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To cite this article: Karl Gustafsson, Linus Hagström & Ulv Hanssen (2019): Long live pacifism! Narrative power and Japan's pacifist model, Cambridge Review of International Affairs

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09557571.2019.1623174>



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Published online: 19 Jun 2019.



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Long live pacifism! Narrative power and Japan's pacifist model

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Abstract *International relations research acknowledges that states can have different security policies but neglects the fact that 'models' may exist in the security policy realm. This article suggests that it is useful to think about models, which it argues can become examples for emulation or be undermined through narrative power. It illustrates the argument by analysing Japan's pacifism—an alternative approach to security policy which failed to become an internationally popular model and, despite serving the country well for many years, has even lost its appeal in Japan. Conventional explanations suggest that Japan's pacifist policies were 'abnormal', and that the Japanese eventually realized this. By contrast, this article argues that narratives undermined Japan's pacifism by mobilizing deep-seated beliefs about what is realistic and unrealistic in international politics, and launches a counter-narrative that could help make pacifism a more credible model in world politics.*

Introduction

Since adopting a war-renouncing constitution in 1947 that has been labelled 'pacifist', Japan's security policy has been more constrained than that of comparable states. This approach to international politics arguably contributed to the country's successful reintegration into the international community and kept it out of wars throughout the post-war period. It has facilitated East Asian peace since the late 1970s (Tønnesson 2018) and could provide inspiration for the construction of a peace community in East Asia (Cho and Shin

2018). Most Japanese citizens continued to support this policy even in times of regional and international instability and tension. Since states claim to be 'peace-loving', pacifism could have given Japan widespread positive recognition and status globally. Indeed, the country could have been considered a beacon of hope in a world in which tens of thousands of people die in wars every year (Uppsala University Department of Peace and Conflict Research 2017). Despite its apparent success and potential, however, Japan's pacifism has never been a model that has attracted emulators. Instead, opinion polls show that the previously strong domestic pride in pacifist policies has begun to decline, and calls for constitutional revision abound among members of the Japanese Diet (Hagström 2010; *Japan Times* 2016). How is it possible that Japan's pacifism has been undermined, despite the fact that it served the country so well in the post-war period?

There is discussion about models in many academic disciplines, but international relations (IR) rarely mentions the possibility that there may be a palette of fundamentally different security policy models for states to choose from. Japan, for example, has been described as a model for other societies in the context of business and management, but not when it comes to national security (Stockwin 2004 [1984], 399). Instead of depicting it as a model, most previous research has blasted Japan's pacifism as an unrealistic and unsustainable aberration. This dominant line of research understands recent changes in Japan's security environment—a rising China and a belligerent North Korea—as having led Japan to realize what has been obvious to them all along (see Hughes 2004; Miller 2005/2006; Samuels 2007; Glosserman and Snyder 2008; Liff 2015; Grønning 2014; Auslin 2016; Hughes 2016; Fatton 2018; for scholarship that problematizes the rise of China and how it should be handled, see Breuer and Johnston 2019; Gries and Jing 2019; Turner and Nymalm 2019).

Other scholars identify competing or complementary explanations at the individual and institutional levels: the advent and increasing power of conservative and revisionist politicians, such as current Prime Minister Abe Shinzō (Pugliese and Insisa 2017); the growing intra-governmental clout of Japan's defence establishment since the Defense Agency was promoted to the status of fully fledged ministry in 2007 (Schulze 2018); and the emergence of threat constructions relating primarily to China's rise and North Korea (for example, Gustafsson 2015a; Suzuki 2015; Hagström and Gustafsson 2015; Hagström and Hanssen 2015; 2016). This article suggests that transnationally powerful narratives underpin and enable all the above-mentioned factors. These narratives *construct* Japan's pacifism, despite its potential to contribute to peaceful change in world politics, as either dangerous or irresponsible and thus 'abnormal' and 'unrealistic'. Moreover, they reproduce a dominant model in the security policy realm, which is considered the 'normal state model', while never explicitly describing it as such. More generally, this article argues that whether ways of thinking and doing security policy are emulated or undermined depends on their narrative construction.

Some argue that Japan's pacifism and the peace the country has enjoyed are effects of the security guarantees set out in the 1952 Japanese-US [United States] Security Treaty (Lind 2004). However, it is far from self-evident why a US ally should be able to maintain pacifist policies for decades. In fact, Japan

has been under pressure to remilitarize and abandon pacifism throughout the existence of the alliance, and other US allies have been drawn into armed conflict during this period.

Others might object that Japan adopted pacifism to convince its neighbours that it was no longer a threat after the end of the Second World War (Midford 2002). States that do not find themselves in a similar situation would therefore have little reason to emulate Japan. However, even if Japan adopted pacifist policies to address a particular problem, pacifism's subsequent success could still make it a model. In addition, it is unclear why Japan would abandon its pacifist policies in a situation where its neighbours still do not appear to have much trust in it.

