

Remilitarization in Japan

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Abstract and Keywords

This chapter reevaluates the utility of militarization as a framework for comprehending Japan's changing military stance, and to challenge many current analyses that portray Japan's security trajectory as one of essential continuity. The concept of militarization assists in identifying those military components—institutional and ideological in nature—present in all societies, including Japan, which are subject to contestation and alteration and open the way to substantive change in military security policy. The first section of the chapter outlines Japan's self-declared and self-imposed constraints on its military posture in the immediate postwar and Cold War periods to establish the baselines against which any shifts toward remilitarization can be evaluated. The sections thereafter systematically assess these baselines and the degree of subsequent shift in the post-Cold War and contemporary periods—in terms of legal and constitutional constraints on military power, procurement of new military capabilities, increases in defense budgets, civil-military relations, the export of military technologies, and external and alliance military commitments. The concluding section, in assessing the overall trajectory of Japan's military posture, and arguing that there has been substantial change rather than continuity, then considers the interrelationship with and challenges for the quality of Japanese democracy.

Keywords: Japan, remilitarization, constitution, civil-military relations, defense budget, US-Japan alliance, security policy, military power, democracy, military exports

The language of militarization might appear stark and dramatic, and is often anathema to policymakers and other analysts in Japan and elsewhere that are proponents of and currently direct attempts to refashion Japan's military posture, US-Japan security cooperation, and other aspects of its international security commitments. The preference is often to couch questions of the future trajectory of Japan's security policy in the language of military "normalization," "renaissance," "evolution," or even "rearmament," and avoid terms such as "remilitarization" (Green 2001; Takao 2008; Oros 2008, 2017; Hagström and Williamson 2009; Soeya, Welch, and Tadokoro 2011; Liff 2015, 2018; Smith 2019). Doubtless, this is because of the connotations of remilitarization with prewar Japanese imperialism and militarism. The Shinzō Abe administration, even in the midst of its efforts

Remilitarization in Japan

to reshape Japan's security policy, talks the language of apparent continuity by referring to a "proactive contribution to international peace," thereby evoking Japanese traditions of pacifism (Kokka Anzen Hoshō Kaigi 2013; Hughes 2015).

However, others policymakers and analysts posit that Japan has clearly reversed away from its postwar state of demilitarization and accompanying sets of anti-militaristic principles and pacifist norms, and is now moving in a trajectory of remilitarization (Hook 1996; Hughes 2009; Moses and Iwami, 2009; Gustafsson, Hagström, and Hanssen 2018; Pyle 2018). Thus, the purpose of this chapter is to reevaluate the utility of militarization for comprehending Japan's changing military stance, and arguably with greater precision than other terminology employed to date.

Militarization—if correctly conceived in social science terms (of which there is rich tradition from the liberal, realist, as well as Marxist perspectives) (Lasswell 1941; Mills 1956; Vagts 1959; Luxemburg 1961; Berghahn 1981; Kaldor 1982; Finer 1988), rather than being regarded as scaremongering language implying a rewind of history to 1931–1945—can provide a powerful analytical framework. The concept of militarization as a dynamic process over time functions as an important reminder to search for not just continuity, but also for significant change in a society's military stance, and assists in identifying those military components—institutional and ideological in nature—present in all societies, including Japan, which are subject to contestation and alteration and open the way to substantive change in military security policy. The framework of militarization provides historical and evidential baselines to contextualize and calibrate the degree to which any one society has shifted its military stance. It encourages us to define more carefully, against objective standards, the significance of Japan's changing security policy, rather than against subjective, and policy-driven, encapsulations such as "normalization." In turn, 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, and "normal," and fit with the character of postwar democracy.

This chapter examines Japan's remilitarization in three sections. The first outlines Japan's self-declared and self-imposed constraints on its military posture in the immediate postwar and Cold War periods to establish the baselines against which any shifts toward remilitarization can be evaluated. The sections thereafter systematically assess these baselines and the degree of subsequent shift in the post-Cold War and contemporary periods—in terms of legal and constitutional constraints on military power, procurement of new military capabilities, increases in defense budgets, civil-military relations, the export of military technologies, and external and alliance military commitments. The conclusion, in assessing the overall trajectory of Japan's military posture, then considers the interrelationship with and challenges for the quality of Japanese democracy.

Japan's Postwar Framework of Security Policy and Militarization

Japan in the initial postwar period underwent near total demilitarization and so stood at the far end of any militarization continuum. In order for Japan to restore its independence, economic stability, and return to the international system in the wake of defeat in the Pacific War, the determination of the Occupation authorities, and then the mainstream of postwar Japanese leaders, was that it was necessary for Japan to reemerge as a democratic and liberal state, or even a “peace state.” In turn, this meant the dismantling of the legacy of internal and external imperialism and militarism, and imposition of new constraints on military power (Dower 2000; Samuels 2007, 38–62).

Japan's military constraints, and thus the benchmarks for measuring subsequent shifts in its military trajectory, took various institutional and ideological forms and evolved from the immediate postwar period onward, and arguably reached their apogee by the mid-1970s. The essential starting point, of course, was the Japanese constitution of 1947 as the very foundation for postwar democracy, and in many ways designed with the core objective of preventing any recrudescence of militarism. Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution, the “peace clause,” set stringent standards for curbing Japan's remilitarization, given that it was initially envisaged by the Occupation authorities that the constitution should prohibit entirely the use of military force for national security and the maintenance of any military establishment—an interpretation subsequently internalized by the main opposition Japan Socialist Party and upheld until the early 1990s, and still supported today by many peace activists in Japan.

