbulent relationship, which still projects great influence on the present too. The two nations have a long practice of exchanging culture and ideas, maintaining trade activities, and waging wars with each other. The general attitude towards each other could be characterized as rivalry,

periodically switching between friendly and hostile. In the Japanese point of view, Korea has always been a gateway to the mainland. For starters, it is the closest and (historically been the) weakest point of the continent, through which Japan could launch an assault and try to expand towards China, which had always been a current objective for the rulers of Japan. Even if the Japanese considered Koreans as a weak nation, all those times Japan had tried to invade Korea, it failed. The Koreans had an excellent defense system, and the invasional squirmishes usually cost a fortune for Japan, both financially and in human lives. The attacks of the Japanese posed great trauma to the Koreans. The Japanese soldiers were infamous of their ruthless actions, which continue to live in the Korean proverbs too.

The World War II period imposed particularly determinative fractures in their relationship, that were unable to mend in 70 years. In 1910, after the successful defeat of the Russians in the Russo-Japanese War, Japan was 'finally' able to annex Korea, making it a protectorate of Imperial Japan (Modern Japan in archives, [2010]). The wrongdoings of the Japanese oppression during the 35 years of occupation lives so strong in the Korean collective memory, that it created the only point of agreement between the two Koreas. For obvious reasons, the normalization of diplomatic relations did not erase the general feelings towards each other, but at least we can say, that the emphasis switched to mostly the actions done by the Imperial Army of Japan, rather than keeping record of all that has been done throughout the history.

3.1. The origin of the comfort women issue

To the rapidly industrializing Japan, that had just won a war against two major powers with its freshly developed army, the Korean Peninsula became more and more attractive for multiple reasons. As mentioned, the geopolitical importance of Korea had always attracted Japan as a spring board to expansion to the continent. The reasons for this long existing expansionist ambition was born from the basic geographical disadvantages of Japan. On the more than 6800 islands of Japan, almost 73 percent of the land is unfit for cultivation, industry or residence, which leads to high population density and food security issues (Stratfor, [2012]). In search for new ways to supplement the missing resources, the Japanese found Korea to be more accessible than China. Although the high time of this mentality was in the Middle Ages, it got transferred to the time of the Meiji Restoration. The Restoration brought about massive industrialization and fast

development of military capacity and technology, which inspired the Emperor Meiji to carry out Japan's long existing dream, to which the campaign of the Russo-Japanese War served as a great opportunity. During the 35 years of occupation, the Japanese basically robbed the country of resources. The food security issue was solved by exporting a large amount of rice back to Japan, that resulted in a huge drop in per capita rice consumption for the Koreans (Korean History, n.d.). However to some extent, Korea did benefit from the occupation due to the intense industrialization, but the overall judgement of it will always be exploitation and repression.

The occupation gave an opportunity for the Japanese to grab top positions in Korea, raising their existential level and secure a position with higher income and prestige. The Japanese therefore migrated in high numbers to the Korean Peninsula, where business, farm cultivation and fishing was easier and more fruitful due to the monopoly on commerce and industry, and thanks to the favoritism with regards to these sectors. The high taxes and the benefits towards Japanese occupants forced the Koreans to relocate to either Japan or Manchuria (Korean History, n.d.). The repression was the strongest in the 1930s: the Japanese authorities had tried to abolish the Korean national identity with prohibiting the usage of Korean language and generally „japanizing” the population with forcing Japanese names and language on them. The aim was to integrate the Korean society into the Japanese one, initially creating a new lower class of laborers. This notion resulted in the same way as anywhere else: with opposition and growing discontent. The forceful nature of the colonization helped to strengthen the Korean national sentiments, through which the assaults and atrocities got engraved into the society deeply. As Kan Naoto, ex-Prime Minister of Japan said, „*those who render pain tend to forget it while those who suffered cannot forget it easily.*” (The Japan Times, [2010]) One of these abiding shared memories is the horrors of the comfort women.

3.2. Defining comfort women

Comfort women are girls and adult women who were forced into prostitution for and by the Imperial Japanese Army. The word 'comfort' comes from the Japanese expression for prostitute¹⁶. Depending on context and scholar, the words *sexual slavery* and *rape camp victims* are also used for describing them. As indicated, these women were collected to

¹⁶ 慰安婦(i-an-fu): 'ian' means comfort or safety, while 'fu' means woman or lady.

camps or stations, where they had to serve the army members. By the forceful nature of the recruitment, these women were deprived of their freedom and were generally kept in miserable conditions. To lessen the damage, the military members were required to always use contraceptives, and the women were provided with medical check-ups regularly (Asian Women's Fund, [2007]). These stations were mainly located in Japan, South Korea, Philippines, and China, but records show that evidence could be found at other territories occupied by the Japanese army (Asian Women's Fund, [2007]). As controversial as it is, there are quite a lot of uncertainties regarding this issue. First of all, there is not any scientifically backed, exact numbers of the victims. Some say, there were about 20,000 victims, while Chinese scholars say the numbers are as high as 360,000 (Asian Women's Fund, [2007]). It is clear, that these numbers might be affected by the national consensus about the issue, but we should not be fast to label these scholars biased. Research is hindered due to the fact, that there are very few comfort women who are still alive, and the Japanese army was not eager to put these activities on record. Based on different experiences, there were different recruiting techniques. The most widespread theory says, that most women and girls were abducted, but per other sources, women were lured with the promise of factory work. The Japanese side, for obvious reasons fostered the idea, that some women chose to work at these comfort women station voluntarily. We will see why.

One of the regular question is: how so was an organized slavery necessary? A 2007 research found that the comfort stations were indeed an initiative of the high-ranking members of the army, to prevent mutiny and discontent among the ranks, and to prevent riot among the civilians. Further goal was to keep the soldiers from wreaking havoc in the occupied territories by raping the civilians (Asian Women's Fund, [2007]). We can see how hypocritical this reasoning is. Raping has been traditionally part of military assaults, no matter organized or not. In this case, we can talk about a carefully instrumented web of crime, established by the Japanese army. Another questionable reason for establishing such a system was the aim to prevent espionage activity. Ironically enough, the comfort women stations were housing the biggest spy network through the Korean Peninsula.

