

From liberalisation to militarisation: The ‘civilising’ of Japan and the end of the pacifist experiment

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Abstract

The pacifist commitment contained in Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution has long been a source of scholarly interest and debate. While the insertion of the clause in the post-WWII constitution was originally justified by General MacArthur (amongst others) as an expression of the ‘high ideals’ of liberalism and democracy that Japan was now embracing, it has since been derided as an impediment to effective Japanese participation in wars fought by the United States that are claimed to be in defence of freedom and democracy. This reversal of liberal logic became evident in the early years of the Cold War as Japan was encouraged to support the US in the Korean War and has strengthened in the years since. From the first Gulf War of 1991, up to the current War on Terror, much has been made of the constraints that Japan faces in supporting the ‘defence of freedom’ on a global scale. This paper aims to show the place of liberal discourses in relation to the pacifist clause in order to highlight the great ambiguity and inconsistency that exists in liberal claims concerning the promotion of peace in international affairs. In the context of tensions over Taiwan and North Korea, as well as the potential for controversial ‘humanitarian’ roles for the Japanese military in the South Pacific, these normative questions aim to shed light on the potential dangers of Japanese remilitarisation on liberal-internationalist grounds.

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Introduction

There is a common sense in liberal political theory and philosophy that universal adherence to liberal principles, on a domestic and international level, is the one potential path for the achievement of world peace. This claim has taken many forms over the centuries since the Enlightenment, ranging from Kant's 'federalism of free states'³ to Michael Doyle's democratic 'zone of peace'⁴ and Francis Fukuyama's 'post-historical societies.'⁵ Yet despite the various connections that have been drawn between liberalism and peace, the place of pacifism within liberal politics remains controversial. The question tends to boil down to the extent to which liberal states should maintain and utilise military forces and the answers range from total prohibition, through transitional acceptance, to arguments in favour of the full-scale militarisation of liberal states.

The case of post-World War Two Japan is instructive in this context, as it provides a clear example of the tensions and connections that exist between liberal ideology and militarisation. The interplay between these issues is grounded in the debates over Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution, which formally declares Japan's commitment to pacifism on what appear to be liberal terms. In the years that have passed since the implementation of this constitution, however, there has been a very noticeable slippage from an absolute prohibition of militarisation, toward a much more permissive interpretation of Article 9. At every point along the way, as this paper will demonstrate, the Japanese government has been prompted by the United States to rebuild its military capabilities, always in pursuit of liberal ends. This then

³ Immanuel Kant, 'Toward Perpetual Peace', in *Practical Philosophy*, ed. Mary Gregor (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

⁴ Michael Doyle, 'Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs', *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 12, no. 3 (1983): 205-235; Michael Doyle, 'Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs, Part 2', *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 12, no. 4 (1983): 323-353.

⁵ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: The Free Press, 1992).

raises the question as to why the pacifist clause was seen as the best way of promoting liberalism in the late 1940s, but has since been seen as a hindrance to the defence and promotion of liberalism on a global scale using military means.

In order to get to the heart of this quandary, this paper will first examine the rationale for the insertion of the pacifist clause in the Japanese constitution. It will then give an overview of the drift away from a strict interpretation of the pacifist clause during the Cold War. Finally, it will examine the contemporary pressure being exerted both inside and outside Japan for a fundamental revision of the Constitution in order to allow the full remilitarisation of Japan in defence of liberty and justice on a global level. At each step of the way the paper will show the presence of liberal argument, leading toward a conclusion that raises serious doubts about the theoretical connections between liberalism and international peace.

The novelty of Japan's pacifist constitution and its relation to various theories of international relations is well recognised. Up to this point, however, most scholars have tended to focus on why the constitution is destined to be breached or changed⁶ or, conversely, why Article 9 has proven to be so durable despite the warnings and doubts.⁷ These two positions basically fall along realist and liberal (or constructivist) lines respectively. This paper, on the other hand, neither presumes the inevitable failure of the pacifist clause, nor celebrates its ongoing resilience. Instead, it seeks to understand the role of liberal internationalist discourse in the erosion of Article 9

⁶ For a general overview of the arguments see, for example, Patrick J Boyd and Richard J Samuel, 'Nine Lives?: The Politics of Constitutional Reform in Japan, Policy Studies 19', East-West Center Washington (2005), www.eastwestcenterwashington.org/publications (accessed July 2 2007). For realist perspectives see, for example, Herman Kahn, *The Emerging Japanese Superstate: Challenge and Response* (Eaglewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1970); Kenneth Waltz, 'The Emerging Structure of International Politics', *International Security* 18(1993): 44-79.

⁷ The work on normativity in the Japanese context by Peter Katzenstein has been particularly prominent. See Peter J. Katzenstein, *Cultural Norms and National Security: Police and Military in Postwar Japan, Cornell Studies in Political Economy* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996); Peter J. Katzenstein, 'Same War: Different Views: Germany, Japan, and Counterterrorism', *International Organization* 57, no. 4 (2003): 731-60.

since its inception in 1946. This provides a new angle for understanding the challenges and contradictions that beset liberal arguments concerning the possibility of world peace.