As is well known, the constitution's role as an absolute brake on remilitarization was diminished through the introduction in National Diet deliberations of the “Ashida amendment” that first enabled conservative politicians, and thereafter the long-governing Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) following its formation in 1955, to interpret Article 9 as possessing the right of the use of force for individual self-defense and the maintenance of military forces for this purpose. Japanese conservative politicians further probed the strength of Article 9 through their choices in the face of emerging Cold War pressures: firstly accepting US requests for Japan's limited rearmament and assumption of a degree of responsibility for its own defense, leading to the eventual establishment of the Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) in 1954; and secondly signing the US-Japan Security Treaty in 1951, enabling the long-term presence of US bases on Japanese territory, and aligning Japan with US regional and global security strategy for the rest of the postwar period.

But even if Article 9 has not proved an absolute bar on Japan's reemergence as a military power, it has framed the constraints and opportunities for Japanese security policy, and generated a number of formal constitutional interpretations and anti-militaristic principles, as summarized in Box 1.

Box 1: Japan's Anti-Militaristic Principles Established by the Mid-1970s

Remilitarization in Japan

Constitutional interpretations and pledge not to become a military great power

- Japan's interpretation of Article 9 as permitting the exercise of the right of individual self-defense has meant it has pursued a policy of "exclusively defense-oriented defense."
- Japan has stated that this policy means that the JSDF should restrict its military capacity to the minimum necessary for self-defense and that the JSDF should not possess "war potential."
- Although Japan provides no strict definition of the minimum necessary capabilities and war potential, and argues that it is dependent on the prevailing security situation, military technology, and the total strength of the JSDF, in practice this has meant eschewing types of weaponry that are designed for power projection or offensive in nature.
- Specifically, the JSDF in the past has not procured long-range or ballistic missiles, strategic bombers, inflight refueling, and "offensive" aircraft carriers similar to those of the US Navy.

Peaceful use of space

- In May 1969, the Diet imposed a Peaceful Purposes Resolution (PPR) stating that Japanese activities in space should be limited to peaceful purposes, interpreted as meaning nonmilitary activities.

One percent of GDP limit on defense expenditure

- In 1976 Prime Minister Miki Takeo, in conjunction with the approval of National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG), established the principle that defense expenditure should be limited to 1 percent of GDP.

Three Non-Nuclear Principles

- Prime Minister Eisaku Satō introduced the Three Non-Nuclear Principles in 1967.
- Japan is not to produce, possess, or introduce nuclear weapons.
- Japan is to rely instead on the US nuclear umbrella, although Prime Minister Kishi Nobusuke's National Diet statement in 1958 made clear that Japan was constitutionally entitled to possess nuclear weapons if deemed the minimum necessary capability for the exclusive purposes of self-defense.
- The first two points were strengthened by Japan's entry into the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1976.

Civilian control

- Article 66 of Japan's constitution stipulates that all ministers of state must be civilians to prevent any repeat of the prewar domination of cabinet government by military appointees.

Remilitarization in Japan

- The Japan Defense Agency and JSDF establishment laws decree that the prime minister is the commander-in-chief of the JSDF and directs the civilian director of the JDA.
- The Cabinet Legislation Bureau interprets the limitations of the constitution upon Japan's military power.
- The prime minister should seek *ex post facto* approval, and if possible prior approval, from the National Diet for JSDF mobilization.
- The JDA, as an administrative rather than policy agency, reports to the Prime Minister's Office instead of the cabinet.
- The JDA's civilian bureaucrats exercise civilian control by drafting the director general of the JDA's instructions for the JSDF.

Restrictions on the export of arms and military technology

- In 1967 Prime Minister Satō's administration first enunciated restrictions on arms exports to Communist states, countries under UN sanctions, and parties to international disputes.
- In 1976 Prime Minister Miki's administration ordered restraint in the case of all states, and prohibited the export of weapon-related technology.

External military commitments and US-Japan cooperation

- Japan's government maintains that the exercise of individual self-defense is not necessarily geographically limited to Japanese territory itself and is able under the constitution to dispatch the JSDF overseas. But Japan also envisages that in most cases overseas dispatch of the JSDF would exceed the minimum force necessary for self-defense. In practice, this meant the JSDF was not deployed overseas during the entire Cold War period.
- Japan has furthermore imposed restrictions on the support it can provide for militaries of other states, maintaining that the provision of logistical and rear-area support for the armed forces of belligerents may be deemed "integral to the use of force" and thus a violation of Article 9.
- The Japanese government since 1954 has furthermore maintained that, while as a sovereign state Japan possesses under Chapter 7 Article 51 of the UN Charter the right of collective self-defense, the actual exercise of this right would exceed the necessary minimum use of force for self-defense and is thus unconstitutional.