After Japan had lost the war, the diplomatic relations had normalized with Korea. As soon as 1951, Korea placed a claim on Japan for taking responsibility and for compensating the comfort women. Japan gave in: 5 years later Korea received 800 million

dollars as a compensation for all who was forced into labor and military service during the occupation (Asia Times, [2013]). It is important to emphasize though, that this sum was paid to the Korean government, and the claim was too vague to call it a compensation for the comfort women. Later on, when the public started demonstrations for the sake of the victims, this became a major argument. As we can see, although the Japanese government provided a considerable amount of money, including written apologies to some survivors, the Korean public opinion still considered this issue unsolved.

Due to the American occupation, the general diplomatic strategy towards the neighbours became the already mentioned apology diplomacy for Japan. In this sense, the Japanese leaders (both political and spiritual, e.g. the Emperor Akihito) made sure to express their deep regret over the atrocities committed during the occupation and the World War II, but Korea (especially South Korea) developed the political behavior of holding any type of cooperation hostage with the claim that Japan had not repented yet. But the reason for that is more layered than that.

The dynamics of Japanese interior politics majorly contribute to the Koreans' frustration. Together with the revisionist thoughts, the LDP does serve as a major concern for the neighbouring countries, especially when the political actions taken represent these ideologies. As mentioned, most of the LDP members are the decedents of the wartime top political and military leaders, which means that in most cases, the then current imperialist and expansionist (often fascist) ideologies are passed down to the current generations. The manifestation of this orientation is quite subtle though. Apart from visiting the Yasukuni shrine, the political elite holds no other apparent threatening power over Korea or China. Be as it may, the Japanese politicians have learned to use the event of a visit to their advantage, or to willingly provoke the neighbours. The ultraconservative sphere of Japanese politics, and the newly appointed Defense Minister serves a major antagonizing point for the Koreans, as it hinders any chance to move on from the past – at least in the Korean point of view. To understand this point of view, a review of the post-war dealings with the comfort women is at hand.

3.3. Progress through the times

After Japan has paid its tribute to the Korean Government, the Japanese viewed the issue solved forever. It is true, that Japan paid for the crimes, but the Koreans were arguing that

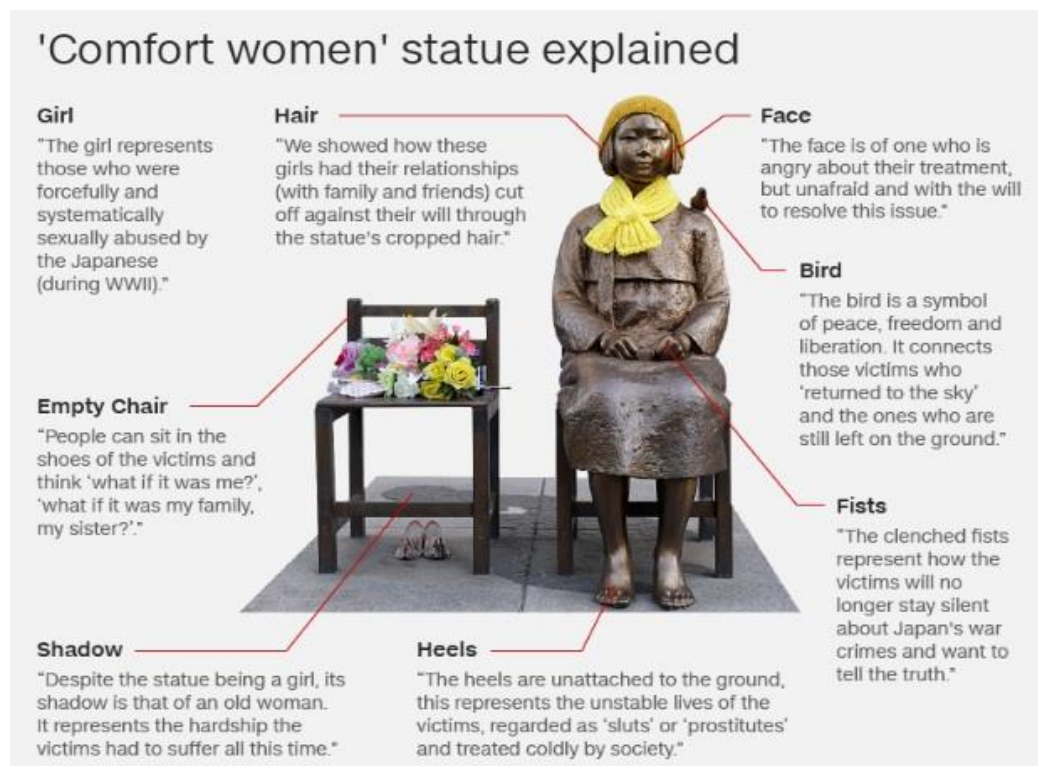
that payment had never seen the comfort women, as it was only paid for the government. The following attitude of the Japanese leadership more or less stayed the same for the next 30 years, but due to the spiritual leadership of Emperor Akihito, who is known to be deeply pacifist, the so-called apology diplomacy was practiced for a long time. This practice became such a compulsory behaviour, that after a time, only the absence of it caused any reaction from the counterparts.

In 1994, Japan made an attempt to satisfy the comfort women, who were more and more eager to share their stories with the world, and established the Asian Women's Fund with the objective of providing the victims with financial aid (Asian Women's Fund, [2007]). The initiative was the idea of no other than Prime Minister Murayama Tomiichi, who became known of the '*Murayama Statement*' with the 50th anniversary speech. In the Murayama Statement, the AWF is also mentioned as a sign of repentance. But the comfort women were once again left dissatisfied. This time the money did land in the hands of the victims, but they argued that this money comes from civilian donors, and did not reflect the remorse of the government. Interestingly enough, this was the point where Asian and Western victims were separated in opinion, because the Dutch victims accepted the money precisely for this feature: the money represented those Japanese, who were feeling responsible and felt bad for the women, therefore the money is coming from sincere emotions (The Asia-Pacific Journal, [2008]). But there were additional problems too. There has been, and still are complaints about the way Japanese educate their children about the 20th century. The history textbooks are indeed affecting negatively the Koreans, as the books interpret the actions of the Imperial Japan in a way, that makes us feel like Japan made no mistake whatsoever. This also means concealing the crimes of the army, including the comfort stations. To raise multiple generations with false interpretation and the aptitude for revisionism is obviously unacceptable to the Far Eastern nations.