After World War Two: Japan and the postwar liberal Constitution

The dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the subsequent declaration of surrender by the Japanese Emperor in August, 1945, was viewed by many around the world as a great victory for a liberal world order. As the emergent United Nations – imbued with ideals of collective security, human rights, and self-determination - began to take shape, a tremendous sense of optimism about the prospects for a peaceful future, guided by liberal principles, took hold in international politics. Few people encapsulated this sense of moral progress more clearly than the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers in Japan, General Douglas MacArthur, who triumphantly declared in 1946 that:

The struggle is now over – the cause of right and justice has prevailed. Christianity, democracy, and the essence of Western culture have survived – and the East is about to be opened to an enlightened age wherein its peoples progressively may attain that higher degree of human dignity which the war has been fought to preserve.⁸

Building upon this sense of great human progress toward universal freedom, security and peace, MacArthur contended that:

To the Pacific basin has come the vista of a new emancipated world. Today, freedom is on the offensive, democracy is on the march. Today, in Asia as well as in Europe, unshackled peoples are tasting the full sweetness of liberty, the relief from fear.⁹

⁸ Vorin E. Whan, *A Soldier Speaks: Public Papers and Speeches of General of the Army Douglas MacArthur* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1965), 146.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 152.

These strong statements, incorporating clear references to the superiority of Western principles of government, set the tone for MacArthur's subsequent involvement in the drafting of a new constitution for Japan. Founded upon the need to spread enlightened principles to the 'barbaric' people of defeated Japan, the American input into the constitution was avowedly concerned with popular sovereignty, democracy, fundamental human rights and, most importantly, a commitment to the disarmament of Japan and the permanent renunciation of war.¹⁰

The impetus behind the pacifist clause of the constitution is itself clearly founded upon these liberal ideals. While many questions remain as to who first proposed the insertion of the article into the constitution, it seems that the main drive for it came from the American leadership in Japan.¹¹ MacArthur's own suggestion for the pacifist clause – in his infamous 'note' on the constitution – stated that Japan was henceforth to rely upon 'the higher ideals which are now stirring in the world for its defence and protection.'¹² While this version of Article 9 did not make it into the final draft of the constitution, it does suggest that the thinking behind the pacifist clause was not driven by strategic demands to keep Japan in a weakened and subordinate condition, but rather to give Japan a role in the new world order as an example for a peaceful future. Nowhere was this aim stated more forcefully than in MacArthur's 1946 speech to the Allied Council for Japan, in which he argued that the pacifist constitution:

...points the way – the only way. The United Nations Organisation, admirable as its purpose, great and noble as are its aims, can only survive to achieve that purpose and those aims if it

¹⁰ These elements are clearly evident in both the *Potsdam Declaration* and the *United States Initial Post-Surrender Policy for Japan*, both of which are available from the website of the National Diet Library: <http://www.ndl.go.jp/constitution/e/etc/c06.html> (accessed April 11 2007).

¹¹ Kenneth Henshall, *A History of Japan: From Stone Age to Superpower* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 223 n. 4.

¹² Douglas MacArthur, 'MacArthur Notes (MacArthur's Three Basic Points), February 3, 1946', National Diet Library, <http://www.ndl.go.jp/constitution/e/shiryo/03/072shoshi.html> (accessed April 20, 2008).

accomplishes as to all nations just what Japan proposes unilaterally to accomplish through this constitution – abolish war as a sovereign right. Such a renunciation must be simultaneous and universal... Thereby may we further universal adherence to that higher law in the preservation of peace which finds full and unqualified approval in the enlightened conscience of the peoples of the earth.¹³

This sentiment was backed by MacArthur's Chief of Staff, Courtney Whitney, who suggested that the renunciation of war in the constitution would afford 'Japan the opportunity to assume the moral leadership of the world in the movement towards lasting peace.'¹⁴ What is evident in all of these arguments is the centrality of universal, rational norms of state behaviour – ideas that can all be located within a liberal internationalist view of international order.

So it was that pacifism found its way into the Japanese constitution, firmly grounded in the triumphant liberal values of the post-World War Two era. The preamble to the constitution of Japan sets the tone, with the statement that:

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.

This is followed by the declaration that Japanese society shall 'never again... be visited with the horrors of war through the action of government.' Most important, of course, is the text of Article 9 which, in English translation, reads:

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.

¹³ Vorin E. Whan, *A Soldier Speaks: Public Papers and Speeches of General of the Army Douglas MacArthur* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1965), 169.

¹⁴ Richard B. Finn, *Winners in Peace: MacArthur, Yoshida, and Postwar Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press., 1992), 100.

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.

The sense of permanence in Article 9 is clear to see. There is no suggestion that war is renounced until such time as Japan becomes a fully functioning ‘normal’ state, nor are any other conditions attached to the clause.¹⁵

Voices of concern over the exuberant idealism of the pacifist clause were certainly raised at the time, with one State Department memo calling the clause a ‘startling and novel constitutional provision’ that might not ‘stand the test of time and the stress of relations between nations.’¹⁶ As stated in the introduction, this kind of argument has been at the centre of critiques of the pacifist clause since its inception.¹⁷ For the purposes of this paper, however, the problem is not to understand how Japanese policies on war fell away from these liberal ideals and back into the amoral realm of power political concerns, but rather how the same liberal ideals that were invoked in support of the inclusion of the pacifist clause could so quickly and definitively be used for the opposite purpose: in support of the remilitarisation of Japan. It was in the years immediately following the passing of the new constitution, in the context of the emergent Cold War conflict, that such pressures for the remilitarisation of Japan – in defence of liberty of democracy – came to the fore.

¹⁵ Despite the apparent clarity of Article 9, debates are of course ongoing as to how much of a restriction it actually places upon Japan in terms of preventing militarisation. For an overview of the different perspectives, see Shotaro Hamura and Eric Shiu, ‘Renunciation of War as a Universal Principle of Mankind: A Look at the Gulf War and the Japanese Constitution’, *The International and Comparative Law Quarterly* 44, no. 2 (1995): 426-443, 430-433.

