

The Power of Politics:  
How Right-Wing Political Parties Shifted Japanese Strategic Culture

Kate Wexler  
International Affairs Program  
University of Colorado, Boulder

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Honors Thesis Defense Committee

Dr. Gregory Young, *Primary Thesis Advisor*

Department of Political Science

Dr. Douglas Snyder, *Honors Council Representative*

International Affairs Program

Dr. Miriam Kingsberg Kadia, *Thesis Committee Member*

Department of History

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## Abstract

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Japanese defense policy is often described as “pacifist,” despite the fact that Japan’s government possesses the fourth-largest military in the world. Conservative politicians like Prime Minister Shinzo Abe advocate for “normalizing” Japan by reforming Article 9 of The Constitution of Japan and converting the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) into a functional military. This research assumes that a shift occurred in Japan’s post-Cold War strategic culture, defined as a set of long-standing beliefs, values, and habits regarding the threat and use of force (Booth and Trood 1999). Within Japan’s overarching antimilitarist strategic culture exists left-wing, centrist, and right-wing parties that differ in their approach to defense policy. Prime Minister Abe represents the right-wing political subculture that advocates for Japan’s involvement in multilateral security institutions. This research will attempt to answer why right-wing politicians can deviate from Article 9’s definition of self-defense, given Japan’s long-standing antimilitarism. Using public opinion surveys conducted by the Cabinet Office of the Prime Minister and newspaper articles published in *The New York Times* and *The Yomiuri Shimbun*, this qualitative analysis demonstrates that domestic and political support for revising Article 9 and expanding SDF capabilities shifted from the 1960s to the 2010s. This research also found that Japan’s right-wing political parties are responsible for this shift. Both of these conclusions are important for understanding Japan’s role in regional and international security activities moving forward.

*Keywords:* Japan, Security Culture, Defense, Article 9, Self Defense Forces

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## Introduction

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On November 19, 2019, Japan announced that it would upgrade its Maritime Self-Defense Force's *Izumo* helicopter to capabilities that include carrying fighter jets. This announcement came after the Ministry of Defense requested a record 5.3 trillion yen for the 2020 fiscal year (Kelly, 2019). The decision was not surprising, since Japan's security capabilities increasingly expanded outside the scope required for self-defense in the last ten years.

During the Allied Occupation in Japan, General Douglas MacArthur created a provision banning Japanese military force for any purpose, including national security. This provision became Article 9 of Japan's constitution, or the peace clause. Following the start of the Korean War, however, the Yoshida administration created the militarized Self-Defense Forces (SDF), which permitted exclusive defense or no use except in the defense of Japan. This historical context is necessary for understanding Japan's strategic culture, defined as a lasting set of beliefs, values, and habits regarding the threat and use of force, which have their roots in geopolitical setting, history and political culture (Booth and Trood 1999). In this case, Japan's strategic culture embraces domestic antimilitarism, meaning that Japan's institutionalized strategic norms prevent it from pursuing military capabilities outside what is necessary for self-defense. This security culture established Japan's distinct security identity, or a widely held set of principles on the acceptable scope of state policies, that limit the extent to which politicians can deviate from these norms (Oros 2014). Japan's security identity is also based on the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the U.S. and Japan, ratified in 1951 and resigned in 1960. Article V of the treaty ensures that U.S. forces will defend Japan against armed attacks and Article VI gives the U.S. authority to maintain military bases in Japan. The Mutual Security

Treaty ensures that Japan is responsible for its self-defense only, while the U.S. is responsible for deterrence in the region. Therefore, historically, politicians in Japan were limited in the scope of their strategic decisions by both institutionalized norms and legal obligations.

Despite this historical context, today, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe strongly advocates for “normalizing” Japan by reforming Article 9 and converting the SDF into a functional military. Japan has already increased its military spending significantly since 2014, and in 2018, the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) proposed removing Japan’s one percent defense spending cap. Within Japan’s overarching strategic culture exists left-wing, centrist, and right-wing parties that differ in their approach to defense policy. Prime Minister Abe represents the right-wing political subculture that advocates for Japan’s involvement in multilateral security institutions. This research will attempt to answer why the Prime Minister can deviate from Article 9’s definition of self-defense given Japan’s long-standing antimilitarism.

Policymakers are expanding the options for the SDF and Japan’s contribution to security institutions and regional conflict resolution. Therefore, understanding politicians’ motivations for creating this shift in decision-making is necessary to assess whether Japan will maintain the status quo or take a more active role in regional and international security activities. Considering Japan’s highly skilled defense forces, this policy shift would likely create tension with South Korea, the People’s Republic of China (PRC), and Russia, surrounding nations formerly victimized by Japan’s militaristic past. Both Japan’s alliance with the United States and role in the international community could evolve significantly over time, should it decide to expand its military presence.

This paper will prove why Japan is experiencing a shift in defense policy given its established strategic culture using the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis a) Japan's defense policy moved away from domestic antimilitarism toward the possibility for military strategies beyond the scope of self-defense.

Hypothesis b) A shift in strategic culture among key subcultures caused this shift in defense policy.

The independent variable measured is change taking place in Japan's strategic culture, due to the influence of Japan's right-wing political parties. The dependent variable is Japanese defense policy over time.

## Historical Background

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Japan's physical location and lack of natural resources produced three distinct strategic cultures in modern history. First, Japan maintained an isolationist and non-military strategic policy until Western powers forced open its borders in the 1850s. This produced a second security identity characterized by imperialism from 1868 to 1945, during which Japan waged four major wars and annexed Korea in 1910. Legal norms favored the military, which held a privileged position in society and among the general public. According to the 1889 constitution, the Japanese emperor held supreme command over the Army, effectively limiting the extent to which the military possessed political control. However, an economic crisis and Japan's declining relations with the West produced a rise in ultra-nationalism, leading the military to take control of Japan's government and fight World War II under the leadership of Prime Minister and General Hideki Tojo. In 1945, the Allied Powers dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, effectively ending World War II and forcing Japan to relinquish its militaristic identity.

Following World War II, Japan entered into its third era of strategic identity: domestic antimilitarism. The Allied Occupation in Japan lasted from 1945 to 1952, during which General Douglas MacArthur, Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers, sought demilitarization and decentralized power in Japan, and imposed a new constitution of Japan that is still used today. This constitution included Article 9, which denies Japan the right to military operations of any kind. However, American and Japanese officials later agreed that Article 9 did not deny Japan the right to self-defense, causing Japan to establish the SDF in 1954. Japan's defeat and physical destruction allowed it to "develop a global 'brand' as a peace-loving contributor to the



international community” (Oros 2014). Although Japan established the SDF at the request of the U.S., in 1954, it maintains that these forces serve self-defense and humanitarian purposes only.

Since World War II, Japan has ranked highly among other countries in terms of its image abroad, with the exception of China and South Korea (Oros 2014, p. 232). This is likely due to war memory of Japan’s colonization practices in Manchuria and Korea and other atrocities committed during World War II. Long-standing domestic opposition to the military and Japan’s alliance with the United States also significantly shaped Japan’s security culture. The fact that United States military bases remain in Japan and continue to operate alongside the SDF suggest that Japan has little need for its own standing military.

Despite these developments, Prime Minister Abe’s efforts to revise Article 9 and Japan’s participation in American-led reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq suggest that Japan is entering a fourth era of security identity (Oros 2014). In terms of military capability, Japan currently possesses the fourth-largest military in the world. It also continues to increase its cooperation with security institutions like ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) and works closely with U.S. military forces. Therefore, it is reasonable to label Japan’s security identity as currently in transition from domestic antimilitarism to performing a larger security role globally.

## Literature Review

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### Strategic Culture Theory

The basis of my research rests on the constructivist theory of strategic culture, or the set of long-standing beliefs and values regarding the use of force. The theory of strategic culture was first coined by Jack Snyder in his 1977 book *The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Limited Nuclear Operations*. In the 1970s, the United States announced that it would increase the flexibility of its strategic targeting plans against the Soviet Union by developing pre-planned nuclear options to replace the multitude of options that currently existed. Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger claimed that more selective nuclear options would “limit the chance of uncontrolled escalation” if deterrence failed. The U.S. identified two kinds of scenarios to underscore the benefits of a flexible security policy. The first, a suicide-or-surrender scenario, assumed that a Soviet counterforce strike would avoid targets near U.S. urban-industrial areas and that the U.S. could either respond in a similar fashion or do nothing. The second scenario assumed that a conventional Soviet attack could not be turned back by conventional means alone. Snyder argues that these scenarios require the need to reassess Soviet attitudes toward nuclear conflict, meaning that the rationale for using nuclear strikes to deter the Soviet Union depends on the probable Soviet response (restraint or counterattack).