The Millennium finally brought core changes in the relations between Japan and South Korea¹⁷. The diplomatic build-up started from the moment the Asian Women's Fund was dissolved in 2007. Back then, it was the first (and very brief) term of Shinzo Abe as a Prime Minister, and for what it is worth, he did commit several diplomatic mistakes, that had turned the relations to its worst. The anger of the remaining comfort women did not

¹⁷ There is a reason, why we only discuss the relations with the South. After the two Koreas were separated, Japan has condemned the North for its repressive regime, and started to ignore the political backwind coming from North Korea regarding this issue. The ROK however, became a major trade partner of Japan, which is why it has always been a top priority to smooth out the tensions between them.

ease, and even after the dissolution of the Fund, they demanded apologies and scrutiny over the history textbooks. Abe, known from his sharp views and ancestral background, for some reason denied the existence of wartime comfort women by stating that there was no evidence found (The Times, [2010]). Despite the earlier government statements of mea culpa, Abe chose to further fuel the anger of the victims. The government was fast in reducing the damage with coming out with an official statement, in which apologies were made. The reason behind this reckless statement is still nowhere to be found. It is possible though, that Abe found it unnecessary to repeatedly stir up the issue, but his judgement was unfortunately poor. Due to other mistakes, Abe was soon relieved from his office, but the victims were not exactly satisfied with that. In 1992, the victims with the help of several civic groups established the practice of the Wednesday demonstrations, which are supposed to aim at the Japanese government for retribution. They gather every Wednesday in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul. After the Abe-incident, the situation escalated, when the demonstrators placed a golden statue of a young girl in front of the embassy, representing all the girls who were forced into sexual slavery.



Picture 1. Explanation of the comfort woman statue in front of the Japanese embassy in Seoul (CNN, [2017])

In retrospective, we can say that the statue has fulfilled its purpose, for it pushed the Japanese government to the point, where it became the utmost priority to reconcile with

South Korea. Of course, there were several other reasons to do so: China's maritime aggression on the South China Sea and the general shaking of power stability in the Far East region drove Japan to start to seriously negotiate with the then-current Prime Minister of the ROK. The (seemingly) final round of the issue was carried out by Prime Ministers Shinzo Abe (for his encore) and Park Geun-Hye. 2015 was the 50th anniversary of the diplomatic normalization between the two countries, which gave the perfect occasion. As a result, a deal was issued on December 28, by which first Abe apologized officially:

„extended his “heartfelt apologies and remorse to all those who suffered immeasurable pain and incurable physical and psychological wounds as comfort women.” He acknowledged that “the honor and dignity of many women were severely injured with the involvement of the Japanese military” and that, “[f]rom this perspective, the Japanese government fully realizes responsibility.” (Forbes, [2016])

Furthermore, the Japanese government paid 1 billion yen to the Korean government's comfort women foundation, and in exchange, Park took an oath to remove the statue from the Japanese Embassy and consider the comfort women issue forever solved. Although the official credit goes to the Abe government for this success, the real work was done by the Japanese Foreign Minister, Kishida Fumio. This extremely long period of negotiations took a diplomatic bravour, which resulted in a true benchmark in the history of Japanese-Korean relations.

And what does the future hold? After such bold statements, the Korean part has still did not fulfill their part of the bargain to this day. More than one year has passed, the Japanese had paid the sum, but the statue of the young girl still stands strong in front of the embassy building. We could ask, why? Japan had decided to put aside its pride and national dignity, even in this turbulent time, when Japanese politics smell of revisionism. Unfortunately, the comfort women find it impossible to consider the issue done, for their lives were forever ruined by the Imperial Army. The history textbooks were also not forgotten: although it was not concluded in the deal to correct them, the victims are still waiting for it to happen. And in this sense, the Japanese government must rely entirely on the victims' decision. The Korean government unfortunately do not have the legislative background or power to make the civil society groups remove the statue, therefore it made a promise to something it has no control over (Forbes, [2016]). And this is where the diplomatic skills are lacking in the Korean counterpart of Foreign Minister Kishida, as Japan made sure to

make only such promises that it can fulfill. In December 2016, PM Abe made a visit in Pearl Harbor for the very first time, where Defense Minister Inada accompanied him. Returning from the States, Inada took the much-feared step to visit the Yasukuni shrine, initiating a new round of dispute in regards the comfort women. Just as if the Koreans were waiting for such mistake, the civil groups erected another golden statue, this time in Busan, in front of the Japanese consulate (CNN, [2017]). The retribution was severe: Japan called back its ambassador to South Korea. The seriousness of this step indicates, that Japan is done with negotiating and complying with Seoul, as it seems like there is no middle ground to be found. And where does this lead us? The comfort women issue has undoubtedly become a political tool for the South Korean government, and a seemingly permanent wound for Japan. Now, with the South Korean PM impeached, the relations might change between the countries, for the better or worse, but it is undeniable, that the region – more so now than ever – needs the two biggest key actors to leave the old disputes behind, and focus on cooperation in the verge of the Chinese emergence, along with the aggression of North Korea.

4. CHINESE RELATIONS

The dynamics between China and Japan has been almost always hectic. In the previous chapters I established some of the effects that China's emergence is causing to Japan. It deals a great pressure on Japan's security and therefore military capabilities, but Beijing's adversary dealings are not exclusively of expansional origin. We could see how the 20th century happenings left a great, seemingly unhealable scar on the Korean nation, and how it influences the political relations in a negative way. This trend can also be found at the Chinese part. As mentioned before, the comfort women system has also been established in the conquered Chinese territories. The atrocities did not only include the institutionalized sex slavery, but the Nanking Massacre and the biological warfare testing are also convincing point to the Chinese to act this way towards the Japanese nation (Kohno & Rosenbluth, [2008]). A considerably worsening aspect is the Nippon Kaigi doctrine, by which the revisionists underestimate or downright deny the facts about the Nanking Massacre. Regarding nationalism in Japan, it has been said, that one of the causing factor is the emergence of China's aggression, but in this sense, it is a confusing though. Which was first: the chicken or the egg? There is no denying, that these events are affecting one another, and that is why I find it important to concentrate on the concrete

actions and the response to them, rather than pondering on who started it first. For that purpose, in this chapter I will focus on the actualities of the 2000s and 2010s, and how these dealings steer the relations between Japan and mainland China.