These constraints, even in this period, were not entirely rigid or unchanging. The JSDF in this period and into the early 1980s steadily expanded its quantitative and qualitative capabilities to become a more effective military—manifested in the build-up of Ground Self-Defense Force (GSDF) main battle tanks (MBT) and artillery, Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF) destroyers and anti-submarine warfare (ASW) capabilities, and Air Self-Defense Force (ASDF) interceptors (Keddell 1993, 154; Hughes 2004b, 146–147).

Remilitarization in Japan

But JSDF's military posture as it developed throughout this period—articulated through the 1976 National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG) and Mid-Term Defense Program (MTDP) as the first documents that set out essential military doctrine alongside the necessary force structure—remained predicated on a Basic Defense Force concept that limited Japan's defensive responsibilities to its own territory against a Soviet invasion and to providing a defensive shield for US offensive power projection from Japan (Hughes 2004b, 144–145). This strict division of military labor was reinforced even as Japan began to explore expanding bilateral security ties under the 1978 US-Japan Guidelines for Defense Cooperation, with Japan prioritizing efforts for Article 5 security treaty contingencies for its own defense and largely devoid of any preparations for Article 6-type contingencies that could lead to assisting the US directly in the region (Tanaka 1997, 265–304).

Hence, these institutional and normative principles certainly functioned to constrain Japan's military posture. As will be seen in the next section, the story since the late 1970s, through the 1980s, and then accelerating from the 1990s onward, has been the incremental erosion, and finally the effective breach, of every single one of these constraints.

Japan's Remilitarization

Japan's international situation over the past four decades has been characterized on the regional level by the rise of potential competitors—in the latter stages of the Cold War in the guise of the USSR, and then in the contemporary period even more seriously in the guise of China—to US hegemonic dominance and thus the very foundation of Japan's security (Smith 2015; Hughes 2016). Japan's security has been further complicated regionally since the mid-1990s by the emerging threat of North Korea's nuclear and missile programs. On the global level, the crises of the Gulf War of 1990–1991 and 9/11, the ensuing “war on terror” in Afghanistan, and the war in Iraq from 2003 onward have heightened Japan's awareness of the threats of terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Most recently, the advent of the Donald J. Trump administration has alerted Japanese policymakers to the need to display greater reciprocity on military support with its treaty partner (Envall 2019, 119; Liff 2019, 3–4).

JSDF Transforming Capabilities—Towards Power Projection and “War Potential”

Japan's erosion of its own military constraints and baselines, in response to these international pressures, has manifested perhaps most obviously over time in five successive revisions of the NDPG, overturning many elements of postwar doctrine and procuring for the JSDF new and more advanced capabilities.

The 2005 NDPG emphasized the development of the JSDF as a “multifunctional, flexible, effective defense force” (Japan Ministry of Defense 2004) capable of defending Japan itself, but also contributing to suppressing emerging international threats. The 2011 NDPG, mindful of the challenges posed by China and North Korea, abandoned the Basic

Remilitarization in Japan

Defense Force entirely in favor of a new Dynamic Defense Force concept, stressing a more proactive JSDF posture in and around Japanese territory, with increasing deployments of forces southward and with new power projection (Japan Ministry of Defense 2010). The 2014 NDPG then moved to emphasize a Joint Dynamic Defense Force to enable the GSDF, MSDF, and ASDF to work more effectively together; and the 2019 NDPG sought to transform the JSDF into a Multidimensional Joint Defense Force to engage in “cross-domain operations,” not only in the land, sea, and air domains, but also in the domains of outer space, cyberspace, and electronic warfare (Heginbotham and Samuels 2018; Mikalsen Grønning 2018, 6–7; Japan Ministry of Defense 2013, 2018b). In turn, the accompanying MTDPs have started to build down numbers of MBTs and artillery and to invest instead in more mobile and technologically advanced forces. The JSDF has continued to procure capabilities, such as ballistic missile defense (BMD), that are ostensibly defensive in nature and function for Japan’s immediate territorial defense and to support US power projection (Hughes 2013). But Japan has increasingly demonstrated a willingness to transgress previous taboos and for the JSDF to procure its own power projection capabilities for responding to regional and even global contingencies, and which can possibly be turned from defensive to offensive purposes.

Japan transgressed first its prohibition on the JSDF’s procurement of inflight refueling capabilities. Even though the ASDF removed inflight refueling equipment from its F-4Js from the mid-1970s, over the next two decades the JDA started to erode this prohibition by arguing that it needed to retain the equipment and hence longer-term potential for this capability on its newly procured F-15J interceptors in order to assist in extended patrol missions (Nishikawa 2008, 161–163). By the 2001–2005 MTDP, the ASDF was sufficiently emboldened to procure four Boeing-767 tanker aircraft and full in-flight refueling capability. The ASDF argues that this is necessary to prolong the time that its fighters can remain airborne and make more efficient use of pilot time in the air and fuel for take-off and landing, and also extend the range of its transports engaged in United Nations peacekeeping operations (UNPKO) and other international cooperation missions (Bōeichōhen 2001). However, in-flight refueling clearly now provides the ASDF with a power-projection capacity to fly sorties across East Asia and beyond. In conjunction with in-flight refueling, the ASDF’s intention to project power has been further demonstrated by its acquisition since the mid-2000s of joint direct attack munitions (JDAM) for precision air strikes, and then the decision since 2011 to procure F-35A fighters designed with stealth capabilities and the primary mission of penetrating the air defenses of other states.

