

Japan's Remilitarization and Constitutional Revision

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Constitutional Revision as a Barometer for Remilitarization

Japan's recent pro-activity in international security—especially since 11 September and the participation of the Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) in supporting the US-led “war on terror” in Afghanistan and Iraq, and, thereafter, attempts to strengthen US-Japan alliance cooperation in East Asia—has further reinvigorated the academic and policy debate on the trajectory and implications of Japan's reemergence as a military power. This reemergence demands attention due to its carrying significant ramifications for Japan's future role as a global security actor in conjunction with the United States and the United Nations.

Much of the academic discussion to date has been dominated by specialists in international relations who have focused on three key issues relating to Japan's assumption of a “normal” military role. These scholars have debated the relative importance of the main drivers—domestic institutions and norms versus international structural pressures—in shaping Japan's security posture.¹ They and other scholars have also concerned themselves with trying to discern the extent of change in Japanese grand strategy, and thus whether Japan continues to adhere to the low-profile “Yoshida Doctrine” or is now moving to a bolder international military stance.² Likewise, these and still other scholars are concerned with discussing the implications of Japan's security trajectory for its own, regional, and global security. A number of scholars would argue that changes to Japanese security policy are incremental and appropriate as befitting an advanced industrial democracy and ally of the

United States. The opposed view from a number of Japanese commentators, but also from vocal foreign and “revisionist” academics, is that Japan’s growing military pro-activity signifies new dangers. The country may be moving inexorably toward the recrudescence of militarism and to reestablishing itself as a destabilizing influence both regionally and globally.³

Much of this mainstream academic analysis, with some exceptions, has eschewed the active use of the term “remilitarization” in attempting to address these three issues of the drivers, extent of change, and appropriateness of a more military active Japan.⁴ It appears that for the mainstream debate on Japanese security, the term “remilitarization,” with its connotations of prewar imperialism and aggression, and frequent association with the intellectual traditions of Marxism and the Japan Peace Research Group, is insufficiently strong in social science terms.

The objective of this chapter, though, is to reevaluate the use of remilitarization for understanding the contemporary trajectory of Japanese security policy and to demonstrate its strengths in addressing the three key debates outlined above. Arguably, the application of the term “remilitarization”—if correctly conceived in dispassionate social science terms (of which there is a long tradition in the study of Japan and other regional contexts), rather than being viewed as some kind of scaremongering language implying an instant rewind of history to 1931–1945—can provide a powerful analytical and theoretical framework to discern the nature and significance of Japan’s changing security policy.

First, the concept of remilitarization assists in identifying those military components—institutional and ideological in nature—present in all societies, including Japan, that are subject to contestation and alteration and thus open the way to substantive change in military security policy. Similarly, the framework assists in demonstrating how shifts in military policy are affected by international interaction leading to both the importation and exportation of remilitarization through mechanisms such as alliance cooperation. Hence, the concept of remilitarization can speak directly to the first debate among scholars of the key domestic and international drivers of military change.

Second, the concept of remilitarization as a dynamic process over time assists as an important reminder to search for the possibilities of not just continuity but also significant change in a society’s military stance. It also assists in setting historical baselines in order to contextualize and calibrate the degree to which any one society has shifted its military stance and whether it may thus be escaping from or repeating its past. In this way remilitarization speaks to the second debate regarding estimations of how far Japan’s security policy may have deviated from its low-profile past.

Finally, but just as important, the concept of remilitarization assists in perceiving more clearly the current policy discourse surrounding Japanese security policy. It encourages us to more carefully define against an objective social science standard the import of Japan's changing security policy rather than against the arguably subjective, and policy and ideologically led, standard of a "normal" military power. In turn, viewing Japan's changing security policy through the militarization framework enables a more searching interrogation of the dominant policy discourse of the "normalization" of Japanese security policy. This forces questions—which might be answered either in the affirmative or negative, but nevertheless have to be addressed—as to whether Japan's activities are really appropriate, responsible, and "normal."

In order to utilize the insights of remilitarization to address these three key questions surrounding Japan's security policy, the intention of this chapter is to focus on one ideological aspect of remilitarization in the Japanese context: constitutional revision. Japan's debate on constitutional revision can be regarded as a prominent facet of what might be termed "militarism of the mind." Remilitarization can be seen to advance not just in terms of extant military capabilities, defense budgets, civil-military relations, and civil relations, but also, and equally importantly, in the erosion of normative constraints on the standing of the military and use of military force in society.⁵ This may manifest itself in the dropping of restrictions on the use of certain types of military weapons, as well as the interlinked erosion of formal legal and constitutional constraints on the use of military force for national security ends.

Japan's principal brake on "militarism of the mind" has clearly been and remains its constitution. Article 9 of the constitution is the point of origin for Japan's exclusively defense-oriented policy, its non-exercise of the right of collective self-defense, and a range of antimilitaristic prohibitions. Japan's constitution has certainly not proved an absolute barrier to its remilitarization, given the ability of policy makers to skillfully reinterpret and stretch constitutional constraints along with the fact that it has been able to incrementally build up extensive military forces, to strengthen US-Japan alliance cooperation, and to initiate the dispatch of the JSDF on a range of overseas operations. Nevertheless, the constitution remains an obstacle to be constantly circumvented by Japanese policy makers in their quest to push forward a "normal" military role.

Moreover, despite Japanese policy makers' past ingenuity in stretching the constitution, there are now increasing indications post-Cold War and post-11 September that they are bumping up against the limits of constitutional reinterpretation as a means to deal with perceived international

security demands, and thus that the movement for a measure of outright revision is gaining a degree of long-term strength. The consequence is that policy makers' attempts to revise Article 9 of the constitution serve as a constant barometer of the remilitarization of Japanese society and its security posture. The stronger and more successful attempts become to assail and subvert the constitution, the more it may be assumed that Japan is slipping away from its previous antimilitaristic posture. Likewise, as these attempts meet resistance, the more it may be assumed that remilitarization is being held in check or at least slowed in pace.

Therefore, in order to test the validity of the remilitarization framework through the example of constitutional revision, this chapter examines a variety of key issues. It considers the motivations behind Japanese policy makers' consideration of the need to implement constitutional change, either by formal revision or reinterpretation or a subtle combination of the two; the extent of the obstacles to constitutional revision; the likely probability of its being effected; and the implications for Japan's security policy and military stance. In turn, at the end it draws from these discussions conclusions regarding the utility of remilitarization as a framework to understand the trajectory of Japan's security policy. Japan's debate on constitutional revision is shown to be insightful in demonstrating how a range of both internal and external forces are exerting change on Japan's security policy and thus what are its crucial drivers. In turn, an examination of the extent of constitutional revision effected provides a benchmark to gauge just how far Japan has remilitarized. Finally, constitutional revision and the means by which it has been attempted asks just how "normal" and appropriate the process of change of Japan's security policy can be considered to be.