A strange relation, China and Japan have. After the World War II, due to the legacies of animosity, the diplomatic relations have been only resolved and normalized in 1972, to open the path to a treaty of friendship (Kingston, [2012]). This treaty was of utmost necessity to let go of the Chinese reparation claims regarding the war damages. Ever since then, the Japanese were cashing out major development aid and loan programs to China, which most likely contributed to China's rise as an economic superpower. These aids were only terminated during the Tiananmen Square massacre, but not for long. Ever since, and mostly in the past two decades, news articles about Asia was all about the emergence of China, its rapidly increasing defense spending, its modernization of armed forces and how the Chinese are developing relationships with their neighbours in the region (Kingston, [2012]). Although there are many positive actions taken towards Myanmar and Malaysia through investments and trade, the world's now biggest economy still holds onto many complicated border disputes with the neighbours, creating a very tense environment around it. The most detrimental political friction point developing between China and Japan is the Senkaku Islands conflict. This almost fifty years-long problem is finally coming to its peak, bringing the possibility to reshape the Far-Eastern region's power structure, and to acquire an uncomfortable amount of independence on the Chinese part. To understand the core of the problem, let us examine the history of the Senkaku Islands.

The Senkaku Islands are three small isle¹⁸ located in between Japan, the People's Republic of China and the Republic of China (formerly known as Taiwan). As shown on the second picture, the islands are closest to Taipei. Although the islands are officially part of Japan, as the most western part of Okinawa prefecture, they are only 170 km far from Taiwan's capital city, Taipei.

¹⁸ The three bigger isles are Uotsuri, Kuba and Kitakojima Island, but they are surrounded by five even smaller isles: Taisho, Minamikojima, Okinokitaiwa, Okinominamiwa and Tobise Island (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, [2015]).



Picture 2. Map of the Senkaku Islands and their competitors (BBC, [2014])

Both China and Taiwan placed claims for the islands, therefore all three of the countries have different names for them. While the Chinese call them the Diaoyu Islands, the Taiwanese call them Tiaoyutai, but in the eyes of the international administration, they are called the Senkaku Islands. This territory has always been uninhabited: there was a short period of time in the early 1900s, when a Japanese businessman had tried to establish a fish-trading post, but since its bankruptcy in the 1940s, no one has been living there. According to their claim, the islands were discovered in the 15th century by the Chinese, but the Japanese have ownership upon them since 1895 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, [2015]). After the World War II, as Japan was occupied by the United States government, the islands were also placed under American control. In 1971, the Okinawa Reversion Treaty was passed, giving back the islands to the governance of Japan.

The main question is: if the islands are so small and uninhabited, then why would the Chinese claim these lands? The answer mirrors the very nature of the post-war political strategies. In 1968, the United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East found out, that the territory is covering quite large oil reserves (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, [2015]). The oil shocks in the '70s made the East Asian countries (especially Japan and China) realize, how vulnerable they are energy security-wise. China

is relying heavily on the oil trade with the Middle-East, as China is one of the biggest oil consumer country in the world (Fábián, [2015]). To acquire a source so close to the mainland is geopolitically crucial. Not only would it make it easier to the Chinese to get oil, but also it would lift their dependence on the Middle-Eastern countries, giving them quite the advantage. And not only regarding energy. By taking control of the islands, China would expand its exclusive economic zone, gaining additional territory for fishing purposes. The islands geopolitical position is also prominent, as they lay close to the South-East Asian maritime trading routes (Fábián, [2015]).

As soon as the American government gave the islands back to the Japanese government in 1971, the Chinese placed their claim right away, but more serious steps were only taken after the Millennium. After 2012, the Chinese started to harass the islands by getting closer and closer to its shores with military vessels and sending ballistic missiles towards the islands' way. In big picture, some analysts tried to find the reason for such an escalation in political relations, and some associated the failure to respond properly to the turbulence in the matter of head of states after the start of the Heisei era (Gannon & Sahashi, [2015]). The pattern of weak leadership did not only hampered communication and trust between the two countries, but it turned out to be major vulnerability both security-wise and in the political sphere. Asian cultures tend to keep thinking in long terms in high regard, so changing PMs every year for decades can make Japan look unreliable to Asian countries. China was fast to act upon this weakness and take advantage of Japan being unable to retaliate.

In November 2013, China has set up the East China Air Defense Identification Zone, which means a new Chinese territory has been created in a completely unilateral way (BBC, [2014]). The growing aggression did not escape the attention of the international media. The provocations also put the States under pressure, as the US is deeply against any change in the power balance, but the loan ties with China prevented them to make any harsh action regarding this dispute. The United States, along with the Japanese government, chose to ignore the establishment of this Identification Zone, but the Chinese were never meant to stop at this point. A military escalation as such is deeply concerning for the American part, as Japan clearly do not have enough navy capacity to counterbalance the Chinese expansion. Therefore, the responsive unofficial statement of the States was that Washington would defend Japan in the event of armed attacks (Fábián,

[2015]). The base of this promise can be traced back to the Occupation, for the security alliance states, that in exchange for the Okinawan military bases, the States would defend Japan in an event of attack. This includes the Senkaku Islands too. But despite this conformation, the U.S. administration did not mobilize its forces to react to the Chinese expansion, which is why Abe Shinzō took the liberty to initiate the much disputed new security legislation. And this step can be labeled as justified, if China's further South China Sea activities are considered. The Senkakus were only the beginning, as China soon joined in the contest for the Spratly Islands, claimed by Vietnam, the Philippines, Taiwan, Brunei and Malaysia (Encyclopaedia Britannica, [2015b]). These geopolitically crucial islands are the biggest habitat of the approximately 11 billion barrels of oil and 190 trillion cubic feet of natural gas (not to mention the rich fishing grounds and the important position through the trade routes) in the South China Sea (Council on Foreign Relations, [2017]). Although per international law, the seas are open for freedom of navigation, Beijing implemented similar procedures, as in the case of the Senkaku Islands. In the past few years, the Chinese military has built three artificial airstrips, deployed fighter jets, cruise missiles and adapted new radar systems without consulting the international community. This process has been dubbed by the experts as the militarization of the South China Sea.