The next section briefly introduces Japan's 'pacifist model' and its key elements. Section three outlines the theoretical approach employed here, focusing on how narrative power enables the rise and fall of models in world politics. Sections four and five show how experts and policymakers inside and outside Japan narrated Japan's pacifist policies as 'unrealistic' and 'abnormal' in the Cold War and post-Cold-War periods, respectively. The penultimate section discusses how a counter-narrative could nonetheless be constructed to make pacifism a more viable model in world politics. The final section provides a conclusion.

Japan's pacifist model

Japan's pacifist model consisted of a set of laws, principles and policies. Key elements are Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution, the ban on offensive weapons, the ban on weapons exports, the three non-nuclear principles, the one per cent cap on defence spending and 'peace education', which introduced pacifist ideals and promoted a 'peace identity' to generations of Japanese schoolchildren. These elements, moreover, are intertwined with a pacifist narrative that has been widely reproduced in Japanese society.

Article 9 states that 'the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes' and that 'land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained' (Cabinet Office 1947). Although the second clause has never been interpreted literally, Article 9 nonetheless imposes far-reaching constraints and is relatively pacifist compared with the constitutions of other states.

While left-wing Japanese pacifists viewed the establishment of the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) in 1954 as unconstitutional, the SDF was heavily restricted from the start. A Cabinet Legislation Bureau constitutional interpretation stipulated that the SDF could not possess 'offensive weapons', such as aircraft carriers, long-range missiles or mid-air refuelling capabilities.

Moreover, in 1967, Prime Minister Satō Eisaku articulated, 'My responsibility is to achieve and maintain safety in Japan under the Three Non-Nuclear principles of not possessing, not producing and not permitting the introduction of nuclear weapons, *in line with Japan's Peace Constitution*' (Sato 1967, emphasis added).

In the same year, the Diet adopted three principles on arms exports, forbidding Japan from exporting weapons to communist bloc countries, countries

subject to United Nations (UN) arms embargoes or states involved in or likely to be involved in international conflict. In 1976, it was also decided that exports would be 'restrained in conformity with Japan's position as a peace-loving nation' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2014).

In November 1976, it became official government policy to keep national defence spending below one per cent of gross domestic product (GDP), formalizing the legacy of the 1965–1975 period. The one per cent cap has prevented radical budget hikes (World Bank 2017).

Peace education has also been central to Japan's pacifist model. On 15 September 1945, just a month after the emperor announced Japan's surrender, the Ministry of Education issued an 'Education policy for the construction of a new Japan'. Its first paragraph outlines an education system that 'eradicates militarist thinking and policies', strives for the 'construction of a peace state' and instils in students a 'love of peace' (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology 2009). Teachers have since taught the value of peace to generations of Japanese and have often arranged school trips to peace museums in Hiroshima, Nagasaki and Okinawa. While depictions of Japanese aggression are limited in such exhibitions, they nonetheless represent war as an inherently bad and horrific endeavour with no heroes (Ishikida 2005; Gustafsson 2011; Yoshida 2014). Peace education is arguably a reason why pacifist sentiments remain strong in some quarters in Japan (Hagström and Isaksson 2019). For instance, only 11 per cent of Japanese respondents to a 2015 survey stated that they would be willing to fight for their country (Pugliese and Insisa 2017, 131).

Scholars have understood these features as epitomizing peaceful cultural norms, which are in turn believed to construct a pacifist Japanese identity (Katzenstein 1996). Some have argued that the term 'anti-militarism' is more apt than 'pacifism' (Berger 1998). However, Japanese narratives about security policy have revolved not around 'anti-militarism' (*higunjishugi*), but around 'pacifism' (*heiwashugi*) and Japan as a 'peace state' (*heiwa kokka*). Japan's pacifism was never 'absolute', as the country has possessed military capacity since 1950. Instead, it has been 'relative' in the sense that successive Japanese governments have maintained that their security policies should be more constrained than those of other countries. Japan simply opted for a security policy that was circumscribed *relative to those of other states*.

Consequently, Japan's pacifism can be understood as a relational identity. Pacifism as a relational identity is narratively constructed through the self's differentiation from others that are not considered pacifist (Gustafsson et al 2018). Through such differentiation, a Japanese identity was constructed based on which it was natural and normal to take pride in military restrictions and far-reaching moderation in security matters. While these security policy restrictions did not make Japan pacifist in the absolute sense, they made it possible for the Japanese to identify themselves as uniquely peaceful and different from both great powers and Japan's own militarist past. In other words, Japan's relative pacifism was more than just a set of security policy restrictions—it was also manifest in an appealing story that made those restrictions appear 'common sense'. At the same time, security restrictions and related policies substantiated the pacifist identity.