Japan's Early Moves toward Constitutional Reinterpretation Post–Cold War

Japan has been forced to devise a number of makeshift measures in the past two decades under its present constitution (promulgated 1946, in effect 1947) in order to enable JSDF overseas in response to global and regional security crises. The preamble of the constitution states Japanese ideals with regard to security:

We, the Japanese people, desire peace for all time and are deeply conscious of the high ideals controlling human relationships, and we have determined to preserve our security and existence, trusting in the justice and faith of the peace-loving peoples of the world. We desire to occupy an honored place in

an international society striving for the preservation of peace, and the banishment of tyranny and slavery, oppression and intolerance for all time from the earth. We recognize that all peoples of the world have the right to live in peace, free from fear and want.

Chapter 2, Article 9 of the constitution, “The Renunciation of War,” reads as follows:

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

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

Japanese policy makers originally interpreted Article 9 as prohibiting both offensive war and the right of national self-defense, but from the 1950s onward they have held to an interpretation allowing Japan, in line with its position as a sovereign state under the UN Charter, to exercise the right of individual self-defense (*kobetsu-teki jieiken*) to maintain military purposes for this purpose.⁶ Alongside its interpretation of Article 9 as permitting the right of individual self-defense, Japan maintained an additional interpretation prohibiting the exercise of the right of collective self-defense (*shūdan-teki jieiken*). Japan’s government recognizes that, as a sovereign state, under Article 7 of the UN Charter it possesses the inherent right of collective self-defense, but since 1954 the government has taken the position that the actual exercise of this right would exceed the minimum force necessary for the purposes of self-defense and is unconstitutional. Japan’s prohibition on the exercise of collective self-defense thus limited the potential for it to assist its US ally outside its own immediate territory during the Cold War period.

Japan’s constitutional interpretations, although not unquestioned by conservative politicians as a restriction on national sovereignty, held until the end of the Cold War and enjoyed relatively broad support from the opposition parties and the wider public. However, Japan’s failure to respond to US and international expectations that it should make a “human contribution” during the Gulf War of 1990–1991 first led Ozawa Ichirō, as the then LDP secretary-general, to enunciate the concept of “international” (*kokusai-teki anzen hoshō*) or “collective security” (*shūdan-teki anzen hoshō*).⁷ Ozawa’s concept of “collective security” contrasts with collective self-defense in that under chapter 7, Article 51, of the UN Charter the latter is an inherent right that can be exercised without UN approval in instances where it is deemed

necessary to defend another state or ally as if one's own territory were attacked; whereas the former is derived from earlier articles of chapter 7, especially Article 43, which stress the exercise of force only if sanctioned by the United Nations and if for the purposes of collective retaliation by UN members against aggression.

In turn, Ozawa argued that the preamble of the constitution (preferably combined with a revision at some point of Article 9 to make clear Japan's right to maintain military forces for international security cooperation), which obliges Japan to strive for an honored position in international society and thus for enhanced international cooperation, means that the Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) can participate in any form of UN-sanctioned and UN-centered multilateral military activity, including full war fighting, without violating Article 9.⁸ Ozawa attempted to implement his stance through the formation in mid-1991 of the LDP's Special Study Group on Japan's Role in International Security.⁹ But its findings were marginalized as the government shifted the focus of its search for an international security role to the passage of the International Peace Cooperation Law of June 1992 enabling the dispatch of the JSDF on noncombat United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (UNPKO).

Japan's Constitution Creaks under Pressure:

POST-9/11 AND REGIONAL CONTINGENCIES

In seeking to respond to the events of 11 September, Japan was again faced with expectation for the overseas dispatch of the JSDF to provide a human contribution and again responded through the stretching of its constitutional interpretations. Japan could have followed the United States in relying principally on the right of individual self-defense, given the Japanese fatalities in the 11 September attacks, but this might have then mandated the constitutional use of force and an open-ended combat mission. Moreover, in contrast to the US's NATO allies, Japan could not invoke the right of collective self-defense. Instead, Japan's preference was to design the Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law (ATSML) and subsequent Replenishment Support Special Measures Law for JSDF noncombat dispatch to support Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan from 2001 until 2009, invoking neither individual self-defense nor collective self-defense, but predicated on relevant UN resolutions. Japan stressed UN resolutions that identified the 11 September attacks on the United States as a threat to international peace, and that called on all UN members, and by implication Japan as well, to counter terrorism. Japan then linked this

UN authority to its own constitution to legitimize JSDF dispatch by switching emphasis from Article 9 to the preamble, the latter stating Japan's obligation to work with an international society for the preservation of peace.

Japanese policy makers subsequently used a similar method to justify the passage of the Iraqi Reconstruction Law through the diet in July 2003, which enabled JSDF dispatch to Iraq on noncombat reconstruction missions from 2004 to 2008. Japan's government predicated the law on extant, if rather weak, UN resolutions; and in arguing for the constitutionality of JSDF dispatch in December 2003, Prime Minister Koizumi Junichirō chose to point to the preamble in support and neglected all mention of Article 9.¹⁰

Japan has employed similar constitutional sleights of hand to expand JSDF cooperation in regional contingencies. Japan's government deflected accusations during the revision of the US-Japan guidelines and passing of the Regional Contingencies Law between 1997 and 1999 that JSDF logistical missions in support of the United States might amount to the exercise of collective self-defense by insisting that it was possible, even in the midst of a major regional conflict, to fix a line between combat zones involving US deployments and noncombat zones for JSDF logistical deployments. Thus, they asserted, there was no risk of the JSDF becoming sucked into combat. Japan's leaders argued as well that the Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF) can, if necessary, defend US ships when engaged in refueling operations on the basis of individual self-defense. In October 2006 then director general of the Japan Defense Agency (JDA) Kyūma Fumio compared Japanese refueling operations as analogous to two companions walking alongside each other, with one then being subject to a mugging, and thus the other companion might seek to defend the other on the basis that the attack might be directed at both. Thus he presented yet another ingenious view of Japanese preservation of its individual self-defense stance.¹¹

