

MASTER THESIS

# Emergence of an Alternative Left

---

The impact of Shinzō Abe's constitutional reinterpretation

Ashwin Ramjiawan

Supervisor  
Dr. Bryce A. Wakefield



**Universiteit  
Leiden**  
The Netherlands

Master of Arts Asian Studies: Politics, Society and Economy of Asia

Academic year: 2015 – 2016

Student number: 0718777

Word count: 12,488

Email: ashwin.ramjiawan@gmail.com

## Emergence of an Alternative Left

*The impact of Shinzō Abe's constitutional reinterpretation*

---

### **Introduction**

The origins and functions of the Japanese constitution remain a source of contention in the nation's postwar politics. After the Second World War, the U.S. occupation of Japan ended in a newly constructed constitution for the Japanese state; often referred to as the *Peace Constitution*. It is given this specific name due to its well-known Article 9, which is the characteristic article that prescribes the renunciation of the right to wage war. Emerging from the draft of the constitution, written by American occupying forces, the primary rationale for the existence of this article was to prevent Japan from reemerge as an aggressive militarist power, as it was during the Second World War. Stimulated by Article 9, Japan's postwar national identity incorporated this prescribed pacifism, and many politicians and activists were empowered by this article to promote world peace altogether. However, over the years after the postwar constitution came into effect, problems of Japan's future attitude toward national defense became more evident. The Japanese Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) was established with great controversy, Japan's reliance on the U.S. remained a source of political friction and over the years Japanese politicians kept pushing the limitations of Article 9. Consequently, these complex issues lie before current prime minister of Japan Shinzō Abe as well.

However, Abe's thinking on Article 9 is quite extreme; the prime minister of Japan has attempted to change the meaning of Article 9 through official reinterpretation, and therefore loosening the restrictions on the JSDF. His argument of official reinterpretation is that in order to defend itself in a changing security environment, Japan needs to enable the right of collective self-defense, prohibited under long-standing earlier interpretations of Article 9. After the support Japan offered the U.S. during its 'war on terrorism', Abe argues that Japan has to be a strong ally to the U.S. and ought to have a proper defense mechanism against threats as North Korea and maybe even China. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs provided the following explanation of this new policy:

Since the end of World War II, Japan has consistently followed the path of a peace-loving nation under the Constitution of Japan. While adhering to a basic policy of maintaining an exclusively national defense-oriented policy, not becoming a military power that poses a threat to other countries, and observing the Three Non-Nuclear Principles, Japan has flourished as an economic power through continuous efforts of its people and built a stable and affluent livelihood. Japan, as a peace-loving nation, has also been cooperating with the international community and international organizations including the United Nations (U.N.), and has proactively contributed to their activities, adhering to the Charter of the United Nations. The course that Japan has taken as a peace-loving nation has garnered significant praise and respect from the international community, and Japan must continue these steps to further fortify such a position. [...] Furthermore, in recent years, risks that can impede the utilization of and free access to the sea, outer space and cyberspace have been spreading and become more serious. No country can secure its own peace only by itself, and the international community also expects Japan to play a more proactive role for peace and stability in the world, in a way commensurate with its national capability.<sup>1</sup>

With this security policy, Prime Minister Abe and his cabinet emphasize Japan's development as a state which will become 'normal' by authorizing the right of individual and collective self-defense. This policy sparked significant debate, not only on Article 9, but also the U.S.-Japan defense guidelines. The distinctive character of Japan's postwar security policy contrasts greatly with these changes, which were all implemented into Japan's new security strategy in a relative little amount of time. In regard to his argument for reinterpreting Article 9, Abe introduced the option to alter the Japanese constitution in benefit of keeping international peace. In his speech to the Diet in 2007, he announced the following:

In addition, we believe that, in order to make greater contributions to the peace and stability of the world, we have to reconstruct the legal basis for

---

<sup>1</sup> Translated excerpt from "Cabinet Decision on Development of Seamless Security Legislation to Ensure Japan's Survival and Protect Its People," Japan's MOFA official website. See Bibliography.

national security to befit the times. We will continue to study, based on individual and specific cases, to identify which case constitutes exercise of the right of collective self-defense that is prohibited under the Constitution. [...] I believe that Japan should make contributions that are commensurate with its place in the international community. We will steadfastly strive for comprehensive reform of the United Nations and pursue permanent membership on the Security Council.<sup>2</sup>

This does not only show that Abe is willing to continue strengthening the alliance with the U.S. as it was initiated by his predecessor former prime minister Koizumi, who also explicitly favored Japan playing an active role within the international community above the content of Japan's constitution. His intention to alter Article 9 stems from the urge of Japan's integration into the international political system by aligning itself with the U.S.

