

## **CHAPTER II**

### **EVOLUTION OF SECURITY AND MILITARY SHIFT IN JAPAN**

This chapter is going to dive deep into the dynamics of Japan's defense policy orientation throughout the years, starting from the rise of the so called 'Japanese pacifism' to its recent militaristic tendencies. The evolution of Japan's defense policy has been one of the defining elements in Japanese politics, both domestic and foreign. This also means that changes in public opinion towards remilitarization attempts are deeply connected to how Japan, as a state actor, acts upon its interest in bringing back Japan's long-lost defense and military capabilities. Since securitization directly interlinked to the long and tumultuous military shift this chapter will discuss a range of topics, including Japan's initial anti-militarism norms and its origins, evolution of public opinion and security policies, especially under Shinzo Abe's leadership, as well as concerns and threats that are being perceived by contemporary Japan.

#### **2.1. The Rise of Japanese Anti-militarism**

Japan's 'pacifist' stance did not initially exist from the start, but rather established as a result of historical events surrounding the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Prior to 1945, Japan served as a hotbed for imperialism, expansionism, ultra-nationalism, and militarism within the Asia-Pacific region. The primary factor that led to the militarization of Japan was the 1929 Great Depression, shifting Japan's initial cooperative economy framework into a more power-projecting militaristic stance. The spread of military officers in influential positions within the Japanese government promoted the rise of militarism and

imperialism (Mauriello, 1999: 9-11). The military's presence within Japanese politics was mainly represented by the Imperial Way Faction or the *Kōdōha*, which was a prominent political faction that sought to create a totalitarian, militaristic, and expansionist Japan. The path to Japanese expansionism was paved once the *Kōdōha* viewed the Asian mainland as the answer to Japan's constrained economy, pressing the establishment of "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere" (Hendrix, 1994: 76). As a result, up until 1945, militarism and imperialism experienced significant growth in Japan, leading to the expansion of Japanese territories across the region of East Asia and Southeast Asia as a mean to secure vital resources and expand its imperial reign.

The Japanese expansion was not received well by the western allies, thus exacerbated the relations between the western allies and Japan into war. The United States particularly refused to recognize the Japanese emperor's reign in China through the Stimson Doctrine (O'Mahoney, 2013: 835). As time went on, the west was further provoked when Japan conquered western occupied territories in Southeast Asia, leading to the placement of an embargo by the US in 1940. This embargo crippled Japan's economy even worse, enraging the nationalist factions in the process. In order to respond to the embargo, Japan swiftly involved itself in the Second World War against the western allies by launching an offense on Pearl Harbour, Hawaii in December 7<sup>th</sup> 1941. This strain of events reflected Japanese militarism at its peak, making it one of Japan's historical milestones in terms of military capabilities.

Once the atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, respectively, on August 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>, 1945, the Second World War ended with the allies emerging victorious. Japan officially surrendered on August 15<sup>th</sup> 1945 and signed the Potsdam Declaration. The declaration consisted of several crucial points, namely the demilitarization of Japan, democratization within the Japanese society, and unconditional surrender of all Japanese armed forces. Japan agreed to this declaration with the condition that Emperor Hirohito stays in throne. Subsequently, the allies occupied Japan for a period in order to ensure the completion of the objectives that was designated by the Potsdam Declaration. This occupation was headed by U.S. General Douglas MacArthur, who was stationed in Japan on August 30<sup>th</sup> 1945. Under his supervision, the western allies established a Supreme Commander for Allied Powers General Headquarters (SCAP GHQ) in Tokyo by late 1945 (Hellegers, 2001: 360). Although involved most of the allied forces, the occupation of Japan excluded the Soviet Union's involvement since it was against MacArthur's will (Takemae, 2002: 94). It can be seen that MacArthur was ultimately the one who arranged Japan's political reorientation from its 'normal' state. This occupation then led to the shift in Japan's defense posture.

Japan's defeat in 1945 marked a significant turning point, leading to a sharp decline in militaristic tendencies and a transformation towards a more non-military standpoint in various aspects. The construction of Japan's anti-military orientation particularly occurred during the United States occupation period following the Second World War. United States' main objective in the occupation of Japan was to pacify and democratize the nation. Therefore, the allied forces

pushed several measures into their occupation, including domestic political reforms, economic restructuring towards capitalism, and international political reconstruction.

Concurrently, Japan pursued a domestic economic reform agenda, using policies aimed at stabilizing and advancing its economy, with substantial support from the United States and SCAP. A particularly noteworthy policy of this agenda was the dissolution of the *Zaibatsu* in 1945, which was exchanged for the *Keiretsu*. *Zaibatsu* refers to vertically integrated business conglomerates within the industrial and financial areas of the Japanese Empire. The key characteristics of *Zaibatsu* are exclusive family ownership and a substantial involvement in the realm of Japanese high politics (Ayu & Widarahesty, 2012: 262). The *Zaibatsu* model was abolished to democratize the economy, stopping monopoly by a number of companies and conglomerates, as well as eliminating powerful, exclusive influencers of Japanese politics. Replacing the *Zaibatsu*, *Keiretsu* formed business alliances that operates within Japan's business ecosystem (Snyder, 2002: 113). Since its organizational structure is far looser, *Keiretsu* can be seen as more democratic in comparison to the previously dominant *Zaibatsu* system. As a result, the abolishment of *Zaibatsu* for *Keiretsu* intricately contributed to both the democratization and pacification efforts within Japan.

Subsequent to the economic reform, 'pacifism' was sacredly manifested in the new Japanese Constitution, which took effect on May 3<sup>rd</sup> 1947. The 9<sup>th</sup> Article of this constitution remains as the strongest, most fundamental pillar of 'Japanese pacifism' (Maki, 1990: 73). The full text of this article is as follows:

*“Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes. In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized”* (The Constitution of Japan: Article 9, 1946).