Japanese policy makers' creative constitutional interpretations have enabled the JSDF to undertake a range of new regional and global missions while also ensuring that Japan does not overcommit itself to certain forms of dispatch. Nevertheless, Japan's policy makers perceive that, while expedient, these interpretations contain major potential drawbacks over the longer term. Japan's non-exercise of collective self-defense and the circumventions of this restriction through the ATSMML and the Iraqi Reconstruction Law imposed cumbersome operational restrictions on the JSDF cooperation with the United States and other states in the field. Furthermore, the *de facto* collective security option, although opening up the possibility of a genuine military combat role for the JSDF, is not one that can be explicitly explored as

the principal basis of Japan's international security role; certainly, at least, it was not appropriate for the long-governing Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), with its pro-US-Japan alliance stance, very much because it is a UN-centered option. Japan can exploit UN legitimization to provide support for its US ally as in Afghanistan and Iraq, but if it were to more strongly push the linkages between the United Nations and its own security policy, then this might set up tensions with its US ally's disinclination to allow the United Nations to constrain its own and allies' military actions. Hence, in cases where there are no extant UN resolutions, Japan's collective security option might lead to inaction and the undermining of the bilateral alliance.

Japanese thinking about the limitations of current constitutional restrictions and incremental reinterpretations as means to respond to international crises has been reinforced by a range of emerging security challenges. In particular, Japanese policy makers perceive ever growing external pressures from the United States for expanded regional and global security cooperation, and for increased strategic and tactical integration of the JSDF and the US military, thus raising questions about Japan's ability in the future to resist engaging in operations in support of the United States that might transgress the non-exercise of collective self-defense.

Ballistic Missile Defense

ALLIANCE TECHNOLOGY EXACERBATING THE PRESSURE FOR REVISION

Most significantly, Japan's embarkation on Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) in cooperation with the United States, and underlined by the BMD-related realignments in the bilateral 2006 Defense Policy Review Initiative (DPRI) and calls from the United States for Japan's BMD system to function for the defense of the US homeland, has placed severe stress on the ban on collective self-defense. US Ambassador Thomas Schieffer in October 2006, Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Asia-Pacific Affairs Richard Lawless in December 2006, and Secretary of Defense Robert Gates in May 2007 made it progressively clearer that the United States expected Japan to use its BMD assets to help intercept missiles targeted for the States.¹² In addition, the May 2007 Security Consultative Committee (SCC), the principal coordinating body for the alliance, agreed that both sides would "clarify concepts, roles, and missions for each side in the conduct of missile defense and related operations in response to ballistic missile threats," interpreted by the Japanese media as requiring Japan's investigation of its use of BMD to assist in the defense of the United States itself.¹³

Japan's government in moving forward with BMD deployments has sought to avoid any breach of the collective self-defense ban. Fukuda Yasuo, as the then chief cabinet secretary, announced Japan's decision to introduce BMD with the statement that the system "will be operated on Japan's independent judgment, and will not be used for the purpose of defending third countries. Therefore, it does not raise any problems with regard to the issue of the right of collective self-defense. The BMD system requires interception of missiles by Japan's own independent judgment based on the information on the target acquired by Japan's own sensors."¹⁴

Japan maintains that any US-Japan information exchanges for the purposes of BMD will not necessarily conflict with existing prohibitions on collective self-defense, as they can be classified as routine information gathering that is not directed specifically for the exercise of the use of force in support of an ally.¹⁵ Japan has deflected US calls for the system to operate for the defense of the US homeland by arguing that its current BMD capabilities are simply technologically insufficient to intercept missiles targeted at the United States. In response to Schieffer's October 2006 remarks about Japan's BMD defending the United States, and consequent speculation within the government that it might reconsider Fukuda's 2003 statement, Kyūma emphasized in a press conference on 21 November that the issue of collective self-defense could not arise, because Japan's BMD was "physically incapable" (*butsuri-teki ni muri*) of pursuing missiles targeted at third countries.¹⁶ Kyūma then repeated this line in response to Robert Gates's critique of Japan's stance in bilateral talks in May 2007.¹⁷

However, in their desperation to maintain the ban on the exercise of collective self-defense, Japanese policy makers have been prepared to construct a second line of argument that maintains the formal ban but at the same time leaves open the possibility of assisting in the defense of the United States from missile attacks if deemed necessary to preserve the US-Japan alliance. For even though Japanese policy makers are aware of the risks of the exercise of collective self-defense in support of the United States, they are also aware that if Japan is seen to be totally impassive in the defense of its ally from missile attacks, and despite its possession of an increasing capacity to intercept missiles targeted for the United States, and especially with the introduction of the upgraded and co-developed Standard Missile-3 interceptor missile with possible breakout capabilities against Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBM), then this might prove fatal for the future of US-Japan alliance cooperation. Japan's policy makers have again sought to prepare a fallback hedging position utilizing convoluted constitutional interpretation

and linguistic artifice. JDA policy makers were thus ready in 2006 to argue that Japan might look to intercept missiles targeted for the United States by using the justification that in passing over Japanese airspace, these missiles could jettison rocket material over its territory and thus pose a risk to its national security, so mandating a BMD intercept predicated on the right of individual self-defense.¹⁸

Japanese policy makers may then have managed in the case of BMD to devise a short-term escape route on the issue of collective self-defense and the defense of the US homeland. However, the complex and operationally deficient nature of this position is clearly not satisfactory over the long term, nor has it relieved the pressure for reconsideration of the right of collective self-defense as the BMD project progresses. Indeed, Japan's management of collective self-defense issues in BMD is simply illustrative of the fact for many government and opposition policy makers that Japan cannot continue to articulate security policy based on constant reinterpretation and, consequently, that a more formal degree of constitutional revision is necessary. As Gotōda Masazuki of the LDP commented at the time of the ATSMML debate, the constitution is increasingly strained like an "elastic band" to its breaking point.¹⁹

First Moves to Formal Revision and Intra-Party Debates

Against this background of growing dissatisfaction with the existing constitutional status quo, Japan has thus begun to shift toward the most serious consideration of formal revision of at any time of the postwar period. The first moves toward constitutional revision took the form of the National Diet's House of Representatives and House of Councilors release of separate reports on the issue in April 2005. The House of Representatives reported a consensus that Article 9 of the constitution should be revised in such a way that the first clause, the renunciation of the right of belligerency, should be kept in place, but that in the second clause Japan's right of self-defense and the constitutionality of the JSDF should be explicitly acknowledged.²⁰ The House of Councilors failed to agree on revisions to Article 9, and neither of the chambers was able to reach a consensus on revisions relating to the exercise of the right of collective self-defense, although they both agreed that Japan should engage more actively in international security cooperation.²¹ In this sense many of the changes debated in the Diet reports were only proposals for *de jure* confirmation of the *de facto* realities of Japan's security policy. Nonetheless, these reports were important in initiating deeper debates on constitutional revision and in preparing the way for party political concrete proposals for revision.