Japan next transgressed its prohibitions on power projection through the procurement in effect of aircraft carriers with a potential offensive function. The MSDF intimated the procurement of carriers for the first time in the postwar period by commissioning two *Izumo*-class destroyers, of 19,500-ton displacement each, with end-to-end flat top decks, and capable of mounting up to twelve helicopters. Although the *Izumo*-class were in effect light carriers, the MSDF maintained the pretense of the non-possession of carriers, or at least non-offensive carriers, given their designation as destroyers, exclusive helicopter complement, and ASW role. However, the MSDF under the 2018 NDPG and MTDP has sought to procure F-35B maritime short vertical take-off and landing (SVTOL) fighters and convert

Remilitarization in Japan

its *Izumo*-class vessels to deploy the aircraft. The Japan Ministry of Defense (JMOD) considered redesignating the refitted vessels as “defensive aircraft carriers,” but in the end opted for “multi-function destroyers” based on the argument that they may not continuously carry F-35Bs (Japan Ministry of Defense 2018a, 10). In reality, though, Japan now possesses fixed-wing aircraft carriers, given that these are akin to the type of US vessels it has defined as offensive aircraft carriers in the past.

Japan is furthermore challenging other past taboos on power projection that may extend to war potential. Although eventually not included in the 2018 NDPG and MTDP, LDP policymakers for a number of years previously, and intensifying in the run-up to the review and release of these documents, pressed for the JSDF to acquire autonomous counter-strike capabilities, such as cruise missiles to strike against North Korean ballistic missile bases, and so starting to undermine Japan’s postwar prohibition on the possession of long-range missiles to strike the territory of other states (Japan-U.S. Alliance Study Group 2017; Fatton 2019, 19–20). The JMOD has also included in its 2020 defense budget funds for research into scramjets for a hypersonic cruise missile (Bōeishōhen 2019, 12). If Japan were to procure hypersonics, given that it is hard to imagine this capability, with its high-velocity trajectory, is practical for homeland territorial defense, it would provide for a powerful deterrent to strike against Chinese and North Korean missile bases.

In addition, Japan has continued to build up other power projection capabilities, including *Hyūga*-class amphibious ships and the establishment in 2018 of a GSDF amphibious rapid deployment brigade (ARDB) of around three thousand personnel and equipped with fifty-two amphibious armed personnel carriers, and seventeen MV-22 Osprey transports (Harold et al. 2018). Many of these capabilities are justified primarily for Japan’s own territorial defense, such as the retaking of Japanese southwestern islands in the East China Sea, but they also offer new potential out-of-area international security commitments for Japan.

Japan’s Militarization of Outer Space

Japanese policymakers have long eyed the possibilities of the militarization of space and ensured that constraints on its usage were limited to the 1969 Peaceful Purposes Resolution (PPR) rather than any formal legal framework. Japan started to breach the PPR in reaction to North Korea’s Taepodong-1 missile launch over Japanese “airspace” in 1998 and its subsequent determination that it required its own indigenous capability with its information-gathering satellite (IGS) constellation utilizing optical and radar technologies (Pekkanen and Kallender-Umezun 2010, 130–173). The Japanese government termed the IGSs “multipurpose” with dual-use civilian functions to justify their introduction, but the satellites were in effect military spy satellites. The National Diet in 2008 next passed a Basic Space Law that in essence overturned the PPR by stating Japan should limit its usage of space to “defensive” rather than nonmilitary uses. Successive versions of Japan’s Basic Space Plan since 2009 have accepted the need for the use of space for security; and Japan’s first National Security Strategy (NSS) of 2013 noted the key connection between space and national security (Kokka Anzen Hoshō Kaigi 2013; Ikeuchi 2015; Hoshiyama

Remilitarization in Japan

2016). The 2018 NDPG went even further and positioned space as one of the key strategic military domains to support “cross-domain operations” (Japan Ministry of Defense 2018a).

Japan has now moved to militarize the use of space through a series of low-profile but very impressive programs, again often obfuscated in their military nature by the dual-use nature of space technology (Kallender and Hughes 2019). Japan has developed an indigenous civilian space launch capability, starting in the mid-1980s with the H-II liquid-fueled rocket series, but since the 1990s extending to the M-series and *Epsilon* solid-fueled rockets for “scientific” launches. Solid-fueled rockets are rarely developed for civilian purposes, and the *Epsilon* in particular is considered to be a mobile launch-on-demand rocket for military payloads such as tactical satellites. Japan has augmented its satellites capabilities with the Quasi-Zenith Satellite System (QZSS) for navigation purposes, and that can support military targeting in the same way as the US’s Global Positioning System (GPS). Japan has further developed satellite capabilities that can function for military communications, signal and electronic intelligence, space situational awareness (SSA), and maritime domain awareness (MDA).

One Percent GDP Limit on Defense Expenditure

Japan’s defense expenditure prohibition has proved to be inconsistent in its application and demonstrated declining traction on policymakers. Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone’s administration overtly breached the prohibition in the mid-1980s by pushing defense spending above 1 percent for a number of years. Moreover, if Japan’s defense budget is calculated on a NATO basis by including pension payments to servicemen (and the NATO methodology being the basis on which Japan chooses to compare its expenditure with other states), then it has always exceeded 1 percent of GDP (Hughes 2009, 39). Prime Minister Abe has more recently indicated that this prohibition should no longer constrain Japan: openly announcing in the National Diet in March 2017 that his administration had no intention of suppressing defense expenditure below 1 percent of GDP, and that no such budgetary policy constraint existed (*Asahi Shimbun* 2017).