This thesis will examine Abe's push to constitutional reinterpretation and how the political left reacted to his argument by focusing on the following question: did the Japanese left-wing political actors reconsider their view on Article 9 and Japan's current defense attitude? If the extreme political left of Japan has altered their stance on Abe and his push for reinterpretation, it means that the whole debate on Japanese defense policy is changing altogether. Therefore, Shinzō Abe might have had an impact on how Article 9 and Japan's defense posture are perceived by the political left-wing. This will be analyzed through the model of securitization, as defined by the Copenhagen School of Security Studies. By applying this framework, this thesis will show how Abe attempts to securitize the issue of Japan's national identity through addressing Japan's defense capabilities and how the left-wing responds by counter-securitizing the issue of pacifism within national identity. The second goal of the thesis is to present the validity of the Copenhagen School's framework by showing its applicability to the case of Japan's constitutional reinterpretation. First, we shall analyze the literature on both Shinzō Abe's reinterpretation attempt and the securitization model. Secondly, we will examine the nature of Abe's push to constitutional reinterpretation by analyzing a book he wrote before he became prime minister and a book he wrote while he was prime minister. Abe's initial strategy - or the lack of it - will be uncovered by

---

<sup>2</sup> Abe (2007)

analyzing his opinion on collective self-defense prior to his function as prime minister, which is formulated in the book *Kono Kuni wo Mamoru Ketsui* (2004). His perspective on the issue as prime minister will be analyzed through the book *Utsukushii Kuni he* (2006). In this way, we can establish whether his stance has changed on reinterpreting the constitution. Then we will explore if and how Abe's attempt for reinterpretation has reshaped the views of the political left in Japan. The effect of Abe's push to reinterpret the constitution on popular opinion will be exposed by analyzing the phenomenon of counter-securitization by Japanese left-wing activists. We will look at in what manner the attempt has affected the left-wing in their rhetoric by examining scholarly articles on the subject. If this is the case, we might conclude that the Japanese extreme left is currently in the middle of a shift towards middle left. Therefore, we also might conclude that consequentially the debates surrounding Article 9 and Japan's defense policies are changing as well. It will cause an even greater distance between the government and the people, since political leaders such as Abe cannot – or will not – realize their normative ambitions when in office. This major problem derives from the fact that Japan is in a crunch vis-à-vis reaching its limit constitutional reinterpretation, as noted by Hughes (2009). The thesis will mainly focus on the language both Abe and the left-wing use in order to analyze their ways of securitization.

## **Literature review**

### *Shinzō Abe and Japan's right to collective self-defense*

What is understood under Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's collective self-defense policy? The domestic debate of this policy is well explained in Bryce Wakefield's article "Abe's Law: Domestic Dimensions of Japan's Collective Self-Defense Debate" (2014), in which he explores the constitutional validity of Abe's intentions of altering the premise of Article 9. This article provides a thorough representation of the debate surrounding the collective self-defense policy. There is a considerable amount of international support for Abe expanding Japan's defense options, including a possible reinterpretation of Article 9. A constitutional reinterpretation that would permit the right of collective self-defense "[...] could allow Japan's Self Defense Forces [...] to better integrate into U.S.-Japan alliance activities and to be more active in international peacekeeping efforts."<sup>3</sup> A reinterpretation of Article 9 is

---

<sup>3</sup> Wakefield (2014), p. 44.

especially interesting for the U.S., since Japan is a strategic ally of the U.S. in the East Asia region. Nevertheless, there is less attention paid to the domestic debate, as noted by Wakefield. However, it is the domestic debate that shows the complexity of Abe's proposition of a constitutional reinterpretation.

The official interpretation of Article 9 was established in 1954 by the Cabinet Legislation Bureau (CLB). In order to prevent any future misunderstanding of the constitutional text, the CLB clarified that a direct attack on Japan's undisputed sovereign territory is not considered as an international dispute. Japan's renunciation of war is prescribed in Article 9 of its constitution, which states the following:

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 a 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.<sup>4</sup>

However, the official interpretation of Article 9 set by the CLB is currently being undermined by Abe. According to the prime minister, reinterpretation is justified "[...] primarily with reference to Japan's practical needs in its transforming regional security environment."<sup>5</sup> His main argument is that international law and policy such as in the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty and the United Nations Charter override commitments of Japan's constitutional texts. Wakefield argues that his negligence of the constitution is lawfully illegitimate by saying that "[...] constitutions by their very nature establish prior commitments to restrict government action even – and arguably especially – when political and practical circumstances change."<sup>6</sup> Constitutions are established as a set of guidelines for the state on how to function properly.