The goal of Snyder’s paper is to analyze whether historical and cultural contexts influence Soviet attitudes towards nuclear conflict. Snyder does this by analyzing attitudes expressed in Soviet military statements and professional writings using the theoretical framework of strategic culture. Here, Snyder defines culture as the “sum total of ideas, conditioned emotional responses, and patterns of habitual behavior that members of a national

strategic community have acquired” (8). He also identifies the notion of strategic subcultures, or a “subsection of the broader strategic community with reasonably distinct beliefs and attitudes on strategic issues” (10). Subcultures account for dualism in Soviet thinking, with certain leaders supporting deterrence and others supporting war. In his analysis, Snyder identifies various factors that influence Soviet strategic thinking and cause it to differ significantly from that of U.S. strategic thinking. These factors include its position relative to Europe, asymmetries in civil defense and population, historical legacies after World War II, and the role of its military in developing policy. Snyder therefore concludes that there exists a distinct Soviet strategic culture based on unique historical, political, and institutional experiences. These institutionalized norms created a Soviet preference for unilateral damage-limiting strategies in the form of unrestrained counterforce strikes, should deterrence fail in conflict resolution. This differs from U.S. strategic thinking, which prefers a cooperative strategy of mutual restraint and interwar deterrence. However, Snyder recognizes a Soviet subculture exists that doubts the possibility of meaningful victory in nuclear war, demonstrating that strategic culture is not universal. Snyder identifies that the importance of strategic culture lies in not assuming Soviet decision-makers will always conform to American strategic rationality. Snyder’s hypotheses applied to Soviet nuclear policy specifically, but other authors broadened this definition to include historical and institutional contexts that determine why all countries respond to security threats differently.

Thomas Berger and Peter Katzenstein later applied the theory of strategic culture to Germany and Japan. Both countries are unique in the field of security studies, considering their successful transition from military states to peaceful democracies. This concept is particularly fascinating for strategic culture theorists, for it provides an example of war and foreign occupation framing domestic views on military force. Thomas Berger argues that the defeat of

both countries in World War II invalidated common beliefs surrounding the use of force within Germany and Japan, causing them to switch from unilateral-expansionist strategic cultures to antimilitarist strategic cultures. Berger finds that strategic culture is not continuous, but rather a default belief system regarding the range of possible strategic choices, based on domestic and international environments.

Katzenstein, in turn, describes how Japan's domestic antimilitarism resulted from institutionalized norms that limit the range of choices leaders can make regarding national security. Constructivism, or the use of norms to explain Japan's strategic behavior, is more useful than realism or liberalism for several reasons. First, realists are too restrictive in treating Japan as a unified and rational state, rather than a pluralistic society with organizations and individuals supporting different agendas. Realists would argue that changes in the international distribution of power would produce significant changes in Japan's national security policy, but there is no evidence to support this. Additionally, Katzenstein finds that liberalism overlooks the effects that constitutive norms have on behavior. Since liberalism emphasizes individual choice autonomous from one's environment, it ignores the importance of political identity in determining behavior.

In contrast to realism and liberalism, Katzenstein argues that Japan's security policy is shaped by state institutions and norms. Experts on Japan fall into two categories in terms of defining the Japanese state. 'Apologists' argue that the Japanese state confirms universal tendencies toward political and economic pluralism, meaning that many groups and firms compete for power, while 'revisionists' argue that Japan developed a distinct form of capitalism in which public and private-sector elites steer the evolution of the country. Whereas apologists adopt an a-historical and a-contextual view of Japanese institutions, revisionists like Katzenstein

favor a historical and contextual focus on state institutions. Japanese collective identity is defined by a norm of procedural consultation, which defies the principle of majority rule, meaning that the minority opinion can block the majority on politically sensitive issues, such as the constitutionality of the SDF and Japan's defense policy. This is relevant to the permeation of right-wing factions wishing to significantly reduce or expand Japan's military capabilities with regard to Article 9.

Katzenstein's thesis is that institutionalized norms shape Japan's external security policy. Japan's comprehensive security policy is shaped by three norms: transnational links involving the SDF, by the restricted place of the SDF in the Japanese state, and by the SDF's isolation from civil society on some issues and close ties with business on others. The SDF draws its greatest strength from outside Japan, due to the fact that U.S. forces retain military bases in Japan and that SDF coordination with the U.S. military expanded greatly during the 1980s. The SDF is also relatively isolated from the public, meaning that it lacks convincing political rationale, which creates public indifference or hostility to its presence in general.

However, economic and political factors are far more salient than transnational links in determining Japan's defense policy. Transnational pressures from the U.S. for an enlarged defense role clashed with the normative Japanese context for security policy, reinforcing three political restraints under which the military operates: a commitment to keep defense spending below one percent, its refusal to send SDF forces abroad in combat roles, and three non-nuclear principles. Fear of being drawn into Cold War conflicts like the Vietnam War prompted Prime Minister Sato to establish Japan's nonnuclear principles in 1967, including Japan's refusal to make or possess nuclear weapons. In summary, Katzenstein identifies various institutionalized norms that shape Japan's domestic antimilitaristic strategic culture.

Both Colin Gray and Alastair Johnston support the legitimacy of the strategic culture debate by assessing its relevance in predicting strategic behavior. Johnston argues that strategic culture *causes* strategic behavior, based on preferences he identifies in Chinese strategic-making. Johnston challenges the established view that Chinese strategy is inherently nonviolent, and instead argues that the core paradigm of Chinese strategy and Western strategy both see conflict as unavoidable and zero-sum, and therefore offensive strategies are preferable over purely defensive policy. Johnston defines strategic culture as a central paradigm that answers three questions: the nature of the conflict, the nature of the enemy, and the efficacy of violence. Johnston finds evidence of a distinct Chinese paradigm in his analysis of the *Seven Military Classics*, the Ming military treatises, and the Ming memorials, which leads him to conclude that China maintains a realpolitik approach to conflict that does not differ from Western culture.

Gray refutes Johnston's argument, claiming that instead of an explanatory variable, strategic culture is merely contextual, meaning various elements such as nationality and geography shape a country's strategic policy. Gray argues that by studying the influence of culture on behavior, Johnston misses the point that strategic culture cannot be 'measured,' for it in fact exists all around us, and is the context for our institutions and behavior. He emphasizes the claim that strategy is "permanent and universal," but it is also "inescapably cultural," meaning it reflects the culture of its "particular maker and executor" (57). Rather than a falsifiable variable, strategic culture provides the context for how humans think about war and military strategy. Gray writes that strategic cultures change relatively little over time and that strategic choices only occasionally "contradict the dominant culture" (62). Thus, Gray helps account for deviations in decision-making by removing the measurable outcomes that Johnston

attempts to prove in his analysis of Chinese strategy. However, Gray's argument still does not account for significant changes in strategic culture across time.

Culture is, in fact, susceptible to slow, multi-generational change across time. Theorist Francis Fukuyama argued that "we see evidence of cultural change all around us," such as the "'Protestantization' of Catholic culture that makes differences between Protestant and Catholic societies much less pronounced than in times past" (40). In his 1993 essay "The Clash of Civilizations?" Samuel Huntington also argued that human civilization is divided into distinct cultural blocks that each transform over time along linear lines. While these essays did not correctly predict the post-Cold War order, they provide evidence that culture is not universal nor permanent. Instead, cultures are subject to shift as people and their environments change.

Alan Bloomfield finds that previous arguments suffer from "too-coherent" and "too-much-continuity" problems. Johnston's argument is *too coherent*, meaning it does not account for other variables, while Gray's argument suffers from *too much continuity*, meaning it does not account for changes over time or irregular behavior. Bloomfield's argument adds another layer to the strategic culture debate: that strategic subcultures account for deviations and changes over time. In Japan, strategic subcultures include left-wing, centrist, and right-wing political parties. This research will defend why Japan's right-wing political parties are responsible for Japan's shift in defense policy.

### **Japan's Security Policy**

Japan's defeat in World War Two and subsequent Allied Occupation dismantled the political state and instituted a new constitution that prohibited military operations in Japan. Despite these measures, the Allied Powers reinstated key militarist leaders to the government and chose not to remove Emperor Hirohito from the throne. One reason for this was so that the Allied

Occupation could rule Japan indirectly through Japanese bureaucracy, and another being the lack of an effective war-time opposition movement, making it difficult to discern who supported the regime and who did not.

In *From Sword to Chrysanthemum*, Thomas Berger compares Japan's security culture to that of West Germany. He identifies three differences between Germany and Japan at the end of the war that lead their citizens to interpret defeat in different ways. First, the rise of Japanese militarism differed from that of the Nazi movement. While Nazism was a populist movement voted into power democratically, Japanese militarists were grounded in the political establishment and heavily concentrated in the military. Thus, Japan's defeat left Japanese citizens feeling like victims of the war and less inclined to favor remilitarization. Second, unlike Germany, former members of the military elite maintained their political roles and directed blame for the war onto the military institution itself, rather than nationalism in general. Finally, war broke out in Asia under the premise that Japan would liberate Asian countries from Western colonialism, creating a level of legitimacy for Japanese expansionism across the political spectrum. Berger finds that these differences did not eradicate nationalism in Japan, but did produce public distrust of the military and a victim mentality in its post-World War II discourse.

Despite Japan's history, Japan evolved from its post-war position to possessing Special Defense Forces with capabilities comparable to that of the U.S. military (Auer 1990). Due to the year of publication, Auer draws from Cold War ideology to argue that Japan cannot remain neutral; rather, it needed to choose between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, and chose the U.S. due to cultural and historical ties. Auer argues that U.S. security policy is largely responsible for Japan's security culture, providing greater explanation for Japan's U.S.-aligned defense policy until this point.



