

# **The Samurai's Rebirth – Japan's Increasing “Offensive” Security Capabilities**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis studies the increasing “offensive” nature of Japanese security capabilities in a nation that has had major restrictions on military capability. There are regional tensions in East Asia that have the potential to escalate to armed conflict. Other countries in the region have increased their levels of armament but how has Japan reacted? I look at three major acquisitions by Japan that have created controversy, then examine the role public opinion has towards issues of defense, including external and domestic considerations. Two major data sets on public opinion, the Global Attitudes Project and the Asia Barometer, are used. I find that external factors are a part of the reasoning for increased diversity in re-armament and levels of trust in domestic institutions are critical to an understanding of Japanese defense issues.

## Introduction

December 15, 2006 marked a significant event in the nation of Japan's history. On this date the Japanese Parliament's Upper House voted to upgrade the nation's defense agency to a full government ministry. This was part of then Prime Minister Abe Shinzo's<sup>1</sup> goals of relieving diplomatic pressure on Japan, and to re-think Japan's post World War II role in today's strategically sensitive world.<sup>2</sup> Japan is located in an area with high levels of tension between its neighbors. To its west is the Korean Peninsula where North and South Korea maintain the world's most heavily defended border. In the south, China and Taiwan are in a state of diplomatic tension since the defeat of the Chinese Nationalists in 1949. Russia is still in diplomatic conflict with Japan over World War II and the occupation of the Kuril Islands, which Japan still claims to this day. Even its ally and protector, the United States has occasional grievances and complaints ranging from trade deficits, economics, and the burden sharing of defense responsibilities, to placement of military forces on Japanese soil.

Japan's neighbors in recent years have been increasing their military and defensive capabilities. As a preeminent economic power in the region, Japan for the most part has not followed suit in terms of overall defense buildup. This has put pressure on Japan both domestically and internationally to respond equivalently. But one must remember Japan's past, the upgrade of the defense agency mentioned above has created renewed tensions and debate about the role of Japan not only in East Asia but the world. Many still remember the militaristic past of Japan. This has made Japan unique concerning issues of militarism, nationalism, and re-armament. Japanese security concerns are illustrated in Figure 1.

At the end of the Second World War, Japan found itself with over 2 million casualties during the war. While this pales in comparison to the losses of Russia and Germany, Japan has the unique

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1 All Japanese names in traditional surname/given name format.

2 BBC News – Japan Upgrades Defense Status - <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/6182087.stm> 15 December, 2006  
Retrieved: 7 February, 2008

distinction of being the only nation in history to suffer a nuclear attack. History has seen the Japanese people defeated and their homeland occupied. The nation of Japan has been rebuilt from the ashes of war into one of the most prosperous nations of the world. One legacy of this history is that Japan as part of its constitution, drafted by the victorious Allies, has lived with Article 9 or the “peace clause,” which states:

*“The Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as a means of settling international disputes.”*

Since the acceptance of the constitution in 1947, actions taken by Japan on matters of defense have followed this regulation. However, due to a number of factors, Japan has been re-arming in increments since the 1950's with their defensive capabilities becoming more “offensive” in nature in the past two decades.<sup>3</sup> Under the general understanding of the constitution, Article 9 does not ban Japan from being able to defend itself, but weapons that are for pure “offensive” purposes are banned under Article 9.<sup>4</sup> Yet Japan has been able to acquire more of these weapons in what appears to some to be a wanton disregard of the constitution. Various factors are at play here ranging from a revival in nationalism to external pressure from its American ally. Other factors include the economic rise and status of Japan, and the nature and role of the Japanese political system in security and defense issues. Various studies have been conducted throughout the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that have focused on the rebirth of nationalism and the reasons for Japanese re-armament, but most of these studies are at least a decade old as of this report (Berger 1993, Hook 1988, Wilborn 1994). Other studies have failed to examine major issues of re-armament including the definition of “offensive” weapons, and how the government determines what is in the nations “best interest (Corning 1989, Johnson 1986, Frühstück 2002).”

With the actions of the Abe government and previous Japanese governments, significant issues

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3 Hook p.390

4 Japanese Ministry of Defense 2008 p.109

have been raised. A 2004 report by Shimoyachi Nao of The Japan Times indicates that revising the constitution is seen as a possibility, but there is no consensus on revisions of Article 9 that would allow for more flexibility towards defense issues. Since the early 1990's a number of new “defensive” systems have been acquired by the Japanese Defense Forces; all have faced some degree of controversy.

## **Recent Japanese Defense Acquisitions and Article Nine**

### ***Kongo Class Destroyer***

To help understand the situation that Japan faces towards defense acquisitions, I examine three cases of defense acquisitions that have created an amount of controversy, but each for different reasons. The first case is the acquisition of the *Kongo* class destroyer, a derivative from the U.S. *Arleigh Burke* class destroyers of the U.S. Navy. *Kongo* class destroyers form a major part of Japan's four primary flotillas of the JMSDF.<sup>5</sup> Each is equipped with AEGIS radar technology that provides these ships with incredible detection and coordination abilities. The AEGIS system was the first point of controversy concerning this class of destroyers; Japan was the first nation outside the United States to acquire such technology. With this, the *Kongo* class can increase its detection distance, the number of targets it can acquire, reaction time and its own missile range. Concerns were high in giving Japan this technology due to an incident in the 1980's where the Toshiba Corporation sold computer guided propulsion systems to the Soviet Union.<sup>6</sup> Concerns were also high that Japan may attempt to “reverse engineer” the AEGIS system, modify it or potentially sell it to other nations. After the U.S. Congress put the purchase under review in 1988, eventually the purchase of the system was cleared. Japanese shipbuilders, however, had to modify certain systems in order to be compliant with the advanced U.S.

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5 Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force

6 Corning p.284

technology.

The primary debates surrounding the *Kongo* class centered primarily around the advanced technology present from the United States, as well as why the Japanese just didn't buy the whole ship from the U.S. instead of only certain systems. The first ship of the class, the JDS *Kongo* was launched on March 25, 1993, and at the time became one of the most advanced warships afloat.<sup>7</sup> It has the capability to detect and attack submarines, conduct surface combat, and serve as an air defense platform. In keeping with the constitutional restrictions, the ships are not equipped to carry the Tomahawk cruise missile, carried by the *Arleigh Burke* class, as this weapon is considered beyond the minimum for self-defense. Without this capability, this ship falls within the limits of the constitution. Today, the *Kongo* class has been upgraded for ballistic missile defense, in light of North Korea's missile testing over the Sea of Japan in 2006. Concerns are still present over increasing the capabilities of these ships, in that they can be outfitted for more offensive purposes, and could be called upon to support U.S. actions throughout the world.