---

4 Official translation of Article 9 by the Japanese government; from "Prime minister of Japan and His Cabinet." See Bibliography.

5 Wakefield (2014), pp. 48-49.

6 Ibid., p. 49.

These guidelines are instituted with the purpose of preventing improper behavior of the state. Wakefield does not argue against the reinterpretation of constitutional texts, but he advocates the correct and legal process of judicial interpretation; the very process Abe intentionally attempts to circumvent.

Abe decided to appoint career diplomat Ichiro Komatsu as head of the CLB under his administration. Komatsu publically disagreed with the CLB's previous position that the right of collective self-defense would violate Article 9.<sup>7</sup> He took this stance on the matter as a part of ensuring the CLB's support of the prime minister's policies. The original purpose of the CLB was to assure that all policies that derive from the government are in line with its constitution. Instead of critically scrutinizing legislation and government's policy and providing the government independent advice, Komatsu turned around this mechanism of governmental self-reflection and self-correction in favor of Abe's agenda to reinterpret the article. As Wakefield notes, this is not the first time Abe has been accused of placing one of his own supporters in positions where they could influence the debate on Article 9's reinterpretation.<sup>8</sup> Komatsu's CLB argued that Article 9 severely restricts Japan's defense capabilities, and is thus in need for change. Their main argument of a reinterpretation relies on the rhetoric that Japan should be allowed to engage in collective self-defense as prescribed by international law. This is in contrast to the CLB's official interpretation of 1954, which pointed out that the first paragraph did not deny Japan's right of self-defense in case of an immediate violation of the nation of Japan.<sup>9</sup> The right of individual self-defense is legally permitted under the Japanese constitution.

The reason why Abe wants to reinterpret Article 9 for enabling Japan's right of collective self-defense is slightly harder to pin down. However, one can see in which direction he wants Japan to develop when looking at Abe's behavior as prime minister. When Abe first took office as the prime minister of Japan in 2006, he immediately took action to resolve problems surrounding the Yasukuni issue by meeting China's and South Korea's leaders in October later that same year. The friction between Japan and these nations regarding the

---

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> From the Diet Records, in Wakefield (2014), p. 46.

history of East Asia had to be controlled, preventing damaging Japan's ties with other nations in the region any further. In addition to the Yasukuni issue's mitigation, Abe built his foreign policy and defense strategy mainly on what Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi had established from 2001 to 2006. Under Koizumi, Japan appeared to have transformed itself into a willing and active ally of the United States.<sup>10</sup> Encouraged by the U.S., Japan became less afraid to tackle controversial issues on history and territory disputes with South Korea and China. Koizumi's infamous visit to the Yasukuni Shrine (a Shinto shrine that serves as commemoration of those who died during the wars involving Japan, including contested war criminals) in 2006 was given major attention by domestic and international media. This was, however, the very message Koizumi attempted to deliver to the rest of the world; after being a relative passive nation state for decades, Japan is now determined to take a tougher stance in global geopolitics.

Still, former prime minister Koizumi did not intend to alter the constitution just as Abe is attempting to do now. Koizumi used ad hoc legislation – an exceptional legislation made with the purpose of solving one particular issue at the time; particularly for deploying the JSDF in Afghanistan and Iraq as non-combat logistical support.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, Yongtao Gui (2013) argues that the U.S.-Japan alliance has become less important since the withdrawal of the U.S. forces from Afghanistan and Iraq. U.S. president Barack Obama focuses more on diplomacy than his predecessor George W. Bush, who initiated the war in the Middle East. Then, on what grounds does Abe advocate his claim for a constitutional revision? According to Gui, Abe's actual intentions are to “[...] give Japan a more military posture and allow greater scope of action for its defense forces.”<sup>12</sup> By doing so, Abe is breaking away from Japan's postwar limitation on its military role. Gui also added that Abe's push for his nationalist agenda is alarming for both the U.S. and Japan's neighboring countries, as Abe nurtures his agenda by the Japanese public's anxiety surrounding China and North Korea. By positioning both nations as threats to Japan, Abe argues for not only a constitutional

---

10 Hughes (2007), p. 158.

11 Gui (2013), p. 50.

12 Ibid.



revision, but an urgent one as well. However, as Wakefield pointed out in his article, the prime minister is in no position to violate national law under any circumstances.