Narratives have portrayed Japan as unique due to its devotion to peace. This exceptional posture, moreover, was narrated as a token of pride. Perhaps the clearest example of this narrative is found in the so-called Fukuda Doctrine, articulated in 1977 by Prime Minister Fukuda Takeo, who stressed that, unlike all other economic great powers in history, Japan would never transform itself into a military power. This deliberate constraint, he claimed, was nothing short of a 'historically unprecedented experiment' (*shijōrei o minai jikken*) that would 'contribute to peace, stability, and development for the world' (*Asahi Shimbun* 1977). Thus, the pacifist narrative includes both exceptionalism and pride in a deliberately weakened military posture.

The lawyer and intellectual Itō Makoto exemplifies how young Japanese embraced the pacifist narrative in the post-war period. Reminiscing about his university days in the late 1970s, Itō writes that he was a young nationalist looking for reasons to be proud of Japan: 'I had a vague idea that Japan should have a military and defend itself, just like the US, and that constitutional revision therefore probably was necessary. But after a while I realized that this would just be to imitate and follow other countries. As I wondered if Japan perhaps couldn't find a more original way, I encountered one of the three principles of the Japanese Constitution: Pacifism. Legal stipulations such as the Constitution's Article Nine, which states that we abandon all war potential, are extremely rare in the world. It made me proud that [such a constitution] existed nowhere else' (Itō 2007, 166).

The notion of a pacifist identity should not be taken to mean that all Japanese people share one monolithic identity. Many conservative politicians arguably paid lip service to pacifism to get elected or to stave off US pressure for more substantial contributions to the alliance. Pacifist sentiments were unquestionably stronger at the grassroots level and among the opposition parties than in the governing Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). Nonetheless, the fact that conservative LDP politicians felt compelled to use pacifist language and adopt a veneer of pacifist values indicates that the pacifist identity was so strong among most of the public that politicians simply could not ignore it. Regardless of whether or not Japanese conservative elites truly embraced this pacifist identity, at a minimum they were constrained by it and therefore had to pretend to do so. Their pacifist-accommodating stance thus had very real effects on Japan's security policy.

Models and narrative power in international politics

A model is 'an example for imitation or emulation' (Merriam-Webster 2017). To describe something as a model typically implies the existence of other models that actors can choose between. It also suggests that courses of action can be emulated with similar results. In some academic disciplines, most notably research on economic development, there is much debate about models, such as the Japanese and Chinese models for industrial development or the Scandinavian welfare state model (for example, Springborg 2009). Research on regime types also implies that there can be different models for ruling a state, such as democracy and authoritarianism (for example, Bell 2015). Such research, however, rarely considers how these models emerge and spread, or why some models become more popular than others.

In discussing Japan's pacifism as a model, this article does not imply that it was ever internationally regarded as an 'example for imitation or emulation'. Prime Minister Fukuda Takeo may have wanted the doctrine that is named after him to 'function as a model *cum* contributor to peace for others to emulate' (Edström 1999, 94) but, any attempt to spread the doctrine was unsuccessful, if undertaken at all. International relations research seems to suggest that, while states may adopt different security policies, different models do not—and cannot—exist. Neorealist research, for instance, treats states as 'functionally undifferentiated' (Waltz 1979, 79). The point here is that the relative success of Japan's pacifist approach to international politics *could have* made pacifism seem like a valid alternative to conventional understandings of statehood and security, although this clearly did not happen, and pacifism is now on the verge of being abandoned even domestically. Arguably, this state of affairs is the result of narrative power. Indeed, this article asserts that whether potential models are undermined or become examples for emulation owes to the power of narratives.

As explained in detail in the introduction to this special issue (Hagström and Gustafsson 2019), 'narrative power' is defined as the capacity of narratives to produce effects. A 'narrative', in turn, is defined as a discourse 'with a clear sequential order that connect[s] events in a meaningful way' and 'offer[s] insights about the world and/or people's experiences of it' (Hinchman and Hinchman 2001, xvi). Narrative is thus a subclass of discourse (Patterson and Monroe 1998), and narrative power is a subclass of 'discursive' or 'productive power' (Digeser 1992). While other discursive forms are also intersubjective and produce meaning, narratives differ through their chronological storytelling structure (White 1973). They contain 'beginnings, middles, and ends', while arguments 'have premises and conclusions' (Roe 1992, 563). In addition, narratives culminate 'in a moral to the story' (Jones and McBeth 2010, 329) or a lesson for the future which suggests a certain course of action (Gustafsson 2011). Once entrenched, narratives, and discourses more generally, make some identities and courses of action seem legitimate, natural, normal and realistic, while others appear to be the opposite (Bruner 1991; Ewick and Silbey 1995).