However, Japan's antimilitarist culture is indeed susceptible to change when confronted by external factors surrounding national security (Machida 2018). Specifically, by analyzing public opinion surveys, Machida finds that concern over Donald Trump withdrawing U.S. troops from Japan is causing more Japanese citizens to favor nuclear rearmament over time. This reaction would severely deviate from Japan's non-nuclear principles and demonstrates shifts in domestic attitudes towards security. Machida's research supports Hypothesis A, which posits that Japan's strategic culture shifted toward greater tolerance for military force over time.

Although Japanese political opinion remained skeptical of the military following World War II, public opinion in fact never supported actual pacifism (Midford 2011). Instead, domestic opinion always embraced some form of military force, but did not see this as an effective method for fulfilling Japan's security goals. Midford describes Japan's security culture as *attitudinal defensive realism*, meaning that clusters of distinct groups, including pacifists, centrists, militarists, and hawks make up Japan's domestic voices. Midford's research supports Hypothesis B, or that distinct political identities account for policy changes in Japan.

Other scholars argue that Japan's strategic culture is no longer constrained by antimilitarism. In his 2018 article, Kenneth Pyle argues that Prime Minister Abe is significantly shifting Japan's foreign policy away from antimilitarism and towards a more proactive role in global security. Similarly, author Ji Young Kim argues that, in fact, Japan has shifted towards militarization since the end of the Cold War, with acceleration occurring in the 1990s. For the purpose of this research, differences in public opinion and political statements between the 1960s and 2010s will illustrate this shift.

Japan's defeat in World War II explains its institutionalized antimilitarist norms and rejection of war and nuclear technology. However, the existence of distinct subcultures in the

form of political parties within Japanese society, combined with the susceptibility of culture to change across time, means that Japan may not remain antimilitarist forever. Policy changes during Prime Minister Abe's administration reflect greater tolerance for Article 9 revision and support for measures that increase the size and capabilities of the SDF. Therefore, it is worth examining how these changes fit into the greater field of strategic culture theory and what they mean for Japan's approach to defense policy in the future.

## Methodology

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Subcultures in the form of political parties are responsible for the shift in Japanese strategic culture. Historically, Japan's political parties fell into three categories: right-idealists (conservatives), centrists, and left-idealists (liberals). In the 1960s, the Japanese Socialist Party (JSP), the Japanese Communist Party (JCP), and the Buddhist Clean Government Party (CGP) represented the left idealists, the Democratic Socialist Party (DSP) and factions of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) represented the centrists, and the majority of the LDP represented right idealists. Left-idealists opposed Japan's Mutual Security Treaty with the West and favored a defense policy of armed neutrality for Japan. Centrists prioritized economic development over defense policy but supported Japan's alliance with the West. Right-idealists, however, supported revising Article 9 to allow for self-defense and wished to strengthen Japan's alliance with the U.S. and Western powers.

Party names change frequently in Japan, but the general ideological divide remains between political parties. Currently, right-wing parties like the LDP, Nippon Ishin no Kai, and Kibo no To (Party of Hope) support more flexible military provisions and Japan's involvement in multilateral institutions. Until 2016, the centrist Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) served as the largest opposition to the ruling LDP-Komeito coalition, but it has since disbanded. In the 2017 general election, the left-wing "Pacifist coalition" included the JCP, the Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan (CDP), and the Social Democratic Party (SDP). These parties opposed revising Article 9 of the constitution and any efforts by the Prime Minister to increase the SDF's involvement in foreign conflicts.

The existence of various political parties, each with a unique perspective on defense policy and constitutional revision, accounts for change within Japan's strategic culture. The fact that the LDP-Komeito coalition continues to retain a majority in Japan's House of Representatives, despite its pro-military defense policies, suggests that Japan is experiencing a shift towards greater tolerance for right-wing defense strategies.

This paper attempts to address why Japan is experiencing this ideological shift given its long-standing domestic antimilitarism. The independent variable measured is change taking place in Japan's strategic culture, due to the influence of Japan's right-wing political parties. The dependent variable is Japanese defense policy over time.

In order to prove that strategic cultures account for changes in Japan's strategic policy, this paper will use the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis a) Japan's defense policy moved away from domestic antimilitarism towards the possibility for military strategies beyond the scope of self-defense.

Hypothesis b) A shift in strategic culture among key subcultures caused this shift in defense policy.

This project will be conducted using qualitative research methods. Chapter 1 compares public opinion survey responses in Japan regarding defense policy and the constitution between the 1960s and the 2010s. The first section of data analysis is based on public opinion surveys conducted by the Cabinet Office of the Prime Minister in the 1960s regarding Article 9 and the size of the SDF. The 1960s are a good baseline because this period is characterized by economic growth and popular support for the U.S.-Japan Mutual Security Treaty, despite concerns that it would bring conflict to Japan. The second section of data analysis is based on public opinion surveys conducted by the Cabinet Office of the Prime Minister and *The Yomiuri Shimbun*

newspaper between 2009 and 2019. The 2010s are a good measure of comparison because enough time exists between 1969 and 2009 to measure whether slow, multi-generational change occurred in Japanese strategic culture.

Chapter 2 compares party platforms, public statements, and voting records between the 1960s and 2010s. The first part of data analysis is based on articles published in *The New York Times* during election years in the 1960s: 1960, 1963, 1967, and 1969. These articles discuss party platforms and provide statements made by Prime Ministers Hayato Ikeda and Eisaku Sato during this period. The second part of data analysis is based on articles published by *The Yomiuri Shimbun* during election years between 2009 and 2019: 2009, 2012, 2014, and 2017. These articles discuss party platforms and include statements made by Prime Ministers Yukio Hatoyama and Shinzo Abe. The purpose of this data analysis is to determine whether political statements regarding defense policy reflected public opinion during these two periods.

Chapter 3 will summarize findings based on analyzed data in Chapters 1 and 2, in order to assess whether right-wing political parties are responsible for a shift in Japan's strategic culture. It will also relate changes in Japanese defense policy to its relations with other countries.

## Chapter 1: Public Opinion in Japan

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Hypothesis a) Japan's defense policy moved away from domestic antimilitarism toward the possibility for military strategies beyond the scope of self-defense.

Hypothesis b) A shift in strategic culture among key subcultures caused this shift in defense policy.

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Japan's Cabinet Office of the Prime Minister conducts public opinion polls annually to assess the public's understanding of public service and government issues. According to the Cabinet Office, these surveys are conducted by statistically selecting thousands of individuals, either in person or by mail. Between 1960 and 1969, similarly conducted opinion polls provide insight into how the public viewed government actions regarding defense and constitutional revision. Beginning in 1961, the Cabinet Office captured respondents' political affiliations in addition to their feelings regarding the constitution and the SDF.

For the purpose of this paper, political affiliation represents strategic subcultures in which parties identified as one of three groups: left idealists, centrists, or right idealists. The Japanese Socialist Party (JSP), the Japanese Communist Party (JCP), and the Buddhist Clean Government Party (CGP) represented the left idealists, the Democratic Socialist Party (DSP) and factions of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) represented the centrists, and the majority of the LDP represented right idealists. Left-idealists (liberals) criticized Japan's imperialistic traditions and wanted to reform Japan's institutions along socialist lines. Therefore, liberals opposed Japan's alliance with the West and favored a policy of unarmed neutrality over Japan's Mutual Security Treaty with the United States. Right idealists, however, objected to many reforms instituted during the U.S. Occupation, including the constitution itself. These same individuals therefore

argued for Japan's right to possess military power and wished to reinstate Japanese nationalism. The centrists were more "pragmatic," arguing for more reforms than right idealists, while not rejecting Japan's traditional values (Berger 1993, p. 139). Centrists based their model on the capitalist West, prioritizing economic development over defense and foreign policy issues. Distinctions between political affiliation within government surveys can thus be used to group citizens into members of strategic subcultures.

Despite the ideological cleavage in Japanese politics, the centrist position gained traction throughout the 1950s due to tensions surrounding the Cold War and Japan's determination to end the U.S. Occupation. In the early 1950s, Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida advocated for Japan's close alignment with the U.S., economic pursuits, and for maintaining a minimal military establishment. This position, later coined the Yoshida Doctrine, initially faced opposition from both left-idealists and right-idealists, and caused the centrists to lose power in 1954. In 1955, right idealists formed the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), led by Prime Ministers Hatoyama and Kishi, right-wing nationalists who advocated for reversing liberal reforms instituted during the U.S. Occupation. Kishi's government triggered domestic outrage when he attempted to renegotiate Japan's Mutual Security Treaty with the United States, causing many LDP members to abandon Kishi and form a new government with the liberal opposition. This triggered a pattern in Japanese politics, where attempts by right-idealists within the LDP to radically depart from the Yoshida Doctrine were blocked by centrists and the left-wing opposition (Berger 1993). Thus, until recently, LDP politicians refrained from efforts to revise Article 9 or radically expand SDF capabilities, in the interest of maintaining a majority in the House of Representatives.