Interpreting the first preamble, the Japanese people vowed to make ‘pacifism’ the main guidance for policies and conduct. This implies that Article 9 guarantees civilian control to the people over its government, as ‘pacifism’ would be enacted not only by the centralized will of Japan as a nation but also by its people. Meanwhile, the second preamble implies that Japan officially renounces the sovereign right of belligerency and seeks to maintain international peace based on justice and order. Hence, to fulfill these objectives, armed forces with war potential is forbidden to be maintained.

However, the ‘pacifism’ written in Article 9 is different from the mainstream definition. ‘Pacifism’ in a broader sense usually refers to the complete rejection of violence and war in all circumstances, including self-defense (Ryan, 2023: 68). Although Article 9 shares similar general principles, it only forbids the possession of ‘excessive war potentials,’ but not completely closing the door for defensive measures. This was further proven by the fact that Article 9 went through multiple reinterpretations and several unsuccessful revision attempts. In addition, Japan still uses multiple non-military elements as a mean of advancing its political influence, albeit not using coercion. Therefore, ‘Japanese pacifism’ is closer to the idea of ‘anti-militarism’ or ‘non-militarism’ than common ‘pacifism.’

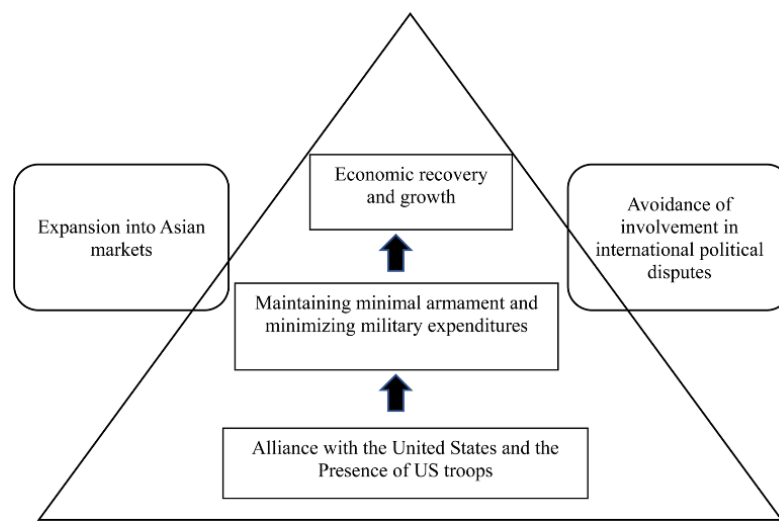
To avoid confusion, this study will adopt the term ‘anti-militarism’ to refer to the ‘Japanese pacifist norm.’

In order to safeguard its national security, Japan left the United State in charge of its defense by signing the U.S.-Japan Mutual Security Treaty in 1951, which was created by the San Francisco Peace Conference (Sakurada, 1997: 2). As part of the conference, Japan also signed a peace treaty with 48 nations on September 8<sup>th</sup> 1945, ending the occupation led by the United States and restoring Japan's sovereignty. As written in the agreement, Japan would grant permission for the United States to establish military bases within the Japanese borders to maintain stability and security. The U.S.-Japan Mutual Security Treaty in 1951 was later revised in 1960, developing mutual relations between both parties in maintaining security within The Far East. Through this agreement Japan can maintain its norm of ‘anti-militarism’ while sustaining a guaranteed defense measure from the United States, further proving that the ‘Japanese pacifism’ is a rebranding of ‘anti-militarism.’

When Japan was dealing with its post-war affairs, Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida, who was in office from 1948 to 1954, aimed to concentrate on reconstructing Japan’s economy while relying on the United States for defense and security. The doctrine is defined as follows: (1) Japan safeguards its national security through an alliance with the United States; (2) Japan is forbidden from maintaining a high capacity for its defense; (3) Japan puts its resources conserved by the previous two policies on economic activities to establish itself as a trading nation. This approach is widely known as “the Yoshida Doctrine” (Sugita, 2016:

123). This economic move was heavily encouraged by Hayato Ikeda, who was Yoshida's finance minister before becoming prime minister (Sugita, 2016: 130). With Yoshida Doctrine in mind, Japan prioritized economic diplomacy in its international relations. The prioritization in economy further strengthened the notion of anti-militarization in Japan's foreign policy and strategy.

Figure 2.1. Causal Relations of Yoshida Doctrine Pillars



Source: (Hoshiro, 2022: 107).

The three main pillars of Yoshida Doctrine are related and interlinked not concurrently, but rather causally (Hoshiro, 2022: 106). The causal relationships described are meticulously delineated in Figure 2.1. The defense alliance with the US made Japan reliant to Uncle Sam when it comes to ensuring security, paving the way for the Japanese people to live under anti-militarism while regaining its economic power. This benefit led to little armament efforts by Japan, capping Japan's defense spending to a maximum of 1% of GDP. The deliberate policy of limited military rearmament and expenditure contributed significantly to Japan's

economy and a speedy economic recovery. Eventually, Japan achieved substantial economic development. This feature was remarkably demonstrated by Japan's expansion of its markets overseas while avoiding any sorts of involvement in international conflicts.

The Yoshida Doctrine laid foundations for the rise of another significant anti-military doctrine, namely the Fukuda Doctrine. The Fukuda Doctrine was established by the former Japanese Prime Minister Takeo Fukuda in 1977 while delivering a speech in Manila. The doctrine was created as a map of Japanese foreign policy directions towards Southeast Asia and its positive role within the region (Sudo, 1992: 4). Since then, the application of this doctrine has played a major role in both Japanese foreign relations towards the Southeast Asian Region and the development of anti-militarism.