A narrative is *dominant* if a critical mass of social actors considers it to be 'common sense' (Krebs 2015). To become dominant, moreover, narratives reference and mobilize more institutionalized 'master narratives' that the target audience has already accepted (Ewick and Silbey 1995). This emphasizes the significance of inter-narrativity and intertextuality, or the ways in which narratives and texts are intertwined with and shaped by each other (Van Peer and Chatman 2001). However, counter-narratives may exist even in situations where one narrative is dominant, and challenge the apparent naturalness of dominant narratives (see Currie 2011). As suggested below, a pacifist counter-narrative could promote an alternative model and engender less conflict-prone international politics (see Chen and Shimizu 2019; Ling and Nakamura 2019). Certainly it would be very difficult for such a counter-narrative to become dominant, but a necessary first step would be to construct it.

The narrative undermining of Japan's pacifist model

This section explores the narratives articulated by influential security experts and government representatives inside and outside Japan to understand why Japan's pacifism never became a model. In examining pacifism in Japan through the lens of a narrative approach, this article does not look for *arguments* about pacifist policies, but focuses instead on how the *meaning* of 'Japan's pacifism' has been constructed as unrealistic and abnormal in increasingly dominant *narratives*. The subsequent section, by contrast, explores how a pacifist counter-narrative might turn pacifism into a more credible model.

The anti-pacifist narrative in the post-war period

Shortly after imposing Japan's 'Peace Constitution', the US occupation authorities began pressuring Japan to rearm. These activities accelerated after the 1949 communist victory in China and the 1950 outbreak of the Korean War. As they stopped seeing Japan as a liberal-pacifist experiment and began viewing it instead as a bulwark against communism in Asia, US policymakers increasingly saw the constitution as a liability. In 1953, US Vice President Richard Nixon called it a 'mistake' (Neis 2015). Such views were also prevalent among Japanese conservatives. Prime Minister Hatoyama Ichirō (1954–1956) stated that the constitution jeopardized Japan's security and 'should be revised for the sake of self-defence' (cited in Yamamuro 1995, 105). By contrast, his predecessor, Yoshida Shigeru, defended the constitution and advocated a doctrine premised on economic growth, close relations with the US and a low-posture security policy. Towards the end of his life, however, Yoshida (1878–1967) openly regretted having led Japan down the pacifist path. Unlike Hatoyama, who stressed the *dangers* of pacifism, Yoshida emphasized its *irresponsibility*, labelling Japan's security policy 'selfish' and a 'deformity' that was 'unacceptable in international society' (cited in Pyle 2004 [1996], 43–44). The continuation of pacifism, Yoshida warned, would only diminish Japan's international prestige.

As the Cold War intensified in the 1980s, however, pacifism was increasingly described as dangerous. Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro (1982–1987) sought to 'approach national defence in the presumably more rational manner of other countries' (Berger 1998, 141). Outspoken academics and pundits also stressed these dangers. For example, Shimizu Ikutarō (1980, 45) warned that '[m]ilitary weakness invites foreign aggression or pressure. To be militarily weak is literally to tempt neighbouring nations that believe only in military strength'. Takeuchi (1986, 75) similarly wrote that 'the weaker a country [is] militarily, the more likely it is to be invaded'.

The narrative these critics promoted often included a dystopian scenario of the future, in which pacifism brought about Japan's demise. Shimizu (1980, 41) warned that if it failed to break away from pacifism, Japan would 'most certainly perish'. Another pundit similarly wrote that 'the road to annihilation is paved by advocates of a soft-hearted defense posture' (Satō 1985, 26). The followers of pacifism were depicted as unbelievably naive and almost religiously irrational, 'closing their eyes to uncomfortable realities' and 'soothing themselves with the pious superstitions of the church of peace' (Takeuchi 1986, 75).

Japanese leaders made some security and defence policy adjustments to satisfy pressures from the anti-pacifist narrative (Nakamura 1982; Hook 1988): they established the 75,000-strong National Police Reserve (NPR), equipped with light infantry weapons, in 1950 and turned it into the SDF in 1954; accepted port calls by US nuclear-armed vessels; and relaxed the ban on exporting defence-related technology to the US in 1983. However, they managed to keep these adjustments fairly limited and defended the constitution against those who advocated even more rapid and far-reaching security reforms (Iokibe 2005). Although the anti-pacifist narrative was popular among conservatives, it did not become powerful enough to seriously challenge Japan's pacifism until much later.

The anti-pacifist narrative in the post-Cold-War period

The idea that Japan's pacifism invited war and invasion became less persuasive after the end of the Cold War. The anti-pacifist narrative was therefore complemented by another dystopian scenario—that pacifism would make Japan an 'irresponsible' second-tier state. This revised narrative gained strength during the 1990–1991 Gulf War. Japan's US\$13 billion financial contribution was famously characterized as 'too little too late' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1991), and US officials stated that Japan would face continued criticism 'unless Japanese flags fly in the Gulf' (Catalinac 2007, 61). Such criticism was intrinsic to the narrative that the episode shamefully epitomized the impotence of Japan's pacifism. One prominent scholar stated that 'it is undeniable that Japan got poor marks from the international community for its contribution to the Gulf War, and that the prestige of Japanese diplomacy suffered as a result' (Nakanishi 2011). The Gulf War allegedly 'left Japanese diplomats with a deep sense of failure', which explains why they understood it as a 'trauma' or 'shock' (Nakanishi 2011). Lessons were drawn based on this narrative. A senior general in the Ground SDF concluded, for example, that 'We learnt from the Gulf War that just sending money and not people would not earn us international respect' (Kelly and Kubo 2015).