¹⁶ Max W. Bishop, ‘Max W. Bishop to the Secretary of State, Subject: Japanese Government’s Draft Constitution’, National Diet Library, http://www.ndl.go.jp/constitution/e/shiryo/03/095/095_0021.html (accessed 5 April 2008).

¹⁷ Herman Kahn, *The Emerging Japanese Superstate: Challenge and Response* (Eaglewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1970); Waltz, ‘The Emerging Structure of International Politics’.

Japan and the Cold War: Drifting from pacifism

It did not take long for the first cracks to appear in the Japanese commitment to pacifism. Post-war negotiations, held by John Foster Dulles, Japan's Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru and General MacArthur in Tokyo in January, 1951, led to the signing of treaties between Japan and the Allied powers in San Francisco in September of the same year. These treaties incorporated a formal declaration of the end of the war, as well as the settlement of issues relating particularly to compensation for prisoners of war, the administration of Japanese territories, the US security guarantee for Japan, and the status of US bases on Japanese soil. It is also interesting to note a short memorandum produced by the Japanese government dated 3rd February, 1951 – immediately following the Tokyo negotiations – entitled *Initial Steps for Rearmament Program*.¹⁸ This short statement, coming only five years after the Japanese constitution came into existence, clearly acknowledged that 'it [would] be necessary for Japan to embark upon a program of rearmament' in order to fulfil the terms of the security pact with the United States. To these ends, the proposal foresaw the expansion of the National Police Reserve as the 'start of Japan's new *democratic* armed forces.'¹⁹

The conclusion of the peace and security treaties took place amidst the fierce fighting on the Korean peninsula, in a battle that many view as the first major military engagement of the Cold War. The war in Korea brought about the rapid movement of

¹⁸ This agreement was written after the treaty negotiations meeting, but neither the United States nor Japan officially admitted to preparing it in full. However, according to several scholars, it is likely that Yoshida wrote it: Finn, *Winners in Peace: Macarthur, Yoshida, and Postwar Japan*, 280; Peter J Herzog, *Japan's Pseudo-Democracy* (New York: New York University Press, 1993), 224; Takeshi Igarashi, 'Peace-Making and Party Politics: The Formation of the Domestic Foreign-Policy System in Postwar Japan', *Journal of Japanese Studies* 11, no. 2 (1985): 323-356, 331; William R. Nester, *Power across the Pacific: A Diplomatic History of American Relations with Japan* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), 253. For the translated text of the memorandum, see Finn, 279.

¹⁹ Finn, *Winners in Peace: Macarthur, Yoshida, and Postwar Japan*, 279, emphasis added; Michael Schaller, *Altered States: The United States and Japan since the Occupation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 35-36.

US troops from Japan to the peninsula, leaving a potential security vacuum that could only be filled by Japanese forces. Thus, with the approval of President Truman, MacArthur – formerly the staunchest advocate of the pacifist constitution - ordered Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida to form the National Police Reserve, which was initially composed of 75,000 police reserve personnel and an extra 8,000 coast guard personnel (the Maritime Safety Force), for the purpose of maintaining ‘domestic order’.²⁰ The establishment of the National Police Reserve and the deployment of the Maritime Safety Force following the outbreak of the Korean War may be seen as the first step in Japan’s remilitarisation. Indeed, this was recognised by the United States Army Colonel to SCAP, Frank Kowalski, who called the enlarged police reserve ‘the disguise of a new Japanese army.’²¹ What made it different, of course, was that it could now be recognised, both in the US and Japan, as a ‘democratic’ armed force, thereby negating the stigma that was attached to the Japanese Imperial Army less than a decade earlier.

Despite the apparent disconnect between the pacifist aspirations of the constitution and the moves toward rearmament initiated by the peace treaty and the war in Korea, these developments were made coherent in the context of the divisive language that accompanied the Cold War, which left little room for pacifist neutrality on the part of Japan. As President Truman put it:

No matter how the immediate situation may develop, we must remember that the fighting in Korea is but one part of the tremendous struggle of our time – the struggle between freedom and Communist slavery. This struggle engages all our national life, all our institutions, and all our resources. For the effort of the evil forces of communism to reach

²⁰ Finn, *Winners in Peace: MacArthur, Yoshida, and Postwar Japan*, 260-263.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 266.

out and dominate the world confronts our Nation and our civilization with the greatest challenge in our history²².

Communism, aided by China and Soviet Union, was, according to Truman, ‘a powerful and ruthless enemy,’ manifesting ‘the danger that arises from the plans of the Kremlin to conquer the civilized world.’ Most importantly, he argued that if the United States was not sufficiently prepared, the communist menace ‘would strike at Japan.’²³ This view was reinforced in a statement by Dean Acheson, then US Secretary of State, who suggested that ‘Western Europe and the United States could not contain the Soviet Union and suppress German and Japan at the same time. Our best hope was to make these former enemies willing and strong supporters of a free-world structure.’²⁴ A memorandum from Acheson and George Marshall (who had served as Secretary of State prior to Acheson) to Truman on 8th January, 1951, clearly illustrated American strategy in relation to Japan:

The principal purpose in the proposed [peace] settlement is to secure the adherence of the Japanese nation to the free nations of the world and to assure that it will play its full part in resisting the further expansion of communist imperialism.²⁵

For the Truman administration, therefore, the threat of Communism was reason enough to support Japan’s remilitarisation, provided that Japan showed a commitment to liberal-democratic principles.

