

REARMAMENT IN THE NAME OF PEACE: JAPANESE PACIFISM AND INDO PACIFIC STRATEGY IN THE 2010S

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ABSTRACT At the end of the Second World War, Japan's newly written constitution has created a unique constitutional pacifism in the country. Ever since, this has remained controversial with the nation's politicians, citizens, and its international allies and rivals. After 70 years of an awkward albeit stable status quo, Japanese politicians are again attempting to redefine the state's relationship with pacifism. In this essay I will examine this process, and the role of America and China in causing this geopolitical shift. Specifically, I will examine both the history of Japanese pacifism, and how Japan is reorienting its strategy to counter China's expanding influence through bases in the South China Sea and the Belt and Road Initiative. This will be followed by an analysis of both Japanese-American cooperation, and how recent events in American politics have convinced Japanese leadership to pursue a more self-sufficient diplomatic strategy.

INTRODUCTION

It is an interesting paradox that the world's ninth largest defence budget is possessed by a country that has forsworn war. Since 1947, Japan's constitution has included Article 9, a clause that renounces Japan's right to use military force to resolve international disputes. The creation of, and subsequent debates around the peace constitution have had a profound impact on Japan's diplomatic, political, and economic situation throughout the Cold War and into the present. As the interests of the Japanese state change, so does its interpretation of pacifism. This is occurring again due to the rise of China and decline of the United States as a unipolar world power. China has become more active in expanding its economic and military interests in Asia and the Pacific. Accordingly, influential figures in Japanese politics have advocated for expanding the Japanese Self Defence force and taking a more active role in Asian affairs. As Japan works with the United States to counter Chinese influence in the region, Japan is moving away from its previous

interpretations of pacifism towards one more aligned with the current moment. I will argue that Japanese pacifism has always changed alongside its national interests. Going forward, Japan will still be constitutionally restricted militarily, but otherwise will act as a regional power, allied with the United States while confronting China and fully engaging in the geopolitics of East Asia.

To understand the changing nature of Japanese pacifism, I will examine the history of the peace constitution, from its creation to the present. This is framed around Daisuke Akimoto's model of negative and positive pacifism in Japanese history. I will then analyze the nature of China's rise and the status of its most influential policies in Asia and the Pacific. This will lead into a discussion of American strategy in the region and how Japan has come into a key role in American East Asian strategy. Finally, I will incorporate the policies of Shinzo Abe and Fumio Kishida, namely their "Free and Open Indo Pacific" initiative and increased

defence spending and regional integration. I will use this evidence to demonstrate why Japanese pacifism has shifted historically and why it is changing once again.

ARTICLE 9 AND CONSTITUTIONAL AMBIGUITIES

In the aftermath of World War Two, the military of the United States occupied Japan and directed the creation of a new constitution. Established in 1947, it established a democratic government centered around a legislature in the reformed Imperial Diet, with the emperor limited to a symbolic role. To assuage the fears of America's allies in China and the Philippines and prevent Japan from re-establishing itself as a military threat, the constitution renounced the country's right to declare war. Specifically, Article 9 of the post war "peace constitution" reads:

"Article 9: 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 1947).

While this was not the first-time disarmament had been imposed in a peace treaty, the Japanese public embraced this constitutional pacifism. Interestingly, the United States would return to Japan in the early 1950s and request that the country consider rearmament in the face of new threats in East Asia. The Korean War raged across the Tsushima Strait, and Japan's other continental neighbors were both the two most powerful communist states. However, the Japanese public had come to embrace this idea of a pacifist state (Schlichtmann 2009, 220-226). It would be the anti-American parties in the Imperial Diet that would become the defenders of Article 9 and Japanese pacifism (Kowalski and Eldridge 2013, 157). The scope of this pacifism was

immediately up for debate. While Article 9 is straightforward in asserting that Japan will never declare war and will always seek to resolve its disputes through diplomacy and international arbitration, it also appears to abolish Japan's right to maintain a military of any sort. This was tenable during the American occupation, but when it ended in 1952, the United States did not want to be entirely responsible for Japan's defence. This led the Liberal Democratic Party under Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida to open debate around the creation of the Japanese Self Defence Force (JSDF). While Article 9 prohibited the maintenance of any war potential, the Yoshida government was firm in its position that since the JSDF was prohibited from launching a war, it had no war potential. This interpretation was fiercely contested by the pro pacifism parties in the legislature (Kowalski and Eldridge 2013, 154-163).