Perhaps no one was as influential in spreading this narrative as political heavyweight Ozawa Ichirō: 'How much of the cost of maintaining peace and freedom has post-war Japan borne? Hardly any. Yet Japan has reaped the harvest of peace and free world markets more than any other nation' (Ozawa 1994, 96). To him, post-war Japan had misunderstood the lessons from the Pacific War. The true lesson was not that Japan should avoid all things military, but that it should avoid the sort of isolationism that led pre-war Japan to come into conflict with the US (Ozawa 1994, 25–26).

That Ozawa was put in charge of the LDP Commission on Japan's future role indicates that his narrative had a receptive audience. The Commission's 1992 report (known as the 'Ozawa Report') claimed that post-war Japan had misunderstood the Japanese Constitution's ideas about pacifism: 'the spirit of the constitution is the spirit of a positive and proactive pacifism which is completely different from passive pacifism or one-country pacifism' (Jiyū Minshutō Kokusai ni Okeru Nihon no Yakuwari ni Kan Suru Tokubetsu Chōsakai 1993, 205). The report was extremely influential and helped to justify the SDF's 1992 deployment to Cambodia—Japan's first participation in a UN peacekeeping

operation. It also became a reference point in the fierce debate in the early 1990s on how Japan should start to take 'responsibility' (*sekinin*) and make 'international contributions' (*kokusai kōken*) commensurate with its economic capability.

A virtual cottage industry of accounts has continued to narrate Japan's pacifism as naive, and therefore irresponsible at best and dangerous at worst. Critics speak of 'one-country pacifism' (*ikkoku heiwashugi*), 'flower field pacifism' (*ohanabatake heiwashugi*) or simply 'passive pacifism' (*shōkyokuteki heiwashugi*), while pacifists are derided as suffering from 'peace senility' (*heiwaboke*). Others ridicule pacifists as 'peace idiots' (*heiva baka*) or 'irresponsible optimists' who 'seem to be skipping around in their flower fields while singing children's songs about peace, but have no idea how dangerous a situation Japan finds itself in' (Girubāto and Erudorijji 2018, 180). Pacifism has thus transformed from an object of pride to one of shame. As the US pundit Jason Morgan recently wrote in a book published in Japanese, 'The Japanese people should be ashamed of the Japanese constitution' (Mōgan 2018, 187). 'Japan has not been protected by Article Nine of the constitution ... What has really protected Japan's peace are the Self-Defense Forces and the US troops stationed in Japan' (Mōgan 2018, 195–196).

The three instalments of the US bipartisan Armitage–Nye Report, published in 2000, 2007 and 2012, echoed this narrative. The report encouraged Japan to take more responsibility within and beyond the bilateral alliance—indicating that not doing so would be beyond the pale for a state of Japan's stature. The 2000 report states, 'Japan's prohibition against collective self-defense is a constraint on alliance cooperation' and 'Washington must make clear that it welcomes a Japan that is willing to make a greater contribution' (2000, 3). Seven years later, the report recommended that Japan recast its 'self-perception' (2007, 19), and 'shoulder responsibilities ... by adequately providing for more of the areas required for its own defense' (2007, 20). The 2012 report called on Japan to address the 'irony' that it was prohibited from participating in collective self-defence, depicting such a policy change as 'responsible' (2012, 15) and necessary to avoid becoming a 'tier-two' state (2012, 1).

The anti-pacifist narrative has also stressed the dangers linked to developments related to China and North Korea (for example, Auslin 2016; Easley 2016; Hughes 2016). After Kim Jong-Il revealed in 2002 that North Korean agents had abducted Japanese citizens, a narrative proliferated that portrayed pacifism as the root cause of Japan's inability to prevent such incidents (Hagström and Hanssen 2015). The lesson to be learned was that protecting Japanese citizens required a departure from pacifism. Until then, critics had not been able to identify any specific instance in which pacifism had brought about Japanese casualties.

More recently, China's military modernization and North Korea's nuclear and missile development have been incorporated into this narrative. It emphasizes how China's defence spending and the sophistication of its military capabilities have grown steadily with its GDP, and ascribes malign intent to China, particularly on account of the dispute over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands (Hagström 2012; for example, Blair and Hornung 2016) and the notion that China is 'anti-Japanese' (Gustafsson 2015a). The narrative also emphasizes that North Korea spends some 20–30 per cent of its GDP on its military, including

on the development of nuclear weapons and long-range missiles. Moreover, that missiles were launched directly over Japan on two separate occasions in 2017 was described as an ‘unprecedented’ threat and proof of North Korea’s bellicosity (Tajima 2017). Prime Minister Abe has represented Japan’s current security environment as the ‘worst in the post-war period’ (Sankei Shimbun 2018). In the words of ultra-conservative pundit Sakurai Yoshiko (2015), ‘How would these people, who maintain that Article 9 has safeguarded the peace and security of Japan, explain the North Korean abductions of Japanese citizens, or the alarming realities of the East and South China Seas where China boisterously is endeavoring to change the existing order?’