²² Harry S. Truman, ‘Address before the Midcentury White House Conference on Children and Youth. December 5th, 1950’, The American Presidency Project [online], John T. Woolley & Gerhard Peters, Santa Barbara, CA, University of California (hosted), Gerhard Peters (database), <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=13677> (accessed August 11, 2007).

²³ Harry S. Truman, ‘Address at the Jefferson-Jackson Day Dinner. April 14th, 1951’, The American Presidency Project [online], John T. Woolley & Gerhard Peters, Santa Barbara, CA, University of California (hosted), Gerhard Peters (database), <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=14062> (accessed August 11, 2007).

²⁴ Finn, *Winners in Peace: MacArthur, Yoshida, and Postwar Japan*, 246.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 272; Toshio Nishi, *Unconditional Democracy: Education and Politics in Occupied Japan, 1945-1952, Education and Society* (Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution Press Stanford University, 1982), 275-276.

From 1952 onwards, the Japanese government received substantial ‘mutual security assistance’ from the United States, which was designed to solidify the security cooperation and integrate Japan into American military strategies through the supply of military facilities and provision of training programmes.²⁶ This support enabled Yoshida to pass the Defence Agency Establishment Bill and the Self Defence Forces Bill through the Japanese Diet in March, 1954. When the bills came into effect in May of the same year, three branches of the Self Defence Forces (SDF) - Air, Ground and Maritime - officially formed the new Japanese defence capability, with a total initial personnel figure of about 164,500.²⁷ These developments were extended incrementally in the decades that followed. The contested revision of the US-Japan Security Treaty in 1960, which remains the key statement of affairs up to the present day, saw a restatement of the commitment to ‘international peace and security’ at the core of the military arrangements between the two countries. The 1978 Security Guidelines reinforced these arrangements²⁸ and further attempts have been made from the 1980s onwards to ‘free up’ the Japanese military to take part in US-led actions in other parts of the world. At every step along the path, it has been largely left to activists within Japan to resist the process of remilitarisation, on the grounds that it could signal a breakdown of those high principles that MacArthur had spoken of in advocating the insertion of Article 9 in the post-war constitution. From the US perspective – with the support of a succession of Japanese leaders – the moral

²⁶ John Welfield, *An Empire in Eclipse: Japan in the Postwar American Alliance System: A Study in the Interaction of Domestic Politics and Foreign Policy* (London ; Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Athlone Press, 1988), 97-98.

²⁷ John McGilvrey Maki, ‘Japan’s Rearmament: Progress and Problems’, *The Western Political Quarterly* 8, no. 4 (1955): 545-68, 552; Welfield, *An Empire in Eclipse : Japan in the Postwar American Alliance System: A Study in the Interaction of Domestic Politics and Foreign Policy*, 82.

²⁸ For the text of the 1978 Guidelines see *Report by the Subcommittee for Defense Cooperation, Submitted to and Approved by the Japan-U.S. Security Consultative Committee*, ‘The World and Japan’, Database of Postwar Japanese Politics and International Relations, managed by Professor Akihiko Tanaka, Institute of Oriental Culture, University of Tokyo, <http://www.ioc.u-tokyo.ac.jp/~worldjpn/documents/texts/docs/19781127.O1E.html> (accessed 5 April 2008).

discourses of liberal internationalism, with a focus upon peace, democracy, and human rights, were placed at the centre of the re-militarisation process, as reasons *for* the rebuilding of the Japanese military.

After the Cold War: Remilitarisation and constitutional change

While the Cold War provided impetus for the gradual erosion of the pacifist commitment of Japan, anti-pacifist discourse reached a new level with the onset of the Gulf War in 1991. It was at this point that Japan was accused of failing to ‘share the burden’ of preserving peace and security in the world and of using ‘checkbook diplomacy’ in dealing with the threat of Saddam Hussein. If the post-Gulf War ‘new world order’ was to be embraced by Japan, it seemed that rearmament and material participation in wars of liberation and human rights-promotion would be the minimum required. Then US Secretary of State James Baker put these arguments directly to the Japanese leadership in a speech in Tokyo in November, 1991. Echoing the critical sentiments that had emerged over Japan’s lack of direct participation in the Gulf War, Baker argued that the time for ‘checkbook diplomacy’ was now over and claimed that:

Japan’s foreign policy may now be headed toward the assumption of broader global responsibilities. As a major beneficiary of the global system, Japan must be a leader in the promotion and evolution of this system. This call for leadership should not just apply to the field of economics but also in building democracy, respect for human rights, stopping the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and in facing transnational challenges in areas such as the environment, narcotics, and refugees.²⁹

Japanese reaction was swift, with a law being passed in 1992 that allows for the participation of Japanese SDF troops in UN-approved peacekeeping operations. As

²⁹ James Baker, ‘The US and Japan: Global Partners in a Pacific Community’, U.S. Department of State Dispatch 2, no. 46 (1991): 841-6, <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=1885968&Fmt=7&clientId=13346&RQT=309&VName=PQD> (accessed May 12 2008).

with all of the post-1946 developments, this enlargement of the potential uses of the Japanese military was, once again, justified along liberal lines. The forces were to be used exclusively for the ‘promotion of peace,’ allowing only ‘humanitarian, non-combat, support activities in secure areas.’³⁰ This perspective was captured in the 1992 Japanese Diplomatic Bluebook, which claims that ‘Peace, in a true sense, should not simply mean an absence of conflicts. It must guarantee such values as freedom, democracy and human rights.’³¹ These definitional gymnastics, which refuse the equation of non-violence with peace, have persisted in the politics of the US-Japan relationship up the present day.