In the 1960s, domestic support for the centrist position limited the extent to which politicians could deviate from antimilitarist norms. Economic development and improved quality

of life made the public hesitant to contradict Occupation-era reforms (Berger 1993). Public approval for maintaining the SDF and the Mutual Security Treaty grew from “less than 50 percent in the late 1950s to well over 70 percent by the mid 1970s” (Berger 1993). This meant that the public supported maintaining the status quo, in which SDF forces maintained only the capabilities required for self-defense, and the U.S. freed Japan from the burden of possessing a standing military.

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### **1960s**

Japan’s Cabinet Office Government Relations Office of the Prime Minister conducts annual public opinion surveys in order to understand the general public’s awareness of government policies. The Cabinet Office archives have digitized versions of public opinion polls on national issues dating back to 1947. The surveys here were pulled from these online archives based on their relevance to security and national defense. Opinion polls from the 1960s measured attitudes toward the military and constitutional revision during this time period. Although surveys undoubtedly reflect various types of bias, whether it be related to questions asked or people surveyed, they provide a sample of how Japanese citizens viewed security issues over a certain time period, and are an accessible primary source to analyze how people think and feel about public policy. Since the types of surveys and questions change year-to-year, this evidence is based on similarly-worded questions across many different surveys related to the constitution and issues regarding the SDF and defense.

In 1960, regarding the strength of the SDF, 49 percent of respondents answered “You can leave it as it is,” while 19 percent of respondents answered it is “Better to increase” and 15 percent answered “It is better to reduce” its strength (Opinion Poll on the Constitution 1960).



When asked, “Do you think the rule that Japan has no army should or should not be changed?,” 49 percent responded “Should not be changed,” compared to 18 percent who reported it “Should be changed” (Opinion Poll on the Constitution 1960). In 1961, 51 percent answered that it is better to keep the size of the SDF “As it is now,” compared to 17 percent who answered it is “Better to increase” the size of the SDF (Opinion Poll on the Constitution 1961). Of these selected respondents, 42 percent identified as voting for the LDP, 3 percent for the Democratic Party, 0.4 percent for the Communist Party, and 27 percent identified as ‘Other’ (Opinion Poll on the Constitution 1961). Both of these surveys suggest that nearly 50 percent of the general public supported maintaining the size of the SDF as it is and keeping Article 9 of the constitution in place. The fact that the majority of respondents identified as LDP supporters suggests that these views remained consistent across the political spectrum.

In 1962, 51 percent responded that the size of the SDF should be kept “As it is now,” while 16 percent answered “Better to increase” and 14 percent answered “It is better to reduce” (Opinion Poll on the Constitution 1962). 1963 Cabinet Office surveys found that 56.6 percent of respondents called for Japan to leave the size of the SDF “As it is now,” compared to 15.4 percent who answered “It is better to strengthen it” and 13.5 who answered “It is better to reduce” the size of the SDF (Opinion Poll on the Constitution 1963). Twenty-nine point eight percent opposed revising the constitution to include armaments for self-defense, to which 30.1 percent agreed (Opinion Poll on the Constitution 1963). 44 percent of respondents self-identified as voting for the LDP, 24.9 for the Socialist Party, and 31.1 for minority parties, other, or unknown (Opinion Poll on the Constitution 1963). These surveys prove that the majority of the general public favored maintaining Article 9 of the constitution and the current size of the SDF. More respondents did, however, support including armaments for self-defense in the constitution

than those who did not. This could be explained by the need to justify Japan's use of the SDF, despite its anti-war clause.

1965 surveys found that 43.1 percent of respondents did not think it better to increase the number of SDF troops, nor upgrade its weapon capabilities (Opinion Poll on the Constitution 1965). Similarly, 36.3 percent answered that they would not like to see Article 9 of the constitution changed to allow for the SDF, compared to 15.4 percent who answered "Better to change" (Opinion Poll on the Constitution 1965). In 1967, 52.9 percent answered that the constitution should have armaments for self-defense, compared to 31.4 percent of respondents who answered that it should not (Opinion Poll on the Constitution 1967). In 1968, the number of respondents who did not support armaments rose slightly to 35.7 percent, compared to 46.1 percent who did (Opinion Poll on the Constitution 1968). In each of these surveys, the majority of respondents did not support measures that increased the current level of defense capabilities, but continued to support adding armaments for self-defense to the constitution.

In 1969, 44 percent of respondents answered that the defense capabilities of the "land, sea, and Air Self-Defense Forces" are "Just enough," compared to 22 who answered "Better to increase" and 10.8 who answered "May be less than now" (Self-Defense Force Opinion Poll 1969). Forty point nine percent of respondents supported protecting "Japan's security with the security system and the SDF as is," compared to 12.9 who wished to dissolve Japan's security with the SDF and strengthen its defense, and 9.6 who wished to "reduce or abolish" the SDF (Self-Defense Force Opinion Poll 1969). 38.7 percent of these respondents were members of the LDP, compared to 14.4 percent in the Socialist Party, 9.1 percent in other parties, and 37.8 who answered "None/Unknown" (Self-Defense Force Opinion Poll 1969). By the end of the decade, the majority of respondents still agreed that Japan's defense capabilities should not exceed

beyond what is necessary for self-defense, despite many identifying as LDP supporters. The number of respondents who answered “None/Unknown” in place of political party must have also agreed with maintaining current levels of SDF strength. Thus, these surveys reveal that public support for Japan’s antimilitaristic security culture transcended political ideology during this time period.

Public support for antimilitarism limited the extent to which politicians could act in conflict with these opinions. Overall, these surveys show that increasing the size and capabilities of the SDF did not find widespread support during this period. The general public supported Article 9 during the 1960s, but by the end of the decade, the majority of respondents also supported adding armaments for self-defense. This does not necessarily mean that respondents were pro-military, but perhaps wished to see Japan justify its use of the SDF without revoking its anti-war commitment. This evidence thus proves that in the 1960s, public opinion did not wish to see Japan’s military capabilities significantly differ from the status quo, which included maintaining its own self-defense capabilities, while receiving military assistance from the U.S. in case of conflict.

Without Japan’s antimilitarist norms, regional conflicts during this period like the Vietnam War, or even Mao Zedong’s rise in China, might have spurred more domestic support for increased SDF capabilities or offensive tactics. Instead, public opinion surveys conducted during this period do not suggest such a shift in public opinion. The majority of respondents supported limiting SDF capabilities to what is necessary for self-defense. Respondents did, however, support including armaments for self-defense in the constitution, in order to justify the existence of the SDF without revoking Japan’s anti-war clause. This included a majority of

respondents who self-identified as members of the right-wing LDP, meaning both conservative and liberal voters supported Japan's commitment to antimilitarism.

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### **2010s**

In order to measure whether Japan's security culture shifted, it is necessary to examine whether public opinion towards increasing the size of the SDF or revising Article 9 shifted several generations later. In 2009, the LDP lost support to the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), a centrist opposition party founded in 1996. This shift also marked the first time that the ruling and opposition parties agreed on broad defense policies. Japan's transition from armed neutrality towards expanded possibilities for the SDF began during the DPJ's brief stint in office, and would continue under LDP President and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's return to power in 2012.

Progress initiated by the DPJ included a new National Defense Program (NDPJ) that increased capabilities of the SDF and expanded cooperation with regional partners. The DPJ also included participation in global counterpiracy operations, Afghanistan reconstruction efforts, and assertiveness towards China regarding the Senkaku Islands, in their definition of self-defense. In 2012, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, whose motto "Japan is back" returned Japanese politics to the international stage and formed a coalition with the center-right Komeito Party to defeat the DPJ and regain its majority in the House of Representatives. Prime Minister Abe's foreign policy faced scrutiny due to his nationalistic views and public denial of Japan's World War II crimes, which weakened Japan's relations with the PRC and South Korea.

Prime Minister Abe began implementing new economic strategies upon entering office, policies that gained him popularity and enabled him to enact changes in security policy within a relatively short period of time. In his first three years since returning to office, he created Japan's first formal national security strategy, formed the National Security Council, drafted new

National Defense Program Guidelines, and agreed to new U.S.-Japan Guidelines for Defense Cooperation. Additionally, Prime Minister Abe implemented an official reinterpretation of the constitution that allowed for Japan's participation in a central security depository with other countries and increased military spending for the first time in ten years (Oros 2017, p. 128). The fact that Prime Minister Abe's administration stayed in power throughout these changes suggests that public opinion, in addition to politics, became more open to the idea that Japan's security warranted more than the minimum amount required for self-defense. These opinions are reflected in surveys conducted by the Cabinet Office and *The Yomiuri Shimbun* outlined in the next section.

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The next set of surveys captures feelings surrounding the SDF and defense issues between 2009 and 2019. Opinion polls conducted by the Cabinet Office of the Prime Minister regarding attitudes toward Japan's constitution are no longer conducted and questions surrounding party affiliation are longer included in the demographic portion of these surveys. Therefore, this research will include data from surveys conducted by *The Yomiuri Shimbun*, in addition to government surveys.

