

The background of the cover is a light yellow-green color with several stylized, dark green leaf motifs scattered across it. These motifs are simple, elongated shapes with a small stem and two leaves, appearing to float or drift across the page.

BEYOND PACIFISM

Why Japan Must Become a “Normal” Nation

William C. Middlebrooks, Jr.

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Contents

Acknowledgments	ix
Abbreviations	xi
Introduction	xiii
1 Constitutions	1
2 Article 9's Impact Upon Japanese Security Policy	18
3 What Is Wrong with the Status Quo?	37
4 Frictions and Threats	58
5 Is History Prologue?	85
6 The Right to Be Normal	101
Notes	115
Index	151

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Abbreviations

ASDF	Air Self Defense Force
DPJ	Democratic Party of Japan
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
GSDF	Ground Self Defense Force
JCG	Japanese Coast Guard
JDA	Japan Defense Agency
LDP	Liberal Democratic Party
MSDF	Maritime Self Defense Force
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OEF-MIO	Maritime Interception Operations in support of Operation Enduring Freedom
PAC-3	Patriot Advance Capability 3
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PLAAF and PLANAF	People's Liberation Army Air Force and Naval Air Force
PLAN	People's Liberation Army Navy
PSI	Proliferation Security Initiative
SCAP	Supreme Command for the Allied Powers
SCC	Security Consultative Committee
SDF	Self Defense Forces
SLOC	Sea Lines of Communication
SM-3	Standard Missile 3
SMD	Sea-based Mid-Course Defense System
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

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Introduction

This book is a polemic, the thesis of which is simple: Japan must either repeal Article 9 of its Constitution—in which “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”—of its Constitution and abandon official pacifism or face a future in which it likely will be unable to defend its territory or its interests from a variety of threats.¹ In short, Japan must either shake off the remaining constraints of official pacifism, and choose to become a “normal” nation willing and able to defend itself and its interests, or endure what former Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro described as the “peace of slaves.”

For more than six decades the Japanese have labored under the mistaken belief that they have found a more civilized way to interact globally: a new approach based on mutual trust that rewards economic strength, financial largesse, and diplomatic initiative. Complicating matters still further, and making a broad commitment to change all the more difficult, is that the Japanese are afraid. They fear that a “normal” Japan will find it impossible to avoid fighting in America’s wars. They also fear themselves and their history and what they might become if they abandon a post-World War II philosophy that has served them so well.

Before the Japanese can hope to forge a more rational future, they must first assess their past—the bad, but also the good. For many Japanese, honestly assessing the twentieth century will be a difficult, sobering exercise from which they will continue to shy away. Paradoxically, only when they have reflected upon the brutality of the imperial era can they truly appreciate what they have accomplished: Japan made the rare transition from being a militarist state in which citizens were denied the most basic of civil liberties to becoming a representative

democracy with an independent judiciary and constitutionally guaranteed rights. From utter ruin, they developed an economy that even during a decade-long recession remained the world's second largest.

The issues surrounding Japan's move toward normalcy, from amending the Constitution, allowing Japan's armed forces to participate in collective self-defense arrangements, or even determining whether Japan should have an official flag and anthem, are frequently described as taboo and thus beyond the range of acceptable debate. This attitude has begun to change in recent years.

A DRAFT

In accordance with then-Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro's plan, Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) issued a draft of proposed constitutional revisions in November 2005 to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the party's founding. Of special interest to most observers, the draft language called for an explicit recognition of the country's Self Defense Forces (SDF) as a military organization. The LDP's proposal specifically called for replacing language in the Constitution's ninth Article, the storied "peace clause," which forbids Japan from maintaining "land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential." The replacement language would guarantee Japan the right to establish a conventional military, which would be authorized to participate in international peace and security operations—missions largely banned under the current constitutional regime.

The thinking underlying the LDP's draft is not unique to Japan's dominant party. There are, in fact, multiple drafts either currently circulating,² or in the process of being written³ that would reduce existing constitutional limitations on the kind of defense force Japan could legally field and deploy. Although it is not yet certain that Japanese politicians will find the courage to amend the Constitution, the Diet, Japan's Parliament, has taken the unprecedented step of enacting legislation that will establish the legal and procedural framework for the national referendum that must follow the legislature's approval of any amendments to the Constitution.⁴

It might surprise the casual observer of global affairs to learn that Japan, which, according to the Central Intelligence Agency, trails only the United States, the People's Republic of China, and France in defense spending,⁵ must amend its national charter simply to declare that the quarter million Japanese in uniform belong to a full-fledged military. Equally surprising, perhaps, is that these proposed amendments, seemingly modest in themselves, would be deemed newsworthy. Yet for many of Japan's neighbors, the news that the Japanese are actively considering amending their Constitution and formally breaking with the official pacifism that has defined Japan's security policy since the end of the Second World War has been a frequent and heated topic of conversation from

Southeast Asia to the Korean Peninsula.⁶

Not all of those who question the wisdom of amending Article 9 (few have argued for its outright repeal) are foreign. Many Center-Left Japanese also are worried that their country has embarked on a dangerous path that could lead either to a revival of militaristic policies of the kind that left Japan broken at the end of their last war, or could, if Japan were to begin participating in collective self-defense arrangements, lead Japan into wars not of her making. In response to the growing possibility that Japan's "peace Constitution" could be amended, "Article 9 Associations" have been established throughout Japan (over 5,000 local chapters had been organized by the summer of 2006).⁷ The Article 9 Associations have as their sole aim the preservation of the legal heart of Japanese pacifism and are, therefore, united in their opposition to any changes to Article 9.