With the JSDF established, the United States would shift its defence policy towards Japan from that of an overseer to a partner. The 1960 signing of "Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan" established a mutual defence pact between both states, bringing permanent American military bases to the island and including Japan under America's nuclear umbrella. Immediately after this treaty was signed, hundreds of thousands of Japanese people took to the streets in protest (Kowalski and Eldridge 2013, 154-163). Politicians across the political spectrum broke from the government to advocate a neutral path through the Cold War. This would culminate in Prime Minister Kishi resigning six months after signing the defense treaty with the United States (Kapur 2018, 17-34). Despite this massive public protest, the defence treaty endured and remains in place to this day, as does the JSDF. Both remained controversial through out the Cold War. The right wing of Japanese politics would support revising or eliminating Article 9 from the constitution but were never able to pass these reforms. Geopolitical shifts in the 1990s would change the role of the JSDF and a coalition government between the socialists and

conservatives would effectively end debate around the existence of the JDSF.

In the 2010s, Shinzo Abe made it a priority to reform Article 9, making the question of constitutional pacifism a major political debate in Japan (Tokuchi 2019, 85). In 2014, the Japanese government approved a cabinet decision to interpret Article 9 as allowing “collective self-defence, but only in very limited circumstances.” (Tokuchi 2019, 88). Abe faced a more difficult challenge in constitutionally legitimizing the existence of the JDSF. Plans to hold a referendum on this issue have been paused since Abe’s resignation in 2020 (Reuters 2017). While Japan’s current prime minister, Fumio Kishida has stated his desire to proceed with the amendment, there is no current plan to do so, and it is unclear if it is even politically feasible. Hideshi Tokuchi, a Japanese expert on defense law writes “Japan’s national interests are increasingly global. Accordingly, Japan has to think and act more proactively in the global context, even in military terms. If there remains a gap between the strategic reality surrounding Japan and the world anticipated in the Constitution as it is, the focus of the policy discussion will continue to be on the tactical question of how to slip past the constitutional restrictions.” (Tokuchi 2019, 88). Given this gridlock between the interests of Japan and the popular policy of constitutional pacifism, Japan’s security outlook can only evolve gradually and in a certain limited direction. To understand the direction in which Japan’s defence and security policy is headed today, one must understand its evolution since the 1950s.

NEGATIVE AND POSITIVE FRAMEWORKS FOR JAPANESE PACIFISM

In his analysis of the geopolitics of Japanese pacifism, political scientist Daisuke Akimoto categorized negative and positive pacifism as distinct approaches taken by Japanese policy. Both terms refer to a different level of commitment to international peace. Akimoto argues that during the 45 years between 1946 and 1991, Japan engaged in ‘negative

pacifism.’ Rooted in the international relations theory of classical liberalism, negative pacifism effectively followed the purest interpretation of Article 9. Through “the renunciation of war and the non possession of military forces,” Japanese society embraced a “culture of anti-militarism.” (Akimoto 2013, 28). Despite limited Japanese rearmament following the Korean war, Japan actively worked to keep itself out of international conflicts. In 1954 the Diet capitalized on anti-war and anti-interventionist sentiments to pass a law that prevented overseas deployment and arms exports. Additionally, this placed a cap on defence spending of 1% of GNP (Akimoto 2013, 40). During the Vietnam war, Japan remained firmly neutral while America’s other pacific allies sent troops. Instead, Japan used low military spending to spur intense economic growth. In the context of the Cold War, it is clear why negative pacifism was useful for Japan. While America and its other allies were dragged into proxy wars and diplomatic crises, Japan remained effectively neutral. While always aligned with and protected by the United States due to the mutual defence pact, Japan would not play a large role politically during the Cold War. Instead, the government’s isolationism and domestic investments ushered in an economic explosion. Between 1946 and 1991, Japan went from a shattered great power, devastated from World War Two, into the second largest economy in the world.