In 2009, 65.1 percent of respondents answered that the SDF should be kept at the current level, compared to 14.1 percent of respondents who answered "Better to increase" the size of the SDF, and 10.8 percent who answered "Better to shrink" (Public Opinion Poll on SDF and Defense Issues 2009). The percentage answering "Better to increase" jumped to 24.8 percent in 2012, with 60 percent answering "Just enough" and 6.2 answering "Better to shrink," (Public Opinion Poll on SDF and Defense Issues 2012). These surveys demonstrate that after 2012, over 20 percent of respondents supported increasing the size of the SDF, compared to this number

falling below 20 percent during the 1960s. This suggests that a greater proportion of the population supported policies that increased SDF capabilities during the early 2010s than in the 1960s.

The percentage of respondents answering “Better to increase” jumped even higher in 2015, with 29.9 of respondents answering “Better to increase,” 59.2 answering “Just enough,” and 4.6 percent answering “Better to shrink” (Public Opinion Poll on SDF and Defense Issues 2015). Similarly, 29.1 percent of respondents answered “Better to increase” in 2018, 60.1 percent answered “Just enough,” and 6.2 answered “Better to shrink” (Public Opinion Poll on SDF and Defense Issues 2018). By the end of the decade, nearly 30 percent of respondents wished to see the size of the SDF increase, compared to less than 20 percent over the course of the 1960s. Thus, nearly 10 percent more Japanese citizens supported policies that increased Japan’s military capabilities in the 2010s than in the 1960s. These numbers illustrate that domestic support for Japan’s defense policies did shift away from domestic antimilitarism over the course of multiple generations.

Since the data collected from the Cabinet Office during this period is relatively sparse compared with that of the 1960s, polls conducted by *The Yomiuri Shimbun* related to revising Article 9 and the SDF will be included in this analysis. These surveys were conducted either by mail-in responses from eligible voters in Japan or by random-digit-dialing methods to landlines and cell phone users. In 2009, 38 percent of respondents agreed with the statement that Article 9 should be amended, compared to only 32 percent of respondents feeling this way in 2010 (“Public Split Amending Constitution” 2010). However, in 2009, only 33 percent of respondents felt that dispatching SDF forces on international peacekeeping operations should be dealt with through a conventional interpretation of Article 9, compared to 44 percent in 2010 (“Public Split

Amending Constitution” 2010). 42 percent of respondents supporting the DPJ favored revision in 2010, compared to 53 percent in 2009 (“Public Split Amending Constitution” 2010).

Even among LDP respondents, only 41 percent supported revision in 2010, compared to 54 percent in 2009 (“Public Split Amending Constitution” 2010). These numbers can be explained by the fact that debate on constitutional revision stalled under Prime Minister Hatoyama, while the left-wing Social Democratic Party continued to advocate for strict interpretation of Article 9 (“Public Split Amending Constitution” 2010). Accordingly, the fact that over 70 percent of respondents wished to see the government discuss this issue further (“Public Split Amending Constitution” 2010), means that a right-wing shift in Japan’s ruling coalition would likely change public opinion toward Article 9 and the SDF.

In 2014, 43 percent of the public answered that Article 9 should be dealt with by using “interpretation and application as the government has done” compared to only 30 percent who answered “Article 9 should be revised” (“42% Favor Constitutional Amendment” 2014). In 2015, 40 percent of respondents answered that “interpretation and implementation” should be used to deal with Article 9, compared to 35 percent who said it “should be amended” and 20 percent who said it must be “strictly observed” (“51% Support Revision” 2015). These surveys illustrate that the majority of respondents supported re-interpreting the constitution to allow for the SDF and a large percentage supported amending the constitution, while the minority opinion now favored strict interpretation of Article 9. “Interpretation and implementation” refers to the government’s ability to enact policies outside the scope of Japan’s pacifist constitution without officially revising Article 9 itself. This suggests that public opinion became increasingly tolerant of defense policies that did not strictly adhere to Japan’s antimilitarist norms. Overall, voters felt

more comfortable with the government enacting defense policies that either re-interpret the meaning of “self-defense” or change Article 9 altogether.

In 2017, 53 percent of respondents supported a proposal by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to add a provision defining the legal grounds for the SDF to Article 9 of the constitution. However, 70 percent of LDP voters supported this compared to less than 20 percent of DPJ supporters (“53% Support SDF in Article 9” 2017). A 2018 *Yomiuri Shimbun* survey found that 55 percent of respondents supported including a constitutional provision allowing for the SDF, to which 42 percent were opposed. (“Support for Constitutional Revision” 2018). By the end of the decade, the majority of respondents responded favorably towards Prime Minister’s Abe’s attempts to revise Article 9. However, LDP supporters reported overwhelmingly more favorably to these policies than DPJ supporters, possibly because the policies enacted under the ruling LDP did not reflect more pragmatic approaches to defense policy practiced by the DPJ.

These survey results support Hypothesis A: that Japan’s defense policy moved away from domestic antimilitarism towards the possibility for military strategies beyond the scope of self-defense. After the LDP returned to power in 2012, public opinion once again favored reinterpretation and revision over strict interpretation of Article 9. Similar to the 1960s, public opinion likely supported measures that justified the government’s use of the SDF without revoking its anti-war clause. However, a higher percentage of respondents now supported increasing the size and capabilities of the SDF, suggesting that tolerance for military activities outside the scope of self-defense did shift over time. Data collected from surveys during this period also support Hypothesis B: that a shift in strategic culture among key subcultures caused this shift in defense policy. The opinions expressed between 2012 and 2018 reflect increased support for right-wing interpretations of Article 9 and support for LDP defense platforms. The



2017 *Yomiuri Shimbun* survey also found that 70 percent of LDP supporters favored constitutional revision, which likely motivated LDP politicians to continue increasing Japan's "self-defense" capabilities.

Japanese public opinion between the 1960s and the 2010s demonstrate an increased tolerance for military strategies outside the scope of self-defense. This suggests that center-right and right-wing politics became increasingly mainstream, despite Japan's image as inherently antimilitaristic. Over time, the LDP majority shifted defense policy away from armed neutrality and towards the possibility for the SDF to practice a more assertive role in international security issues. Not only the LDP, but also the centrist DPJ party, supported policies that saw Japan taking an active role in global security issues, despite predictions that a change in power would alter Japanese defense policy. These policies can be partially explained by threats from the international environment, but as opinion surveys from the 1960s reveal, public support for defense policies do not always coincide with security threats. Japanese policies during the 1960s coincided with events like the Vietnam War, yet support for increased SDF capabilities did not reach the same level as it did in the 2010s. Instead, this shift in public opinion can be better explained as a change in Japanese attitudes toward strategic defense, driven largely by center-right and right-wing political parties.

## Chapter 2: Voting Records and Public Statements

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Hypothesis a) Japan's defense policy moved away from domestic antimilitarism toward the possibility for military strategies beyond the scope of self-defense.

Hypothesis b) A shift in strategic culture among key subcultures caused this shift in defense policy.

Chapter 1 of this paper demonstrated that Japanese public opinion became increasingly tolerant of defense policies that increased SDF capabilities and fell outside the scope of self-defense. Chapter 2 of this paper will demonstrate that right-wing political parties caused this shift in strategic culture.

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### 1960s

This section will use data from articles published by *The New York Times* during Japan's election years: 1960, 1963, 1967, and 1969. Although Japanese journalists would undoubtedly provide a better interpretation of election coverage, newspaper articles from that time are not available in English. Therefore, American coverage of these selections will be used with the understanding that any non-factual information carries American bias. The purpose of this section is to determine whether public statements made by Japanese elected officials from right-wing and centrist parties reflect their commitment to expand military capabilities or revise Article 9 of the constitution.

At the start of the 1960s, Prime Minister Hayato Ikeda headed the right-wing LDP after the crisis surrounding the U.S.-Japan Mutual Security Treaty under Prime Minister Kishi. In 1960, Ikeda campaigned on a platform that supported Japan's continued enforcement of the security treaty, while increasing economic expansion at home ("Ikeda's Campaign" 1960).

Facing leftist opposition parties that claimed the Security Treaty could involve Japan in another war, Ikeda and his foreign minister, Zentaro Kosaka, told the Diet that socialist neutralism is unrealistic for Japan and that neutralists should reconsider Japan's position in the world ("Ikeda's Campaign" 1960). Specifically, Ikeda argued that Japan's relationship with the U.S. and the West is the "primary basis of national prosperity and economic development" ("Ikeda's Campaign" 1960). By strengthening ties with the U.S., the LDP hoped to expand Japan's own military power without losing support from voters who supported Japan's commitment to pacifist neutrality. Leftists in the Socialist Party tried to frame the LDP for putting Japan at risk of joining a U.S. conflict by association which, based on public opinion concerning SDF capabilities and Article 9, would have been highly unpopular at the time. Instead, the LDP managed to frame the U.S. alliance as responsible for Japan's economic prosperity, which after decades of instability and war, took precedence over strengthening Japan's power militarily.