The lesson: towards a ‘normal’ or ‘beautiful’ country

The anti-pacifist narrative not only warns of the dystopian consequences of pacifism, but also offers a way out—a utopian vision for a post-pacifist Japan. The two most famous examples are arguably Ozawa’s ‘normal country’ (*futsū no kuni*) and Prime Minister Abe’s ‘beautiful country’ (*utsukushii kuni*). Ozawa’s idealized normal country ‘willingly shoulders those responsibilities regarded as natural in the international community’ and ‘cooperate[s] fully with other nations’ (1994, 94–95). More specifically, it lets the SDF participate in UN peacekeeping and peace-enforcement operations. Ozawa’s narrative contrasts this utopian vision with post-war pacifist Japan, portraying the latter as abnormal. The normal/abnormal dichotomy has likely resonated because it relies on a strategy of inter-narrativity which turns the pacifist narrative on its head. While pacifists have claimed that Japan’s unique devotion to peace has made it exceptional, Ozawa reframes pacifism as something abnormal that should make the Japanese ashamed rather than proud (Hagström 2015).

Narratives urging Japan to become normal also appear in academic works published inside and outside Japan, highlighting the role of scholars as narrators (see Winkler 2019). These publications rarely problematize the notion of normality, beyond its constant differentiation from ‘pacifism’ and the idea that ‘normal states’ should have security and defence policies different from that of post-war Japan—for example by allowing participation in collective self-defence (Hughes 2004; Miller 2005/2006; Glosserman and Snyder 2008; Liff 2015). As Richard Samuels (2007, 111) clarifies, ‘stripped to its essence, the idea of a “normal nation” simply means a nation that can go to war’. Characteristically, William C Middlebrooks (2008, 101) writes, ‘The Japanese have ... arrived at a crossroads: they must either forsake the goal of becoming a “normal nation”, or amend their Constitution’. Normality is also the ideal in Kevin Cooney’s (2002) book, where ‘becoming normal’ is depicted as ‘maturation’. This suggests that pacifist Japan is temporally behind—a child who needs to grow up and become a ‘normal adult’. In Japan, the term ‘abnormal’ (*ijō* or *futsū de wa nai*) is not always explicitly used—although examples include Kitaoka (2000)—but it is implied when influential scholars and policymakers call Article 9 a ‘big obstacle’ (*shōgai* or *ōkina shishō*) (Kitaoka 2000, 271; Yachi 2009, 124) and criticize Japan’s security policy for being ‘insufficient’ (*fujūbun*) (Kitaoka 2000, 11; Yachi 2009, 123).

Prime Minister Abe offers another solution in his ‘beautiful country’ narrative. It differs from the ‘normal country’ narrative in that it seeks to retain

Japan's exceptionalism while discarding pacifism (Hagström 2015). The pacifist constitution, Abe complains, has left Japan with a contradictory 'military without war potential' (*senryoku naki guntai*), unable to properly defend Japan (Abe 2006, 124). Pacifism has also damaged Japan's standing, as other countries view Japan's unwillingness to participate in upholding international security as 'cunning' (*zurui*) (Abe 2006, 142). To become a 'beautiful country', Japan must revise the constitution and begin to engage in collective self-defence, which would 'not only enable the defence of Japan, but also contribute to the stability of Asia' (Abe 2006, 133). Abe has made 'proactive pacifism' (*sekkyokuteki heiwashugi*) one of the pillars of his security policy, suggesting that Japan is breaking away from its past 'passive pacifism' (*shōkyokuteki heiwashugi*) and is beginning to approximate a security policy that is suitable for a responsible member of the international community.

As part of the promotion of proactive pacifism, Japan further relaxed its ban on arms exports in April 2014. Although Abe has not yet attempted to revise the constitution, in September 2015 his government enacted a series of security laws that made its July 2014 reinterpretation of Article 9 legal and the article itself compatible with collective self-defence. Hence, even if it is not under direct attack, Japan can now offer military support to an ally. Moreover, in 2017, Abe explicitly rejected the notion of a one per cent of GDP cap on defence spending, stating that 'I will secure defense spending to protect our nation, to protect Japanese people's life efficiently, considering issues such as the security environment in Asia-Pacific region' (Reuters 2017).