The domestic and international pressure being placed upon the Japanese constitution has, if anything, increased in the context of the War on Terror. In keeping with the aggressive promotion of liberalism that has marked the foreign policy of the Bush administration since the September 11 attacks, a re-armed and assertive Japan has also found favour amongst the neo-conservatives in Washington who have been so influential in recent years. In a 2006 article entitled ‘A Japan that can say yes’, Dan Blumenthal and Gary Schmitt argue that a shared sense of ‘liberal nationalism’ between the US and Japan should be accompanied by heightened co-operation in promoting liberal-democratic values – by force if necessary – around the world. The authors applaud then Prime Minister Koizumi for equating ‘Japan’s well-being with the spread of the universal values associated with liberal democracy and human rights’ and for introducing a development aid program that would reward the

³⁰ Rinn-Sup Shinn, ‘Japanese Participation in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations’, Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress (1992), <http://digital.library.unt.edu/govdocs/crs/permalink/meta-crs-24:1> (accessed April 5 2008).

³¹ The whole text of the Diplomatic bluebook in 1992 is available from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, ‘Diplomatic Bluebook 1992: Japan’s Diplomatic Activities’, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/other/bluebook/1992/1992-contents.htm> (accessed December 12 2007).

‘recipient country’s progress in democratic reform.’³² They also express their support for moves to amend the constitution to remove the pacifist clause, arguing that a ‘liberalism that wants to defend itself is no less liberal for doing so.’³³ Such arguments have been taken up by William Kristol, who, in rejecting the need for UN approval in conducting US foreign policy, suggest that it would be better ‘to work with Japan, rather than kowtowing to China, on North Korea.’³⁴ This more unilateral approach to the militarised promotion of liberal ideals represents a further departure from the PKO law that Japan passed in 1992. To be sure, the Japanese government is some way from behaving in the way that the neo-conservatives suggest would be appropriate, but it is of great interest that liberal discourse has shown itself, in recent years, to be amenable to such proposals.

An a more official level, the publication of a report on US-Japan relations by Richard Armitage and Joseph Nye, entitled *The U.S.-Japan Alliance: Getting Asia Right Through 2020* (hereafter the *Armitage Report*), gives a good indication of US government thinking on Japan’s military future. The report, following on from a similar report published in 2000,³⁵ identifies ‘radical Islamic fundamentalism’s attack on Western values [and] international extremism including terrorism’ as crucial issues for the new century. The response, according the *Armitage Report*, is to continue to promote Western values such as democracy and free trade as the foundation for regional security.³⁶ In this regard, the report offers India as an example insofar as it

³² Dan Blumenthal and Gary J. Schmitt, ‘A Japan That Can Say Yes: We Should Welcome the Nationalism of Prime Minister Abe’, American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research (2006) (accessed May 12 2008).

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ William Kristol, ‘Huffing and Puffing’, *The Weekly Standard*, no. 6 (2006): 7.

³⁵ Richard L. Armitage et al., ‘The United States and Japan: Advanced toward Mature Partnership’, National Defense University, http://www.ndu.edu/inss/strforum/SR_01/SR_Japan.htm (accessed 27 March 2007), 26.

³⁶ Richard L. Armitage and Joseph S. Nye, ‘The U.S.-Japan Alliance: Getting Asia Right through 2020’, Center for Strategic and International Studies,

‘has made the *right choices in terms of democracy and openness*, thereby providing greater domestic stability.’ Furthermore, ‘India’s successes in democratic practices add buoyancy to Japan’s own diplomatic weight founded on common values.’³⁷ Cooperation with other democratic states such as Australia,³⁸ New Zealand and Singapore, based on these common democratic values is viewed as ‘the most effective way’ of promoting ‘free markets, continued prosperity based on the rule of law, and increasing political freedom’.³⁹

Emphasising the theme of ‘common values,’ the *Armitage Report* also establishes an antagonistic relationship between democratic states like the United States and Japan and the anti-democratic China. This ‘values gap’, it is argued ‘matters in the most consequential form because it gives rise to a ‘trust deficit’’.⁴⁰ The notion of a ‘trust deficit’ then leads to the argument that Chinese rearmament needs to be ‘hedged against’⁴¹ and that China is supporting ‘irresponsible’ states that are undermining the promotion of liberal principles on a global level.⁴² Japan’s role in relation to China is, therefore, to ‘illuminate a path for China to become a responsible stakeholder,’⁴³ which ultimately means bringing about the democratisation of China.⁴⁴

In relation to military matters, while the report insists that the amendment of the constitution is a Japanese domestic issue, it also suggests that Japan should seriously address and even eliminate the constitutional restriction presented by Article

http://www.csis.org/component/option.com_csis_pubs/task/view/id.3729/type.1/ (accessed August 3 2007), 27.

³⁷ Ibid., 6; emphasis added.

³⁸ The emphasis on ‘common values’ is particularly pronounced in the security agreement signed by Shinzo Abe and John Howard in July of 2007. See ‘Japan-Australia Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation’, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/australia/joint0703.html> (accessed August 16 2007)

³⁹ Armitage and Nye, ‘The U.S.-Japan Alliance: Getting Asia Right through 2020’, 14.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 4.

⁴¹ James Przystup and Philip Saunders, ‘Visions of Order: Japan and China in US Strategy’, *Strategic Forum*, no. 220 (2006): 1-6

⁴² Armitage and Nye, ‘The U.S.-Japan Alliance: Getting Asia Right through 2020’, 4.

⁴³ Ibid., 23.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 14.