As the governing party until 2009 the LDP was the principal initiator of attempts at constitutional revision, long advocating formal revision (*kai-ken*) as part of its party platform. In March 2004 the Defense Policy Studies Subcommittee of the LDP's Policy Research Council (PRC) issued a report titled "Recommendations on Japan's New Defense Policy." It proposed that Japan should amend Article 9 to recognize the JSDF as a national armed force responsible for national territorial defense and the support of international security, and to state clearly the possession of the rights of individual self-defense and collective self-defense. In addition, the PRC recommended that Japan should pass a Fundamental Law for National Defense and general law governing international peace cooperation activities to replace the existing practice of passing ad hoc legislation to cover individual JSDF missions and thus enable Japan to respond more readily to international contingencies.²²

The LDP's New Constitution Drafting Committee (*Shinkempō Kisō Inukai*) then released a final draft of a revised constitution in November 2005 to coincide with the fiftieth anniversary of the LDP's foundation. The draft settled upon three key issues for constitutional revision relating to security. Chapter 2 of the constitution was to be renamed "security" instead of the "renunciation of war," and the first paragraph and its pacifist principles were retained. The sentence beginning "in order to . . ." was removed, and major changes were made to the second paragraph. First, the JSDF's existence was recognized with its nomenclature changed from Japan Self-Defense Forces (*Jieitai*) to Japan Self-Defense Military (*Jieigun*). Second, the *Jieigun* was specifically charged with international cooperation for the preservation of international peace and security. This change was reinforced by a revised preamble, which states that the Japanese people pledge themselves to cooperate for the preservation of international peace.²³ Third, the LDP sought to tackle the collective self-defense issue not through the process of constitutional revision itself, but through the legislative process and plans to submit to the National Diet a separate Fundamental National Security Law that would specify the right and particular conditions for the exercise of collective self-defense.²⁴

The LDP appeared relatively confident that it could effect this change because of the subtle modification in the status of the JSDF created by its designation as a military (*gun*) in the revised Article 9. The LDP sought to argue that by establishing in the constitution the principle of Japan's possession of a military with international security responsibilities rather than just a force designed for its own individual defense per se, and by setting this principle alongside the already established principle of Japan's inherent possession of the right of collective self-defense, it would be able to push forward the concept that it is only "natural" (*tōzen*) for Japan to breach its

self-imposed ban to exercise this right and to utilize its military forces for the support of its US ally and the international community.²⁵ LDP policy makers appeared confident that this legislative and reinterpretative package could be pushed through, because the drafting of the bill would enable the party and its New Kōmeitō coalition partner to negotiate acceptable limits on the extent of collective self-defense exercise in terms of specific conditions and geographical extent, and because a straight legislative bill would require only a simple majority in the National Diet rather than the tough two-thirds' majority required for constitutional revision.²⁶

The LDP was further emboldened due to its detecting grounds for convergence with the then main opposition Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) on constitutional revision. The DPJ has followed the LDP in recognizing the need for a full debate on constitutional revision in order to respond to Japan's changing security circumstances, although it has experienced greater difficulty in developing an intra-party consensus on the form of revision and how to position itself as the main opposition party on this issue vis-à-vis the LDP. The DPJ initiated its own Research Committee on the Constitution in 1999, which produced a midterm proposal (*teigen*) in June 2004, and then a final proposal report in October 2005. The DPJ originally intended to produce its draft version of a new constitution by mid-2006, although as of 2013 this final draft was yet to materialize. The party's basic position in opposition to the LDP's revision (*kaiken*) is conceptualized as one of constitutional "enhancement" (*sōken*). Influential figures from all wings of the party are disturbed by what they perceive as the "hollowing out" (*kūdōka*) of the constitution's principles by endless government reinterpretations. Instead the DPJ's basic aim is to re-augment the fundamental pacifist principles of the constitution and to bring clearer demarcations to the utilization of its military force for its own individual self-defense and in support of the United States. At the same time, the DPJ is concerned with expanding Japan's scope for international security cooperation with the wider East Asian regional community and especially the United Nations.

In practice, though, forming a DPJ consensus on constitutional revision has been a difficult task due to internal factionalism. The Social Democratic Party of Japan (SDPJ) rump led by Yokomichi Takahiro has been opposed to revision in general and especially any moves to lift the prohibition on the exercise of collective self-defense.²⁷ Former DPJ president Ozawa has made common cause with Yokomichi on this position, arguing that in line with his notion of collective security, constitutional revision is not necessary for Japan to play an international security role. Ozawa and Yokomichi have

jointly argued that Japan should thus avoid any move to constitutional revision that would only enable the LDP to further expand support for the United States and that instead Japan should seek to support the establishment of a UN standing army with JSDF participation.²⁸ The social progressives in the party, led by Naoto Kan, later to become prime minister in 2010–2011, have preserved a more open mind on revision, but also proposed the establishment of a special reserve force, separate from the JSDF, for overseas operations.²⁹ The intent of Kan and his followers was clearly to expand the scope for Japanese international security cooperation but to do by means divorced from, and therefore capping also the future potential extent of, JSDF dispatch overseas in support of US military operations.

Meanwhile, on the other, more liberal- or conservative-leaning wings of the DPJ, there is a greater appetite for constitutional revision and the possible exercise of collective self-defense. Hatoyama Yukio, to become the first DPJ prime minister in 2009–2010, advocated in his own draft for a revised constitution in 2005 a limited form of collective self-defense, mandating Japan to participate in peacekeeping operations and peace-creation activities conducted by the United Nations and “other established international organizations.”³⁰ Former DPJ president and later foreign minister Okada Katsuya caused controversy within the party when he argued in a speech in the United States in July 2004 that based on clear UN resolutions Japan could actually use military force to contribute to international security, although this definition was closer to that of collective security.³¹ Maehara Seiji, yet another former DPJ president, and later foreign minister and contender for prime minister, has gone even further, stating that Japan should investigate, based on constitutional revision, the exercise of collective self-defense and be entitled to use military force in carefully designed circumstances such as regional contingencies and in UN-led operations.³² Maehara has emphasized in the past his willingness to work on a bipartisan basis with the LDP on key security legislation and constitutional revision.