Besides the attempts to further enhance the Self-Defense Forces, PM Abe has been increasingly vocal about the reinforcement of the United Nations Convention on the Law of Sea¹⁹, and the need for international cooperation on pushing back Chinese military assertiveness. To maintain the regional status quo, in the past few years Japan has been working on strengthening the military ties with other South East Asian countries, such as the Philippines and Vietnam. The new defense budget aims at military technology, to help the cooperation with technology transfer (European Union Institute for Security Studies, [2016]). The arms and technology transfer, along with the Official Development Aid (ODA) loans targeting capacity building are meant to contribute to the region's proactive peace-keeping agenda. Choosing the Philippines as a main partner regarding the ODA loans can be criticized, as the current president, Rodrigo Duterte became infamous for his bloody war on drug. But the choice seems to be logical, as back in 2013, Manila called for arbitration from The Hague upon China, for disregarding the UNCLOS with the territorial

¹⁹ The United Nations Convention on the Law of Sea (UNCLOS) grants 200 nautical miles as an exclusive economic zone, or EEZ, from a countries coast (Encyclopaedia Britannica, [2015]). This secures extended fishing territory for each country. Every sea territory above 200 nautical miles has the freedom to navigate.

claims and its nine-dash demarcation line, which meant to interfere with the Philippines' EEZ (Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, [2015]). The court ruled in favor of Manila – but Beijing decided to disregard the ruling, because they found it null and void (The Guardian, [2016]). However, with the start of the Duterte era, a foreign policy shift is under way, as the Philippines is concentrating its attention more on China as a partner, rather than the US. This shift ultimately makes the regional order uncertain, along with the stature of Japan, the most important ally of the States. With China's pivot to the South China Sea, relations with Japan are shaky, and it will stay shaky until both sides keep using these events to whip up nationalist sentiments against each other. The recent increase in Japan's defense budget indicates, that there is a small chance that Japan can repair relations with China in the future. If we consider this recent Chinese military buildup, and add to it the North Korean nuclear threat, we can finally answer the ultimate question: why would Japan think of remilitarization? But before I elaborate on this finding, it is important to examine two more countries, who have major affiliation with Japan.

5. TRANSREGIONAL ACTORS IN THE FAR EAST

In this chapter, I will present the influence of transregional actors in the Far East, related to Japan. In this context, I define the word 'transregional', as actors originally located in another region, that are highly active in the Far East, and has some kind of relation with Tokyo. This definition refers to two main actors, that cannot be disregarded, when talking about the foreign relations of Japan.

5.1. The Bear and the Sun

Russia is the sole quasi-European actor, that can be present in the Far East without crossing its borders. For centuries, due to its proximity, the Russian Empire had identified itself as a European power, but a kind of duality was always a feature of the Russians. This is also represented in Russia's coat of arms, that depicts an eagle with two heads, symbolizing the forever restlessness and need to watch the Western and Easter borders (Geopolitical Futures, [2017]). Geopolitically speaking, Russia's advantage and disadvantage comes from the same property, a.k.a. its lack of warm water outlet. The Northern borders are secured thanks to the harsh environment and the sea, therefore Russia was eager to secure all the other borders to the West with creating buffer zones, or

buffer countries. This was possible with the Soviet Union in the 20th century (and even before that, in the age of the Holy Alliance), but the dissolution of it brought many insecurities to the Russians. The race for natural resources brought in Russia too, which lead to the current sour relations with Japan.

In 1786, Russian Empress, Catherine the Great claimed ownership on the area to the Russian Empire's Eastern borders, the so-called Southern Kurils (The Japan Times, [2016b]). This area consists of 56 islands, that were attached to Japan in 1855, when the two countries had drawn the borders between them. In these terms, the emphasis is on the two bigger islands, Etorofu and Kunashiri, with the two islet groups named Shikotan and Habomai. These islands have economic, strategic, and geopolitical value. They are rich in mineral resources, hot springs and they lie on the meeting point of cold and warm currents, making it exceptionally potent for fishing (The Japan Times, [2016b]). In 1875, the sovereignty over the islands, and the whole chain was officially given to Tokyo, in exchange for the handover of the Sakhalin Islands. During the World War II, the fate of the islands changed as the Soviet Union occupied the Northern Territories right after the bombing of Hiroshima. Japan considers this act illegal to this day, but the official Russian standpoint is that the islands were taken rightfully as spoils of the war (The Japan Times, [2016a]). The San Francisco Treaty states that Japan lost its sovereignty over the Kuril Islands, but the USSR cannot have them either (The Japan Times, [2009]). The base of dispute is, that according to Tokyo, the four mentioned islands are not part of the Kuril Islands. The situation therefore is not clear.

This event put a major strain on the relations of the two, because the seizing of the Kurils became a reason for not concluding the Peace Treaty between them. For obvious reasons, the failure of concluding the WWII Peace Treaty prevents the two countries of cooperating on a normal level, and creates enough diplomatic conundrum to force them to return to the negotiating table from time to time. And this is where the difference shows up between the Senkaku and the Kuril Islands dispute. While the Senkakus are uninhabited, the sovereignty is easy to misinterpret, but the Kuril Islands are home to approximately 17 000 Japanese citizens (The Japan Times, [2016b]).