Three Non-Nuclear Principles

Japan’s conservative policymakers have maintained since their very inception a degree of skepticism over the Three Non-Nuclear Principles, avoided their enshrining in law, and never closed down the option of Japan’s acquisition of its own nuclear weapons. Prime Minister Satō himself privately described the principles as “nonsense” (Pyle 2018) and secretly breached the third principle by opening the way from the 1960s onward for the transit through Japanese ports of tactical nuclear weapons on US vessels, and also considered breaches of the first and second principles by initiating in secret and unofficial research in 1968 and 1970 (known as the *1968/70 Internal Report*) the desirability and feasibility of Japan’s acquiring nuclear weapons (Hughes 2007, 83).

Remilitarization in Japan

Japanese policymakers have subsequently tested the strength of the nuclear taboo. The JDA conducted an internal review of Japan's nuclear options in 1995, titled *A Report Considering the Problems of the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction*, and set against the backdrop of the first North Korean nuclear crisis (Mochizuki 2007, 310–311). Prominent conservative politicians—including, before coming into the highest office, figures such as Prime Minister Abe and Deputy Prime Minister Tarō Asō (a former prime minister)—have routinely speculated publicly on the need for Japan to debate developing its own nuclear option. Tomomi Inada, minister of defense until August 2017, called in the past for Japan to investigate the benefits of possessing nuclear weapons (Hughes 2017a, 101)

Japan has, of course, not sought to actively develop its own nuclear deterrent, and there is a strong consensus that an indigenous nuclear option is neither credible nor necessary as long as the US nuclear umbrella can be relied upon, and that the domestic political, technological, and international diplomatic hurdles remain very high (L. Hughes 2007). Nevertheless, Japan continues to build capability for a “recessed” nuclear deterrent—extensively stockpiling plutonium from civilian nuclear reactors and through its space programs developing potential launch and reentry vehicles and targeting systems—that can likely be materialized into an independent deterrent in the event of the failure of US security guarantees.

Restrictions on the Export of Arms and Military Technology

Japanese policymakers have sought to erode this prohibition from early on in its inception for two interrelated reasons. The first has been the increasing necessity since the 1980s to solidify US-Japan security cooperation through joint military technology cooperation projects. The second, and more recent—given the increasing costs and sophistication of military technologies—has been Japan's need to preserve its domestic defense production base through the economies of scale offered by international development collaborations with the US and other states and potential export opportunities. Japan's first partial breach of this constraint came with Prime Minister Nakasone's signing an Exchange of Technology Agreement Between Japan and the United States in November 1983, enabling a series of bilateral projects with the US. A further partial exemption was announced in December 2004 to facilitate co-development with the US on BMD. The Chief Cabinet Secretary's statement stressed that BMD would not conflict with the arms export ban because the project was designed for the smooth functioning of the US-Japan alliance, and thus Japan's own defense. The JMOD further interpreted the statement as providing grounds for investigation with other countries into joint research and development of technologies to respond to terrorism and piracy (Kankōkai Henshūbu 2006, 147–148; Bōeishōhen, 2008, 388)

The Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) administration of Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda in 2011 issued a “Statement on Guidelines for Overseas Transfer of Defense Equipment,” and argued that Japan, in seeking a more proactive contribution to international security to improve the performance of its defense equipment, and to strengthen the alliance with

Remilitarization in Japan

the US and other partners, should allow overseas transfers of defense equipment. The Abe administration in 2014 then decisively ended previous bans on the exports of weapons technology in favor of the “Three Principles on Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology.” The new principles somewhat return to the original 1967 restrictions by preventing export only to states considered to impede international peace and security, such as those transgressing international treaties or under UN sanctions, but allow export to those states contributing to international peace or Japan’s security, such as the US, NATO countries, and those engaged in UNPKO, and that could prove controls in place to prevent re-export to third countries. Japan’s NSS in 2013 made it clear that defense equipment and technology cooperation should become “mainstream” in Japan’s security activities, and part of the “proactive contribution to peace” (Kokka Anzen Hoshō Kaigi 2013; Hughes 2017b). Japan has now started to explore export and collaborative development opportunities with Australia, India, and European partners (Wilkins 2016).

Civilian Control

Japanese efforts to relegate the postwar influence of military affairs and the military itself from policymaking have likewise been eroded significantly in recent decades. The influence of defense and security policymaking agencies has been boosted by the elevation of the JDA to the JMOD and full ministerial and cabinet-level status in 2007, now holding an equal role in designing security policy alongside the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and interacting with the US in the “2+2” process that involves respective bilateral foreign and defense ministers. Similarly, the creation of Japan’s new National Security Council (NSC) in 2013, with membership consisting of the prime minister, chief cabinet secretary, and foreign defense ministers, now acts as the “control tower” for shaping overall security policy (Le 2018, 189).