The consequence of the DPJ’s internal divisions has been its need to forge compromises in its proposals for constitutional revision, as seen in *teigen* reports of 2004 and 2005. The DPJ, in a fashion similar to that of the LDP, first proposed that the existence of the JSDF and right of individual self-defense should be recognized in the constitution. Its second proposal also focused on specifying an international security role for the JSDF, but this is linked more strongly to the concept of collective security and operations under UN mandates, although the extent of force available in these missions was left deliberately vague to placate the left of the party.³³ The DPJ’s third major

proposal also resembled that of the LDP by seeking to create a Fundamental Security Law that would draw up specific restrictions on the international security operations of the JSDF.³⁴

Abe's Successes and Failures on Constitutional Revision

Although the LDP was aware of the not insignificant remaining challenges to constitutional revision, in 2006–2007, under the leadership of then Prime Minister Abe Shinzō, it began to press ahead with concrete steps for revision. During his election campaign for LDP president and prime minister, Abe made clear his intention to seek constitutional revision, and after securing election he duly made this, along with the revision of the Fundamental Law of Education, an official policy pledge of his administration. Abe himself viewed revision of the constitution and the exercise of the right of collective self-defense as an essential part of his vision for Japan to escape from the constraints imposed by the postwar settlement (*sengo dakkyaku*) and to reassert its identity as a great power.³⁵

Abe subsequently moved to push forward legislation in the National Diet, already mooted since Koizumi's period in office, designed to create the procedures for a national referendum on constitutional revision. Abe was undoubtedly emboldened by his inheritance from Koizumi of the two-thirds' "supermajority" in the House of Representatives (Article 96 of the constitution allowing for revision in the case of two-thirds' majority support in both chambers, and a simple majority in a special referendum), and succeeded in ramming the legislation through the upper and lower chambers of the National Diet on 12 April and 14 May 2006 respectively. The successful passage of the legislation included a three-year moratorium on any attempts to submit drafts for constitutional revision to the National Diet. The LDP's intention during this three-year period was to begin to lay the foundations for a bid to revise the constitution by encouraging the formation of a Research Commission on the Constitution in the House of Councilors in January 2007 and a Deliberative Council on the Constitution in the House of Representatives in August 2007. The LDP also hoped to produce an outline draft for a revised constitution for submission to and passage through the National Diet in 2011 and then submission to a national referendum in the same year.³⁶

In the meantime Abe turned his attention to attempts to more immediately loosen restrictions on Japan's exercise of collective self-defense. In an interview given to the *Washington Post* on 14 November 2006, Prime Minister Abe had already opined that in reaction to emerging US demands,

Japan should reconsider its ban on the exercise of collective self-defense in order to intercept missiles targeted at the United States.³⁷ Then on 20 November then chief cabinet secretary Shiozaki Yasuhisa indicated that the Japanese government might reconsider Fukuda's 2003 statement on BMD, thus sparking the speculation that led to Kyūma's explanation that Japan could not intercept US missiles with current technological capacities.³⁸ Abe then proceeded on 17 April to establish within the Prime Minister's Office a Council on Reconstruction for the Legal Basis for Security, chaired by Yanai Shunji, a former ambassador to the United States. The panel was charged with researching ways to bring Japan's legal measures into line with a range of new security scenarios facing the JSDF; particularly implicit was the task of considering areas where Japan might consider exercising the right of collective self-defense in relation to BMD. Abe's intent to use the panel as a means to slice at existing interpretations, and thereby build pressure for the breach of the ban on collective self-defense, was made clear by the fact that he packed it with experts who were already known to be supporters of the exercise of this right.³⁹

The Yanai Panel produced its final report on 24 June 2008, having studied four major scenarios. The first scenario concerned Japan's legal ability to respond to an attack on nearby US warships engaged in joint exercises with the MSDF in international waters. The second involved Japan's legal ability to respond, irrespective of extant technological capabilities, by utilizing its BMD assets to intercept a missile launch targeted at the United States. The third scenario addressed Japan's legal ability to use force in order to defend the military personnel of other states engaged in UNPKO in which Japan was also participating. The final scenario raised the subject of Japan's legal right to provide logistical support to the militaries of other states involved in UNPKO that might involve the use of force.

The panel concluded that in the first and second scenarios Japan had no other option but to seek to exercise the right of collective self-defense. In the first scenario, it argued that any attempts to justify Japanese defense of US warships as an act of individual self-defense under Article 95 of the JSDF Law on the grounds that an attack might also inflict damage MSDF forces nearby would only create operational vagaries and only apply if US warships were extremely proximate.⁴⁰ The report thus sketched out the possibility that the JSDF might have to sit idly by while its ally's warships suffered damage. In the second scenario, the panel concluded that attempts to justify an interception of a missile targeted at the United States as an act of individual self-defense based on Articles of 82-2 and 93-3 of the JSDF Law relating to BMD and drawing

on the right to police the safety of the seas would again founder on a lack of operational clarity. The report pointed out that if Japan were to take no action, then this would undermine the purpose of BMD in promoting US-Japan alliance cooperation, the US deterrence posture around Japan, and the foundations of the alliance. The report stressed that Japan must exercise the right of collective self-defense for operations involving its BMD assets deployed on its own territory and in international waters in order to defend the United States. However, it also quietly noted that this did not oblige Japan to exercise the same right to defend the United States against missile attacks in the territorial waters of other states, thus maintaining a degree of limitation on the extent of US-Japan BMD operational commitments outside Japan itself.⁴¹

In regard to the third and fourth scenarios, the panel concluded that these could be responded to not through collective self-defense, but through constitutional reinterpretations utilizing individual self-defense. The panel argued that Japan's use of force in support of military personnel from other states involved in UNPKO should not be seen as a violation of Article 9's renunciation of the use of force for settling international disputes, as these missions are not traditional wars but UN-mandated operations for the restoration and maintenance of international peace. Similarly, for the fourth scenario, the panel argued that the provision of logistical support to UNPKO was not the same as engaging in the use of force in traditional war fighting, and thus did not transgress Article 9 of the constitution. Indeed, the panel argued, Japan's enhanced participation in scenarios three and four would actually bring it firmly into line with international norms on the use of force.⁴² However, the panel still maintained a degree of reserve in pushing the logic of participation in UN operations and the constitutionality of the use of force. The panel was careful not to follow Ozawa's line and argue for full collective security, stressing that Japan should participate only selectively in UNPKO as national interests dictated, and that its arguments for reinterpretation did not imply that Japan should as yet engage in full combat duties under the United Nations.⁴³ Finally, the panel concluded that if Japan were to squarely face the security challenges of the new century, then it would have to continue to revisit the issues of collective self-defense and constitutional reinterpretation.⁴⁴