To make citizens willing to fight for their country, it is necessary to foster some patriotic sentiment (see Gustafsson 2016). In addition to the above-mentioned security policy reforms, the Abe government has thus sought to replace Japan's peace education with patriotic education. Conservative Japanese politicians and pundits have promoted the narrative that Japanese peace education is 'masochistic' and 'anti-Japanese' (Gustafsson 2015b). The well-known author Hyakuta Naoki has even accused the post-war education system of 'making children hate Japan' (Abe and Hyakuta 2017, 157). Influential politicians have praised the emperor-centric 1890 Imperial Rescript on Education, which played an important part in pre-war and wartime indoctrination (*Asahi Shimbun* 2017). In 2006, during Abe's first stint as prime minister, the Fundamental Law of Education was also revised in a 'patriotic' direction to foster 'love' of 'our country' (*wagakuni*) (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology 2006).

A pacifist counter-narrative

The anti-pacifist narrative not only delegitimizes Japan's pacifism, ensuring that it is not seen as a model for other states to emulate, but also promotes its opposite—a model of 'normal state behaviour' in the security policy realm. As with 'pacifism', 'normality' is regarded here as a narratively constructed identity. Its meaning is derived not from an inherent property, but from the way in which it is differentiated from abnormality (Hagström 2015). As they embrace and reproduce narratives about the advantages of the normal state model—albeit without ever labelling it as such—scholars and pundits find it completely unsurprising that Japan is currently beefing up its security at the

expense of relative pacifism. There is a broad consensus that real threats, based primarily on material capabilities, have finally begun to ‘limit the impact of other, more idealist, and value-based role identities’ on Japanese security policy (Catalinac 2007, 91). This return to material factors is argued to be long overdue, as states are regarded as operating in an anarchical system in which only self-help can protect against threats. However, this begs the following questions: If material factors show states how naive and dangerous pacifism is, why did the Japanese people not realize this during the Korean War or the Vietnam War? In addition, why did Japan not abandon pacifism in the face of a materially superior and ideologically threatening Soviet Union?

Perhaps a pacifist model is unable to deal adequately with all the problems that the normal state model produces. Here, Robert Cox’s distinction between problem-solving and critical theory is instructive. The former ‘takes the world as it finds it, with the prevailing social and power relationships and the institutions into which they are organized, as the given framework for action’. Its aim is ‘to make these relationships and institutions work smoothly by dealing effectively with particular sources of trouble’ (Cox 1981, 128–129). The latter, by contrast, ‘does not take institutions and social and power relations for granted but calls them into question by concerning itself with their origins and how and whether they might be in the process of changing. It is directed towards an appraisal of the very framework of action, or problematic, which problem-solving theory accepts as its parameters’ (Cox 1981, 129). Clearly, the dominant normal state model takes a problem-solving approach to the world. It advises that conflicts can be prevented by designating threats and undertaking armed deterrence—and if a war breaks out, it recommends that states should deal with it through military means.

This article’s argument, by contrast, follows critical theory. It is conceivable that there would not be such a high risk of conflict in the first place if the normal state model were not so dominant. This acknowledges the contingency, rather than the naturalness or necessity, of the dominant normal state model. It also recognizes the performativity of the model: it seems more sensible and real the more states treat it as such. Tremendous narrative power reproduces the normal state model. Consider again a few counterfactual questions. What if equal effort were to be invested in narratives advocating the advantages of pacifism? What if pacifism could mobilize entrenched master-narratives as powerful as those that support the normal state model? What if peace education became the norm across the globe in lieu of patriotism? Moreover, what if states had to pursue pacifism in order to acquire status and peer recognition as they currently pursue armaments and wage wars to do so?

There is a predictable objection. What about rogue states that would refuse to adhere to pacifism even if it became an internationally popular model? How would they be dealt with? To put it starkly, Nazis might be ruling the world if the US had been pacifist in 1941. From this perspective, hampering one’s own ability to wage war automatically puts potential aggressors in an advantageous position. This is why George Orwell (1942) criticized pacifism as ‘pro-Fascist’—or an ideology that is both more deceptive and potentially more dangerous than ideologies premised on war-making, such as Nazism and fascism. In his anti-pacifist treatise, moreover, John Lewis wrote, ‘There is peaceableness which is mere acquiescence in evil and encourages it. There is a

refusal to fight which is the occasion of war' (Lewis [1940] 1979, 36). While Lewis has a point, the normal state model arguably acquiesces in 'evil' more often than pacifism; the willingness to fight is more often the reason for war than the refusal to do so. First, while 'normal states' typically justify their power- and security-seeking behaviour with reference to the constant threat from aggressors and rogues, so do those aggressors and rogues. For example, Japan and the US justify the deepening of their bilateral alliance by referring to North Korea's acquisition of nuclear arms and missiles, and North Korea justifies its defence posture by means of the existence of a US threat. Second, no aggressor nation has ever followed a 'pacifist' doctrine or identity. Instead, aggressors and rogues tend to be 'normal states' in the sense that they, based on the 'normal state model', are preoccupied with power and security, defined in military terms. Lewis wrote in 1940 that 'Pacifism ... is now upheld by a large and influential body of public opinion' (Lewis [1940] 1979, 13), and suggested that it had enabled the appeasement of Germany. However, pacifist narratives were apparently not sufficiently dominant, either in Germany or in the rest of Europe. Had they predominated, it is highly doubtful that the Second World War would have broken out in the first place.