The LDP found support in their argument during the general election, when the party won 300 out of 467 seats in the House of Representatives, only 234 of which are required for a majority (Nohlen, Grotz, and Hartmann 2001, 381). In comparison, the leftist Socialist Party won 144 seats, the centrist DSP won 17, and the far-left Communist party won only three (Nohlen, Grotz, and Hartmann 2001, 381). These election results suggest that the general public voted strongly in favor of maintaining the Security Treaty for the sake of freeing Japan from the burden of shouldering its own defense spending. Similarly, the LDP managed to secure a majority in the Diet without threatening significant remilitarization of the SDF.

By 1963, Ikeda's economic-growth program and pro-Western foreign policy continued to attract voters, though at a lesser rate. The November 21 election granted the LDP only 283 seats in the House of Representatives, compared to 300 in 1960. Comparatively, the Socialist, DSP,

and Communist parties won 144, 23, and 5 seats, respectively (Nohlen, Grotz, and Hartmann 2001, 381).

While the DSP campaigned for a foreign policy more independent of the U.S., Ikeda defended Japan's relationship with the U.S. as necessary for becoming one of the "three pillars of the free world," alongside the U.S. and Western Europe ("Japan to Elect New Diet" 1963). The Socialists argued that both U.S. military bases and the Mutual Security Treaty could endanger Japan's neutrality. These same parties opposed renouncing Article 9 of the constitution, something that the LDP supported in order to increase Japan's role in maintaining peace and security in the region ("Japanese Socialists Expect Campaign to Be Bitter" 1963). The Socialists also strongly opposed nuclear-powered U.S. submarines visiting Japanese ports, simply because this meant involving Japan in U.S. nuclear strategies ("Japanese Socialists Expect Campaign to Be Bitter" 1963). These reactions represent a strong rebuttal to pro-American defense strategies among opposition parties in the Diet and concern for Japan's commitment to Article 9 overall.

In October 1964, Ikeda retired due to health complications and named Eisaku Sato his successor, but Sato would not face an election until 1967. Like Ikeda, Sato supported the U.S. on a wide range of policy issues, including its approach toward the PRC and the Vietnam War ("Sato Sees U.S. and Japan in Accord" 1965). Publicly, Sato stated in 1965 that he opposed revising Article 9 of the constitution for the time being and that since World War II, Japan "has renounced all expansionism, militarism and imperialism" ("Sato Sees U.S. and Japan in Accord" 1965). He also attributed Japan's national security and economic prosperity to its military agreement with the U.S., which he considered the "the sole guardian of peace" in the international community ("Sato Sees U.S. and Japan in Accord" 1965). Sato led the LDP to control the Diet in 1967, despite his support for the widely unpopular war in Vietnam, charges of

corruption within his party, and rising consumer prices (“Sato is Expected to Win in Japan” 1967). Sato’s outwardly-moderate statements defending Japan’s Mutual Security Treaty reflect his party’s commitment to securing Japan’s defense capabilities through its ties to the U.S., which inevitably cost Japan neutrality in exchange for security and economic prosperity.

The LDP did, however, lose six seats to the centrist Democratic-Socialist Party (DSP) led by Suehiro Nishio and faced competition from the new center-right Komeito party in the 1967 election. Both the Socialist and Communist Parties campaigned against the government’s continuation of the Mutual Security Treaty, which they claimed violated Article 9 and Japan’s commitment to armed neutrality (“Sato is Expected to Win in Japan” 1967). However, Sato’s win ensured that Japan’s Mutual Security Treaty with the U.S. would exist beyond 1970. This was considered a setback for leftists, who did not wish to see Japan’s entanglement in anti-Communist proxy wars as a result of this alliance (“Japan’s Vote Seen as Blow to Left” 1967). Leftist opposition to the Security Treaty remained consistent with the prediction that right-idealists were still constrained in their capabilities to alter Japan’s defense policy during this period.

In 1969, Sato dissolved the House of Representatives and scheduled a vote for December 27, approximately one month after President Nixon agreed to return Okinawa and the Ryukyu Islands to Japan by 1972 (“Election in Japan is Set for Dec. 27” 1969). This agreement came with Nixon’s promise to return Japanese territory without nuclear weapons and with restrictions on combat use of U.S. bases (“Premier’s Party is Victor in Japan” 1969). In his campaign leading up to the election, Sato told the House of Representatives that he intended to “firmly maintain” Japan’s Mutual Security Treaty with the U.S. “over a considerable period of time” (“Election in Japan is Set for Dec. 27” 1969). Regarding Japan’s partnership with the U.S., Sato stated that

while Japan is responsible for its self-defense, the U.S. is responsible for deterrence, and that Japan can play a leading role in Asia using economic aid rather than military force (“Election in Japan is Set for Dec. 27” 1969). Sato’s statements to the Diet represent a public commitment to ensure Japan’s partnership with the U.S. did not expand beyond protecting Japan’s security. Sato campaigned on the success of President Nixon’s return of Okinawa, which demonstrated Sato’s ability to negotiate treaties that benefited Japan, rather than sacrificing Japan’s sovereignty or risking its entanglement in U.S. conflicts.

Despite Sato’s promises, LDP opposition parties remained suspicious of the role Sato envisioned for Japan. Specifically, they voiced concerns about Sato being involved too deeply on the U.S. side, putting Japan at risk of being dragged into conflict “not of her own choosing” in exchange for control of Okinawa (“Election in Japan is Set for Dec. 27” 1969). On the campaign trail, Sato asked for support in maintaining the Mutual Security Treaty, with the explanation that it allowed Japan to peacefully build up its economy during the last quarter century and deterred conflict in East Asia (“Sato Asks Support for Pro-American Policy” 1969). In his campaign speeches, Sato also assured voters of his determination to preserve Article 9 and restrict military build-up to what is necessary for Japan’s self-defense (“Sato Goes to the People for a Mandate” 1969). Sato’s campaign speeches represent the LDP’s commitment to preserve and strengthen Japan’s relationship with the U.S. in order to maintain Japan’s economic power in the region. In public, Sato did not advocate for rapid expansion of Japan’s own military capability or any intention of revising Article 9. Sato’s campaign promises reflect a deeper understanding of Japanese public opinion, which did not favor entanglement in U.S. conflict and desired greater sovereignty from the U.S. itself. Sato’s success in securing back Okinawa and the Ryukyu

Islands clearly signaled to voters that the LDP would protect Japan from unnecessary conflict, despite claims made by opposition parties.

Conversely, Sato's Socialist Party opponent Tomomi Narita ran a campaign against "American imperialism," asking voters "Will you choose the Liberal-Democratic party and war, or the Socialist party and peace and prosperity?" ("Sato Asks Support for Pro-American Policy as Campaign Opens" 1969). Sato recognized that opposition parties would denounce the Mutual Security Treaty, but pointed to his success at regaining Okinawa as proof that the U.S. supported Japan's efforts to reduce conflict in East Asia ("Sato Goes to the People for a Mandate" 1969). Sato's success in securing Okinawa inevitably helped the LDP win a majority of 288 seats in the House of Representatives, 11 more seats than in 1967 ("Mr. Sato's Victory" 1969). In comparison, the Socialist party lost 50 more seats than in 1967, while Komeito, the Democratic-Socialist, and Communist parties gained 22, 1, and 9 seats, respectively (Nohlen, Grotz, and Hartmann 2001, 381). The LDP's success in the 1969 election confirmed that voters prioritized Japan's economic development and held the LDP accountable for limiting Japan's military beyond the scope of self-defense.

Throughout this period, the LDP avoided losing to the left-wing opposition by framing its defense policies in alignment with Japan's commitment to armed neutrality and economic growth. Rather than argue that Japan required greater defense capabilities, the LDP-majority during the 1960s demonstrated that Japan's commitment to self-defense ensured protection from the U.S. without involving Japan in external conflicts.

Public statements and campaign speeches made during this period support the hypothesis that right-wing parties were restricted by left-wing opposition parties and the general public in their attempt to increase Japan's military capabilities. In campaign speeches, Prime Ministers

Ikeda and Sato both argued that the Mutual Security Treaty promoted Japan's rapid economic development during the 1950s and 1960s by reducing Japan's defense expenditures. Publicly, LDP leaders did not promote Article 9 revision nor increasing military capabilities beyond the scope of self-defense, for this undoubtedly would have increased leftist backlash against American "imperialist" efforts in Vietnam and the PRC. Therefore, the LDP emphasized successes like regaining Okinawa to demonstrate their commitment to protecting Japanese sovereignty and preventing entanglement in American conflicts.

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### **2010s**

This section will use data from articles published by *The Yomiuri Shimbun*, a Japanese newspaper, during the following election years: 2009, 2012, 2014, and 2017. These articles were selected based on their relation to Article 9 and defense issues, but with the understanding that any journalistic interpretation undoubtedly exhibits some level of bias. The purpose of this section is to determine whether political statements regarding the SDF and revising Article 9 of the constitution changed significantly from the 1960s, and whether these statements influenced voter support for right-wing parties.