Abe's promotion of national referendum legislation and his institution of the Yanai Panel appeared to position his administration to move ahead with constitutional revision by a mixture of formal revision and reinterpretation and broadly in line with LDP plans. However, Abe's plans were to be derailed by late 2007. The LDP and DPJ were already at loggerheads over the issues of whether a special referendum could be used to seek public approval on other

policy matters, and if government employees such as university professors and high school teachers were to be allowed to engage in constitutional debates in the event of a referendum. However, Abe's use of strong-arm tactics to force the referendum legislation through the National Diet, irrespective of calls for bipartisanship on constitutional revision, only served to provide another policy issue to galvanize much of the DPJ into more active opposition.⁴⁵ Abe's tactics further raised the concerns of his New Kōmeitō coalition partner, with its declarations in April and May 2007 that it remained broadly opposed to the exercise of collective self-defense, although it was prepared to tolerate the Yanai Panel's research into "grey zone" areas where the borderline with individual self-defense was indistinct.⁴⁶ In addition, Abe's stance attracted criticism from the LDP itself, with the influential faction leaders Yamazaki Taku and Tanigaki Sadakazu both stating their discomfort at the prime minister's attempt to introduce collective self-defense through the back door by utilizing the Yanai Panel in order to avoid open debate. Former JDA director general Ishiba Shigeru compared Abe's tactics to those of his grandfather prime minister Kishi Nobusuke in forcing through the National Diet in 1960 the revised US-Japan security treaty.⁴⁷ Abe then made the fateful mistake of attempting to campaign on the issue of constitutional revision as one of his main campaign pledges in the September 2007 elections for the House of Councilors, only to find that he was punished by an electorate baffled as to why Abe was concentrating on this and other foreign policy issues when the problems of growing economic inequalities in Japanese society seemed to be more pressing.

Fukuda and Asō: Constitutional Revision off the Agenda

Abe's consequent fall from power and the succession of Fukuda as prime minister further dampened the constitutional revision debate. Fukuda's preoccupation with domestic political and economic problems, fighting Ministry of Defense scandals, and maintaining the MSDF mission in the Indian Ocean, meant he had little appetite for engaging in the controversy over the constitution. Indeed, during Fukuda's period in office the Yanai Panel was never convened, and he received its final report in June 2008 with minimal interest and no intention to act upon it.⁴⁸

Fukuda's successor as prime minister in September 2009, Asō Tarō, demonstrated some renewed interest in the exercise of collective self-defense in line with his more assertive stance on security. After speaking at the UN General Assembly in New York on 25 September, just one day after his appointment as prime minister, Asō remarked in response to reporters' questions about

current constitutional interpretations that collective self-defense was an “important issue,” thereby raising speculation that he might follow Abe in seeking to exercise this right.⁴⁹ Foreign Minister Nakasone Hirofumi and Minister of Defense Hamada Yasukazu then denied on 30 September that there were any government moves to change the interpretations relating to constitutional self-defense, even though they were both personally in favor of the exercise of this right.⁵⁰ Asō then back-pedaled on his earlier statements on constitutional reinterpretation, stating on 4 November that he had no intention of following this line, undoubtedly mindful of the controversy brewing at that time over remarks from the Air Self-Defense Force (ASDF) chief of staff, Tamogami Toshio, on historical revisionism and related questions of civilian control.⁵¹

Asō’s caution was certainly reinforced by the fact that the Japanese public appeared to be blowing hot and cold over the possibility of constitutional revision. A 2004 poll in the newspaper *Asahi Shimbun* showed that 53 percent of respondents were in favor of constitutional revision—the first time a majority was recorded since the newspaper began polling on the issue. According to the survey, 60 percent of respondents opposed revision of Article 9, but this was a decline of 14 points from the previous survey in 2001.⁵² Another *Asahi Shimbun* poll in 2006 demonstrated a rise in support for constitutional revision overall to 55 percent, and a drop in those opposed to revision of Article 9 to 42 percent, with those in favor now edging ahead for the first time at 43 percent, with 15 percent undecided.⁵³ The *Asahi Shimbun*’s poll in 2007 recorded that 58 percent of respondents favored overall constitutional revision, but that those opposing revision of Article 9 had risen to 49 percent, and those in favor falling to 33 percent, with 18 percent undecided.⁵⁴ In 2008 the same poll indicated that public support had now shifted significantly, with 59 percent opposed to constitutional revision overall, and 66 percent opposed to revision of Article 9, 23 percent in favor, and 11 percent undecided.⁵⁵ This impression of declining support by 2008 among the public for constitutional revision in general is supported by *Yomiuri Shimbun*’s polls. It found in 2006 found that 39 percent were in favor of revising Article 9, but by 2007 this had fallen to 36 percent and then down to 31 percent in 2008.⁵⁶

By 2009, therefore, it appeared that constitutional revision, either by formal revision or reinterpretation, had been demoted down the list of Japanese policy makers’ security priorities. Nevertheless, Japanese policy makers clearly harbored continuing interest in the issue. LDP, DPJ, and New Kōmeitō politicians who were dissatisfied at the waning of the constitutional revision debate under Fukuda formed a cross-party Dietmen’s Alliance for the Establishment of a New Constitution in March 2008, including 191 National Diet

members, with prominent members such as the then LDP secretary-general Ibuki Bunmei, Koga Makoto, Tanigaki, and the DPJ's then secretary-general Hatoyama, and Maehara. Japanese security experts also continued to argue for constitutional revision, Kitaoka Shinichi and Tanaka Akihiko, two of the members of the Yanai panel, supervised the production of a report by the private Tokyo Foundation in October 2008 on Japan's future security strategy, which called for the exercise of collective self-defense in BMD and international peace operations.⁵⁷ The Prime Minister's Council on Security and Defense Capabilities report (or Katsumata Report, and including many of the same personnel as those involved in the Tokyo Foundation report), produced in August 2009 to prepare for a scheduled NDPG revision later that year, recommended that the Yanai Panel report's measures for the exercise of collective self-defense should be implemented by the government.⁵⁸