Picture 3. Japanese - the Northern Territories, Russian - the Southern Kurils (RT, [2014], edited)

The Russian authority therefore creates unrest not only among the Japanese administration, but the inhabitants too. Regarding the negotiations, the first Russian offer arrived in 1956 from Nikita Krushchev, including only the two smaller islet group, Shikotan and Habomai in exchange for the peace treaty (The Japan Times, [2016b]). In 1956, in the heat of the Cold War, the American influence in the region was still forming the political strategies of Japan, which is why the offer was turned down. The first real talks were initiated by – not surprisingly – Nakasone Yasuhiro and Mikhail Gorbachev in 1986. The negotiations were not successful this time also, as Gorbachev’s premiership soon came to an end. The second and third round during the ‘90s brought similar results, as domestic disorder and scandals disrupted the politicians on both sides. Knowing the Japanese political circumstances in the ‘90s and 2000s, it should not be a surprise, that until the Abe administration came into power, no substantial proceeding was brought about. The same goes to Vladimir Putin on the Russian side: he was the one, who issued the militarization of the islands at the beginning of the 2010s. The question became crucial to solve. Complying with the rules of the polling politics, PM Abe only took action after the cabinet reshuffle: high on the approval polls and reinforced with a revisionist Defense Minister. Before the August 4th reshuffle, Abe prepared the radical shift in foreign policy by announcing the “*new approach*” in dealing with the Kuril dispute with Putin in May

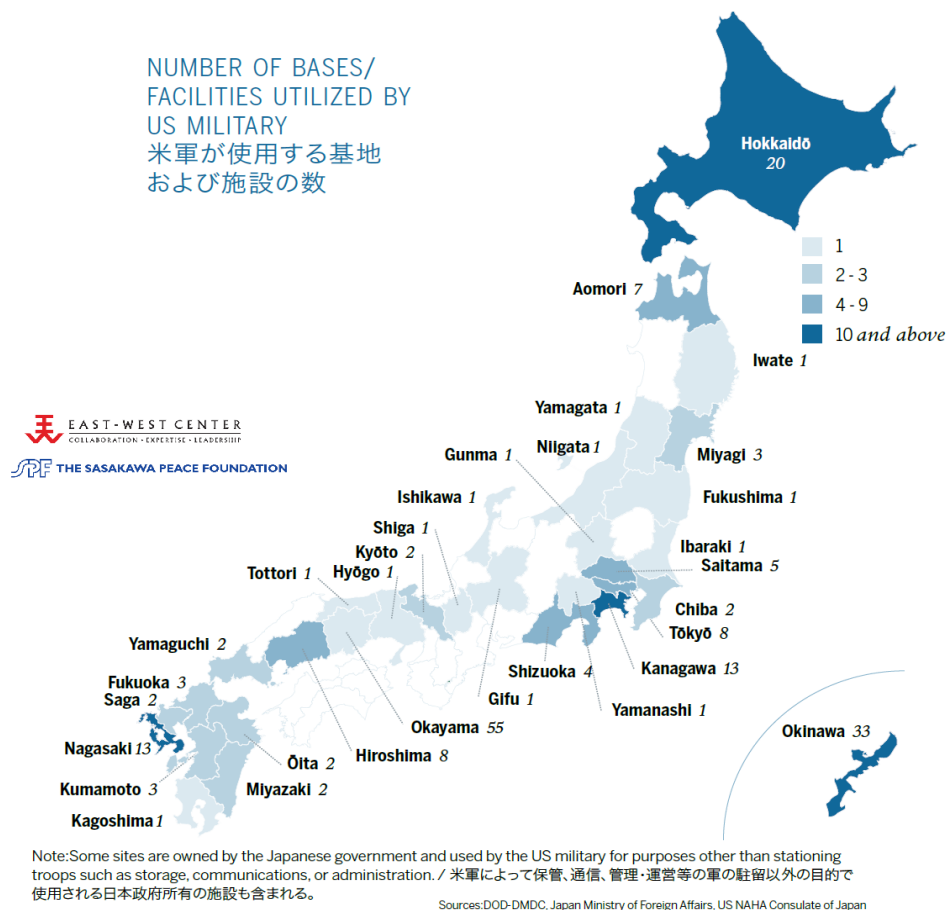
(The Diplomat, [2016b]). The contents and course line of the new approach agenda was never revealed, but Abe indicated several times, that he intends to conclude this dispute, the same way he did with the comfort women issue in 2015. The follow-up of the meeting later that year was an official visit by President Putin in Japan. Despite the heightened expectations, the meeting was not only utterly unsuccessful, but Abe came out of the negotiations with less than he had before. The joint statement noted that no decisive action will be taken on the territorial issue, but tighter economic cooperation can be expected in the form of Japanese investment in the energy and healthcare sectors (The Diplomat, [2016c]). The premiers were also making plans for the future with establishing a special economic zone for the disputed islands. This zone would mean Russian law enforcement in sectors such as tourism, culture, and fishing. From the Japanese point of view, this scenario would be naturally out of question, because this would mean that the Japanese citizens would pay taxes for the Russian state.

The main question is: how did Abe lose so much from his posture? What kind of future awaits regarding Russo-Japanese relations? It is true, that PM Abe was relatively in a safe domestic position when he initiated the talks, but he underestimated the consequences of the two-year long EU-led sanctioning of Russia for the annexation of the Crimea. During these two years of isolating Russia both politically and economically, Abe's international and geopolitical position has changed for the worse. The pressure from China, and the collapse of the comfort women deal with South Korea pushed Japan's position back in the regional power structure enough, to deprive Abe of real trump cards during the negotiations. This is only reinforced with the questionable attitude of the new American president towards the East Asian region. With the possible end of the U.S. pivot to Asia, Japan's influence and strength can weaken by the reduced American interest in the region. On the other hand, Putin's position is increasingly favorable, due to the American rapprochement and the intensifying cooperation with China. In these power relations, it is unusually important, that Japan joined forces with the EU on the sanctions, for Putin's offence can shape Japan's position and level of security. The end result of the Abe-Putin meeting confirms my earlier assumption, namely that the power structure of the Far Eastern region is fundamentally changing. Although, until this point, Russia was a small player in the region, with its emerging military activity and its close alliance with China, the U.S. as a regional player might be excluded gradually. The future is uncertain. Putin stated several times that Russia will not trade territories, and Japan does not have any

leverage to force him (except concluding of the Peace Treaty) (The Diplomat, [2016b]). In this dispute, one again, the *gaiatsu* has the power over Japanese foreign policy, no matter what PM Abe's position is.