In turn, the influence of the JSDF has risen in defense policymaking, facilitated by structural changes within the JMOD and challenging the strict hierarchy of civilian over military officials. Prime Minister Ryūtarō Hashimoto in 1997 ordered the abolition of the 1952 National Safety Agency order, enabling JSDF officers to testify in the Diet and offer direct advice to the Prime Minister’s Office and the cabinet (Katahara 2001, 8; Koketsu 2005, 47–48). The JSDF strengthened its own policy cohesion by replacing the Joint Staff Council with a new Joint Staff Office in March 2006, designed to facilitate joint operations between the three services. The previous JSC consisted of the three chiefs of staff of the GSDF, MSDF, and ASDF, each able individually to provide advice to the civilian leadership—the result in practice being that each service acted separately in accordance with its own doctrine (Bōeichōhen 2003, 305–306). The new JSO, with its chief of staff drawn from one of the services, now represents all three services, and becomes the principal military conduit for relaying civilian orders to the JSDF and potentially capable of acting as the principal military advisor to the director general.

A further key structural change has been revisions to Article 12 of the JMOD Establishment Law, as part of the package of security legislation in 2016, that integrated the function of the civilian Defense Policy Bureau with the uniformed Operational Bureau. The ob-

Remilitarization in Japan

jective of the reforms is to equalize the influence of civilian and military officials in advising the minister. For whereas previously the civilian bureaucrats sat as a layer of control above the uniformed officers and checked their decisions before passing to the minister, now the two sets of officials provide advice equally. Added to this, the creation of the NSC, with its secretariat staffed by MOFA, the JMOD, and JSDF officers, has further boosted the relative influence of military officers (Smith 2019: 146).

Japan's civilian control regime has further changed due to the new operational demands resulting from the introduction of BMD. Japan's need to respond in very compressed real-time frames to ballistic missile launches has meant that since February 2005 the minister of defense has been empowered, if there is no time to consult with the prime minister, to order the JSDF directly to mobilize interceptor launches in accordance with preplanned scenarios (Bōichō 2005, 11–13). This provides a free-ranging role to JSDF commanders in the field that was previously unimaginable in the postwar period.

The changes to civilian control are intended to enhance military operability but have raised questions about the declining degree of effective control over the JSDF. In 2007 it was revealed that the JSDF and the JMOD had failed to report correct information to the top civilian leadership with regard to the MSDF's refueling activities to support the US-led coalition shipping in Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) from 2002 to 2009. The MSDF correctly reported to its own Chief of Staff Office in February 2003 that it had supplied the US with 800,000 gallons of fuel oil, but this information was incorrectly recorded as 200,000 gallons and then passed on to the director general of the JDA and the Chief Cabinet Secretary. The fact that these mistakes were unreported for over four years represented a fundamental failure of civilian control, made even more worrying by the fact that it involved overseas dispatch operating close to a conflict zone and far from the oversight of the political leadership (Hughes 2009, 58–59).

A similar failure of civilian control surfaced following the dispatch of the GSDF for a UNPKO mission in South Sudan between 2012 and 2017. The JMOD vice-minister and GSDF, it became apparent in 2016, had concealed from Defense Minister Inaba the existence of operation logs that made clear the extent of conflict in the area of deployment that was supposedly relatively stable and had made possible originally the ostensibly non-combat mission. The resulting political scandal led to the removal of the vice-minister, GSDF chief of staff, and eventually Inaba (Smith 2019: 149).

Japan's Expanding External Military Commitments

Japan's concerns over the deteriorating international security environment in the post-Cold War period, and the concomitant need to provide a security commitment beyond its own immediate territorial defense, have enabled the stretching and then ultimately breaches of previous self-imposed constraints on the overseas dispatch of the JSDF and the range of cooperation under the US-Japan alliance.

Remilitarization in Japan

Japanese policymakers perceived a demand from the US and the international community to provide a “human contribution” to the Gulf War in 1990–1991 in the form of the overseas dispatch of the JSDF, but in the end were only able to provide a financial contribution of US\$13 billion to support the coalition forces. After the cessation of hostilities, Japan was able to dispatch MSDF minesweepers for noncombat operations in the Gulf in 1991, but there ensued a full-scale domestic debate on Japan’s future international security role. Japan thus eventually settled on the passing of a new International Peace Cooperation Law (ICPL) in June 1992 to allow JSDF dispatch on noncombat UNPKO for the first time.

Japan next began to push the envelope of its external defense commitments outward, in reaction the North Korean nuclear crisis of the mid-1990s that exposed the lack of interoperability of the US-Japan alliance to respond to regional contingencies. Japan and the United States revised the Guidelines for Defense Cooperation from 1996 to 1997, and Japan passed the Law to Ensure the Peace and Security of Japan in Situations in Areas Surrounding Japan in 1999, thereby starting to clarify the extent of Japanese “rear-area” logistical support for the United States under Article 6 of the security treaty in a regional contingency.

Japan’s cooperation with the US and with other states was next promoted in global contingencies. In order to support the US-led international coalition in Afghanistan following 9/11, the National Diet passed an Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law, which enabled the dispatch of the MSDF to conduct noncombat refueling operations for coalition ships in OEF (Midford 2003). Furthermore, in response to expectations for allied support in the US intervention in Iraq, Japan passed an Iraqi Reconstruction Law that enabled the dispatch of the JSDF on noncombat logistical and reconstruction missions in southern Iraq from 2004 to 2008 (Hughes 2004c).