The three-year moratorium on introducing drafts for a revised constitution also came to an end in 2009, meaning the issue could be tackled openly again. Former prime minister Abe continued to agitate on the constitutional reform issue, calling in May 2009 for reinterpretation to allow collective self-defense to be included in the LDP election manifesto.⁵⁹ In its report on Japanese defense policy in June 2009, the LDP called for movement on establishing the Deliberative Council on the Constitution in the House of Representatives to consider revision measures and also for the reinterpretation of the ban on collective self-defense.⁶⁰ Although the impending House of Representatives election in 2009 meant that few policy makers were willing to openly campaign on the issue of the constitution, most acknowledged that it was an issue to be addressed after the general election.⁶¹

Furthermore, even as the formal debate on constitutional revision reached an impasse in 2009, Japan continued to chip away incrementally in *de facto* terms at constitutional revision as seen in the MSDF's antipiracy dispatch since March 2009 to the Gulf of Aden. Japanese policy makers felt that the existing legal basis for antipiracy activities based on the Self-Defense Forces Law policing provisions was inadequate to ensure effective operations and the safety of Japanese personnel if confronted by pirates using force.⁶² Hence, in June 2009, after an MSDF dispatch, Japan passed a new Antipiracy Law. The new law allows the JSDF to protect non-Japanese ships as long as they are in the same vicinity, and to use force not only for self-defense but also to compel pirate ships to halt if no other reasonable means is available.⁶³ Japan's government argues that the use of force against pirates to protect foreign shipping does not equate to collective self-defense, because it is essentially a police action against a non-state actor.⁶⁴ However, the new law—closely

modeled on one of the Yanai Panel scenarios—is another exercise in setting de facto precedents for Japan to defend other countries and to pave the way for extending the exercise of collective self-defense in other contexts. However, the government has looked to obfuscate these changes with the stipulation that all ships under its protection must be close by, thus blurring the lines between self-defense and collective self-defense.

Developments under the DPJ

The advent of the DPJ from 2009 to 2012 might have been expected to give renewed momentum to the constitutional revision debate, given the presence of major figures in the party, such as Hatoyama, Ozawa, and Maehara, who were open proponents of revision. However, the DPJ demonstrated reluctance to prioritize tackling the issue.

The DPJ's 2009 House of Representatives election manifesto made rather vague noncommittal mention of constitutional revision, simply promising a “free and magnanimous debate” on the constitution and possible items for revision built on a consensus and “cautious and active” investigations.⁶⁵ Mention of constitutional revision was then omitted altogether from the DPJ's 2010 House of Councilors election manifesto. The DPJ's caution was accounted for by its awareness of other economic priorities that were more appealing to the electorate, the fact of its own internal divisions on the reform issues, and the fact that in 2009 it needed especially to appeal to the SDPJ as a potential coalition partner. The likely divisions between the DPJ and SDPJ over constitutional revision were revealed in 2009 by the comments of the SDPJ leader Fukushima Mizuho, who stated in March 2010 that she still personally regarded the JSDF as unconstitutional and only accepted its existence in her capacity as a member of the coalition cabinet.⁶⁶

Meanwhile, public opinion continues to show a fluid mix of amenability and resistance to revision. A *Yomiuri Shimbun* poll in April 2009 demonstrated that support for revision of Article 9 had suddenly rebounded to 38 percent, close to the high levels of 2005–2006, the apparent reason for the new level of support being the lack of clarity in Japanese constitutional interpretations for the overseas dispatch of the JSDF.⁶⁷ But a similar poll conducted the following April showed support for Article 9 revision dipping to 32 percent. The *Asahi Shimbun* poll for 2010 showed a decline to 30 percent in support of revision of Article 9 and then down to 24 percent in 2011.⁶⁸

But despite the lack of apparent momentum for constitutional revision, the issue clearly rumbles on among policy makers, intellectuals, and the public.

Relieved of the responsibilities of government, the LDP has found new freedom to play with issues of nationalism, revisionism, and the constitution. The LDP launched its Headquarters for the Promotion of Constitutional Revision in December 2009 to produce a new version of its 2005 draft constitution plan. The DPJ then initiated its own Constitution Research Council in May 2011, chaired by Maehara, with a view to producing a report by March 2012. The DPJ administration's production in August 2010 of its own new Prime Minister's Council on Security and Defense Capabilities report—known as the Satō Report, with its membership generally rigged in line with DPJ preferences and tasked with leading the DPJ administration's view of a revised NDPG—also indicated that Japan might want to reconsider its ban on collective self-defense in line with the Yanai Report. Finally, the return to power of Abe as prime minister from December 2012 with a resounding victory in the House of Representatives election promises to re-spark the constitutional revision debate, although Abe is currently biding his time and waiting for a mandate in the House of Councilors election in mid-2013 before pushing ahead with revision plans.

Japan's Security Policy and Future Scenarios for Constitutional Revision

Japan has reached something of a short-term hiatus in its debate on constitutional revision, but arguably there are still longer-term drivers working to restimulate future debate, whether under an LDP or DPJ government. Japan's deepening of security cooperation with the United States in BMD and other operations will only serve to demonstrate the mounting contradictions and limitations of constant reinterpretation. Japan may also face new regional and global security crises that will highlight in policy makers' own eyes the seemingly untenable nature of Article 9 and its related restrictions on the exercise of military power. Exactly how attempts to implement constitutional revision will play out are as yet unknown, but it might be possible to envisage three outcomes with related impacts on the direction of Japanese security policy.

The first scenario might be the LDP-led strategy of formal constitutional revision followed by diet legislation and reinterpretation. This will enable Japan, through the essential recognition of the right of exercise of collective self-defense, to engage in the full gamut of military operations. These include Japan's current participation in UN-centered and -mandated noncombat operations in UNPKO and past operations such as in the Indian Ocean. They also include an extension to partake in UN chapter 7 collective security and

non- or weakly UN-mandated US-centered “coalitions of the willing” combat operations. Although Japan may continue to place restrictions on the use of force by limiting collective self-defense to East Asia and in support of the United States, this constitutional revision route will mean in effect lifting most restrictions on Japan’s use of military power for national security ends. Japan will thus become a “normal” military state.