5.2. The Bald Eagle and the Sun

Lastly, the most prominent actor in Japan's catchment area is, and has been for over 70 years, is the United States. Although the U.S. does not have legal territory in the East Asian region, it is unquestionably a major regional power. The base of this power is its permanent presence, that is secured by the American military bases all around Japan. In the previous chapters I elaborated on the post-war events, that helped the settling of the U.S. forces in Japan.



Picture 4. Number of U.S. military bases in Japan (Asia Matters for America, [2015])

The World War II, and more precisely the San Francisco Peace Treaty granted the privilege to the American forces to acquire the islands in Okinawa Prefecture, south to Kyūshū, where according to the agreement between the two countries, the U.S. army

became able to establish military bases, and permanently keep troops there (Kingston, [2012]). Although the sovereignty of the islands was officially returned to the Japanese administration in 1972, the bases and the troops were left untouched. As seen on the map above (Picture 4.), Okinawa is still the most populated by military bases to this day by the highest number of 33 of American bases and facilities. There are multiple reasons why Okinawa was chosen. The first reason is the fact, that at the end of the war, the last battles were based in Okinawa. The second reason proves a strategic mind behind the selection.



Picture 5. The strategic location of Okinawa (The Heritage Foundation, [2009])

The same way, as the Kuril Islands serve as a strategic point to the Russian Federation, Okinawa is meant to be a watchdog for the Far Eastern region security-wise. The geographical proximity to Taiwan (Republic of China), South Korea (which is another major American ally) and Guam shown on the map (Picture 5.) gives a huge military

advantage to the States in the event of an assault. Given the obligations of the U.S. army in case of an attack on Japan, the bases are very much needed. President Obama, who was fearful of the Chinese “*adventurism*” has also reinforced this statement, and explained it as a major concern that clearly destabilizes the post-war regional order carefully fostered by the States (Canon Institute for Global Studies, [2016]). The dynamics of this military relationship suggests, that the military-wise crippled Japan is outsourcing its defense²⁰, bearing with key advantages – but the reality shows symptoms of discontent.

The current number of American troops is approximately 49 000 – 38 000 of which are ground forces and 11 000 are part of the navy (Fábián, [2015]). Regarding this huge amount of personnel, the most serious unrest is to be found in Okinawa, linked to the Futenma Air Base. The complaints against Futenma and the American presence are varying, many of which are against the noise pollution, the obvious fear of crashes, and most importantly the crimes committed by the Americans stationing there (Global Security, [2013]). The air base is located at the heart of Ginowan city, so the soldiers and the personnel serving there is not separated from the locals. The base restricts the city in more than one way: infrastructure cannot be developed to a normal level and the homes of the civilians must be kept at a certain height to help the activities of the airplanes. Aside from general consequences, there were several murder incidents and accidents in the past, that raised the local sentiments to a great level, big enough to induce demonstrations for the relocation of the air base. One of these demonstrations were held when a 12 years old school girl was raped by a soldier in 1995. The demonstrations were silenced by a major land deal (and the concerns for China), by which the U.S. army was obliged to give back some of the area of the air base to the city. Another case was the tragic event when a fishing ship, the Ehime Maru boarded by high schoolers was sunk by an emerging submarine (Fábián, [2015]). A very recent murder incident had also caused major rallies in Okinawa, when an ex-marine raped and murdered a 20 years old Okinawan woman (Al-Jazeera, [2016]). As a response, the Okinawan bases initiated restrictions on the soldiers’ off-duty activities, but the adverse emotions never disappeared.

These protests inflict problems not only on local level. The governor of Okinawa, Onaga Takeshi had come to embrace the wishes of the locals, and has been the advocate for the relocation of the air base ever since he entered office. His willingness to even go to court with the central government has put a strain between the two, causing quite the domestic

²⁰ Including the nuclear umbrella against North Korea.

disturbance. On the other hand, the demands of the Okinawans urged the U.S. forces to agree with the Abe administration on the relocation of Futenma to Nago city, further away from the centrum, but still not as far as the locals would want to (Fábián, [2015]). The relocation has financial costs, but it also weakens the American influence in the region, as the constructions and the adversary against the troops keeps the Americans occupied. With the decreasing territory, many observers talk about the role of the U.S. diminishing too. The fights with the local government can influence the capacity of the army, and that can unnecessarily weaken the U.S. position in the region, which is most likely one of the few elements, that restrains China's ascendancy at a certain level. But that is not the case regarding North Korea. Many of past Japanese politicians had already pointed out the inefficiency of the American nuclear umbrella against the North Korean threat. And the concerns are fairly grounded. Ever since the '90s, the North developed the custom to express its discontent with Japan (and other countries too) through launching ballistic missiles towards the country or its EEZ. This custom is becoming increasingly dangerous for Japan, because in March 2017, a missile had already reached Japan's EEZ, and later even the Sea of Japan, indicating a serious development in the North Korean nuclear technology (Al-Jazeera, [2017]). The situation is even more troubling considering Japan's inability to protect itself with the barely capable Self-Defense Forces, but the fact that even the stationing U.S. forces do not seem to prepare countermeasures is painting a dark future for Japan.