9.⁴⁵ This suggestion makes sense in light of the clear implication that the United States, in partnership with its allies, may militarily intervene in the domestic affairs of states within the Asian region. In an obvious reference to the idea of ‘conditional sovereignty’ that has been formalised in the ‘responsibility to protect’,⁴⁶ the report promotes the development of:

a region where leaders choose to address the internal and external problems arising from troubled states, like Burma, rather than turning a blind eye based on an outdated concept of ‘noninterference in internal affairs.’⁴⁷

In order to enhance the possibilities for Japanese participation in such actions, the report recommends the passing of legislation that would permanently enable the SDF to be deployed in humanitarian intervention or peacekeeping operations. This recommendation is based on the negative response to Japan’s creation of *ad hoc* laws such as the *Emergency Law* in 1999, the *Anti-Terrorism Law* in 2001 and the *Iraq Humanitarian Law* in 2003 that were used to legalise the despatch of its troops to East Timor, Afghanistan, and Iraq respectively.⁴⁸ According to the report, the process of making *ad hoc* legislation is unreliable, time-consuming and ineffective in times of international crisis.

These external pressures have certainly played a part in the ongoing debate within Japan over constitutional reform. Under Prime Ministers Koizumi, Abe, and now Fukuda, the arguments over the ‘freeing up’ of the SDF from the limitations set by the constitution have not abated. Shinzo Abe, in particular, was strongly committed to constitutional reform, and presided over the passage of legislation designed to enable such reform by 2010. This, however, was one of his last acts as

⁴⁵ Ibid., 22.

⁴⁶ Gareth Evans et al., ‘The Responsibility to Protect’, (Ottawa: The International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, 2001).

⁴⁷ Armitage and Nye, ‘The U.S.-Japan Alliance: Getting Asia Right through 2020’, 1.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 22.

Prime Minister, as a variety of domestic scandals, as well as the ongoing unpopularity of the renunciation of the pacifist clause, led to his downfall in 2007. Indeed, one of the most fascinating aspects of recent Japanese history has been the strength of domestic resistance to the various proposals that have been put forward for constitutional amendment, as well as the opposition to the ad hoc legislation that has enabled SDF participation in recent war situations. It is precisely the strength of this opinion, which was most recently measured at 66%,⁴⁹ that has led to the current Prime Minister, Yasuo Fukuda, shelving the debate on reform for the foreseeable future.

Nevertheless, as the political debate has continued, Japan's military, as one journalist puts it, 'has been rapidly crossing out items from its list of can't do's.'⁵⁰ Joint exercises with the US Air Force in Guam in July of 2007 involved the first live bombing exercise undertaken by the Japanese military since WWII and the operations in support of the US military in Afghanistan and Iraq continue, albeit in very limited ways. The joint development of a missile defence system with the United States has also continued, leading to the expression of concerns by China that a new arms race may be developing, with Japan playing a key role. Of even greater concern is the oft-mentioned potential for the development of a nuclear arms potential by Japan, which would surely indicate a grave deterioration in relations in the region and increase the potential for an incredibly destructive conflict. Set against the backdrop of concerns over Taiwan and North Korea and the ongoing possibility for Japanese participation in peacekeeping operations in the hotly-contested islands of the South Pacific, the idea of abandoning the pacifist constitution begins to look like common sense to some, but great folly to others.

⁴⁹ 'Poll: 66% Want Article 9 to Stay As Is'. *Asahi Shimbun*, May 5 2008, <http://www.asahi.com/english/Herald-asahi/TKY200805050052.html> (accessed May 12 2008).

⁵⁰ Norimitsu Onishi. 'Japan military recalibrates its definition of pacifism', *Asahi Shimbun*, July 23 (2007): 5.

The contemporary incompatibility of Liberalism and Pacifism

What does all of this mean for liberal internationalist norms in the world today? While we must acknowledge that liberalism is not a single, coherent ideology, a number of problematic issues arise on questions of liberalism and pacifism when examined through the prism of post-WWII Japan. Most prominent amongst these are the following assumptions: a) that liberal-democratic societies have an obligation to maintain and use military force in the service of international peace and security and that a pacifist stance runs counter to this obligation; b) that a state that has become liberal-democratic will never engage in aggressive or imperialistic foreign policy practices in the future and can therefore be trusted with large military capabilities; and c) that the definition of a 'normal' state incorporates an element of military power that can be used to transform international 'institutions and norms according to Japanese values and interests.'⁵¹ I will briefly discuss each of these issues in turn.

On the first point, it is clear that the increased pressures on Japan to militarise have always been characterised as an element of the *responsibility* of free nations, or liberal-democratic nations, to act against their enemies. In the context of the Cold War this meant resisting the expansion of communism, while the post-Cold War years have been marked by the opposition to human rights-abusers and terrorists. The remilitarisation of Japan, from this perspective, is encouraged in order to draw Japan from the sidelines of 'history' and into the heroic narrative of resistance and rescue that is particularly prevalent in cases of humanitarian intervention and the peacekeeping operations that follow.⁵² A pacifist insistence upon non-violence in

⁵¹ Alan Dupont, 'The Schizophrenic Superpower', *The National Interest*, no. 79 (2005): 43-51.

⁵² For an analysis of humanitarian intervention as heroic narrative see: Anne Orford, 'Muscular Humanitarianism: Reading the Narratives of the New Interventionism', *European Journal of International Law* 10, no. 4 (1999): 679-711.

situations where 'evil' or 'barbarism' are manifest is considered selfish, cowardly, and unbecoming for a rich and free society like Japan. Any understanding of a strong adherence to pacifist principles as being a brave form of action in itself, of setting an example for other states of the possibility of peace, appears to have disappeared in the years since General MacArthur spoke so eloquently in favour of the principles contained in Article 9.