### ***Hyuga* Class Helicopter “Destroyer”**

While the *Kongo* class destroyer had controversy surrounding its acquisition, overall the ship fell within the restrictions of the constitution. The *Hyuga* class helicopter destroyer presents a case where this is not as clear-cut. As it has been stated, Japan is forbidden to possess any weapon that exceeds the minimum for self-defense. The Defense White Paper of Japan clearly states this, that possession of systems such as ICBM's, long-range bombers, and “attack” aircraft carriers are banned.<sup>8</sup> However the *Hyuga* class seems to violate this ban. Funding was approved in 2001 for two helicopter destroyers to replace the *Haruna* class currently in service. The first ship, the JDS *Hyuga* was launched August 23, 2007, and is expected to be in service with the JMSDF in March 2009. Even

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7 DDG Kongo Class – Globalsecurity.org <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/japan/kongo.htm> Retrieved: 20 Jan. 2009

8 Defense of Japan 2008 p.109

though the Japanese Defense Agency has labeled these ships as destroyers, many top defense analysts including Jane's Information Group label the ship as a carrier.<sup>9</sup>

The contradictions to the idea of this ship being a destroyer begin right with the ship's construction. Physically these ships resemble an aircraft carrier, including a flush landing deck and a starboard island structure. At over 13,500 tons, with a displacement of 20,000 tons loaded, the *Hyuga* class matches in size to smaller conventional aircraft carriers such as Italy's *Giuseppe Garibaldi* (10,100 tons) and Spain's *Principe de Asturias* (17,188 tons). Loaded, Japan's new vessels compare with Britain's *Invincible* class at 20,600 tons.<sup>10</sup> However the Defense Agency labels these ships as helicopter carrying destroyers dedicated to anti-submarine warfare (ASW) and humanitarian/logistic support. The ships are designated as destroyers to avoid the restriction on the possession of “aircraft” carriers, although they are not purely a destroyer either. Defense News (2008) cites the decision to pursue the construction of these “helicopter carriers,” as a response to the growing of China's submarine force, but notes that before the construction of these carriers, Japan already had an effective ASW capability since the Soviet era. Others cite that these ships will give Japan more flexibility for supporting U.S. and U.N. missions, a sign that Japan may be more willing to participate in international affairs. Japan has previously wanted to obtain an aircraft carrier, but was opposed by the U.S. and others. Some believe that through the construction of these ships, Japan is rehearsing carrier-building technology and taking the first step towards building a large aircraft carrier. This is in contrast to the belief in many Japanese that any aircraft carrier is considered an “offensive” weapon.

Another part of the controversy surrounding the *Hyuga* class is the potential for strike capability that any warship of its type could possess. Attack helicopters such as the AH-64 Apache and the AH-1 Cobra could easily be brought aboard and launched from the deck of the *Hyuga* class; giving Japan

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9 Jane's Fighting Ships – 2008

10 DDH Hyuga/ DDH “13,500 ton” class – Globalsecurity.org <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/japan/ddh-x.htm> Retrieved: 20 Jan. 2009

enhanced and expanded strike capability. Some analysts have suggested that the launch of these ships is eventually targeted at the acquisition of the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter; currently in development by the U.S.<sup>11</sup> This multi-role fighter easily has strike capabilities which would be in defiance to the Japanese constitution. Others however have discounted this as purely a rumor.

## **KC-767 Tanker**

In February 2008, Japan received delivery of a KC-767 Tanker for air refueling purposes for the JASDF.<sup>12</sup> This airplane is the first of its kind for Japan, having never before possessed this ability. The Japanese Defense Agency placed the order for this aircraft back in 2003 in order to provide the JASDF with air refueling capability along with the ability for troop transport.<sup>13</sup> This aircraft can offload 20% more fuel than its predecessor the KC-135. It also has the capability to refuel all types of aircraft from all services including those of the U.S. The aircraft is also interoperability compliant with NATO and the European Union standards. Built by the Boeing Aerospace Company in the United States, four of these aircraft have been ordered with two already constructed.

This acquisition has also faced concern and controversy. Globalsecurity.org (2008) details major concerns by Japan's neighbors that the JASDF having air-refueling capability might signal a renaissance of militarism. However, the JASDF states that this is incorrect, in that refueling does not infringe upon Japan's "exclusive defense" policy and is not a threat to neighboring countries.<sup>14</sup> Further the JASDF insists that the air refuel capability allows their planes to stay in the air longer, not to travel further distances, which would increase their strike capability. Still the fact that Japan possesses this capability is controversial. Their F-15's and F-2's would have the reach necessary to strike at both

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11 Minnick, Wendell. *Defense News*. "Japan's New Ship: Destroyer or Carrier?" <http://www.defensenews.com> 30 June, 2007 Retrieved: 20 Jan. 2009

12 Japanese Air Self Defense Force

13 Boeing, Japan Sign 767 Tanker Transport Contract

[http://www.boeing.com/ids/globaltanker/news/2003/q2/nr\\_030404m.html](http://www.boeing.com/ids/globaltanker/news/2003/q2/nr_030404m.html) Retrieved: 22 January, 2009

14 KC-767 <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/systems/aircraft/kc-767-int.htm> Retrieved: 22 January, 2009

China and Korea if they desired. Further development of the ATD-X, a stealth superiority fighter combined with air refueling capability gives Japan the tools to become a greater power in regional security.

What factors are allowing Japan to acquire weapon systems that seem to strain the definition of being for “purely for defensive purposes?” What role do the people of Japan have in their government towards issues of defense? Is there a political elite that is behind the increasing diversity of defense acquisitions?

## **Literature Review**

### **Previous Research**

A number of scholars have done research into issues concerning the defense of Japan ranging from matters of policy and alliances, to the cultural fabric and sentiment of the people. Thomas Berger (1993) provides an excellent analysis of the anti-militaristic culture that has taken hold in post-war Japan. His study focuses on the prospect of Japan re-arming itself to a pre-World War II state, which has caused many of its neighbors and its own people to worry. Berger argues that these fears are largely misplaced and that in the short term, it is unlikely Japan will seek to become a major military power. But his study is over a decade old; many new developments have taken place such as the upgrade of the Defense Agency, renewed tensions with North Korea following the country's ballistic missile testing, increased tensions with China, and the development of new, advanced weapon systems. Others such as Glenn Hook (1988) have asked the same question but have argued that Japanese anti-militarism has eroded due to a combination of internal and external factors, and that public opinion is more inclined to accept re-armament.

Thomas Wilborn (1994) takes a different approach by examining defense policy to determine the potential of Japan becoming a major military power in the Asia-Pacific region. His analysis also

includes examining the capabilities of Japan's defense forces as well as the attitudes of Japan's political elites. Wilborn presents one of the major dilemmas that Japan has faced since the end of World War II towards re-armament; that of defining “exclusively offensive” weapons, which was noted are banned under the constitution. Generally this has included long-range ballistic missiles, long-range strategic bombers, and offensive aircraft carriers. This last item is of current concern with the Defense Ministry's building of the *Hyuga* class “helicopter carrier.”<sup>15</sup> Also he presents a set of “never again” policies, which the governments of Japan in the post war period internalized in order not to repeat history. One of the most relevant to the continuing advancement of defense technology is:

*“Never again slight the importance of superior technology and the capacity to produce large quantities of advanced weapons with high quality control.”*

In his analysis of Japanese and American security cooperation, Gregory Corning (1989) examined the role the security treaty between the United States and Japan has had towards Japanese defense policy and acquisitions. Corning explains that much of Japan's defense policy has been shaped in part by pressure from the U.S. on matters of burden-sharing and by revisionist governments in the last two decades that have sought to raise Japan's status in the alliance. He also states that cooperation via defense technology will make the alliance stronger and cites examples of this, notably by having Japanese firms conduct research and development for the U.S. and by Japan buying advanced defense systems from the U.S. In this way, both sides gain what they want. This is not without its share of problems either. Corning also cites concerns by both parties on being reliant upon one another for defense issues. But to conduct further research into the matter, an understanding of the background of militarism and nationalism in Japan is necessary.