ANACHRONISM

In spite of the earnestness of these concerns, the counter-arguments that Article 9 is a dangerous anachronism are strong and passionately offered,⁸ and more Japanese are accepting that the constitutional status quo must change. The question remains unanswered, however, whether the Japanese people are yet ready to abandon formally the pacifist principles that Article 9 enshrines. Pacifism may have been imposed upon them by their victors, but it has nonetheless become the defining element in how the Japanese see themselves in relation to the rest of the world. The impact that Article 9 has had on Japan's collective imagination is a deep one, and it will take an almost unimaginable focus of political energy to amend a Constitution that has not been touched since its promulgation.

SO MUCH FOR INEVITABLE

It looked for a time as if Japan were on an ineluctable path that would take it beyond official pacifism. Abe Shinzo, the first Japanese prime minister born after World War II, was keen to lead his country to what he described as a "beautiful country, Japan," which translated into a vague vision of a Japan that, among other things, reacquainted itself with its culture and traditional mores and was a global leader that was "respected, and loved in the world."⁹ In furtherance of this project, Abe endeavored to begin the process that would allow the "Japanese [to] write a constitution for ourselves that would reflect the shape of the country we consider desirable in the 21st century."¹⁰ While he spoke of "new values, such as privacy, the environment and so on,"¹¹ Abe's press to amend the Constitution was fueled by North Korean missiles and growing Chinese bellicosity, as well as an overarching desire for Japan to assume a more prominent role in world affairs. To that end, Abe succeeded in pushing through a referendum law, the first step in

the amendment process, and had set up a panel of experts to examine long-standing constitutional interpretations that kept the Japanese from participating in collective self-defense arrangements.

Unfortunately, Prime Minister Abe misread a population that was less enamored of a “beautiful country, Japan” than he was himself.¹² Abe’s miscalculation was never more evident than in his decision to make revising the constitution a central element in the July 2007 House of Councillors election. “An election campaign represents an important opportunity for politicians to explain their ideas to the people,” Abe stated in an “E-mail Magazine” the prime minister’s office sends out free to subscribers.¹³ Furthermore, he himself “would be lacking in conviction if, when presented with the opportunity, one avoided debating the subject of the Constitution, for it touches the national vision.”¹⁴ Abe’s LDP, which had held a majority of the 242 seats in the Upper House of Japan’s legislature, suffered a net loss of 27 seats, leaving the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) headed by Ozawa Ichiro, the largest party in the House of Councillors.

Abe’s initial response to the loss was to stick out his chin and persevere. He had, he said, “made a promise to make [Japan] a beautiful country,” and he had every intention of carrying it out.¹⁵ The practical reality of the DPJ’s victory in the House of Councillors took some time to sink in for the hapless Abe. Gone were his hopes for amending the Constitution and revising Article 9 to allow the Self Defense Forces to become a more conventional military force. More immediately, however, the Upper House election defeat put the Maritime Self Defense Force’s refueling mission in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, which was up for its next scheduled legislative renewal, in jeopardy. The DPJ’s chief Ozawa was not shy in stating his belief that the refueling activities taking place in the Indian Ocean were unconstitutional and vowed to prevent their extension.

Abe, for his part, threatened to resign over the refueling extension issue. Mounting unpopularity with what came to be seen as a corrupt and poorly managed government (as well as rumors of ill health), however, made waiting for a showdown in the Upper House unnecessary and Abe resigned before the vote could come up.

The question of whether the Japanese should amend their Constitution is not an academic one. Japan arguably faces greater existential risks today than at any time since the end of World War II. Although the potential that the Soviet Union would move on Japanese territory existed during the early years of the Cold War, the American military presence (coupled with the ever-ready U.S. nuclear deterrent) quickly made Japan a prohibitively risky target for Moscow. Moreover, the relative rationality and predictability of Super Power stand-offs and proxy wars that developed over the course of the Cold War have given way to threats that the United States and Japan did not consider when they formalized their security relationship in 1951 and again in 1960.

In North Korea, Japan has a calculating and determined foe willing and able to commit mass murder in its desperate struggle to prop up a cadaverous regime. North Korea's launch of a Taepo Dong-1 missile over the northern part of Japan in August 1998, and its test of a nuclear device eight years later, provided irrefutable proof not only that Japan is at risk as never before, but that the Japanese are not equipped to counter North Korean aggressions. Because of Article 9 and decades of cautious interpretation, Japan is unprepared in almost every conceivable way to face the menace on the western shore of the Sea of Japan: Japan's Air Self Defense Force does not have the capability to hit North Korean launch sites and return should Tokyo decide to strike preemptively,¹⁶ no branch of the SDF possesses land attack cruise missiles, and, even if such weapons were in its arsenal, Japan has not developed institutions and doctrines configured for a quick response to any North Korean threat. If that were not enough, the threat that a resurgent China poses (eager as it is to reacquire the dominant role in the region that it has not played in centuries) is potentially a more pronounced danger to Japan's long-term interests.

Japan's ability to protect itself hinges on its willingness to break free of the inertia generated by 60 years of living under the premise that pacifism is a viable alternative to the immoral and ineffective reliance on crude violence as a means to defend one's homeland. The premise is false, of course, because Japan has rested its defense, not on the good wishes of the world's people, but entirely upon the promise of the greatest military power in the history of mankind to go to war on Japan's behalf should it be attacked. That promise is no longer sufficient to ensure Japan's well-being.