Nonetheless, a narrative approach to pacifism faces a problem that is quite typical of pacifism: it guarantees pacific outcomes only in the hypothetical scenario that most states acquire pacifist identities (Lewis [1940] 1979, 20–21, 42–47). Here, Lewis, who argues that the most certain way 'to get nowhere' is to demand 'nothing less than perfection' (Lewis [1940] 1979, 48) is instructive. This article acknowledges that pacifism can be dangerous, but contends that it is not quite as dangerous as the normal state model. The challenge is that while promoting pacifist narratives a less than perfect situation must be navigated in which such narratives may never become entirely dominant. The aim is thus not to find a perfectly safe strategy for survival in international politics. Rather, it is to argue that if an equal narrative effort were invested in the pacifist model as in the normal state model, and if entrenched master-narratives were mobilized in support of it, the world would be less violent, albeit not necessarily free of violence. Japan's relative pacifism is instructive in this context. While spreading pacifist narratives in the post-war period, consecutive Japanese governments maintained a 'necessary minimum' defence capacity.

The promotion of pacifist narratives constitutes a step towards normalizing pacifism as a model in world politics. However, such narratives should avoid differentiating the Self's pacifism from the aggressiveness of the Other (Jackson 2019, 11). Otherwise 'pacifism' risks being reduced to an identity that simply perpetuates the normal state model by justifying war preparations to protect *our* pacifism from *their* aggressiveness—not unlike Prime Minister Abe's 'proactive pacifism'. Again, the Japanese case may be informative. Japan's pacifist identity in most of the post-war period was mainly constructed in relation not to other *unpeaceful* states, but to Japan's own *unpeaceful* past (Hagström and Hanssen 2016; Gustafsson 2019).

Does this mean that a pacifist model can only become successful once every country has begun to define itself in relation to its *unpeaceful* past? This article asserts that the pacifist identity should be transnational and inclusive. From such a perspective, the entire non-pacifist history of the world, with all its

torture, violence and war, can be relegated to a collective shameful past from which the world can differentiate its present Self (Wendt 2003, 527–528).

Conclusion

This article has argued that pacifism served Japan well in the post-war period and used to be a source of Japanese national pride. Even though it could offer a compelling example for other states to emulate, Japanese leaders are doing their best to dismantle it. The more the pacifist model has been described as abnormal and unrealistic, the more Japanese policymakers have found it beneficial to abandon it. Pacifism is being replaced with what is regarded as the normal state model, which is considered realistic and natural. This is ironic, since the policies stipulated by the normal state model already appear to be presenting a security dilemma for East Asia (Liff and Ikenberry 2014). By increasing their military preparedness, apparently in response to each other, both Japan and China are acting in accordance with the normal state model, that is, ensuring that they are ‘nation[s] that can go to war’ (Samuels 2007, 111).

Is this the end of the pacifist model? In fact, to fully grasp its future potential, the pacifist model must be compared with the currently dominant model—and, moreover, the latter has to be recognized as such. It is credible that a pacifist model would produce less war and human suffering than the normal state model if the former were to replace the latter. Richard Norman (1988, 209) makes a similar remark about non-violent resistance, arguing that it can only become a real option to violent resistance if ‘we can bring it about that people do have a choice’. The Japanese legal scholar Itō Makoto reminds us that, just as the abolition of slavery was once considered irrational, the abolition of arms is considered irrational today. However, that does not mean that it will remain so for all eternity. Itō (2007, 193) has therefore tried to change the narrative on pacifism: ‘Rather than seeing Article 9 as irrational, I see it as proof of advancement.’ Such narrative re-articulations are crucial for the pacifist model to gain ground.

In fact, the early pacifist movement in post-war Japan was founded on this conviction. The most influential pacifist advocacy group in post-surrender Japan, the Peace Issues Symposium, wrote in 1950 that, once ‘ethical demands’ for peace had been consistently turned into a ‘model for our actions’, they would ‘transform into an objective force that moves reality’ (Heiwa Mondai Danwakai 1950, 52). In this sense, the group portrayed pacifism not as an alternative to realism, but rather as its logical conclusion.

Acknowledgements

For very useful comments on previous drafts of this article, the authors would like to extend their gratitude to the three anonymous reviewers of *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, Steve Chan, Nina Krickel, Petter Y Lindgren, LHM Ling, Akitoshi Miyashita, Oliver Turner, Kosuke Shimizu, Stephanie Winkler and George Yin.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Funding

Marianne and Marcus Wallenberg Foundation, grant number 2013.0162 and 2016.0036.

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