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15 Hutchison, Harold C. Naval Air: Japan's Secret Aircraft Carriers - <http://www.strategypage.com/htm/htnavai/articles/20070825.aspx> 25 August, 2007. Retrieved: 10 February, 2008

## **Explaining Increased Security Capability Under Constitutional Constraints**

### **External Considerations**

#### *China – The Dragon vs. The Samurai*

External factors towards Japanese re-armament, militarism, and nationalism have been examined thoroughly by various individuals. A common theme in the various reports is the effect of China. Sino-Japanese relations have been stressed throughout the history of both countries. McClain (2002) gives examples of a number of incidents and affairs that have strained relations from early in their histories, through World War II and beyond. He makes clear that these incidents are not forgotten by China, whereas Japan seems to gloss over a number of these issues by choice. Visits by various prime ministers including Nakasone Yasuhiro, and Koizumi Junichiro, to the Yasukuni Shrine, which is said to house the spirits of Japan's war dead, have sparked massive protests and debate. More recently, a series of new conflicts between the two nations have come to light. Matthews (2003) in his study of Japan's increased nationalism, notes that the rise of China, economically and politically in the region has usurped Japan's traditional post-war position. China's GDP growth rate of 8% in 2002 has made it the world's highest. Japan, being heavily invested in the economies of many Southeast Asian nations, has seen those nations turn to China as their most important future economic partner. Many domestic Japanese companies as well as American companies are heavily investing in China. Again Japan's traditional "hammer" has been threatened; this raises the question of how the Japanese will respond. The resentment towards this shift combined with strategic tensions such as the Senkaku Islands, which may hold potential oil reserves, has strengthened the hand of many Japanese nationalists who believe that their nation should have the military power to rival its neighbors.

Roy (2004) gives detail to the strategic concerns and the political opinion of the Chinese. In a 2002 opinion poll, half of the Chinese respondents believed that relations with Japan were "not good"

and only 22% believed relations were “good.” The Chinese have become alarmed at what they perceive as Japanese security policy becoming more assertive through increased defense spending, closer ties with the United States military through combined exercises, technology and personal exchanges. The overall feeling of displeasure by the Chinese as a result of World War II has not faded as well, contributing to continued tensions between the two nations. The Institute of National Strategic Studies (2007) has implied that Sino-Japanese tensions have the potential to intensify due to pressures inciting them, including the issue of Taiwan.

#### *Korea – An Uneasy Past*

The two Koreas are also a source of tension for Japan. During the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Korea was a Japanese colony; with the end of the war, Korea was split into two nations, one allied with the west, the other a communist state. Relations with South Korea have been considerably better than with North Korea but strained never the less. Memories of the Second World War that still run strong in South Korea along with a sense of economic competition contribute to these tensions. North Korea has been an even more troubled story. The government of Kim-Jong Il has been a thorn in Japan's side for many years. Provocative threats and actions by North Korea have caused the Japanese to not only strengthen their ties with the United States for security, but to take certain measures into their own hands. Matthews cites an incident in 2001 where a North Korean spy ship gathering intelligence, disguised as Chinese fishing vessel was spotted in Japanese territorial waters was fired upon by the JMSDF and Japanese Coast Guard (2001). This response was a significant event. For the first time since World War II, Japanese naval forces sank a foreign vessel. Only a decade ago such actions by Japan would have been unimaginable. This event combined with more provocative actions by North Korea had lifted tensions to the point where then defense minister, Ishiba Shigeru, warned that Japan could potentially launch a preemptive strike to defend its self if necessary. A clear shift in Japanese attitudes about their country and defense became present at least within the military and factions of the

government. The question remains however, what is the public's perception of such events and threats? Also do these tensions give policy makers and defense officials the reasons they need towards continued advanced defense acquisitions?

### *The United States – An Alliance of Convenience*

The pressure of the Japanese-United States military alliance is critical to any move towards full re-armament. Initially, the U.S. in the post-war world had placed itself as Japan's protector, making Japan reliant on the U.S. for all matters of security. The Korean War and the Cold War changed that whole plan. The U.S. put pressure on Japan to fill the security vacuum resulting from the partial U.S. withdraw from Japan following the Korean War. Japan faced pressure from the United States to further re-arm during the 1950's and 60's but stood firm in opposing it. Even if the government had wished to re-arm to the level desired by the U.S., there was little public support for re-armament. Masswood (1990) makes clear that the Self-Defense Forces of Japan were seen by both the U.S. and Japan as secondary members in the alliance. Sentiment towards the alliance initially was poor, but with the advent of the Cold War and tensions with the Soviet Union, the alliance became accepted. Now, however, without the threat of the Cold War, many have once again questioned the need for the level of foreign troops stationed in Japan.

There have always been concerns about whether the U.S. was firmly committed to the defense of Japan, and in 1960 the Japanese and the U.S. revised their security treaty, making Japan a more equal partner in defense. Since then, Japan has made enormous steps in re-arming the nation; despite this some in the United States as well as Japan still see this as inadequate. Hook (1988) notes the erosion of impediments to militarization that took place in Japan, which gave agencies such as the JDF more legitimacy and rising public support, which allowed for their moderate growth. The purchase of F-15 fighters in 1982, a more offensive oriented weapon, illustrates the changing mood towards defense. Wilborn (1994) describes the JDF attempting to emulate the U.S. military in various aspects

such as structure, technology, and culture. Through cooperation with the United States, Japanese defense has risen to a point where some see it as potentially no longer needing to rely on the U.S. for protection. To reach this point would entail even further re-armament and public acceptance of it. There are those who stress the costs of the alliance for both Japan and the U.S. Some American politicians would like to see further re-armament in Japan in order to relieve defense costs in the region, notably the U.S. Eighth Army in Korea and the U.S. Navy Seventh Fleet at Yokosuka. Public perception is once again critical. From Japan's side, the presence of the U.S. military by some is seen as a remnant of a piece of history they wish to forget, along with the troubles a military force brings to a community; noise, pollution, and social problems.

## **Domestic Considerations**

### *The Yoshida Era*

Traditionally the Japanese had found their source of national pride in such establishments as the emperor, the army, and the navy. Post-war, things changed; the emperor was no longer the working head of state, merely a ceremonial figurehead. The army and navy were disbanded and no forces for war were to be maintained. In 1953, under Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru, with assistance and intense pressure from the United States, a domestic police force, then a full-fledged defense force was developed. The Yoshida Doctrine, which Neary (2002), McClain (2002), and Maswood (1990) all note, was developed by Yoshida to begin the full restoration of the nation, but not through militarism. He stressed that by focusing on economic growth and political passivity, Japan could recover from the war more easily and hopefully regain its stature in the world. Yoshida saw the need for Japan to not be drawn into Cold War rivalries, which could potentially drain Japan's resources; this included any potential re-armament. Neary (2002) tells of the Japanese refusal to fully re-arm under pressure from the United States. However, Yoshida relented with limited re-armament following the Korean War, but

only the bare minimum for self-defense, which is still a base principle in Japanese defense policy today. External defense was the task of the United States.

All of this came to a climax at the San Francisco Treaty summit in 1951, which gave sovereignty back to Japan; Yoshida considered this his greatest triumph. The Japanese people responded to Yoshida however by remaining ambivalent towards his moves. A 1952 public opinion poll conducted by the *Asahi Shimbun* newspaper revealed that only 18% of Japanese people thought their country had truly become independent. Yoshida's popularity rating also plummeted to 20% from a high of 58% the year before (McClain 2002). McClain argues that by consenting to allow overall national defense to be in the hands of the Americans, the Japanese people saw this as a slight against them by Yoshida. Even though he kept the radical elements that had brought war to Japan out of the new system and brought the foundation for economic recovery, public opinion was that he had sold out to the U.S., thus resulting in his downfall.

However the Yoshida Doctrine did give Japan the start it needed after the war. The economic growth and prosperity that Japan underwent is a source of national pride for the Japanese, even with the recessions of the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the post-war world, Japan's “hammer” in its foreign relations has been the tremendous economic power that the nation built in the post-war era.