Carrying forward the principles contained in the Fukuda Doctrine, Japan aims to improve its international relations and economy with a peaceful approach. These principles revolve around three core tenets of the doctrine itself. First, Fukuda affirms Japan's dedication to the principles of peace, explicitly declaring that Japan would refrain from evolving into a military power. Second, Japan will strive to cultivate relationships characterized by mutual confidence and trust across diverse domains with Southeast Asian nations. Third, Japan expresses its intention to actively collaborate with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and its constituent member countries, functioning as an equal partner in their respective initiatives (Sudo, 1988: 512). The implementations of this doctrine through several policies, such as bridging the gap between ASEAN States



and the three communist countries, supporting Southeast Asia through Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and Official Development Assistance (ODA), as well as consistently projecting Japanese soft power and positive image, has fruited beneficial outcomes in the cultivation of Japanese anti-militarism within its foreign policy framework.

## **2.2. Anti-military Public Opinion and Security Policy Dynamics**

The public or the Japanese society plays an important role when it comes to preserving Japan's anti-militaristic identity. As a fundamental tenet of Japan, anti-militarism in international affairs, peace, stability, and diplomacy are highly valued by the Japanese people. Public opinion had consistently favored non-military resolutions to disputes and a diplomatic approach to international affairs, limiting Japan's international contribution largely to economic assistance and preserving Article 9 (Miyashita, 2008: 108). The existence of public support towards anti-militarism acts as a moral compass which guides the Japanese government to make every move abides its anti-militarist constitution. The people would also oppose the government through various means whenever government tries to bring Japan back to its militaristic nature, as stated in the first preamble of Article 9. In response, the Japanese government can't simply overlook the public since they are critical to the entire society. John K. Emmerson, an American diplomat, noted that:

*"...no Japanese Prime Minister can afford to ignore public opinion, especially as it is manifested in the elected parliament and through such power groups as the bureaucracy, business, special interests, and the highly developed mass media"* (Emmerson & Humphreys, 1973: 2).

This means that the Japanese public holds a valid power in deciding the course policymaking despite not having direct control over it. Ruling elites must take into account what the public thinks about to gain full legitimacy. Japanese policymakers have the agency to decide which course of action is the best for achieving Japan's national interest, but the public is ultimately the actor who decide whether policymakers made the correct choice and whether they deserve legitimacy. This has long been the case for security and defense in Japan, with public usually leaning toward a more non-militaristic approach while the government often favors the opposite, especially during the rule of conservative-led cabinet.

Anti-militarism is embedded deep within the Japanese public's mind due to several factors, the concept of victimhood being among the most important (Cai, 2008: 180). The Second World War has left a bitter memory for the people, placing the Japanese society as the victim. This condition is referred to as victimhood or victim mentality. The victim mentality reflects the fear of horrendous suffering experienced by ordinary Japanese civilians during the war, especially regarding the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, as well as the irresponsible militarism conducted by high-ranking officials. However, victimhood comes with the price of eroding sense of responsibility for the war (Uesugi, 2023: 46). Therefore, his makes the concept of victimhood makes the norm of anti-militarism a viable tool in denying past mistakes while making the general society itself looks innocent.

The strong collective construction of the people's anti-militarist mindset is what makes the Japanese public opinion a force to be reckoned with. Although public opinion encompasses anti-militarism as a whole, it becomes especially powerful in the sector of military. Almost every attempt to increase the role and scope of the military by the government had resulted in a major backlash from the public.

However, one political party stands among the rest when it comes to remilitarizing tendencies, which is the conservative oriented Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). Although it has 'liberal' and 'democratic' in its name, the party adopts a right-winged conservative outlook on politics (Kingston, 2013: 19). Furthermore, the LDP is often associated with the *Nippon Kaigi*, an ultranationalist organization with a considerable amount of influence in the legislative and executive government bodies (RSIS, 2019). In spite of this, there are numerous factions within the LDP with their own respective interests, creating a more complex political environment. The LDP was founded in 1955 and has been consistently in power ever since, except in the span of 1993-1994 and 2009-2012. This makes the LDP a main driving force in Japanese politics, virtually affecting the aspects of Japanese foreign policy. Therefore, it is no wonder that the Japanese government under the LDP is constantly pushing for right-winged agendas, including stronger defense capabilities.

Early significant public demonstration regarding strengthened defense and military can be seen in the Anpo Protests. The Anpo Protests were a series of massive public demonstration spanning from 1959—1970, opposing the United

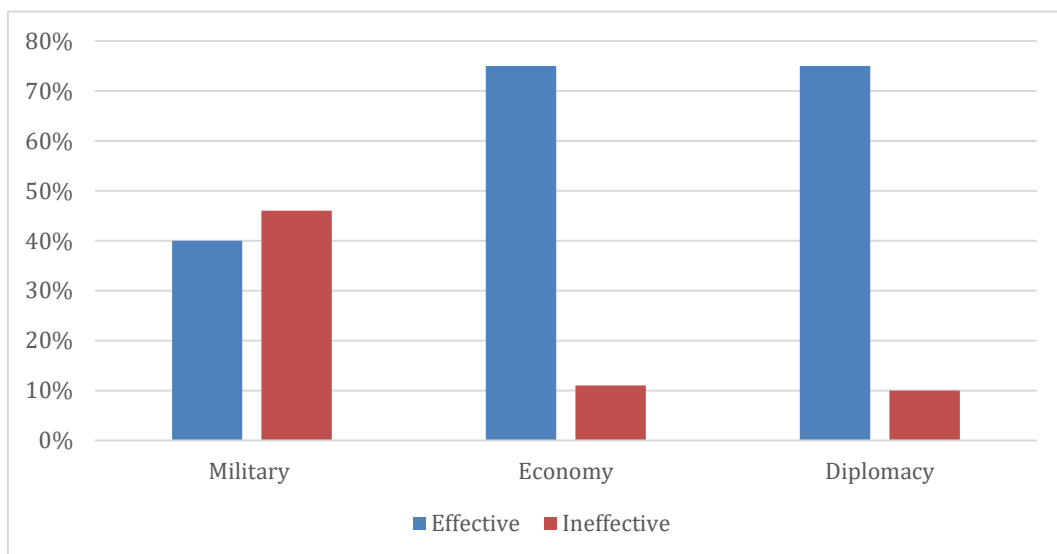
States—Japan Security Treaty since it allows the U.S to establish military bases on Japanese soil (Kapur, 2018: 1). These protests led to the resignation of Prime Minister Nobuo Kishi in 1960 (Kapur, 2018: 4-5). Although significant, this case is only a mere demonstration of the true power of Japanese public voices in regards to military and defense policies.