Another interesting perspective Gui posed is on the argument of Japan's process of 'normalization', throwing Abe's strategic rationale for reinterpreting or amending Article 9 into greater doubt. Even if Abe succeeds in altering Article 9 – whether through amendment or reinterpretation, tensions in East Asia will only grow under current circumstances. After short-term success from economic policies, Abe began to make blunt statements on history and foreign relations; by asserting Japan's position on territorial and historical disputes with China and South Korea, and by applying more pressure on North Korea concerning the nuclear issue instead of starting a dialogue. While Abe is focusing on 'normalizing' Japan's foreign and security policies, the stability in the East Asian region starts to stagger due to the absence of diplomatic initiatives from Japan to its neighbors. A stronger Japanese military is not necessarily equal to a more stable security agenda. Especially China and South Korea will not accept the expansion of Japan's military role, while the historical war of aggression and colonialism of Japan are still disputed issues. In the words of Gui: "(...) a Japan with a 'normal' military posture but 'abnormal' views of history and international morality would only deepen mistrust among countries of this region."<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, Abe's perception of threat in the region does not correspond with the perception of the U.S. The U.S. does not consider China as an immediate security concern and even stimulates a closer alignment on challenges such as the North Korea threat. Thus according to Gui, arguing for a collective self-defense policy with the purpose of strengthening the U.S.-Japan alliance does not add up; security perspectives in the East Asian region between the U.S. and Japan differ too much and would not result in a stronger alliance. The U.S.-Japan alliance is in fact, however, one of the major points in foreign policy Abe wants to accentuate. And Abe's new security policy model actually does streamline both interests of the U.S. and Japan, which only strengthens their bond. Apart from this, Gui justly emphasized Abe's lack in bolstering ties with other East Asian nations regarding Japan's wartime past.

This brings us to the following question: is a constitutional revision a strategic necessity? Wakefield argues that the ban on collective self-defense might be outdated and

---

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 52.

could possibly be rescinded, on the condition that it is dealt with in a legitimate fashion.<sup>14</sup> Gui deems that the current relations Japan has with its neighbors have a much higher priority than forging a masculine stance of the nation by focusing on expanding the capabilities of its military. We might want to look at this in the context of how the constitution has been reinterpreted prior to Abe's attempt. Christopher W. Hughes notes that the constitution has not been an absolute barrier for Japan's postwar remilitarization, since policymakers had the ability to reinterpret and stretch the given constitutional limitations.<sup>15</sup> Hughes mentions Ichirō Ozawa, who was Secretary General of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) during the Gulf War of 1990-91. When Japan failed to satisfy U.S. and international pressure to deliver a 'human contribution' during the war, Ozawa opted for a concept called 'international' (*kokusai-teki anzen hosho*) or 'collective' security (*shudan-teki anzen hosho*). He argued that the Preamble of the constitution obliges Japan to aim for an honored position within international society and thus for an enhanced international cooperation. This permits Japan to engage in UN-sanctioned and UN-centered multilateral military operations; which includes full war-fighting without violating Article 9. Another case of elastic approach to the constitution Hughes mentions is that of Koizumi. Koizumi responded to the 11 September terrorist attacks by calling on all UN members to counter terrorism collectively. As Ozawa, Koizumi's notion is linked to the international attempt to eradicate terrorism, which included Japan by implication with the Preamble of the constitution, saying: "I believe that the international community is calling upon Japan, and the people of Japan to act in accordance with the ideals of our Constitution. [...] all peoples of the world have the right to live in peace, free from fear and want."<sup>16</sup> On the pretext of an international society for the preservation of peace, Japanese policymakers were also able to justify the Iraqi Reconstruction Law; which enabled the deployment of the JSDF in Iraq from 2004 to 2008.<sup>17</sup>

One can notice a significant gap between two definitions of the use of 'reinterpretation'. On one hand there is Hughes, among others, who see 'reinterpretation' as