In 2009, the centrist Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) defeated the LDP in a general election for the first time since 1955. The two parties clashed on issues such as diplomacy and national security during the months leading up to the election, including an SDF mission aimed at refueling U.S. Navy vessels in the Indian Ocean ("Sales Tax, Security Key Pledge Issues" 2009). While the LDP outwardly supported this mission, DPJ Prime Minister candidate Yukio Hatoyama questioned whether the periodic SDF's refueling missions "can really contribute to peace in Afghanistan" ("Aso Takes Fight to Hatoyama" 2009). These campaign statements



reflect the LDP's desire to secure the U.S.-Japan alignment and increase the SDF's operations overseas, with greater hesitation from the DPJ.

Throughout the 2009 election, Hatoyama advocated for "equal-footing" between the U.S. and Japan, "so that our side can strongly assert Japan's will," rather than acting "to suit U.S. convenience" ("DPJ's 'Equal Alliance with the U.S.'" 2009). In its party platform, the DPJ also pledged to reexamine the Japan-U.S. Status of Forces Agreement; specifically, it promised to abolish Japan's "sympathy budget," its contribution to U.S. forces stationed in Japan ("DPJ's 'Equal Alliance with the U.S.'" 2009). Since the DPJ would not hold a majority in the lower house if elected, it planned to form a coalition government with other LDP-opposition parties, such as the leftist Social Democratic Party (SDP), which opposed revising Article 9 ("DPJ's 'Equal Alliance with the U.S.'" 2009). This undoubtedly limited the DPJ even further in their position regarding constitutional revision.

Ultimately, on August 30, 2009, the DPJ won over 300 seats in the Lower House, with the opposition bloc winning 340 seats in total, compared to only 140 for the right-wing LDP-Komeito bloc ("In Landslide, DPJ Wins Over 300 Seats" 2009). These election results reflect a primarily LDP-driven shift toward supporting Article 9 revision and expanding SDF capabilities, despite pushback from centrist and left-wing opposition parties. This suggests a change in security culture from the 1960s, when the LDP appeared more willing to cater to leftist opposition.

Despite this historic change of power in 2009, in 2012, the LDP once again ran on a platform that considered the Japan-U.S. alliance the basis for Japan's foreign policy and pledged to "enable Japan to exercise its right to self-defense" ("Abe Announces LDP Campaign Platform" 2012). President Shinzo Abe campaigned for Japan's participation in international

peacekeeping efforts and for constitutional revision to allow for the SDF (“Abe’s Security Policy Goals” 2012). Prime Minister Abe argued that Article 9 revision should begin by amending Article 96, which states that all constitutional amendments must start with the Diet (“Abe’s Security Policy Goals Reflected in LDP Platform” 2012). Despite these statements, the LDP faced pushback from its centrist coalition partner, the New Komeito Party, whose members expressed concern for Abe’s “hawkish” policies and threatened to impose a clause that the LDP may not deviate from standard definitions of security (“Abe’s Security Policy Goals” 2012). Thus, the LDP continued to campaign on maintaining strong relations with the U.S. while expanding Japan’s own military power, despite significant opposition from left-wing and even centrist parties.

This time, the LDP would win, gaining a majority 294 seats in the House of Representatives, compared to only 57 for the DPJ (“Abe to Appoint Cabinet” 2012). Comparatively, the far-right Japan Restoration Party won 54 seats and New Komeito won 31 seats. These election results suggest that Japanese public opinion did not feel deterred by “hawkish” LDP policies, and perhaps considered national security a reasonable justification for remilitarization.

Abe remained consistent with his intention to revise Article 9 in order to allow for self-defense, claiming that Japan’s relations with other countries depended on its strong alliance with the U.S. (“Abe Seeks Constitutional Discussion” 2014). In July 2014, Abe’s cabinet approved a government interpretation of the constitution that allows Japan to use the minimum amount of force required in situations that pose a “clear threat to the Japanese state or could fundamentally threaten the Japanese people’s constitutional right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” (“Parties Debate Collective Self-Defense” 2014). In September 2014, Abe approved the use of

arms by SDF members in UN missions and pledged to expand Japan's participation in UN peacekeeping beyond reconstruction efforts and transportation provision ("Abe Pledges Broader SDF Peacekeeping" 2014). Both of these steps represent broad attempts by the LDP to expand SDF capabilities beyond self-defense and to align Japan more closely with other military powers like the United States.

During the 2014 election, the LDP promised to maintain Abe's advancements in "fulfilling our responsibility to preserve peace in the region and the world" by establishing legal frameworks for SDF activities ("Parties Debate Collective Self-Defense" 2014). Komeito supported the LDP, promising to "gain the understanding of the people" regarding collective self-defense ("Parties Debate Collective Self-Defense" 2014). Additionally, both the far-right Party for Future Generations (PFG) and center-right Japan Innovation Party supported the LDP ("Parties Debate Collective Self-Defense" 2014). The PFG campaigned for the "establishment of an independent constitution," rather than one imposed on Japan during the U.S. Occupation, in addition to adding provisions that allow for the SDF ("Parties Divided Over Constitutional Revision" 2014). These statements made by center-right and right-wing parties reflect a clear preference for constitutional revisions that enforce legal provisions for the existence of the SDF, indicative of their support for greater self-defense capabilities in Japan.

On the side of the leftist opposition, the DPJ did not outwardly support constitutional revision, stating that it would "seek to establish a future-oriented constitution by deepening debate...through dialogue with the people" ("Parties Divided Over Constitutional Revision" 2014). However, the DPJ also promised that it would "not allow any change in constitutional interpretation that would permit exercise of the collective defense as a whole" ("Parties Debate Collective Self-Defense" 2014). The center-left People's Life Party took the position that

“national defense will be secured based on the pacifist principle of the constitution (“Parties Debate Collective Self-Defense” 2014). Meanwhile, the JCP campaigned on a policy of “carrying out a diplomatic strategy based on the spirit of Article 9 of the constitution,” while the SDP advocated for “legal arrangements to put into concrete shape the ideals of the constitution” (“Parties Debate Collective Self-Defense” 2014). These policy platforms suggest that the farther left the political party, the stronger their opposition to constitutional revision, which supports the hypothesis that Japan’s right-wing parties are primarily driving this shift in strategic culture.

In December 2014, the LDP-Komeito coalition won 326 seats in the House of Representatives, compared to only 73 seats for the DPJ (Seig, Kajimoto 2014). These election results prove that popular opinion favored the right-wing coalition either in spite of, or because of, its U.S.-centered foreign policy and emphasis on constitutional revision. Opposition voices existed in the election, but these gained significantly less public support.

In 2017, Prime Minister Abe stated that he would like to “enforce a new constitution in 2020,” but assured voters that until then, he intends to preserve Article 9’s rejection of war (“Timing of Referendum Key to Constitutional Revision” 2017). In response to criticism from his opponents that revising Article 9 “could allow Japan to engage in war,” Abe clarified that he only intended to maintain the “SDF’s existence,” not transform it into an offensive military (“Timing of Referendum Key to Constitutional Revision” 2017). However, Abe’s intentions to involve the SDF in peacekeeping operations outside Japan suggests that he intends to utilize the SDF as a fully-functional, if not offensive, military force. During his campaign, Abe stated his goal to ratify a new constitution by 2020, which received support from 87 percent of LDP candidates and 90 percent of the center-right Nippon Ishin no Kai (Japan Innovation Party) (“Parties, Candidates Split on Top Law Revision” 2017). In October, the LDP-Komeito coalition

won 313 seats in the House of Representatives, compared to 55 for the Constitutional Democratic Party, 12 for the Japanese Communist Party, and 2 for the Social Democratic Party of Japan (IFES Election Guide | Elections 2017) These results illustrate that support for conservative politics deepened in 2014 and 2017, despite Abe's demands for constitutional revision. Each of these reports suggests that Japan's long-standing antimilitarism no longer restricted right-wing politicians from imposing an agenda that deviates from this during the 2010s.

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During the 1960s, right-wing politicians framed the debate surrounding constitutional revision and the SDF as critical to Japan's economic security. Following the U.S. Occupation, the Mutual Security Agreement freed Japan from the economic burden associated with defense expenditures. The LDP argued that the existence of both this treaty and the SDF ensured that the U.S. would continue to carry responsibility for deterrence in the region, while Japan remained responsible for its own self-defense. Leftist opposition parties feared that these policies would drag Japan into U.S.-centered conflict, fears that both Prime Ministers Ikeda and Sato extinguished by securing Japan's sovereignty in Okinawa and keeping Japanese forces out of Vietnam. The LDP did not remain neutral on these issues, however, claiming that U.S. operations in Vietnam and its approach towards the PRC were imperative for maintaining peace in the free world. Therefore, LDP politicians clearly advocated for Japan's expanded military presence in the region, while remaining cautious not to alienate voters wary of military interests in the aftermath of World War II.

Unlike LDP politicians during the 1960s, during the 2010s, LDP members were willing to express outright support for constitutional revision and increased "peace-building" operations

for the SDF overseas. Contemporary politicians remained consistent with their counterparts from the 1960s by arguing that Japan's alignment with the U.S. benefited its role in global diplomacy. Today, Japan remains the third most powerful economy in the world, despite significant economic setbacks in the 1990s and the massive Tohoku Earthquake and Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster in 2011. Japan's resilience throughout these crises suggests that its economic success no longer depends on military support. Instead, politicians' desire for revising the constitution and increasing SDF capabilities reflects a shift in Japan's security identity. Less constrained by antimilitarism than their 1960s counterparts, conservative politicians likely seek greater support from voters to expand Japan's global military presence and eventually revise Japan's pacifist constitution.