The pronounced anti-militarist norm within Japan's public gained particular prominence during the 1970s, a period characterized by the nation's stable economic conditions in contrast to the arduous initial years following World War II (Tollefson, 2018: 30). Additionally, during this phase, Japanese policymakers instituted a series of principles aimed at safeguarding and upholding Japan's anti-militarist stance. In spite of the docile national climate, Japan was planning to place the Fourth Defense Buildup Plan. Therefore, newspaper outlets began to intensively collect polls and surveys surrounding the topic of defense.

Examining the data gleaned from Tollefson's 2018 study, it becomes evident that polls and surveys conducted during the 1970s indicated a favorable public disposition towards anti-militarist norms (Tollefson, 2018: 30-36). In July of 1971, *Nippon Hoso Kyokai* (NHK) created a poll to ask the public whether the Fourth Defense Buildup Plan was too much. Over 50% of the respondents answered "Yes", 36.1% said "Required", and 3.9% answered "Not Enough". Several months later, in September of 1971, NHK conducted another survey to question the public if Japan's defense effort was insufficient. The results show that 52.4% of the respondents said "No" and 22.5% said "Yes" (Emmerson & Humphreys, 1973: 103).

Another example can be seen in a poll by *Mainichi Shimbun*, a conservative minded news outlet which surveyed the public to question the effectiveness of the JSDF in May 1972. The answers show that the Japanese public opinion was divided regarding the effectiveness of the means in safeguarding its security. Instead, the public believes that economic, cooperation, and diplomacy means are better in ensuring Japan's security. The results show that 46% of the public deemed military power ineffective while 40% others said effective. However, 75% of respondents deemed economic and diplomatic endeavors effective. Table 2.1. presents detailed data of *Mainichi Shimbun's* Poll results.

Table 2.1. Mainichi Shimbun Poll of May 1972



Source: (Midford, 2011: 61)

Drawing upon the outcomes of surveys conducted in the early 1970s, it can be deduced that the Japanese public displayed a resolute adherence to anti-militarist norms. This assertion is substantiated by the discernible trend of respondents consistently favoring options within the survey that most vehemently

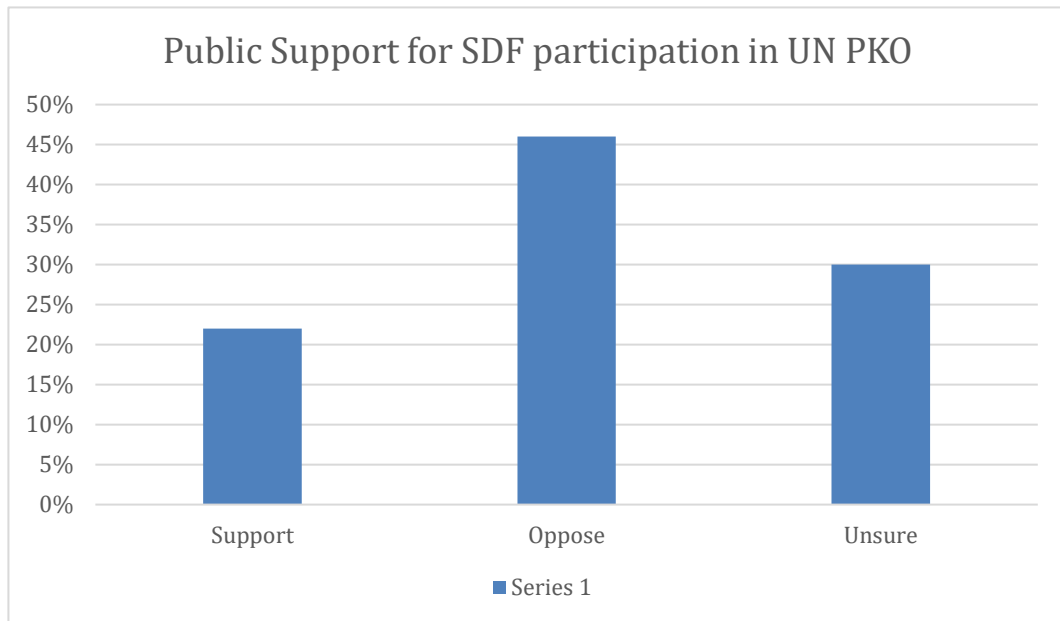
opposed militaristic approaches and instead favored those advocating for tranquility and non-aggression. Furthermore, the public views military power as less effective compared to other methods for ensuring national security. It was clear that the Japanese public was highly skeptical about the use of military instrument, even if it were to be used for defensive means.

The 1980s saw another domination of the LDP in Japanese politics, meaning there were substantial efforts to upgrade Japan's military complex. The move was led by the nationalist, pro-JSDF Yasuhiro Nakasone who served most of the decade as Prime Minister. His endeavor included the dispatching of Japanese civilians in the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (UN PKO) to Pakistan and Afghanistan. Nonetheless, the public remained consistent to anti-militarist norms as projected by both official and media polls. In fact, even though the LDP enabled the JSDF to be sent overseas through the Law Concerning the Dispatch of Japanese Disaster Relief Teams in 1987, none were dispatched due to concern in the LDP regarding public support. Besides JSDF involvement in international disasters, budget increase discourse was active in the 1980s, showing yet another public opposition against any attempt of militarization.