### *The Nakasone Era*

Much research has been done in the review of the rebirth of Japan as a nation. The work of Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro was critical towards the expansion of the defense forces of Japan. Nakasone took steps that his predecessors were either unwilling or unable to make. He was also a contributing force to renewed nationalism beginning in the 1980's. Berger (1993) and Neary (2002) both note that Nakasone's energetic leadership was considered unusual in post-war Japan. Before becoming Prime Minister, Nakasone was the former director general of the Defense Agency and quite

proud of his service.<sup>16</sup> He was also the Chairman of the Executive Council of the Liberal Democratic Party where he stressed the need for constitutional reform to allow for necessary defense potential. Masswood (1990) and Johnson (1986) point out that under Nakasone, interpretation of the constitution was considered flexible, thus preventing the need for any major constitutional revision. Johnson also notes that Nakasone however had to negotiate between the two views of Japanese defense, the first being “revived Japanese militarism,” and the second being the view of a “free ride on defense,” a view taken by Japan's American allies. Hook (1988) also notes the Diet of Japan was also under pressure from the U.S. during the 1980's to increase levels of defense spending in an effort to help reduce the amount of U.S. capital and involvement needed.

Nakasone responded with a series of political actions that were meant to kill two birds with one stone, to appease the U.S. and to allay fears of revived militarism. Nakasone's defense policy consisted of a steady increase in defense expenditures, close cooperation with the U.S., and a major effort at public education. Throughout the 1980's, defense expenditures rose slowly but steadily. But when Nakasone attempted to abolish the 1% GDP Defense Spending Limit, he met with near-universal opposition from the political and social realms. Different authors have argued that in both Yoshida and Nakasone's cases, while public sentiment and social culture have worked against them, eventually their policies and ideas towards defense and other issues have found acceptance with time. In Nakasone's dilemma, he was forced to change tactics. Nakasone was forced to divide the increases throughout a number of years eventually getting his victory when the Diet approved his plan for the period of 1986-90 on September 18, 1985.<sup>17</sup>

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16 Johnson p.557

17 Johnson p.568

*The Japanese Defense Force*

The Japanese Defense Force (JDF) is another critical part of understanding the process of re-armament in Japan. Frühstück (2002) provides a comprehensive report concerning many issues of the JDF. His study encompasses the various social, political, and cultural aspects of Japan in relation to the JDF. In contrast to Berger's study, which focuses primarily on the link between Japan's violent past and the potential for future aggression, Frühstück suggests a shift in focus. His study is concerned with the question of how the armed forces handle their “problematic existence” in anti-militaristic contemporary Japan.<sup>18</sup> Many consider the JDF a pure violation of Article 9, while others see the need for a defense force, but with the limitations laid out from the constitution. Other problems noted by Wilborn (1994), Masswood (1990), and by Globalsecurity.org (2007) that the JDF face include: an irritation at their role in society, lack of a sense of effectiveness, and low public approval. Just recently, a spike in suicides has been noted in JDF personnel. The suicide rate is close to double that of civil servants in other ministries and agencies.<sup>19</sup>

In pure numbers, the JDF is considered small. It also suffers from the restrictions from Article 9, but some of these restrictions have been circumvented through creative ways. While not directly written in the constitution, military spending was to be minimal to conform to the ideal of a purely defensive nation. Most significant was the scrapping of the 1% GNP ceiling on military spending put in place by Prime Minister Takeo Miki. In 1985 the Nakasone government, enabling a boost in military spending, scrapped this ceiling. Hook (1998) notes that the following the removal of the ceiling, military expenditures which had been rising throughout the 1980's, now shot up to 3700 billion yen, about 1.013% of the nation's GNP. However in the 1990's according to Table 2, defense spending has leveled out in the last several years. According to the Ministry of Defense (2008) defense spending

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18 Frühstück p.2

19 *Asahi Shimbun*. 2008. Sept. 27. “Motive unknown in half of SDF suicides”

for FY 2008 was calculated at approximately 47 billion dollars, down from highs near 50 billion dollars in 1996.

Public perceptions on matters such as this are a focal point for research. The perception of not only the JDF, but also the government's actions towards matters of defense policy is vital towards determining Japan's future moves in re-armament. Higher opinions of the JDF, its people, missions, effectiveness, and of policy moves, plus overall satisfaction with the nation, may indicate an increased likelihood of acceptance of further and more diversified re-armament.

Since the studies of the last decade, many new developments have taken place that has contributed to the acquisition of advanced defensive technology and re-armament in Japan. This as stated has not come without debate and controversy. Many ask why a nation that has forbidden the use of war as means of settling disputes is acquiring technology that may give it the potential to repeat history in the region. A combination of all of the factors listed: culture, political, economic, social, domestic and external affairs, must be analyzed in order to explain the reasons for this re-armament and to come to an updated conclusion on the future re-armament of Japan.

### **Methods and Analysis**

To analyze the increasing diversity of Japanese defense acquisitions, a variety of subjects must be covered. To begin, I analyze Japanese public opinion on various issues related to defense including: views on the defense establishment, perception of threats, cultural superiority, and perception of the government. By analyzing public opinion I hope to identify current views of how the Japanese perceive their nation's role towards defense. If the public identifies threats, and has trust in both the defense establishment and the government, they may be less vocal in opposition to more diversified re-armament, which allows the government the freedom and justification to acquire these systems. Also if the people feel that their culture and status is superior, they may feel that it deserves protection. To do

this I've used the Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project, most recently compiled in 2006. This fifteen-nation survey asks questions on world and domestic issues, some specific to certain countries. Japan is one of the nations included in this survey, and specific questions relating to the perception of threats, revision of Article 9, and cultural superiority are included. However this data set has some limitations, primarily that for Japan, there were a low number of respondents,  $n = 500$ . Due to this I have also used the Asia Barometer Survey 2004 to reinforce any findings from the Global Attitudes Project. The Asia Barometer Survey is much like the Global Attitudes project, but asks more generalized questions relating to public opinion on political values, governance, and perception of government and social issues. This survey was larger than the Global Attitudes Project, but still relatively low number of respondents,  $n < 1000$ . By utilizing both of these data sets, I hope to identify current Japanese views on the defense of their nation, and how these views, good or bad, allow the Japanese government to continue acquiring advanced defense systems.

### **Public Opinion – Global Attitudes Project**

The Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project offers a wide variety of variables to examine in terms of views towards security and defense. My dependent variable from this data set is Revision of Article 9 (ART9REV), a dichotomous variable asking whether a respondent supports or opposes revision of Article 9 of the Japanese constitution. Remember that Article 9 is the clause that prevents Japan from having a full-fledged military force. If a desire to revise this is present, this could translate into more freedom for the defense ministry to acquire more advanced and powerful systems.

A number of independent variable can be identified from this data set, however, due to the low numbers of the sample; I created a series of indexes to account for the low cell sizes that would be present during the analysis. The first is Cultural View/Protection (CULTURAL), which is an ordinal measure of Japanese views towards their culture and whether they feel it should be protected.

Nationalism Levels (NATINDEX) is an index of the level of nationalism the respondents identified with, from least nationalistic to very nationalistic. These two variables are measure domestic factors towards defense. To account for the external influences, I created a number of indexes measuring perceptions and feelings towards nations that have influence or are situated close to Japan. Perceptions of North Korea, (NKORINDEX), the United States (USINDEX), and China (CHINDEX) are all measures of the general perception, good or bad towards each of these nations. Bad perceptions may give strength to the idea of defending the nation from a potential threat. The effect of China is one that may be more influential than the others due to the continued tensions and history between the two nations. To account for this I created a Chinese Military Index (CHINMIL2) and a Chinese Economic Index (CHINAECO), which measure perceptions towards China's increasing military capacity and their growing economic status. I also included, as a control variable, Age (AGE4) to see if there was a generational gap between the World War II generation and the younger generation who would not have memories of the war. Of note, this age variable did not prove itself significant, even when layered with the other variables, but is included for reference and thought.