Moreover, Japan has begun to accumulate experience of other out-of-area dispatches and defense linkages. MSDF destroyers and P-3C patrol aircraft have been engaged in anti-piracy missions in the Gulf of Aden since 2008, leading Japan from 2011 onward to construct in Djibouti its first permanent overseas base in the postwar period.

But despite Japan’s beginning to stretch interpretations and send the JSDF overseas, it was careful through these new external commitments not to in actuality or formally breach past constraints. All of the JSDF out-of-area dispatches noted above were noncombat in nature, enabled by specific and time-bound National Diet legislation, and predicated on UN resolutions, and thus were not justified by utilization of Article 9 and the exercise of individual self-defense. Moreover, Japanese policymakers assiduously avoided any exercise of the right of collective self-defense. Japan repeated this cautious approach even in strengthening military cooperation with its US ally—the revised Defense Guidelines only outlining logistical and noncombat support for the US, delimiting the support to regional contingencies solely under Article 6, and ensuring that this support would be “rear-area” and so far from combat areas to avoid issues of “integration of force” and Japan’s own exercise of force (Hughes 2004a, 126–136).

Remilitarization in Japan

The advent of the Abe administration, though, has emboldened Japan to finally breach the postwar constraints on external military commitments. Japan's NSS now argues that contemporary security challenges are diverse and exacerbated in reach and impact by advances in military technology, meaning that no state can any longer defend itself entirely alone, and international collective responses are increasingly indispensable (Kokka Anzen Hoshō Kaigi 2013). Consequently, Japan announced a Cabinet Decision in May 2014 that provided for significant reinterpretations of Article 9, and then formed the basis for extensive security legislation eventually passed by the National Diet in 2015, all of which essentially overturned the existing constraints on Japan's external defense commitments (Cabinet Secretariat 2014).

The first major reinterpretation and change was to "further support for the peace and stability of the international community" by expanding the scope and range of logistical support available to the armed forces of other states carrying out the legitimate use of force. The Cabinet Decision and accompanying Law to Ensure Security in Contingencies Significantly Affecting Japan that replaced the regional contingencies law now argued Japanese logistical support would not be "integral to the use of force" as long as the forces of other states were not actively involved in a theater of combat. The JSDF is thus no longer limited to "rear area" support far from combat zones, and can instead provide support for states immediately behind their combat lines or in transit to combat theaters (Martin 2017, 479-480).

The second and most radical reinterpretation is that Japan's new security environment necessitates the exercise of both individual self-defense and collective self-defense. The new Law Concerning Measures to Ensure Peace and Security of Japan that Will Have an Important Influence on Japan's Peace and Security enables Japan's exercise of the right of collective self-defense in scenarios and under "three new conditions"—where an attack on another state in a close relationship with Japan poses a clear danger to overturning the Japanese people's right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; where there is no other appropriate means to repel the attack; and where the use of force is restricted to the minimum necessary to repel the attack.

Thirdly, a new International Peace Support Law removes the need for Japan to enact separate laws for each JSDF dispatch to provide logistical support to multinational forces; and revisions to the IPCL enable the JSDF during UNPKO to use force in pursuing certain duties rather than just defending JSDF personnel. The GSDF UNPKO in South Sudan had this collective self-defense element added to its mission from late 2016 until early 2017, although exercise of the right remained untried despite the deteriorating security conditions.

The Abe administration argues that the "three new conditions" still significantly circumscribe the extent of Japan's likelihood and extent of collective self-defense military actions in support of the US and other states. However, these constraints appear largely hollow in reality, given that the Abe administration has consistently avoided defining in detail the actual conditions that might form a clear danger to national existence and

could trigger a military response, has not made clear what the threshold might be for deciding when there is no alternative to military action, and has obfuscated definitions of what might constitute the minimum use of force. The government has retained considerable flexibility to interpret the need for military action as it sees fits and to respond to US calls for assistance (Wakefield and Martin 2014; Hughes 2017c).

In conjunction with the reinterpretation of Article 9 and new legislation, the Abe administration's 2015 revision of the US-Japan Defense Guidelines has greatly expanded, far beyond that of the 1978 and 1997 versions, the range of Japanese support for the US in contingencies. The functional range of support is increased to specify intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance; BMD; maritime security asset protection; joint use of facilities; PKO; humanitarian assistance and disaster relief; and now cyberspace and outer space. The revised Guidelines stress a concept of "seamless cooperation," removing the previous rigid separation of bilateral cooperation into "Japan" and "regional" contingencies. The intention is that military cooperation will operate more smoothly across all potential scenarios and levels of conflict escalation. In turn, the revised Defense Guidelines emphasize that bilateral cooperation should now be global, and not necessarily be restricted geographically, as in past formulations, to Japan itself or the surrounding region, thus removing in effect the previous Article 5- and Article 6-type division of responsibilities. Most significantly, and designed to interlink with Japan's intended breach of the ban on the exercise of collective self-defense, the revised Defense Guidelines outline the areas where the JSDF can now exercise force to defend US forces, such as the protection of US shipping, interdiction of other shipping, BMD, and providing logistical support during conflicts (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Japan 2015).