This discursive transformation has important consequences. There have been a number of warnings in recent years over the slide of liberal internationalism toward liberal imperialism, by divergent scholars such as Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, Robert Cooper, Tony Smith, and Vivien Jabri.⁵³ As the War on Terror reached fever-pitch with the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the logic of liberal internationalism came to the fore in the justifications offered by Tony Blair and George Bush. Indeed, the claim that the invasion and occupation was warranted as a humanitarian action that would free the Iraqi people from the brutality of Saddam Hussein and create a democratic model for the entire middle east proved to be the most durable argument in favour of the war. The 'responsibility to protect' doctrine that had been formulated in 2001 in the aftermath of the Kosovo intervention fed directly into this rhetoric, to the extent that many supporters of humanitarian intervention also spoke out in favour of the Iraq invasion.⁵⁴ As we have seen, Japanese involvement in this conflict was limited and controversial, yet the case of Iraq illustrates the potential dangers presented by an over-zealous reliance upon militarised liberal internationalist principles. A reconsideration of pacifism as a viable option for liberal-democratic

⁵³ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000); Robert Cooper, 'Imperial Liberalism', *The National Interest*, no.79 (2005): 25-34; Tony Smith, *A Pact with the Devil: Washington's Bid for World Supremacy and the Betrayal of the American Promise* (New York: Routledge, 2007); Vivienne Jabri, *War and the Transformation of Global Politics*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007)

⁵⁴ The most prominent example of this phenomenon was Michael Ignatieff, who later retracted his support for the war.

societies is one possible response to these concerns, and Japan is obviously well placed to make an example of itself in that regard.

The second point of concern relates to the calm assurance exhibited by many scholars and political leaders when considering the possibility that a re-armed Japan could pose serious dangers. Any fears that the acceptance of a larger Japanese role in global military affairs might be a dangerous development appears to be limited to pacifist activists within Japan, as well as the governments of China and North and South Korea. In the United States, as in other Western nations, a strong acceptance now exists that Japan has shown itself to be a reliable liberal-democratic nation since WWII and could therefore be trusted with an expanded military role. As one commentator put it:

Logic dictates that Japan play a greater role in global politics and security. There is no more reason to fear such a role for Japan than for Germany, another of the Allies' World War II enemies. Both are now democracies committed to peaceful resolution of international disputes. Neither is apt to use military force to grab another country's resources.⁵⁵

Such an argument has also been put forward by Alan Dupont, who suggests that 'the existence of a resilient, mature democracy works against a revival of militarism' and that domestic and international pressures are too great to allow a return to Japanese nationalism and imperialism.⁵⁶ While this may be true in the short term, this kind of teleological argument, which sees Japanese development as being on a clear and irreversible path from nationalist imperialism to enlightened democracy, informs much of the anti-pacifist sentiment that emanates from Western governments, academia, and media.

This is not, however, an argument that can be taken for granted. Even a cursory study of Japanese history will show that it was the Japanese attempt (and

⁵⁵ 'Japan Shirks Global Obligation', *The Salt Lake Tribune*, December 13 (1992): A40

⁵⁶ Alan Dupont, 'The Schizophrenic Superpower', *The National Interest*, no. 79 (2005): 43-51.

failure) to gain recognition as an equal and just player in the European international order in the late nineteenth century that led directly toward the imperialism and nationalism of the twentieth.⁵⁷ If Japan does indeed abandon the constitutional prohibition on war-making and redevelop a powerful – perhaps nuclear – military capacity, then there would be great cause for concern. If we add in the fact that Japan has taken on board the idea that liberal-democratic countries need to strongly represent the ideals of ‘civilisation’, in opposition to the backward and abusive governments in China, North Korea, and perhaps even Russia,⁵⁸ then we have a volatile mix of militarisation and ideology in a region that is not short of serious flashpoints for future conflict. Again, this should give pause to those who assume that a liberal-democratic country is in some way immune from the temptation to wage aggressive wars or those who believe that nationalism and imperialism cannot be resurrected in the context of a liberal democratic society. In this context, the continued adherence to a pacifist constitution, no matter how minimal, could well produce the best outcomes in terms of peace and security for the region and for the world.

The final point that seems worthy of further inquiry is the notion of ‘normalisation’ as it has been applied to the remilitarisation of Japan. As I have shown above, the idea that Japan should reform its pacifist constitution and rebuild a strong and assertive military force is often expressed as a necessary precondition for making Japan a ‘normal’ nation-state. While we may expect such rhetoric to come from realist scholars of international relations, who have always been suspicious of the durability of the pacifist clause, it is slightly more surprising to hear the language

⁵⁷ Shogo Suzuki, ‘Japan's Socialization into Janus-Faced European International Society’, *European Journal of International Relations* 11, no. 1 (2005): 137-164.

⁵⁸ This is precisely the argument that has recently been put forth by Robert Kagan. See Robert Kagan, ‘The World Divides and Democracy is at Bay’, *The Sunday Times*, 2 September (2007): 4

of ‘normalisation’ being used by liberals. It is quite clear that Article 9, while perhaps an imposition on the Japanese people in 1946, has come to be cherished by a majority of the Japanese people and this has been reflected in recent opinion polling.⁵⁹ If the formation of liberal nation-states around constitutions is the foundation-stone of a liberal world order, it is hard to understand how any liberal thinker would see fit to condemn the Japanese constitution as being outdated or contrary to the promotion of liberalism on a broader scale. Such an approach seems to represent a classic case of getting ‘the cart before the horse’. In the negotiations over the drafting of the constitution, MacArthur and his associates were very concerned about ensuring that a document would be produced that would reflect the ‘freely expressed will of the Japanese people.’⁶⁰ Once that had been achieved, the desire to overturn it in the interests of ‘international peace and security’ began to work in the opposite direction, prompting calls for constitutional change that continue today.