Corresponding with this economic growth, in the 1970s and 80s, Japan began to gradually increase its defence budget while maintaining the 1% of GNP limit. Thanks to the size of its economy, by 1996, Japan had the third largest defence budget in the world (Roser et al 2013). This would mark a shift towards positive pacifism in the 1990s and 2000s. Akimoto defines positive pacifism as Japan taking an active stance in promoting peace internationally. Akimoto cites the preamble to the 1947 constitution, that makes broad, idealistic claims about “preserving international peace and removing ‘structural violence’” from the world (Akimoto, 2013, 29). In an interesting coincidence, this correlates with the 1989 ascension of Emperor Akihito and his regnal

era of Heisei, or “achieving peace worldwide.” (Government of Japan 1989). To achieve this, Japan developed a strict framework to enable overseas deployments of the JSDF, with its first overseas mission occurring in 1992 with a deployment to Cambodia as part of the U.N. peacekeeping mission there (Akimoto 2013). As part of this objective to promote worldwide peace, Japan also increased its international aid funding and committed to rebuilding efforts in countries devastated by war and natural disasters (Ishizuka 2013, 201-222). Japan contributed to the international mission into post-2001 Afghanistan, where it was a “lead country” in the disarm, demobilize and reintegrate program. This contributed to Japan’s strategic objectives. By rebuilding Afghanistan, there was hope that international terrorism would decline. In doing so, international economic risk would be reduced and Japan, as one of the world’s wealthiest countries would prosper (Ashizawa 2014). This thinking also inspired similar humanitarian operations in Iraq between 2004 and 2006 (Shaoul 2007, 231-246). While this shift to positive pacifism meant that Japan was more involved in resolving international crises, it did not provide an excuse to intervene everywhere. The Imperial Diet would fiercely debate whether to assist the United States during the First Gulf War, ultimately deciding not to support a war of aggression despite U.N. sanction (Akimoto 2013, 20).

In theory positive pacifism aligns with Japan’s interests. It leaned into the liberal internationalist thinking that dominated the 1990s. The United States was the global hegemon and worldwide countries were moving towards market capitalism and democracy. Japan’s international power, namely its economy, thrived in a stable and open world. As long as goods and wealth flowed through global markets Japan prospered. Peacekeeping operations as part of broad international coalitions helped preserve this global order. Nominally, peacekeeping in a country like Cambodia would eventually lead to Cambodia becoming a more stable country in the Asia Pacific and a new avenue for Japanese products and investment. A similar

logic applied to Japan’s role in the War on Terror, and it is worth noting that the Japanese government and public view these operations as broadly successful (Toyoda 2016, 21-36).

However, it is apparent that today the main vectors for economic disruption are not rogue terrorist groups or failed states. Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has made it clear that there is still considerable economic and political risk in the global system should a major economy break from the international order. Russia has reenergized Cold War fears and alliance building, with Japan joining the NATO security bloc in imposing intense economic sanctions upon Russia (Reuters Staff 2023). However, prior to Russia’s invasion, Japan and the United States were growing increasingly weary of the rising power of China. Beginning primarily under Abe’s government in the 2010s, Japan and the United States began to expand their cooperation on economic and security strategy in the Pacific region to counter the influence of China.

CHINA’S GROWING INFLUENCE IN THE PACIFIC

China’s rising influence in Asia can be seen most clearly through two major initiatives. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is an expansive policy that is designed to expand China’s economic influence across Eurasia (Reilly 2021, 343). According to the Chinese government, this program will improve economic interconnectivity across Asia, enabling further trade and economic prosperity (Reilly 2021). China has excess economic capacity and is willing to provide generous investment and loans in exchange for closer relations. While this investment has built useful infrastructure in countries that have otherwise struggled to obtain investment, there are strings attached to this money. The Chinese government proudly promotes the success of the Ethiopia-Djibouti railway as boosting “regional integration,” while also making it easier for Ethiopia to export raw materials to China (Reilly 2021). When countries have failed to pay back their loans, China has offered debt relief in exchange for directly leasing this

infrastructure for military and economic uses, as seen in Sri Lanka. BRI projects in Southeast-Asia often are costly and employ Chinese firms and workers in their construction (Reilly 2021, 3460- In Myanmar, this has inspired public backlash and resentment towards China, prompting China to “scale back some BRI-branded projects in response to demands by recipient countries.” (Reilly 2021, 343-346). Despite these concerns, sixty-six countries are officially participating in the BRI, and will continue to rely on China without an alternative source of funding and expertise.