The firm consistency on anti-militarism can be seen in August 1989 when the Prime Minister's Office questioned the public regarding their stance on the participation of JSDF in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (UN PKO). Table 2.2 shows the public's response concerning JSDF involvement in UN PKO. Specifically, 22% of respondents expressed "support," while 46% of respondents

indicated "opposition," with an additional 30% remaining "undecided" on the matter.

Table 2.2. Poll Results from Office of the Prime Minister



Source: (Midford, 2011: 63)

Public opposition was also the case for defense budget increase. Although Japan has always imposed itself with a 1% of GDP cap for its defense budget, conservative political actors has previously tried numerous efforts in order to increase defense spending beyond the 1% limit. Prime Minister Nakasone eventually attempted a budget increase, raising slightly above the 1% cap. However, his action caused massive public rejection. Opposition from the public can be seen in *Mainichi Shimbun* poll from April of 1985 where 78% of the respondents expressed disapproval to the defense budget increase. Another poll from *Asahi Shimbun* in 1985 also reveals that the public rejected the increase with 70% of respondents expressed disapproval (Midford, 2011: 66).

Looking at the survey result, it is safe to say that although Japan tried to lean towards a more defensive stance in the 1980s, the public still heavily opposed the use of military instruments. Citizens began to accept JSDF efficiency in providing humanitarian and other non-military aids abroad, but still disapproved of dispatching the JSDF, especially in the context of military. Moreover, massive rejections from the public regarding defense budget increase made remilitarization efforts even more difficult (Tollefson, 2018: 39). This phenomenon ultimately constrained the LDP and other conservative actors from realizing their ambitions towards a strengthened Japan.

Fast forward to the early 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the dynamics between public opinion and the diet has become more interesting since the Diet commissions, under the pressure of LDP, began working on constitutional reform while the public stood firmly by postwar anti-militarism values. This was due to the fact that the 2000s presented more complex post-cold war security climate for the entire international system, including Japan. One notable instance of this phenomenon was observed during the discourse surrounding the Iraq War, in which the Japanese public was overwhelmingly critical (Midford, 2011: 125). The events unfolded in Iraq prompted the Japanese to fear that they would have no choice other than involving themselves in international conflicts to support the US. Once it was clear that the United States was going to attack Iraq without U.N. approval, opposition from the Japanese public rapidly rose. An *Asahi Shimbun* poll in August of 2002 shows that 77% of respondents opposed USA's plan to attack Iraq, while 14% others supported the notion (Midford, 2011: 126). From the previously stated fact, it can



be implied that the public firmly reflected skepticism towards using military means, including when facing the threat of weapons of mass destruction.

Meanwhile, the LDP-based PM Junichiro Koizumi made serious efforts to enable the JSDF to participate in international operations aside from humanitarian assistances. Koizumi was hesitant in expressing support for the war in Iraq, as it would mean mass rejection from the public. When he finally stated support towards the Iraq War, his hesitation was proven to be right. Based on a *Nihon Keizai Shimbun* poll taken right after Koizumi's statement, his approval rating fell to 42% from 38%, while his disapproval rating skyrocketed to 41% from 35% (Midford, 2011: 128). Despite this fact, the LDP and the *Komeito* Party subsequently passed the Iraq support bill in July 2003, Authorizing SDF deployment to Iraq for reconstruction support. The bill was initially welcomed, but the public quickly dropped the support for the bill with polls and surveys reporting similar trends everywhere (Ishibashi, 2007: 769). Although imperfect in many ways, Koizumi's move paved the way for his successors to further create more hawkish, aggressive moves. This was reflected by the public's initial stance, which was less negative than expected.

The initial stance later developed into a more interesting response in which the public gradually accepted the SDF deployment to Iraq. It was generally accepted that the deployment of the SDF to Iraq from December 2003 through March 2004 went smoothly (Midford, 2011: 136). This was due to the fact that the SDF mostly conducted humanitarian and reconstruction work while relying on foreign troops, mostly Dutch, to defend their camps against insurgent attacks.

The SDF's role eventually led to a rather mixed response from the public, albeit gaining significant popularity among the Japanese.

After the initial justification for deployment proved ineffective, Koizumi shifted focus from positioning Japan and the SDF as significant players in global security to highlighting their aptitude in delivering humanitarian aid and facilitating reconstruction efforts in volatile settings. In justifying the dispatch, Koizumi stated:

*'In personnel terms, given that the situation in Iraq is one that cannot always be described as being safe, I have decided to dispatch the SDF, which have had a daily training regimen, and are capable of operating efficiently and avoiding danger in hostile environments. They will not use force'* (Shinoda, 2006: 89).

The culmination of the SDF's performance in Iraq and its proximity to a combat situation led to the public mixed opinion. Asahi Shimbun conducted two polls in 2004 to measure the public's response to the SDF's ultimate involvement in Iraq. The first one in February 2004 shows that 42% supported the dispatch while 41% others did not. The latter one in March shows a slightly higher opposition with 48% of respondents opposed the dispatch while 44% others supported it (Asahi Shimbun, 2007). This goes to show that justification and urgency can become a major factor in fostering the Japanese public support. Furthermore, it became clear that public acceptance toward increased military role can change, especially considering the long and tumultuous efforts of defense and military policies that have been paving the way for it to happen.

To summarize, security policies which leaned further from anti-militarism were heavily opposed in most instances. Public resistance to militarization,

especially by the conservatives, has historically been remarkable. This influence has persisted into the 21st century, with the Japanese public's overwhelming skepticism toward military actions. However, in complex international security scenarios, such as the discourse surrounding the Iraq War, the Japanese public opinion can be a complex matter. It is evident that many factors affect the ultimate public perception and that the perception can indeed change over time. Hence, Japanese securitizing actors has never stopped from trying to revitalize the nation's defense and military capabilities while building a consensus with the general public.