---

14 Wakefield (2014), p. 54.

15 Hughes (2009), p. 112.

16 Koizumi's speech at the Press Conference of 9 December 2003, as cited in Kersten (2016), p. 9.

17 Hughes (2009), pp. 112-114.

defined by results. Japan was not able to send its troops before 1992, but thereafter it was permitted under the UN Peacekeeping Operation Law; arguing that this was only possible by ‘reinterpreting’ the constitution. On the other hand there are legal scholars, among others, who focus more on ‘reinterpretation’ as the government crossing clear legal boundaries that it had established itself. Wakefield and Craig Martin (2014) examine both perspectives on using ‘reinterpretation’ and conclude that: “It is true that there have been incremental changes to Japan’s defense posture, but there has been a consistent understanding that such decisions on force adjustments fall within constitutional boundaries [...]. The government has never suggested that these defense posture adjustments constituted a ‘reinterpretation’, nor have they have they ever been understood to ‘reinterpret’ Article 9.”<sup>18</sup> Thus, in Wakefield and Martin’s view, Abe’s current reinterpretation differs from past adjustments in defense posture such as that of 1992; adjustments that scholars such as Hughes regard as ‘reinterpretations’ as well. The main argument Wakefield and Martin pose against regarding past adjustments in defense posture as ‘reinterpretations’ is that those past adjustments did not exceed constitutional boundaries. When taking the adjustments of 1992 as example, Wakefield and Martin argue that the deployment of the JSDF did expand Japan’s military capabilities, but did not constitute a use of force under international law; the purpose for its deployment consisted solely of peace keeping activities. Therefore, the two scholars argue that the adjustment in defense posture was within the boundaries of both international law and the constitution, and therefore should not be labeled as ‘reinterpretation’. In regard to the JSDF assistance in the belligerent occupation of Iraq in 2003, Wakefield and Martin note that although a use of force may have been constituted, it was not an example of a past ‘reinterpretation’; they see it as a violation of the constitution. What Wakefield and Martin do regard as a ‘reinterpretation’ is that of Abe’s, because it challenges the content of the constitution rather than being a mere adjustment in defense posture. Abe does surpass the boundaries of Article 9 with his reinterpretation and therefore should be differentiated from past adjustments in Japan’s defense posture by labeling only Abe’s attempt as ‘reinterpretation’. Furthermore, Wakefield and Martin accentuate that such a reinterpretation as Abe’s that alters the meaning of the constitution is unprecedented in Japanese politics.

---

18 Wakefield and Martin (2014), p. 3.

Although it is different from past adjustments in Japan's defense posture, the adjustment Abe wants to make through reinterpretation is – just as previous attempts in altering Japan's defense posture – highly influenced by foreign pressure. It is mainly because of this pressure that motivated Abe to realize not only a less constrained security policy, but also a reconstruction of these constraints that apply to it. In his eyes, Japan is ready for the next big step towards normalization of its security policy and leave Japan's postwar constrained sovereign state in the past. Rikki Kersten (2016) reassures that this change of policy does not imply that Japan is heading towards irresponsible militarism and aggression, which somewhat resonates in Gui's argument. Kersten does acknowledge the foreign pressure Hughes illustrated, and argues that it is due to the Obama administration that forced Japan towards normalization under Abe. Furthermore, Abe disguises his argument for Japan's right of collective self-defense under the notion of both Ozawa and Koizumi's collective international security, calling it a 'Proactive Contribution to Peace'. This is evident in the Joint Vision Statement of April 2015 issued by Obama and Abe:

Through the United States' Asia-Pacific Rebalance strategy, and Japan's policy of 'Proactive Contribution to Peace' based on the principle of international cooperation, we are working closely together to ensure a peaceful and prosperous future for the region and the world.<sup>19</sup>

However, Abe's new attitude towards Japan's foreign policy carries a conflict along with it. It is a conflict between the popular perceptions of national identity and political representations of this identity. Kersten states that: "This [conflict] is because the means that the Abe administration has utilized to appropriate this security normality for Japan have shattered the congruence between norms and security policy in Japan, and shaken the normative foundations of the post-war Japanese nation."<sup>20</sup> This is in accord with Wakefield's argument; Abe is violating the democratic principle of antimilitarism with his tactics to impose the right to collective self-defense, and opened a debate with it on Abe's focus on the substance of his constraints rather than the substance of the norms themselves. Kersten

---

19 From White House Press Office 2015, as cited in Kersten (2016), p 15.

20 Kersten (2016), p. 19.

illustrates that the power of pacifism still is a predominant norm in Japan, by noting that Abe forcibly had to include the noun ‘pacifism’ onto his proactive security policy. She concludes that this is an apparent constraint of Abe’s normative ambition.<sup>21</sup>