### **Public Opinion – Asia Barometer Survey 2004**

The Asia Barometer Survey, last conducted in 2004, is a survey of public opinion on political values, governance, and social issues. Of concern for this study is the dependent variable, More or Less Government Spending – Military and Defense. This is an ordinal level variable coded 1=More Spending to 3=Spend Less. If public opinion trends towards spending more on defense, the government may have justification in acquiring more advanced defense technology.

The independent variables include both domestic and external issues concerning defense, much like the Global Attitudes Project. Trust in Institutions – The Military, is an ordinal level variable measuring the level of trust in the military institution present in the nation, ranging from 1=trust a lot,

to 4=Don't trust at all. Other variables that are similar include, Trust in Parliament and Trust in the Central Government, both coded the same as Trust in the Military. External factors are covered through three ordinal level variables describing whether China, the United States, and North Korea are considered good or bad influences upon Japan. (1=good influence, 3=bad influence) All of the independent variables are measures of trust and confidence in how the Japanese perceive defense issues, which in turn relates to how defense acquisitions are made.

## Results

The Global Attitudes Project revealed a number of interesting results concerning Japanese views of the issues at question. Perception of Culture was found to not have a significant relationship upon desire to revise Article 9. Of the 350 people that responded that their culture was superior, 69.2% opposed revision. Overall 71.6% opposed revision out of 472 respondents to this question. In contrast, Nationalism was found to have a significant effect, although this relationship was moderate (Cramer's  $V=.286$ ). As to be expected, those who had identified themselves as more nationalistic were in favor of revision of Article 9. However those who favored revision were in a clear minority, only 28.2% of 461 people. The external factors also revealed interesting results. Surprising was the test of Perception of North Korea by revision of Article 9. While over half of the respondents indicated that they felt North Korea was a threat to their nation, only 28.8% were in favor of revision of Article 9. The relationship was not significant (Cramer's  $V=.088$ ), yet it seems North Korea is recognized as a threat to Japan. Perception of the United States was also found not to have a significant relationship with revision of Article 9 (Cramer's  $V=.121$ ). Perceptions of China however were found to have significance towards revision of Article 9, but this relationship was again moderate (Cramer's  $V=.240$ ). Over half of the respondents felt China represented a threat, yet only 29.2% were in favor of revision.

The recognizing of China as an overall threat makes looking at whether the Japanese view

China's two main assets; its military and its economy as a threat. Significance wise, military power was found not to have a significant effect ( $\Phi = .026$ ). Economics on the other hand were found to have a significant relationship towards Article 9 revision. A weak relationship was found between the two ( $\Phi = .101$ ) with those who felt that China's economy was a good thing numbering 331 compared to a bad thing, only 128 people. In both cases, good and bad, a majority of the respondents were opposed to revision of Article 9.

The Asia Barometer data also revealed a number of interesting results towards the issues concerning security and defense. When tested against the dependent variable of More or Less Government Spending on the Military, the first independent variable tested, Trust in the Military Institution, a significant yet weak relationship was present (Cramer's  $V=.163$ ). Those that had high trust in the military were found to support higher levels of spending on the military. Regardless of level of trust, 49% of the respondents indicated that they would like to see spending continue at the same levels and 43% said spend less amounts. Trust in Parliament was also found to have a significant relationship with military spending (Cramer's  $V=.135$ ). A large majority of 73%, (571 of 777 respondents) responded either didn't really trust or didn't trust the Japanese Parliament at all. This translated into 531 people indicating wishes to spend the same or less on the military. Trust in the Central Government was also found to have a significant yet weak relationship, (Cramer's  $V=.123$ ). A small majority was found to not trust the central government. Similar to the numbers for the Parliament, trust in the central government resulted in a close margin in the total number between those who supported spending the same and those who supported spending less (Same amount=48.5%, Less=43.9%).

External effects were found to have an interesting effect compared to the previous data set. North Korean Influence was found not to be a significant factor towards military spending (Cramer's  $V=.037$ ). However, nearly 90% of the respondents (total  $n=777$ ) believed North Korea to be a bad

influence regardless of indication of military spending. U.S. influence however was found to be significant in this data set (Cramer's  $v=.137$ ), although weak. Respondents were found to be very even in distribution of perception of U.S. influence, while similar numbers were found for the total that responded either spend the same or spend less. Lastly, Chinese influence was found not to have a significant effect upon perception of military spending in stark contrast to the Global Attitudes project (Cramer's  $V=.075$ ). A small majority were found to be neutral on whether they believed China was a good or bad influence, while in general all groups only had support for more spending in very low levels (high=12%, low=6.5%).

The overall findings from the tests of these two datasets revealed that the Japanese do recognize certain external threats such as North Korea and China, yet this was statistically insignificant. Interestingly, while China's economic power was considered a good thing by a majority of Japanese, China's military power was not statistically significant, yet still was overwhelmingly considered a bad thing. However in the Asia Barometer, China overall was not considered enough of a threat to warrant more military spending. The U.S. was also considered a threat but a weak one. Domestic factors seemed to exert similar effect levels. Protection of culture was not a major factor towards revision of Article 9, but levels of trust towards Parliament and the central government were statistically significant. Levels of trust in the government bodies along with recognition of some aspects of their neighbors do seem to influence views towards Article 9 revision and potential increases in military spending.

## **Conclusions**

After analyzing public opinion and examining the case studies, a number of answers appear to the question of Japan's increasing "offensive" defense acquisitions. Yet more questions also arise. Public opinion has shown that while there is recognition of external threats to their nation such as

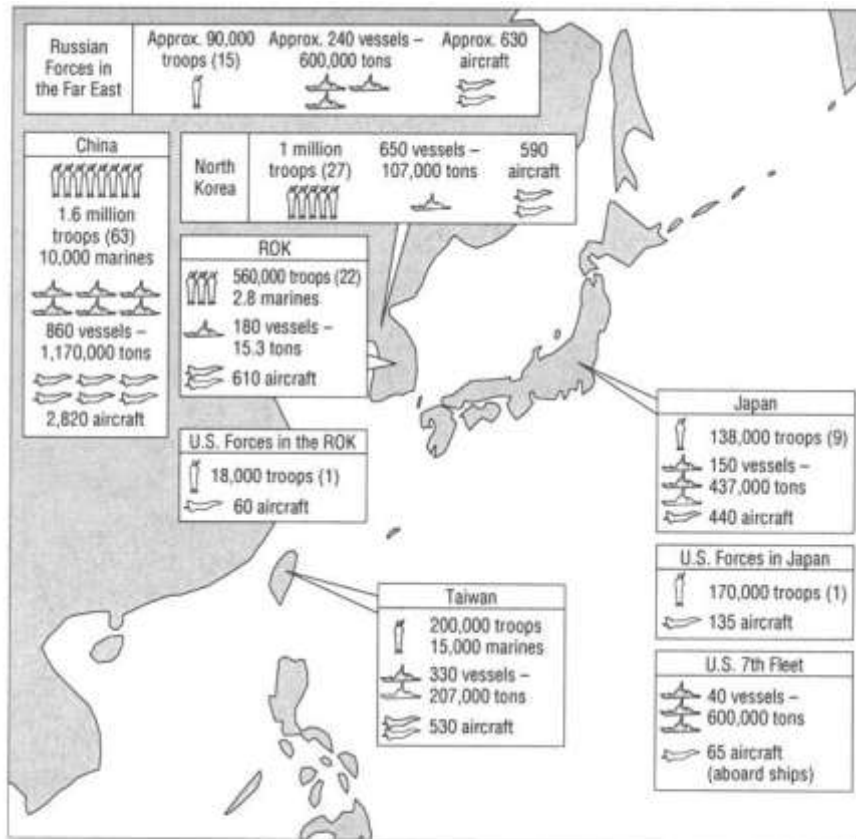
North Korea and China, these alone are not enough to support revision of Article 9, giving more freedom to defense acquisitions. Domestic perceptions are even more blatant, low levels of trust in both the central government and the Japanese Parliament reveal the gap in perception between lawmakers and the general public. There may be a political and defense elite within the Japanese political system that is driving the push for more advanced defense technology, but it is currently unclear from this research whether this is so. Nationalism is a factor that must be considered as well as the perception of competition from China. Increases in either of these may lend themselves to the prospect of a more “offensively” armed Japan. As illustrated by Japanese political history, those that have been more nationalistic such as Nakasone have steered Japan to a greater position concerning defense and security. Souring of relations with any of the major powers could also lead to changes for Japanese defense. Most concerning would be deteriorating of relations with either China or the United States, the former as its rival and the latter as its protector.