It needs to be noted that although previous military efforts were opposed by the general public, several policies and reinterpretations were eventually realized. Despite rejections from the public, the implemented policies gradually constructed a sense of 'normality' within the society. This means that the enactment of security policies were not mere attempts to securitize military threats, but also to pave the way toward common consensus. Securitizing actors can then utilize security discourse to build a sense of urgency that could possibly change the public's mind in a top-down scenario. Hence, it is safe to say that the recently increasing public acceptance in Japan did not materialize overnight; rather, it is the product of a complex historical evolution.

### **2.3. Evolution of Security Policies Under Shinzo Abe**

Within the context of Japan's security discourse, one prominent and consistently assertive figure distinguishes himself from the others, championing a revisionist-inclined reorientation of Japan's security trajectory: Prime Minister

Shinzo Abe. As a key member of the conservative LDP, he maintained a commitment to constitutional revision, particularly regarding Article 9 reinterpretation to broaden Japan's security role in the international system. This commitment was exemplified by his active involvement as a member of the cross-party Diet Members' Alliance for Advancing the Evaluation of a New Constitution, underscoring his dedication to reshaping Japan's security and defense policies in alignment with his pragmatic vision. Abe's influence extended beyond the domestic sphere, resonating internationally as he sought to position Japan as a more proactive player on the global security stage, advocating for collective self-defense and strengthening defense ties with key allies. His revisionist notion can be seen as a response to elements that were perceived as threats, challenges, or concerns, primarily China, North Korea, and terrorism.

Despite all the changes in Japan's security policies, institutions, and legislations, Japan's security discourse did not change drastically until Shinzo Abe came to power in his first period (2006—2007). The most significant shift during Abe's first period was the elevation of the Japan Defense Agency (JDA) into Japan Ministry of Defense (JMOD) in 2007. With this upgrade, JMOD has the same legal standing within its field of expertise, which is the security policy of Japan, as the other ministries, abolishing the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) domination (Schulze, 2016: 7). Consequently, JMOD gained a stronger positional power within the government, enabling JMOD's security discourse to be better perceived by the audience. This event was also the main enabler of securitization

towards Japan's potential threats and concerns, namely North Korea, China, and terrorism.

In the same year, the Japanese Defense White Paper (DWP) labelled China as a 'concern' (*kenen*) (Japan Ministry of Defense, 2007: 4). The inclusion of China in Japanese security discourse has been done since the 1990s, but the Prime Minister Office and MOFA had previously avoided depicting China harshly. In fact, various study centers have labelled China as early as 1996. The reason behind the labelling was China's lack of transparency regarding its military build-up. With this official labelling, China has stepped up as one of Japan's potential threats alongside North Korea and terrorism. Therefore, this phenomenon indicates the start of Japan's discourse of China as a security 'concern'. Although Shinzo Abe's first period ended in 2007, his hawkish agendas influenced several security policies in the years following.

The depiction of China as a 'concern' from the 2007 DWP was later manifested in Japan's National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG) of 2010 (Schulze, 2016: 19). NDPG stated that China was indeed a security 'concern' in two ways. Firstly, the possession of nuclear and missile capabilities that could reach Japanese territory. Japanese policy-makers are deeply anxious about China's military buildup. These concerns include China's modernization of both its conventional and nuclear capabilities, its sustained and substantial increases in defense expenditure, a perceived lack of transparency in its military planning, and indications that China is increasingly willing to project its military power beyond its immediate borders (Hughes, 2009: 481). The second concern revolves around

the potential expansion of China's influence into Japanese waters, exemplified by the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands dispute. China's growing assertiveness in this matter has heightened Japan's apprehension about the issue. since Apart from employing a linguistic approach to construct China as a matter of concern, there were limited security policies specifically designed to directly address this newly labelled 'concern' until Abe's second period in office.

Since Abe returned to power in December 2012, his leadership has resurged Japan's more assertive, revisionist foreign and security policies. One of his earliest yet crucial moves was to assemble an Advisory Council on the establishment of the first National Security Council (NSC) in February 2013, which was then made official in December (Hughes, 2015: 29). The NSC was made to act as a control tower of Japan's foreign and security policymaking, facilitating better information sharing and coordination among crucial security agencies.

Coinciding with the NSC establishment, Abe created a Prime Minister Advisory Panel on National Security and Defense Capabilities, producing Japan's first ever National Security Strategy (NSS). The 2013 NSS recognized a global power shift towards the Asia-Pacific, identifying a broad range of challenges and emergent threats that loom over Japan (Japan National Security Council, 2013: 6-13). The NSS also advocated Japan's diplomacy in the international system, contributing to world peace and order. However, the strategy in the NSS was excessively focused on military, emphasizing the strengthening of Japan's national capabilities to fulfill several agendas, including but not limited to enhancing Japan's national defense capabilities to safeguard territorial integrity,

maritime security, and cyber security. (Japan National Security Council, 2013: 14-20). Additionally, the NSS acknowledges Japan's inability to maintain the status quo independently and emphasizes the necessity of departing from its traditional anti-militarism by actively nurturing security relationships to safeguard its national interests with countries like the US, South Korea, ASEAN states, Australia, and India. To put it succinctly, the NSS implied that Abe wanted to make Japan a proactive member of the international community in terms of regional security architecture. It is an ambitious strategy aimed at a substantial transformation of Japan's strategic positioning, with the intent of proactively influencing the regional security landscape in alignment with Japanese national interests.