It is of course difficult to overcome the ‘security dilemma’ inherent in realist thought when it comes to understanding international politics. There is little doubt that Japan will be faced with military threats at some point in the future and it may well be true that Japan has only maintained its own security since WWII through the military protection offered by the United States. But if we take Immanuel Kant’s work seriously, we should at least consider the possibility that disarmament and the renunciation of war as a sovereign right is a necessary precondition to the achievement of a sustainable world peace.⁶¹ If we are serious about pursuing the

⁵⁹ *Asahi Shimbun*, May 5 2008.

⁶⁰ These are the words used in the *Potsdam Declaration* and the *United States Initial Post-Surrender Policy for Japan*.

⁶¹ The gradual abolition of standing armies is the focus of the third preliminary article of *Perpetual Peace*. While Kant does allow for forces for the defence of nation-states, he describes the existence of standing armies as ‘hardly compatible with the rights of mankind in our own person.’ See Immanuel Kant, ‘Toward Perpetual Peace’, in *Practical Philosophy*, ed. Mary Gregor (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

peaceful ends that are promised in liberal internationalist theory, the acceptance (if not encouragement) of pacifist constitutions in liberal-democratic societies could well be a more productive path to follow than the insistence upon militarisation and physical domination of those considered to be the enemies of such an ideology. Supporting the maintenance of the pacifist constitution in Japan could, in this regard, set a fine example for other nation states as General MacArthur envisaged. Rejecting the idea that an active military force is an aspirational norm of international political life constitutes a first step in reinforcing a sustainable discourse of peace that could, in time, undermine the paranoid arms racing that characterises the ‘real world’. As Tom Plate wrote recently in the *South China Morning Post*:

Underneath the swirl is the sense that the Japanese know they have achieved a lot by not being like other nations, by not going along the route of military build-up, and thus by not – in this perverse sense – being quite the ‘normal’ nation. Maybe they felt they were on to something and weren’t quite ready to give it up. If so, good for them.⁶²

This positive framing of the ‘different’ approach to security that has been taken by Japan offers a viable alternative to the insistence that constitutional change and further militarisation is essential in order to absorb Japan into the ‘normal’ community of nations.

Conclusion

The place of liberal theory in the formation and subsequent debates over the Japanese constitution is complex and often contradictory. As this paper has demonstrated, the insertion of the pacifist clause was initially justified by MacArthur as being a foundation stone for a peaceful and democratic Japan and a guiding light for a peaceful future world order. In the years that have followed, however, the same

⁶² Tom Plate, ‘Japan – Not Quite the ‘Normal’ Nation’, *The South China Morning Post*, August 2 (2007): 11.

arguments have been used *against* the maintenance of Article 9, with the claim that a economically strong and liberal democratic Japan must assist in the preservation of world peace through military means. The outcome has been that the more Japan has proved its liberal-democratic credentials, the more militarised it has become. Any suggestion of pacifism as being a hallmark of a peaceful liberal-democratic world order has precipitously fallen by the wayside in the years since 1946, to the extent that many commentators and political leaders now argue that Japanese remilitarisation should proceed precisely *because* it is a liberal-democratic country. This appears in stark contrast to the initial arguments in support of the pacifist clause, which suggested that such a clause was necessary to preserve liberal-democratic institutions in Japan and to provide a shining example of the commitment to peace that a people could subscribe to in their national constitution.

The malleability of liberal thought in relation to a pacifist Japan has a number of important consequences for theories of international relations. We seem to have entered a phase of liberal theory in which the pursuit of peace is locked in an unbreakable relation with the exercise of military force. This trend is most evident in the justifications for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, but also lies at the heart of the popular ‘responsibility to protect’ doctrine which has been used to promote and justify the use of force for humanitarian ends. For Japan, these liberal arguments in support of militarisation have been used to push against the ongoing validity of Article 9 of the Japanese constitution, both domestically and internationally. While such moves are yet to result in constitutional change, there have been incremental legislative changes that have progressively permitted increased military activity by the Japanese SDF in the years since 1946. Indeed, we appear to have reached a point where the

continued Japanese commitment to pacifist principles is now condemned as being antithetical to world peace.

These movements and pressures being exerted upon Japan for constitutional change that would allow full scale remilitarisation must, in our opinion, be subject to serious critical scrutiny, particularly when liberal arguments are being used in their favour. In contrast to the suggestion that liberal-democracy must be defended militarily by Japan, we believe that there is a strong case to be made that the ongoing commitment to Article 9 offers a far greater prospect for producing peace in the Asian region (and perhaps even globally) and that the original reasoning offered by MacArthur for the insertion of that clause remains relevant in the contemporary context. As a 2007 editorial in the International Herald Tribune (Herald Asahi) so eloquently argued:

Japan should strive to become a ‘coordinator of the public interest’ and contribute to a peaceful present and future for humanity. The limits of military power have become more than apparent. We are confident that the philosophy of Article 9 can grant a new power to Japan. We see no reason whatsoever to discard it.⁶³

⁶³ Editorial, *Asahi Shimbun*, May 23 (2007).