China has become militarily expansionistic under Xi Jinping. This is most notable in the South China Sea. “As a primary trade route for more than half of the world’s annual merchant fleet tonnage” and containing potential fossil fuel reserves, the South China Sea is a major security and economic issue for the entire Indo-Pacific region” (Jenner and Truong Thuy 2016, 1) Any country that can claim a larger portion of the South China Sea stands to profit considerably. Despite this, all these countries respected international maritime law and restricted their economic zones accordingly. China has claimed the entire South China Sea since before the Chinese Civil War, but it was not until 2012 that it began enforcing this claim over the entire sea as part of China’s “territorial waters.” This has led to several confrontations with Vietnamese and Filipino fishing boats. In one more serious 2012 incident, there was a standoff between Filipino and Chinese patrol vessels, escalating to a flotilla of 92 Chinese vessels driving the Philippine Navy out of the contested area (Ba and Storey 2016). However, China’s claims have been dismissed by the Permanent Court of Arbitration, and this standoff has soured Chinese relations with several Indo-Pacific nations (Permanent Court of Arbitration 2016). To project their claims and force in the sea, China constructed artificial islands with military installations. This has triggered a standoff, as neighboring countries refrain from using portions of their maritime zones in case this triggers a Chinese military response. Likewise, China does not fully develop its military and economic potential in the region to avoid igniting a crisis. Regardless,

this dispute has poisoned China’s relations in the region, enflaming nationalist sentiments across the region (Ba and Storey 2016).

These controversial policies indicate that China is becoming more assertive on the world stage. However, these policies have also caused tension with countries across the Indo-Pacific. This has created an opening for American and Japanese engagement in the region, and both countries’ interests are aligned concerning the Indo-Pacific.

CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN STRATEGY IN ASIA

Several American Presidents, including Harry Truman, Barack Obama, and Joe Biden have attempted to ‘pivot to Asia’ reorienting American foreign policy towards strategic goals concerning east Asia. As China has become increasingly powerful, America has sought to counter this by increasing its own military and diplomatic capacity in East Asia. This goal is aided by America’s close relationship with the three other countries in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, namely Japan, India, and Australia. Furthermore, Chinese antagonism over the South China Sea has made several countries open to aligning themselves with the United States. The U.S navy has jointly run Freedom of Navigation Operations (FONOP) with regional partners in the South China Sea since 2015. American fleets brazenly sailing through the sea directly challenges China’s claimed hegemony (Smith, 2021). While these operations are appreciated by neighboring countries and have led to closer defence cooperation with Vietnam and the Philippines, FONOP operations alone will not convince China to reverse course over the South China Sea (Thayer 2016). The Obama administration’s policy initiative to orient East Asia away from China and towards the United States was the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). The Obama administration portrayed the TPP as a free trade deal that would increase trade and economic ties across the Pacific. Despite the focus on the economic benefits, “the primary reason for the TPP and the anticipated FTAAP appears to be

geopolitical: to reset a regional balance of power that has increasingly shifted to China” (De Santis 2012, 2010). By pivoting towards Asia and deepening economic ties with Pacific countries, Washington hoped to strengthen its influence in the region and hopefully suppress China’s “discriminatory trade policies,” “military buildup,” and “truculent behavior” in what it calls its “near seas” (De Santis 2012, 2010). Despite the potential of the TPP, President Trump unilaterally withdrew the United States from the agreement three days after his inauguration. This has effectively ended America’s promotion of multilateral, anti-Chinese organization in the Pacific.

Shortly afterwards, Japan began an initiative to rework the TPP without the United States. Alongside ten other countries including Singapore, Vietnam, Australia, and Canada, the renamed Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific-Partnership (CPTPP) was signed in 2018. Japan’s eagerness to maintain the TPP despite the American withdrawal indicates that their priorities are aligned with the TPP’s goal of promoting economic growth and containing Chinese influence (Lee and Bhattacharya 2021). This signals increasing Japanese involvement in the geo-politics of East Asia despite its historical pacifism.