NSS might outlines the objectives of Abe's security policies, but they have to be turned into legislative action in order to be realized. Thus, the Abe Administration pursued a number of key steps to realize the NSS into action. One of the earliest provisions of the NSS was through the adoption of the 'Three Principles of Transfer of Defense Technology and Equipment' in 2014, which effectively lifted the ban on the sale and transfer of defense technology (Irsadanar & Warsito, 2018: 80). Article 9 has strictly regulated that Japanese defense manufacturers were banned from selling military products outside Japan. The ban lift opened doors for major Japanese heavy industry corporations, such as Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, Ltd. and Kawasaki Heavy Industries, Ltd., to engage in military business activities beyond the borders.

In 2015, the Japanese government passed two legislative measures to further advance the goals of the NSS. First, they revised official development assistance (ODA) regulations with the Development Cooperation Charter (DCC), shifting from traditional economic-focused diplomacy to a political and ideological approach. DCC prioritizes projects that promote the rule of law, governance, human rights and democratization, recognizing that economic development alone cannot ensure stability. In addition, it lifted restrictions on supporting military forces for non-military purposes, allowing Japan to contribute to disaster relief efforts. The DCC also encouraged Japan to proactively propose development initiatives to host countries, consistent with the proactive and security-focused goals of the NSS. The ineffectiveness of decades of ODA in mitigating the ongoing political crisis between China and Japan likely played a significant role in prompting this shift (Szanto, 2017: 45). However, many see these changes as a departure from the neutrality of previous policies that primarily aimed to enhance economic ties, with potential positive outcomes.

To further put the NSS into action, Shinzo Abe pushed a large legislative package called 'Japan's Legislation for Peace and Security' (*Heiwa anzen-hō*) to the Diet in 2015, aiming to reinterpret Article 9 of Japan's Constitution itself. This move was crucial since it sought to alter the very foundation of Japan's anti-militarism and anti-militarism (Szanto, 2017: 46). One of the most significant proposed alterations involved multiple amendments to the wording of Article 9, including the modification of the article's title from 'Renunciation of War' to 'Security'. Amendments to the first paragraph are proposed to give a better



interpretation of Article 9, emphasizing that Japan renounces the right to wage war and may not use threats or force to resolve international conflicts. However, the second paragraph was proposed to be removed and replaced with a new paragraph that explicitly states Japan's right to self-defense (Umeda, 2015: 48-49). In the end, Article 9 remained unchanged, but the discourse surrounding this effort was significant. Abe not only emphasized the necessity of constitutional revision but also stressed the importance of defense and security reform to both the domestic audience and the international community.

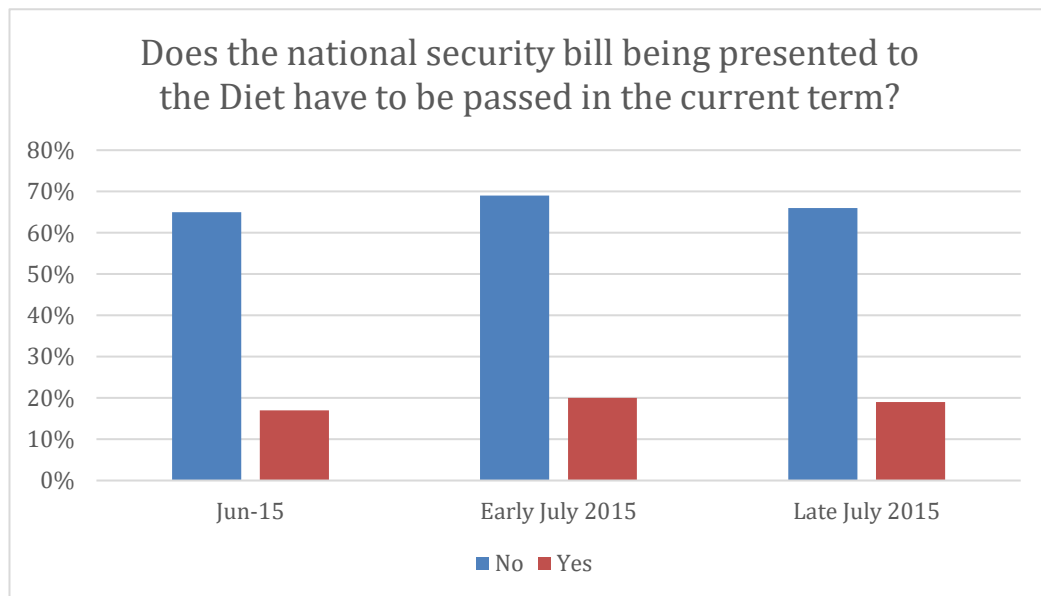
Although Article 9 remained unrevised, Abe ultimately pushed through the aforementioned legislation package (Legislation for Peace and Security). The legislations highlight one controversial key feature, collective self-defense (Szanto, 2017: 48). Collective self-defense goes against the traditional interpretation of Japan's Article 9, as it would allow the JSDF to participate in international conflicts which could threaten Japanese security. In spite of this, the Abe Administration interpreted Article 9 to allow said arrangements. The cabinet declared that Article 9 does not inherently forbid Japan from taking required defensive measure to maintain its peace, security, and survival (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2014). Furthermore, the cabinet also argued that national security should not be narrowly concerned with direct threats, but also the necessity of addressing indirect threats to safeguard Japan. Consequently, the collective self-defense bill was seen by many as a departure from Japan's initial anti-militarist stance and received public backlashes from all over.

Following the announcement of Shinzo Abe's new security legislation, the Abe Administration has faced widespread and significant domestic opposition from the public. This opposition came from the public's concern regarding the potential reinterpretation of Article 9 and the adoption of the National Security Strategy, as well as legislations and policies following the NSS. It was clear that the clash between public opinion and security policies stemmed from strong anti-militarist norms adhered by the Japanese people. Additionally, the public feared that Japan will be dragged into international conflicts or that the legislation would allow the Prime Minister to lead Japan into the direction of war (Szanto, 2017: 40). Hence, it was natural that the public opposed Abe when he came even close to constitutional revision.