6. OUTCOMES AND CONCLUSION

The main question is: where does this leave us? To what direction is Japan going towards? I listed several elements so far that could have caused the emergence of a more radical nationalism, revisionism, and the overall development towards a possible remilitarization in Japan. The flow of the post-war domestic and foreign policies shows that there is a tangible change of trends in security policy in Japan. Almost the entirety of the Cold War era was built on the Yoshida Doctrine, that summoned an inactive foreign policy, focusing the country's resources on the restoration and development after the devastation of the war. The base of this Doctrine was the established pacifism, that swept through the country. The shocks of the atomic bombing helped pacifism to not only spread among the society, but the general policies of the government were heavily affected by it too. The overprotected security environment provided by the American presence nurtured

the Yoshida principles for over 30 years. The Doctrine helped the country to make up for the military deficit by performing miraculously on economic grounds, thus strengthening the country's position in the global economic arena. But this relatively peaceful period gave birth to several problematic elements, that are still influencing the dynamics of not only the political sphere, but also the regional relations. One of these elements is the Article 9 of the constitution, that prevents Japan from maintaining effective army, navy, and air force, thus relieving Japan from the sovereignty to use military force. The Article has been influencing Japanese politics ever since its implementation, but the Yoshida Doctrine and the American pressure had prevented the prime ministers from putting the question of amending it to national agenda. This phenomenon, the reliance on outside forces was dubbed *gaiatsu* – a trend that spread its roots deep in the foreign politics of Japan. Both *gaiatsu* and the domestic policies were utilized and formed in order to maintain the status quo in the foreign relations of Japan. The most prominent foreign policy that helped this strategy was the custom of apology diplomacy. The normalization of diplomatic relations with China and South Korea was possible with the will for repentance and apologetic rhetoric carried out towards these nations in regards of the horrors of the World War II, inflicted by the Japanese Imperial Army.

The doubts towards these elements had become more pronounced in the mid-1980's, as the bipolar world order had started to crumble. The enter of Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro introduced new thoughts regarding the Yoshida Doctrine and the Article 9. Nakasone has used the platforms given to express his discontent about Japan's international role, and the regional perception of Japan, which did not improve in the eyes of China and the Koreas, despite exercising apology diplomacy. The ideologies he represented became the core tenets of the growing nationalist and revisionist wave. At the same time, the '80s were the starting point of the Yasukuni politics, which accelerated the comfort women issue with South Korea, and eventually became a staple foreign policy strategy of the revisionist politicians. The Shinto shrine has the power to negatively influence the relations with the ROK and China to this day, thus, along with the earlier apology diplomacy, we can refer to it as a strong advocate of the government leadership. Many Japanese premiers were and are criticized heavily for visiting the shrine, because it might be interpreted as the PM is revisionist and do not accept Japan's past crimes as true facts. Both PM Nakasone's and PM Koizumi's term was poisoned by these accusations, but they were reluctant to let go of this custom, for they have not accept their diplomatic

utility. The current prime minister, Abe Shinzō however realized the negative effect of these visits, and chose to avoid it, in order to improve relations with the neighbours. It is unquestionable though, that Abe thinks of it as a foreign policy tool, and from time to time, the Abe administration chooses to express its opinion through a visit by a cabinet member. We have seen in Chapter 2, 3, and 4, how these visits swayed the relations with Japan for the worse.

Along with the Yasukuni controversy, another important political factor is the Nippon Kaigi, the country's biggest revisionist societal group. The group's unconcealed objective is the elimination of the Article 9, the restructuring of the political order to a true imperial monarchy with the Emperor on top, and the re-education of the society to Japanese supremacy. Considering the group's involvement in Japanese politics, and its strong and false viewpoint on regional history, it cannot be disregarded when assessing Japanese foreign policy. This is even more so true when analyzing Prime Minister Abe Shinzō's policies. Although Abe is a member of the group, and he did try to carry out some of the Kaigi's goals (like the history textbook reform) in his first term as a prime minister, but from 2012 he turned his attention to less of a revisionist goals. Although PM Abe's ultimate goal is reportedly the amendment of Article 9, his political measures indicates a far sophisticated driving force behind it than pure revisionism. His 6 years in office is the prime example for pragmatism. His plan to revive the economy, and the way he utilizes the modern trends and tools of Japanese politics like polling politics, Yasukuni politics and apology diplomacy is a clear sign of a hardline pragmatic turn in Japanese politics. It is important to emphasize, that there is a gap between Abe's pragmatism and the Nippon Kaigi's revisionist ideologies, widening year-by-year. Many accuse Abe for his Kaigi membership and possible revisionism, but in fact, some of his policies clearly contradict the Kaigi's viewpoints, such as the constant wish to repair and enhance the relations with South Korea and China. His pragmatic policies are manifesting a long arrow, filled with steps towards the ultimate goal, the normalization of Japan. Obviously, these steps include solving four key problems, that has been around since the 1980's and even earlier: the detrimental demographic disaster (low birthrate, aging population, deforming social cohesion), the economic slump (low productivity, weak entrepreneurship, lack of women involvement), bad relations with regional actors, and the national security unfit for recent regional developments.

The original question still remains: is there, or will there be remilitarization in Japan? If we follow through the topics and statements of the chapters, the simplest answer is: yes. Would that whip up aggressive militarism? Probably not. The long answer for that is obviously more sophisticated. Since the beginning of the Heisei era, there is a tangible shift (not only) in Japanese civil sentiment and political aims. After the death of Emperor Hirohito and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, an era has been closed. An era, where Japan could separate politics and economics, where Japan could manage without any substantial (national) defense system, and an era, where other regional players (more or less) respected Japan's wish to exist as a completely pacifist country. But China's extending military assertiveness, the exponentially growing North Korean nuclear threat, the reluctant territory disputes with China and the Russian Federation, and the diminishing regional role of the United States gave birth to serious identity questions both on societal and political level. In the past 25 years, we could see the prolonged struggle, in which Japan is trying to stay pacifist by preventing the government from developing the military capacities of Japan, but the outside forces, the *gaiatsu*, is putting too much pressure on the governments through these regional developments. While it was the economic failures, that called forth the pragmatic turn in Japanese politics, the Millennium quickly draw the attention to security issues. Since 2015, it is the high time for evolving power relations, and time is too short for pondering on the effects of revisionism. Prime Minister Abe Shinzō most likely realized the urgency of these threats and bypassed the intricacy of a possible amendment of the peace clause, and chose to enhance and modify the already existing security framework regarding the Self-Defense Forces and the national defense budget. And with the increasing missile threat from North Korea, the situation is sure to escalate. With today's Far Eastern political climate, it appears inevitable, that Japan needs to internalize at least some aspects of militarism in order to survive. At this point, it is up to the society to accept the move from the rigid policies of the Cold War period, and try to adapt to the challenges of the new century.

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