### Chapter 3: Significance and Conclusions

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On December 19, 2019, Japan's government approved a record-high increase in defense spending to 5.31 trillion yen (\$48.56 billion dollars), its eighth consecutive increase since 2012 (Kelly 2019). Prime Minister Abe has incrementally increased defense spending since taking office in 2012, pursuing policies through the National Defense Program Guidelines of 2013 and 2018 and through the Mid-Term Defense Programs of 2014 and 2019, which offer plans for meeting requirements based on Japan's strategic environment (Bosack 2020). This budget includes spending for increased space and cyber capabilities, strengthened air and maritime weapons systems, and increased human capital (Bosack 2020). These defense measures are typical of Abe's administration, which has held a firm majority in the Diet and high voter approval ratings since 2012. The fact that Abe's government is able to accomplish these military goals without losing voter support suggests that Japan's strategic culture changed significantly from the decades immediately following World War II.

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#### **Purpose of Strategic Culture Theory**

The core assumptions in this paper rest on the constructivist theory of strategic culture, defined as the "sum total of ideas, conditioned emotional responses, and patterns of habitual behavior that members of a national strategic community have acquired" (Snyder 1977). Constructivism is more useful for explaining Japan's domestic antimilitarism than realism or liberalism for several reasons: first, realists treat Japan as a unitary actor, rather than a pluralistic society; second, Japan did not significantly change its national security policy during the twentieth century in response to global conflict (Katzenstein 1993). Conversely, liberals

overlook the effect of institutionalized norms on comprehensive security policy, which in Japan includes the transnational links of the SDF, its restricted place in the Japanese state, and its isolation from civil society on some issues and close ties with business on others (Katzenstein 1993). Japan's strategic behavior and security policy cannot be explained by realist and liberal assumptions, but rather by the constructivist argument that Japan's collective antimilitarist identity is rooted in historical context. None of the behaviors demonstrated over the past sixty years can be explained by global anarchy or cooperation alone.

Strategic culture is essentially a central paradigm that answered three questions: the nature of the conflict, the nature of the enemy, and the efficacy of violence (Johnston 1995). Culture is the "permanent and universal" context for how humans think about war and military strategy (Gray 1999). These arguments are useful for understanding the pervasiveness of long-standing norms regarding unarmed neutrality in Japan. However, culture is, in fact, susceptible to slow, generational change, particularly when faced with external events (Fukuyama 1992; Huntington 1993). It is *not* susceptible to significant change over a short period of time; therefore, analyzing data from every decade between the 1960s and now would not be an accurate interpretation of strategic culture theory. Public opinion surveys and public statements from the 1960s and 2010s illustrate this generational shift in culture. Guaranteed protection from the U.S. might have steered Japanese citizens and elected officials away from advocating for national defense, but today, Japan's own international power and eighty-year separation from World War II no longer breed the same level of concerns.

Strategic culture also changes significantly over time due to the existence of subcultures, or domestic groups within a country's dominant culture (Bloomfield 2012). In Japan, right-wing factions within the broader strategic culture contributed to a shift in public attitudes. This is



demonstrated by the LDP's ability to obtain a majority in the House of Representatives in every election except for 2009, despite pushback from centrist and left-wing opposition parties regarding constitutional revision and increased defense spending. Compared to the 1960s, public statements made by politicians in the 2010s provide further evidence of the strategic culture shift. Specifically, contemporary LDP politicians are less hesitant to campaign for constitutional revision and SDF "peace-keeping operations" outside of Japan in alignment with U.S. policies.

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### **Findings**

Both Hypothesis A and Hypothesis B were proven in this research. Chapter 1 illustrated that public opinion became increasingly tolerant of military strategies beyond the scope of self-defense between the 1960s and 2010s. During the 1960s, the majority of respondents supported including armaments for self-defense in the constitution without increasing the size or capabilities of the SDF (Cabinet Office 1960-1969). After the LDP's return to power in the 2012, the majority of respondents still supported either reinterpreting or revising Article 9, but a larger proportion now supported increasing the size of the SDF (Cabinet Office; *The Yomiuri Shimbun* 2009-2019). These answers support Hypothesis A, that Japan's defense policy moved away from domestic antimilitarism and toward the possibility for military strategies beyond the scope of self-defense.

Realists might argue that these attitudes are explained by Japan's close proximity to China and North Korea, but Japan's proximity to the PRC and Vietnam during the 1960s did not elicit the same level of support for increasing SDF capabilities. Instead, a shift in strategic culture is a better explanation for why the general public is more supportive of LDP efforts to expand the scope of the SDF. The fact that voters continue to support the conservative coalition

means that Japanese citizens are also less opposed to expanding SDF peacekeeping operations in the region, or at least do not let it deter them from electing these parties.

Chapter 2 confirmed that this shift in strategic culture did, in fact, result from Japan's right-wing subculture in the form of the LDP-Komeito coalition. This conclusion proves Hypothesis B, that a shift in strategic culture among key subcultures caused Japan's shift in defense policy. In terms of elected officials, LDP members in the 1960s supported the same policies regarding constitutional revision and the SDF as they do today, but were more hesitant to state this support outright. Conservative politicians therefore framed the existence of the U.S.-Japan Mutual Defense Treaty and the SDF as critical to Japan's economic expansion. With the U.S. taking responsibility for deterrence in the region, Japan could reap the benefits of U.S. intervention without sacrificing substantial economic resources. LDP politicians also hesitated to state their support for Article 9 revision, knowing that citizens would see no reason for Japan to revoke its renouncement of war so soon after suffering defeat in World War II. Today, LDP politicians argue that Article 9 impedes on Japanese sovereignty and therefore want to maintain SDF forces without constitutional restraint. Elected officials take advantage of a voter base that is removed from Japan's militaristic past by multiple generations, and can therefore more easily accept the argument that greater SDF capability is critical for maintaining peace and stability in the East Asia region.

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### **Limitations and Future Research**

Further research regarding changes in Japan's strategic culture could be accomplished with access to translated Japanese news sources from the 1960s. The articles selected here were found in *New York Times* archives from the 1960s and *Yomiuri Shimbun* articles from the 2010s,

which are accessible through the *Yomidas Rekishikan* database. Accessibility to similar sources from the 1960s that reflect the Japanese perspective would enhance this analysis, and perhaps prevent a less biased view of Japanese politics. In the interest of time and language constraints, this could not be accomplished for the purpose of this paper.

Future scholars may also wish to expand the scope of this research by addressing how American politicians and Japan-U.S. relations contributed to this shift in public attitudes toward the military. While this paper touches on how U.S. policies directly impact Japanese defense strategy, it would be useful to measure whether public opinion toward the U.S. shifted significantly over this time period. Another topic for future research is to analyze whether shifts in Japan's strategic culture are reflected in Prime Minister Abe's policies toward Japan's involvement with international institutions like the United Nations and regional institutions like the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

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### **Implications**

Japan's decision to increase SDF capabilities and revise Article 9 of the constitution is highly relevant to its relations with neighboring countries in the region, specifically its relations with Russia, the PRC and South Korea. The PRC and South Korea retain poor relations with Japan due to the forced displacement of their peoples and other crimes committed by Japan during World War II. Japan's decision to alter its constitution or not also impacts its alignment with the U.S., and could possibly draw Japan into U.S.-centered conflicts in the future. Perhaps greater attention to historical contexts behind a country's decision to remain neutral or not could provide insight into how nations should frame their strategic decisions moving forward. In Japan, greater attention to the benefits provided by not militarizing might convince LDP members that

revising Article 9 and increasing SDF capabilities could make Japan vulnerable to hostility from East Asian neighbors and hawkish U.S. defense policies. Thus, Japan's strategic culture determines not only its domestic environment over the next decade, but also how it negatively or positively impacts the international environment around it.

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### **Reflection**

The impetus for this research began while studying abroad at Kansai Gaidai University in Hirakata City, Japan, during the 2018-19 academic school year. After taking a class called Security Issues in East Asia taught by Professor Nur Daut, I became interested in Japan's response to security issues in the region and how attempts to revise Article 9 impacted Japan's relations with other countries. After traveling to Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, I also wanted to incorporate what I learned about U.S. foreign policy in the region into my Senior Honors Thesis.

Initially, the purpose of my research was to take a realist stance that analyzed whether external factors such as President Trump's foreign policy, in addition to threats from the PRC and North Korea, contributed to significant changes in Japan's strategic policy. Professor Greg Young then challenged me to take a constructivist approach that examined cultural and institutional factors. This project involved extensive time analyzing primary sources from the Prime Minister's Cabinet Office, in addition to news sources from both *The New York Times* and *The Yomiuri Shimbun*. Thanks to support from my mentors, I managed to narrow down decades worth of information into patterns and themes that made sense chronologically and captured a multi-generational shift in strategic culture. My intention for this research is that it will be

expanded in the future to better understand how Japan's domestic environment impacts its role in the international security environment.

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