Conclusion: Japan's Remilitarization and Evaluating the Quality of Democracy

Japan, as can be witnessed from the above analysis, has steadily eroded and then broken all of its self-imposed and self-declared constraints on remilitarization in the postwar period. Yet even today the JMOD in its annual *Defense of Japan* white paper continues to trumpet these constraints as intact and adhered to (Bōeishōhen 2018, 212–214). But the empirical record demonstrates that these have been systematically contravened and discarded.

The application of remilitarization to Japan reinforces a range of analytical insights. First, there should be no reticence in utilizing the terminology of remilitarization, which as applied to Japan elucidates that its postwar military trajectory—whether in its own military capabilities and doctrines or external alliance commitments—has been marked by significant change rather than continuity.

Second, in regard to the question of the ramifications of Japan's shifting military posture, it has relentlessly if incrementally moved along the militarization continuum, transgressed key taboos, shows no signs of retreating back from its new commitments, and ap-

Remilitarization in Japan

appears to be following in the wake of its US ally and other potential military partners. This process of significant change might be cast in reassuring language such as “normalization” or “proactive contribution to peace,” but the plain facts are that Japan is now moving to become a more effective, even great, military power, able to use force not just in its own defense but also for collective self-defense, across a range of domains, and regionally and globally. Japan has thus fundamentally changed shape as a military actor. Of course, the immediate implication of Japan’s remilitarization is not that it will act irresponsibly or seek to threaten its neighbors again. Japanese policymakers remain cognizant and cautious over the costs of military conflict. However, the probability of Japan’s engagement in military action surely appears heightened, and remilitarization assists in perceiving clearly this new state of affairs.

Finally, the framework of remilitarization presents significant questions relating to the changing quality of Japanese democracy. Proponents of Japan’s changing security policy and military posture argue that Japan’s changes are “normal” and indeed in line with Japan’s postwar democratic ideals—in close adherence to Article 9 of the constitution, authorized as they have been through National Diet debates and then specific legislation—and essentially driven by the need to defend Japan against nondemocratic states and uphold international democratic and liberal values. These are the very types of discourse employed by the current Abe administration to legitimize recent changes to Japanese security policy.

At the same time, the analysis of Japan’s remilitarization indicates motivations and methods that challenge many of the ideals of Japanese democracy established in the postwar period and born out of the desire to prevent any return to the status of a great military power. Highly notable are the means by which Japanese policymakers, in pushing forward remilitarization, have sought to obfuscate and desensitize these changes and if possible evade fuller democratic and public scrutiny. This can be seen in the language used to justify the procurement of new capabilities, with such obfuscating language as “multi-function destroyers” to camouflage the procurement of aircraft carriers, or ISGs and other “dual-use” technologies to disguise the procurement of spy satellites and military space infrastructure.

Even more concerning has been the means Japanese policymakers have used to circumvent Article 9 and its associated prohibitions. Article 9 has been continuously stretched in interpretation to make possible a range of changes to Japan’s security policy. Most recently, though, Japanese policymakers have chosen to formally reinterpret for the first time Article 9 through even more questionable processes. The Cabinet Decision of May 2014, including ending the ban on the exercise of collective self-defense, was predicated on recommendations from Abe’s Advisory Panel on the Reconstruction of the Legal Basis for Security—an extra-constitutional body with no mandate to offer advice on the reinterpretation of the constitution, and with arguably limited expertise, given that it included few constitutional scholars and instead nearly entirely security policy “hawks” aligned with Abe, and was essentially tasked with a results-oriented investigation to construct a reinterpretation to further the executive’s agenda rather than to deliberate objectively on

Remilitarization in Japan

Article 9. Moreover, in this process the Cabinet Legislation Bureau—the government body that in the past has ruled on constitutional interpretations—was subject to political manipulation to fall in line with Abe’s policies. The government, then, in presenting the security legislation of 2015 to the National Diet, never asked for direct approval of the Cabinet’s reinterpretation. Even more extraordinarily, the revised interpretation enabling collective self-defense was incorporated into the revised US-Japan Defense Guidelines before the necessary legislation for the exercise of this right had been submitted to the National Diet, thereby generating an international military commitment for the Japanese state that had not even received domestic democratic scrutiny or approval (Hughes 2017c; Martin 2017, 477–485).

If many of Japan’s moves toward remilitarization have looked to loosen democratic oversight as the postwar period has proceeded, then more recent changes in military policy look set to challenge the very foundations of Japanese democracy itself. Abe’s ambitions now extend to not just reinterpretation of Article 9, but also the first ever formal revision of the article and other sections of the constitution as a whole. These proposed revisions are again presented as moderate and emphasizing continuity—Abe proposing the apparently limited revision of paragraphs one and two of Article 9 to recognize that the “JSDF is maintained as an armed organization to take necessary self-defense measures.”

However, there is again obfuscation and radical intent contained in these revisions. In contrast to other plans for revision, the “necessary self-defense measures” remain undefined, and thus flexible and potentially extensive. How far Abe will succeed in his constitutional reform plans given National Diet opposition remains to be seen, and he has in fact achieved much of his security policy agenda through reinterpretation rather than revision. But recent attempts to revise the constitution also demonstrate that adherence to many of the ideals democratization as necessary to curbing remilitarization are waning.

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