Future studies of this subject would be helpful in continuing the understanding of the mentality of defense in Japan. A study with many more subjects I believe would be the most helpful, as during my research, low numbers in categories became a problem during my analysis. Questions concerning the more recent moves by the Ministry of Defense and a more current survey would shed new light upon the current public perception of the issues relating to the defense of Japan. Also of interest would be a study examining the effect of a political and military elite within the Japanese political system.

In regards to the more advanced defense technology Japan has either acquired or is looking to acquire, some of this can be explained through the government creating unique loopholes to the constitution. While public opinion has revealed distaste for revision of Article 9 and the Japanese constitution, the government uses different means of justification to acquire certain pieces of technology. Simple labeling has been one way of circumventing the restrictions as illustrated by the *Hyuga* class “helicopter carrier.” Others include using the reason that certain pieces will increase the

reliability, efficiency, and interoperability with allies. Seeing that the public does recognize threats, the government may still use this to provoke fear, thereby gaining the reasons for more “offensive” technology. The question remains however, will this pattern continue? Culturally and socially, differences are clear in comparison to the government, yet the government has remained in power. Japan is still a major regional player in East Asia, and while it cannot achieve the numbers its neighbors and allies have in terms of defense, Japan is still able to compete technologically and remain one of the most advanced technological powers in the region. Japan seems to be building for the future but what kind of future is unknown. Issues of defense will remain a controversial subject in Japan due to history and long ingrained beliefs about the defense establishment, which will continue to hamper those who wish to see a more fully armed and independent Japan.

**Figure 1: Military Situation – East Asia**

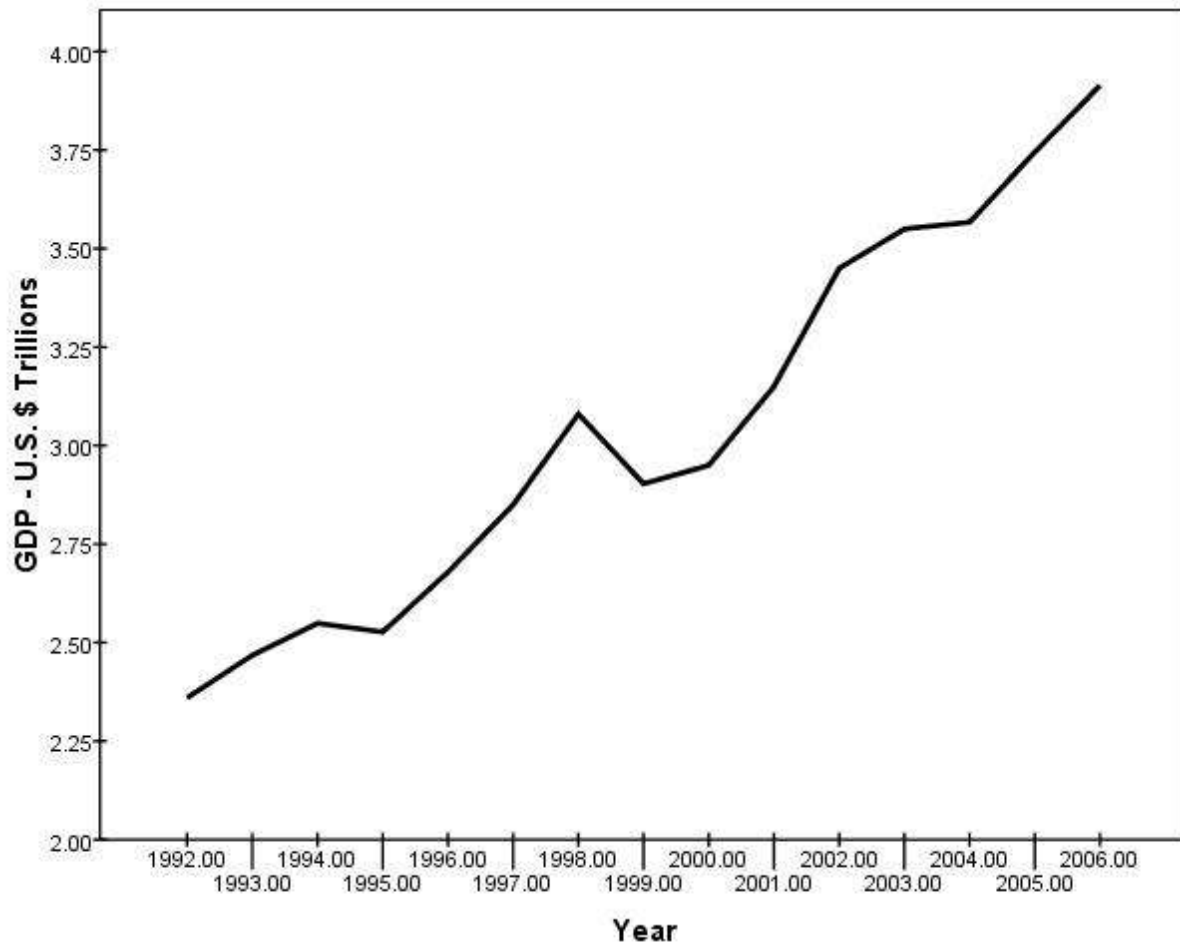


Notes: 1. Source: "The Military Balance 2008" publications of the U.S. Department of Defense and others (actual numbers as of the end of FY 2007 are shown for Japan)  
 2. U.S. ground forces in Japan and the ROK are combined figures of Army and Marine Corps personnel  
 3. Combat aircraft includes Navy and Marine aircraft  
 4. Figures inside parentheses show the number of divisions

Legend  
 Ground forces (200,000 troops)    Naval vessels (200,000 tons)    Combat aircraft (500 aircraft)