THE EVOLVING NATURE OF JAPANESE PACIFISM IN THE 2010S

While elements within Japanese politics may wish to return to a foreign policy of peaceful isolation, or to remain a global peacekeeper, (Akimoto 2013, 215-230). the fact of the matter is that Japan is increasingly threatened with potential conflicts. Japan and Russia continue to feud over the Kuril Islands, and while this is not a source of major international tension on its own, it has recently resurfaced due to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine (Ye Hee Lee 2022). These tensions with Russia are far more concerning due to Russia’s increasing dependence upon China economically. China and Japan have a complicated bilateral relationship. Poor historical relations have been pragmatically put aside in the name of

economic growth since both countries are close trading partners. While in a vacuum, Sino-Japanese relations are profitable and cordial, this situation may be untenable. China’s antagonism towards Taiwan will inevitably involve Japan. Japan’s Senkaku Islands are near the Taiwanese coast, islands which China has claimed historically. The Japanese government fears that any military conflict between China and Taiwan may include an attempt to occupy the islands. Furthermore, due to the large naval presence of the JSDF near the islands, a mistake or miscalculation could pull Japan into that hypothetical conflict. This risk was proven by a 2012 incident when a Chinese flotilla sailed into Japanese waters near the Senkaku islands and was confronted by two JSDF destroyers (De Santis 2012).

Shinzo Abe and his successors responded to these threats by increasing funding for the JSDF to the 1% of GNP limit and by pursuing a diplomatic strategy that increases Japanese influence throughout the Pacific. Abe and Kishida both promote the “Free and Open Indo Pacific” (FOIP) strategy. Formulated under the Abe government and announced in 2019, FOIP remains one of the keystones of Japanese foreign policy under Kishida (Akimoto 2021). This is a comprehensive plan to expand Japanese economic and diplomatic leverage through engagement with the Indo-Pacific countries, such as India, Vietnam, Myanmar, and the Philippines. FOIP is focused on the following three pillars “1. Promotion and establishment of the rule of law, freedom of navigation, free trade, 2. Pursuit of economic prosperity, 3. Commitment for peace and stability” (Government of Japan 2019). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs document explaining the FOIP directly attaches the first goal to the CPTPP, as all member countries have agreed to promote free trade, economic liberalization, and the freedom of navigation (Government of Japan 2019). This requirement also plays into the rhetoric of Indo-Pacific countries frustrated with Chinese aggression in the South China Sea. Japan seeks to achieve the second pillar, the “Pursuit of economic prosperity,” primarily by providing funding, technical expertise, and

political support for dozens of projects in the Indo-Pacific (Government of Japan 2019). These intend to increase regional connectivity through physical transportation projects such as port expansion and new high-speed railways, or economically through special economic zones and improved communications infrastructure (Government of Japan 2019, 6-12). In doing so, Japan is providing an alternative to Chinese development assistance through the BRI. Both initiatives target the same countries in the Indo-Pacific and offer similar conceptions of infrastructure development. Furthermore, these Japanese led projects are supported by the U.S State Department (Blinken 2021). In December 2021, Secretary of State Anthony Blinken gave a speech on U.S strategy in the Indo Pacific and he stressed the important work done by all the members of the Quad in the region, specifically concerning infrastructure. Blinken stressed that America's longstanding alliance with Japan and South Korea has been critical to the stability of the Indo-Pacific stating that "those bonds have long provided the foundation for peace, security, and prosperity in the region" (Blinken 2021).

Due to the negative sentiments associated with the BRI, the Japan's FOIP has a marketing advantage. Its connection with Japan and the United States also makes it particularly appealing for regional democracies, as well as countries open to aligning against Chinese expansion in the South China Sea.

Unlike the United States, Japan had refrained from directly deploying militarily in the South China Sea. Rather, Japan has utilized the FOIP. The third pillar listed under the FOIP's priorities is a "Commitment for peace and stability" (Government of Japan 2019, 2). This includes several provisions to promote maritime security in the Indo-Pacific. Japan and the U.S are assisting the Philippine navy to expand its "maritime security capacity" (Government of Japan 2019, 9). Japan is also unilaterally working on a similar program with Vietnam, which seeks to increase the number of "offshore patrols" from 0 in 2015 to 72 by

2023 (Government of Japan 2019 9). By promoting the rule of law, freedom of navigation, and maritime security in the Indo-Pacific, Japan is indirectly confronting China's control over the South China Sea. Akimoto believes that this is a priority for Prime Minister Kishida, writing "like his immediate predecessors, Kishida will uphold the FOIP strategy while counterbalancing the increasing Chinese political assertiveness and military presence in the East and South China Seas" (2021). Japan is achieving this through the increased economic and security relations it has established throughout the region.