Significant opposition can be seen from survey and poll results regarding Japan's new security bills. In June 2013, when *Asahi Shimbun* asked the public whether they agreed to constitutional reinterpretation to allow collective self-defense, the majority of respondents were opposed, with 59% answering "Disagree," while 27% answered "Agree" (Tollefson, 2018: 51). In December 2014, *Asahi Shimbun* asked the same question to the public, resulting in 50% of respondents answering "Disagree", while 32% of others answered "Agree" (Tollefson, 2018: 51). Another survey in June 2015 by *Asahi Shimbun* asking if the national security bill being presented to the Diet must be passed in the current term, merely 17% of respondents answered "Yes", while 65% of respondents answered "No". Early July 2015 *Asahi Shimbun* survey results with the same question show similar outcomes, with 20% of respondents answering "Yes" and

69% of respondents answering “No”. Finally, Late July *Asahi Shimbun* survey results with the same question also show similar public opposition, with 19% of respondents answering “Yes” and 66% of respondents answering “No” (Tollefson, 2018: 50). The consistent survey results shows that although the Abe Administration succeed in politicizing security issues in their discourses and policies, the public’s firm anti-militarist nature didn’t favor security policies that were being presented. In fact, domestic opposition was so strong that the Japanese public resorted to numerous methods in advocating their say about this issue.

Table 2.3. *Asahi Shimbun* survey results from June to late July 2015



Source: (Tollefson, 2018: 50)

Aside from disagreement through polls and surveys, the Japanese public also exhibited opposition through nationwide protests and movements. Although the Abe Administration was no stranger to protests, the most notable occurred amidst the debate surrounding the controversial collective self-defense bill in August 2015. This particular protest is often regarded as one of the largest in

Japan's history. The protest, which was one of hundreds planned nationwide across Japan, involved tens of thousands of people gathering near Japan's Parliament Building in Tokyo to reject Abe's Legislation for Peace and Security Bills (Takenaka, 2015). Two prominent slogans that resonated among the protestors were "No war" and "Abe, quit". From this event, it can be inferred that many Japanese strongly support anti-militarist norms and Article 9 even when faced with the prospect of constitutional change. Hence, the public expressed their anger and protest to have the bills scrapped, further strengthening anti-militarist norms as stated in Article 9.

The reason behind high public backlash was not rooted only in Japanese anti-militarist norms. It can also be attributed to the various inconsistencies of Abe's 'hawkish' security agendas. For instance, Japan should be threatened about the Crimea annexation by Russia in 2014 if it really means to preserve peace across the globe, but Abe chose a softer approach and decided not to frame it as a securitization trigger. Instead, Japan adopted a more lenient approach in response to Moscow's annexation of Crimea in 2014, a strategy characterized by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe as a "new approach" (Yennie-Lindgren, 2018). As previously stated, Abe also saw China as a 'concern' rather than a direct challenge since it did not pose as much threat as it currently poses. In simple words, Abe might have identified China, North Korea, and even Russia as a threat, but refuse to go all out in securitizing these threats. Hence, his security discourse lacks the sense of urgency and consistency for a stronger defense and military on Japan's behalf.

However, despite backlashes, Abe succeeded in reinterpreting Article 9. This has several important implications toward Japan's securitizing efforts. Firstly, it means that the 'pacifist norm' of Japan is not something as rigid as we thought it is. It is something that can be reinterpreted and changed according to the government's need. Secondly, the public eventually have to deal with whatever interpretation the government is adopting despite having significant voice in the process. Ultimately, the public has to accept the evolution of security policies, which ultimately means that there is a top-down model of influence within the security politics of Japan. All in all, Shinzo Abe's security efforts were not all in vain. The reinterpretation served as a bridge to further advance Japanese security goals, meaning that it was successful at some degree. The increasing 'threat discourse' regarding China and North Korea under Abe also signifies that the public had accepted the narrated threats. This made it hard for the public to completely decline Abe's proposal since the threat has been perceived.

#### **2.4. Fumio Kishida and His Security Trajectory**

Fumio Kishida is a Hiroshima-born Prime Minister who is also serving as a President of the ruling conservative party, the LDP. Coming from the same political party and had close relations with Shinzo Abe, he previously served as the Minister of Foreign Affairs under the Abe Cabinet. Kishida is known as a low-key consensus builder, claiming that he is especially good at listening and value consensus (Nemoto, 2021). For Kishida, building consensus in a bottom-up manner is as important as employing a top-down approach. His entire personality of leadership is based off the principles of 'polite and peaceful politics,' making

him seemingly more dovish than his predecessors. In addition, Kishida is pushing for what his late mentor, Abe, fought for in the past, which was to boost the country's defense spending (Kelly & Toyoda, 2022). Looking at his background and personality, he is a departure from the usually 'hawkish' LDP politician. This makes him an ideal bridge-builder between consensus and conservative interests.

Following Fumio Kishida's victory over Taro Kono in 2021 with a total of 257 votes from the parliament, he became the Prime Minister of Japan and the President of the LDP, replacing Yoshihide Suga. As he takes on this leadership role, he faces a complex set of contemporary challenges, including navigating Japan's security policies under the threat of worsening international security climate. His concern was briefly fleshed out in his first policy speech, showing his commitment to end the pandemic and, most importantly, protecting Japanese territory from the increasingly rough security environment (The Government of Japan, 2021). Pandemics aside, his messages concerning national security and foreign affairs projects his stance on Japan's defense ecosystem and how he would tackle existing security issues. In his speech, he stated that he is committing to revise Japan's National Security Strategy, National Defense Program Guidelines, and Mid-Term Defense Program. Although not as hawkish, it can be seen that Kishida shares similar visions of security as his conservative LDP predecessor and mentor figure, Shinzo Abe. He realizes that Japan is in dire need of strengthened defense, especially since both regional and international security environment have proved concerning.