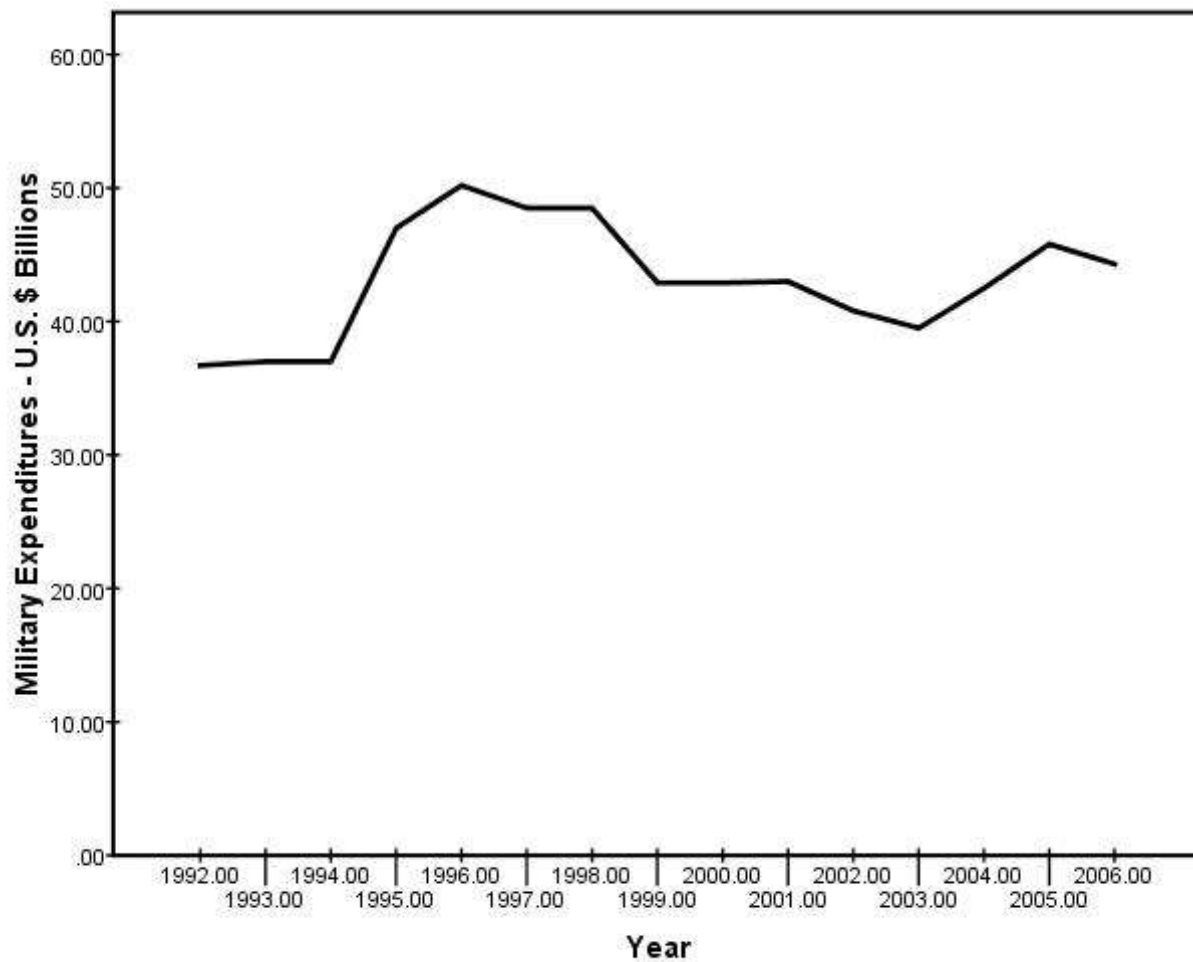
Source: Japanese Ministry of Defense: Japanese Defense "White Paper" 2008

**Figure 2: Japanese GDP Levels – 1992-2006**

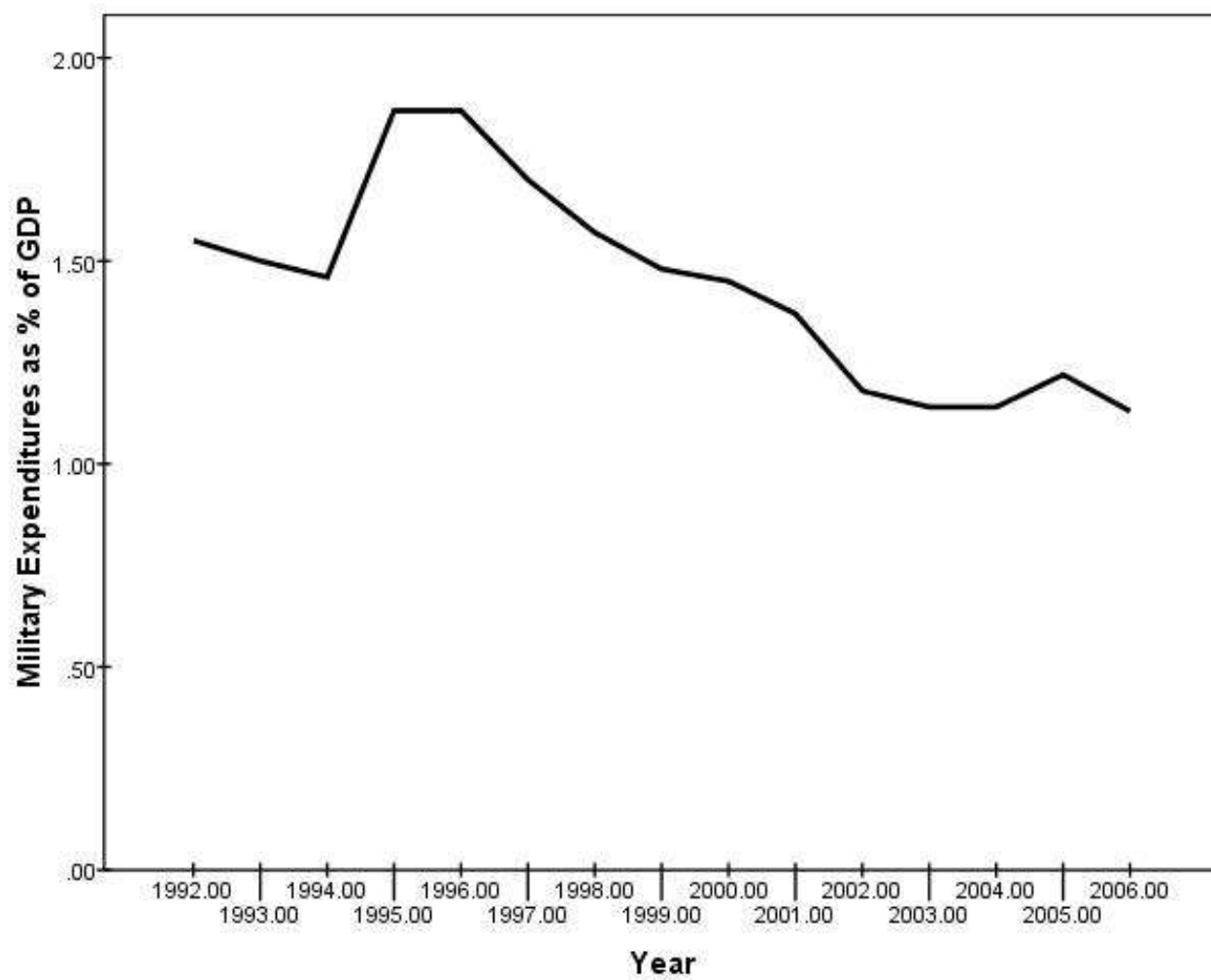


Source: CIA Factbook 1992-2006

**Figure 3: Japanese Defense Expenditures – 1992-2006**



Source: CIA Factbook 1992-2006

**Figure 4: Japanese Defense Expenditures as % of GDP**

Source: CIA Factbook 1992-2006

**Table 1: Japanese Public Opinion Results – Perception of Culture**

		Japanese Perception of Culture			
		Agree - Culture is superior and needs to be protected	Neutral	Disagree - Culture is not superior and doesn't need to be protected	Total
Revision of Article 9	Favor	110 30.8%	13 18.8%	11 23.9%	134 28.4%
	Oppose	247 69.2%	56 81.2%	35 76.1%	338 71.6%
	Total	357 100.0%	69 100.0%	46 100.0%	472 100.0%