This confrontational outlook extends beyond the FOIP. Throughout the Abe administration, defence spending increased every year (Streltsov 2016). While Abe was unsuccessful in his desire to reform Article 9, he did expand the purview of the JSDF far more than his predecessors. This is far more important than a constitutional change legitimizing the JSDF, as "claims about the alleged unconstitutionality of the JSDF have in no way impeded its operations" (Flores 2017, 12). Even though the 1% of GNP limit on defence spending perseveres, the role of the JSDF has increased. Beginning in 2021, the JSDF began joining American naval exercises in the South China Sea (Williams and Vinson 2021). Abe set the groundwork for this operation during his tenure. Since the creation of the JSDF, it has conducted joint exercises with the U.S military in the Japanese archipelago and the surrounding waters. As a self defence force, it did not partake in international military exercises. Abe had effectively broken-down norms around the use of the JSDF, and there has been little pushback from the Imperial Diet. Japan and the United States have increasingly coordinated Pacific defence policy over the last ten years. The United States already maintains a large military presence on the Japanese home islands, but these forces can only operate with the approval of the Japanese defence ministry. Increased defence cooperation is a certainty if tensions with China continue to rise. The JSDF is also particularly specialized in logistics, fulfilling this role in a number of its peacekeeping operations.

Combined with the extensive American bases in Japan, the cooperation of the JSDF and Japanese government will be critical for any extensive American deployment in Asia (Streltsov 2016). Rand Corporation analyst Jeffrey Hornung extends this fact to argue that the United States should support modernization efforts in the JSDF, particularly so that it can fulfil strategic roles to compliment the U.S military. This ensures that Japan will increasingly cooperate with the United States in the face of Chinese aggression. Their militaries have effectively become inseparable.

CONCLUSION

The extent of Article 9 in Japan's constitution has always been vague and poorly defined. This has given Japan a degree of flexibility with which to act on its pacifist obligations. During the Cold War, Japan maintained a small self defence force that never departed from the home islands. Between 1991 and the 2010s, Japan began to engage in global peacekeeping efforts. In doing so, the Japanese government hoped to promote global peace and stability. However, the rise of China has begun to shift Japanese international strategy, and as such its model of pacifism. China is increasing its economic influence through the BRI and its military presence in the South China Sea. Japan has actively put its pacifism at risk by countering China in these matters. Through the Free and Open Indo Pacific, Japan is providing its own investments in infrastructure in the Indo Pacific. It is aiding rival claimants to the South China

Sea in increasing their "maritime security capacity." Japan has also formed an economic bloc with other Pacific countries through the CPTPP. Japan shares these objectives with the United States and through the FOIP it has proved itself capable of achieving them. This makes Japan key to American interests in the region. The Biden administration supports the goals of the FOIP and it could potentially provide a model for a similar American-backed initiative to build infrastructure, promote security, and increase trade in the Indo-Pacific. Alongside this goal of influencing the region to align against China, Japan has also directly increased its own military capacity and budget. This has included joint military maneuvers in the South China Sea and increased integration of both militaries when it comes to defence policy in the Pacific. While Article 9 of the constitution remains popular and resistant to amendment, Japan's pacifism continues to change. While Japan will not be declaring unilateral wars of aggression in the foreseeable future, it is has become much more strategically active. Like the previous phases of pacifism, this is necessary to protect Japan's interests in Asia and the Pacific. By engaging economically and diplomatically in the Indo Pacific, Japan had put itself at risk of conflict with China. It is increasing its military spending and alignment with the United States. As such, it is no longer a pacifist country in the previous senses. Rather, Japan is engaging in the power politics of East Asia simply without the ability to declare war, wielding diplomacy as a weapon to protect its national interests, rather than solely as a mechanism with which to promote peace.

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