A second scenario might be a more consensual attempt by the LDP and DPJ to simply recognize the de facto realities of the existence of the JSDF and its engagement in international security cooperation. This will necessarily enable Japan to continue its current noncombat participation in UNPKO and future noncombat support missions such as those previously in the Indian Ocean, and to finally settle criticisms of these as unconstitutional, thereby opening the way for Japan to increase its participation in these types of operations. However, Japanese policy makers will still be free to pursue the route of constitutional reinterpretation and thus potentially open the way for participation in a full range of operations. Constitutional revision in this form may only be a way station on Japan’s path toward assuming a “normal” military role rather than placing any kind of long-term cap on the remilitarization of its security policy.

A possible third scenario is that of failed attempts to revise the constitution or even a reticence by the LDP and DPJ to deal with this controversial issue. If this scenario of non-revision occurs, then this will certainly slow down the current trajectory of Japan’s security policy. It may lead to the questioning of even current activities as against the spirit of the constitution and strengthen the *goken* argument. However, more likely is that it will not halt participation in UNPKO or noncombat support missions. Indeed, it may only temporarily slow Japan’s military path, as faced with the same pressures to pursue an enhanced military path, Japan may resort to reinterpretation once again to push forward its military role, even if at an even slower incremental pace.

These various scenarios and developing military roles will affect Japan’s key international relations in different ways. If Japan moves the LDP route, then this should clearly strengthen US-Japan alliance ties and provide new avenues for military cooperation. If Japan settles for de facto recognition or non-revision, then this will certainly hamper expanded alliance cooperation, disappoint US expectations, and engender new tensions in ties. However, the United States may want to be careful what it wishes for. If Japan goes the LDP revision route, it will certainly create a more active ally, but also an ally released from many previous restrictions, which may then feel empowered to at last pursue a more independent security agenda from the United States.

Conclusion: Japan's Remilitarization Understood through Constitutional Revision

Japan is currently in the throes of its most serious debate on the revision of the constitution since its promulgation in 1946, with many of those involved seeing nothing less at stake than Japan's postwar identity as a peace state. In many ways, therefore, constitutional revision is the ultimate test of in what ways, how far, and whether in an appropriate fashion, Japan is undergoing remilitarization.

With regard to the first question of using constitutional revision as a means to demonstrate the dominant forces shaping Japanese remilitarization, it can be seen that the process of revision is indeed subject to heavy contestation both internally and externally. The internal pressures for revision and subversion are clearly strong among a range of policy makers from the mainstream and right of the political spectrum. There is some emerging consensus among the DPJ and LDP, and even the New Kōmeitō, on the need to address the perceived inadequacies of the current constitution to respond to emerging security challenges. Hence, without this internal realignment of the political debate it is impossible for remilitarization to move forward.

But more apparent is the fact that even if they possess a long-term ideological aversion to the current constitution, many of these policy makers have been catalyzed in their actions for revision or subversion by the growing external pressures of Japan's security environment. The Japanese debate on the constitution has been given its chief momentum by a series of external security crises, including the first Gulf War, the North Korean nuclear and Taiwan Strait crises, and the "war on terror." In addition, these pressures have been compounded by the need for Japanese expanded military support in these contingencies, as well as general alliance strengthening through bilateral projects such as BMD. Most strikingly, in seeking Japanese military support, US policy makers have even sought to intervene directly in the constitutional debate and encouraged Japan to review arrangements such as the interpretation of collective self-defense. On top of this, it is apparent that Japanese policy makers have often made common cause with their US counterparts on issues of constitutional reinterpretation and revision, famously using so-called *gaiatsu* (foreign pressure) to generate *naiatsu* (internal pressure) for moving their political agendas forward. Consequently, focusing on constitutional revision viewed through the concept of remilitarization establishes that Japan's security policy is driven by internal and external forces, but with external forces possibly setting the overall agenda.

Consideration of the second question—regarding how far Japanese security policy has actually shifted if calibrated against the benchmark of constitutional revision—reveals a mixed picture. On the one hand, there is a story of Japan's incremental erosion of constitutional interpretations and subsequently erosion on the development of certain key military capabilities and the dispatch of the JSDF. On the other, Japan's constitution clearly has functioned to constrain, if not halt, Japan's remilitarization. Moreover, it has formed a central issue around which policy makers and civil society have converged in order to counter Japanese government plans for further remilitarization. Therefore, the course of the debate on constitutional revision illustrates a definite trajectory of remilitarization but one that is still subject to considerable resistance. All the same, though, the sense is that it is only a matter of time before both *de facto* and *de jure* revision of the constitution provides a pathway for significant Japanese remilitarization and emergence as a major military power in its own right and as a more steadfast US ally.

Finally, the debate on constitutional revision viewed through the lens of remilitarization provides important insights on the third question of the appropriateness or "normal" development of Japan's security policy. Japanese and US government policy makers point to Japan's enhanced individual national and bilateral alliance role in international security as one that is highly suitable for an advanced democracy and to be welcomed as Japan becomes a "normal" state prepared to use military power for security ends. However, even disregarding the issue of whether the use of military force for security alongside the United States is truly "normal" for any state, the supposed normality of the process of Japan's remilitarization is called into question when the process of constitutional revision itself is examined. For it has to be asked whether Japanese policy makers, and especially the LDP's, constant reinterpretation of the constitution involving the closing off of open debate is truly a democratic and normal practice. Moreover, the attempts by Abe to essentially strong-arm constitutional revision through the National Diet process clearly defy normal democratic conventions. At the same time, though, it should be noted that there is still considerable resilience in the democratic opposition to these types of tactics to revise the constitution and advance remilitarization. Abe's ultimate failure to drive through constitutional change in his first period in office was in part the result of his own political ineptness but was also due to the established strength of Japan's democratic institutions and attachment to the constitution by other policy makers and the electorate as a symbol of postwar democracy.

Overall, then, while the steady incremental remilitarization of Japan can be witnessed through the issue of constitutional revision—much of which is driven by external forces and is not always entirely “normal” policy making—it is clear that these impetuses will be subject to moderation, if not halted, by other enduring forces of Japanese democracy. In this sense, therefore, constitutional revision serves as an ideal litmus test of the competing pressures that will determine Japan’s security trajectory in the future.

Japanese demilitarization, challenged virtually from the outset, continues to expect powerful press on national policy. At the same time, it already remains a work in progress, and recent challenges may change its patterns substantially.

Notes

The author would like to thank the Asia Program Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars, Washington, DC, for permission to reproduce material for this chapter from a presentation at the center in September 2011.

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