Chi Square = 4.579

Cramer's V = .098

\*Significance at .05 level

**Table 2: Japanese Public Opinion – Nationalism Index**

			Japanese Nationalistic Index				
			Least Nationalistic	Somewhat Nationalistic	Nationalistic	Very Nationalistic	Total
Revision of Article 9	Favor	Count	14 9.7%	43 33.3%	54 37.8%	19 43.2%	130 28.2%
	Oppose	Count	131 90.3%	86 66.7%	89 62.2%	25 56.8%	331 71.8%
	Total	Count	145 100.0%	129 100.0%	143 100.0%	44 100.0%	461 100.0%

Chi Square = 37.643

Cramer's V = .286\*

\*Significance at .05 level

**Table 3: Japanese Public Opinion – North Korea**

	Japanese Perception - North Korea						
	No Threat At All	Not a Threat	Somewhat not a Threat	Somewhat a Threat	A Threat	An Extreme Threat	Total
Revision of Article 9 Favor	0 .0%	4 25.0%	10 19.2%	19 27.9%	42 30.0%	60 31.4%	135 28.8%
Oppose	1 100.0%	12 75.0%	42 80.8%	49 72.1%	98 70.0%	131 68.6%	333 71.2%
Total	1 100.0%	16 100.0%	52 100.0%	68 100.0%	140 100.0%	191 100.0%	468 100.0%

Chi Square = 3.594

Cramer's V = .088

\*Significance at .05 level

**Table 4: Japanese Public Opinion – United States**

	Japanese Perception - U.S.					
	No Threat	Mostly Not a Threat	Neutral	Somewhat a Threat	An Extreme Threat	Total
Revision of Article 9 Favor	10 34.5%	40 33.3%	49 24.3%	28 28.9%	7 50.0%	134 29.0%
Oppose	19 65.5%	80 66.7%	153 75.7%	69 71.1%	7 50.0%	328 71.0%
Total	29 100.0%	120 100.0%	202 100.0%	97 100.0%	14 100.0%	462 100.0%

Chi Square = 6.723

Cramer's V = .121

\*Significance at .05 level

**Table 5: Japanese Public Opinion – China**

		Japanese Perception - China				Total
		No Threat	Neutral	Somewhat a Threat	An Extreme Threat	
Revision of Article 9	Favor	8 16.3%	25 19.2%	56 31.1%	39 48.8%	128 29.2%
	Oppose	41 83.7%	105 80.8%	124 68.9%	41 51.2%	311 70.8%
	Total	49 100.0%	130 100.0%	180 100.0%	80 100.0%	439 100.0%

Chi Square = 25.31

Cramer's V = .240\*

\*Significance at .01 level

**Table 6: Public Opinion – Chinese Military Power**

		Chinese Military Power		
		Good Thing	Bad Thing	Total
Revision of Article 9	Favor	3 21.4%	125 28.3%	128 28.1%
	Oppose	11 78.6%	317 71.7%	328 71.9%
	Total	14 100.0%	442 100.0%	456 100.0%

Chi Square = .316

Phi = .026

\*Significance at .05 level

**Table 7: Public Opinion – Chinese Economic Power**

		China Economy a Good Thing		
		Good Thing	Bad Thing	Total
Revision of Article 9	Favor	83 25.1%	45 35.2%	128 27.9%
	Oppose	248 74.9%	83 64.8%	331 72.1%
	Total	331 100.0%	128 100.0%	459 100.0%

Chi Square = 4.664

Phi = .101\*

\*Significance at .05 level

**Table 8: Military Spending by Trust in the Military**

		Level of Trust - Military				Total
		Trust a lot	Trust to a degree	Don't really trust	Don't trust at all	
More or Less Govt. Spending - Military and Defense	More Spending	13 20.6%	40 8.0%	7 4.0%	1 4.3%	61 8.0%
	Spend the Same	29 46.0%	270 54.0%	66 37.5%	8 34.8%	373 49.0%
	Spend Less	21 33.3%	190 38.0%	103 58.5%	14 60.9%	328 43.0%
	Total	63 100.0%	500 100.0%	176 100.0%	23 100.0%	762 100.0%

Chi Square = 40.706

Cramer's V = .163\*

\*Significance at .01 level

**Table 9: Military Spending by Trust in Parliament**

		Trust in Parliament				Total
		Trust a lot	Trust to a degree	Don't really trust	Don't trust at all	
More or Less Govt. Spending - Military and Defense	More Spending	0 .0%	21 10.4%	31 7.2%	9 6.3%	61 7.9%
	Spend the Same Now	3 75.0%	123 60.9%	193 45.0%	57 40.1%	376 48.4%
	Spend Less	1 25.0%	58 28.7%	205 47.8%	76 53.5%	340 43.8%
	Total	4 100.0%	202 100.0%	429 100.0%	142 100.0%	777 100.0%

Chi Square = 28.194

Cramer's V = .135\*

\*Significance at .01 level

**Table 10: Military Spending by Trust in the Central Government**

		Trust in the Central Government				Total
		Trust a lot	Trust to a degree	Don't really trust	Don't trust at all	
More or Less Govt. Spending - Military and Defense	More Spending	0 .0%	26 8.8%	29 7.7%	2 2.9%	57 7.6%
	Spend the Same Now	3 50.0%	170 57.4%	159 42.0%	31 45.6%	363 48.5%
	Spend Less	3 50.0%	100 33.8%	191 50.4%	35 51.5%	329 43.9%
	Total	6 100.0%	296 100.0%	379 100.0%	68 100.0%	749 100.0%

Chi Square = 22.763

Cramer's V = .123\*

\*Significance at .05 level

**Table 11: Military Spending by Perception of North Korean Influence**

		North Korean Influence			
		Good Influence	Neither Good or Bad Influence	Bad Influence	Total
More or Less Govt. Spending - Military and Defense	More Spending	0 .0%	6 8.7%	55 7.8%	61 7.9%
	Spend the Same Now	3 50.0%	36 52.2%	341 48.6%	380 48.9%
	Spend Less	3 50.0%	27 39.1%	306 43.6%	336 43.2%
	Total	6 100.0%	69 100.0%	702 100.0%	777 100.0%

Chi Square = 1.055

Cramer's V = .026

\*Significance at .05 level

**Table 12: Military Spending by Perception of U.S. Influence**

		U.S. Influence			
		Good Influence	Neither Good or Bad Influence	Bad Influence	Total
More or Less Govt. Spending - Military and Defense	More Spending	26 10.7%	22 8.5%	15 5.7%	63 8.2%
	Spend the Same Now	125 51.7%	135 52.1%	112 42.4%	372 48.6%
	Spend Less	91 37.6%	102 39.4%	137 51.9%	330 43.1%
	Total	242 100.0%	259 100.0%	264 100.0%	765 100.0%

Chi Square = 14.413

Cramer's V = .097\*

\*Significance at .05 level

**Table 13: Military Spending by Perception of Chinese Influence**

		Chinese Influence			
		Good Influence	Neither Good or Bad Influence	Bad Influence	Total
More or Less Govt. Spending - Military and Defense	More Spending	14 7.4%	24 6.5%	23 12.0%	61 8.1%
	Spend the Same Now	91 48.4%	194 52.2%	80 41.7%	365 48.5%
	Spend Less	83 44.1%	154 41.4%	89 46.4%	326 43.4%
	Total	188 100.0%	372 100.0%	192 100.0%	752 100.0%

Chi Square = 8.530

Cramer's V = .075

\*Significance at .05 level

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