If Kersten’s claim of Abe current constraint on his initial ideology is true, then what are the true motivations for Shinzō Abe to push for such a constitutional reinterpretation? Jeffrey Hornung and Mike Mochizuki explain how Abe’s reinterpretation will have little effect in terms of strategy: “Under the new security legislation, Japan can better respond to security challenges across the full range of contingencies from peacetime to grey-zone situations to high-intensity conflicts. [...] However, [...] Japan continues to impose strict restrictions on the use of force, power projection capabilities, and arms exports, and its national legislature remains highly intrusive in operational decisions.”<sup>22</sup> Although Abe’s reinterpretation will enable new capabilities for the JSDF through legalizing the exercise of collective self-defense, Japan’s restrictions on the use of force will not alter Japan’s security strategy or attitude. As Hornung and Mochizuki argue, Japan will adopt the right of collective self-defense to a limited degree and will therefore remain bounded to its constitutional restrictions on belligerence. Considering the perspectives of Hornung, Mochizuki and Kersten, this poses the following question: is Abe forwarding his reinterpretation just to enflame public opinion, and if so; why?

#### *The theory of securitization by the Copenhagen School*

In the traditionalist sense, security equates with military issues and the use of force. This focus on the military and political aspects of security stems from the fixation on the military and nuclear obsessions of the Cold War. However, dissatisfaction of this perspective grew in the 1970s and 1980s when environmental and economic agendas in international relations rose, and later the concerns with identity issues and transnational crime developed in the 1990s. The particular politics of security became applicable to issues of non-traditional fields, which widened the scope of what was regarded as security. Besides the orthodox fields of the military and politics, nonmilitary issues within economic, environmental and societal sector became also considered as security issues. The book ‘Security: A New Framework for

---

21 Ibid.

22 Hornung and Mochizuki (2016), p. 109.

Analysis' (1998) by Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde – who are the original founders of the Copenhagen School of thought within security studies – provide an examination of the distinctive character and dynamics of security in the traditional and non-traditional fields, by offering a constructivist method for understanding the securitization processes in each field. In their book, the authors revisit to the question of who can securitize what and under what circumstances.

The fundamental aspect of security can be found in the traditional military-political context of international relations theory. Here, it solely surrounds the survival of a state. The original notion presumes that when a specific issue poses as an existential threat to a state, the urgent nature of the threat justifies the state's extraordinary measures as a means of its own survival. In other words, a threatening development can be prioritized by the representatives of a state by pronouncing an emergency condition; enabling the state to use extraordinary means to neutralize the threat. It is a more extreme version of a politicized issue; in contrast to securitization, politicization does not require emergency measures outside the normal bounds of political processes. Security frames a certain issue either as a special kind of politics or as 'above politics'. Theoretically, every issue can be placed on the spectrum ranging from non-politicized, to politicized and ultimately securitized. An existential threat can only be understood in the context of the particular character of the referent object in question, as defined by Buzan et al. (1998) It is a matter of subjectivity; the assessment of the situation determines whether the referent object is endangered by an issue or not. Furthermore, the nature of the threat differs greatly per sector and level of analysis.

The referent object – for example – in the military sector is often the state, but it can also be another kind of political entity. Traditional security studies regard all military affairs as matters of security, but that may not always be the case: "For many of the advanced democracies, defense of the state is becoming only one, and perhaps not even the main de facto, function of the armed forces. Their militaries may be increasingly trained and called upon to support routine world order activities, such as peacekeeping or humanitarian intervention, that cannot be viewed as concerning existential threats to their states or even as emergency action in the sense of suspending normal rules."<sup>23</sup> This argument is notably

---

23 Buzan et al. (1998), p. 22.

used against China's fear of Japan's remilitarization; although Abe's collective self-defense policy loosens the restrictions on the JSDF, the new policy only is aimed at Japan's peace keeping operations and global security. We will look closer at the role of the JSDF later on. Existential threats in the political sector are traditionally defined in respect of the constituting principle. This can be sovereignty, but sometimes it can be ideology of the state. Possible threats to the state's sovereignty can vary from anything that questions its recognition to its legitimacy or the governing authority. An example for this is the current immigration of Syrian refugees to states of the European Union. The referent objects of security are in this case the EU states, and the growing dismay of how the EU miscalculated the massive impact and consequences of the immigration process can be considered as a potential threat to the institutions that constitute the EU regime. It is notable that in comparison the military and political sectors differ in the characterization of their threats. This is the reason why the Copenhagen School separates the concept of security into different sectors; each sector has a distinct definition of security and threats. They argue that: "Sectors are views of the international system through a lens that highlights one particular aspect of the relationship and interaction among all of its constituent units."<sup>24</sup> Therefore is the general definition of security the survival of existential threats, but the existential threats are not the same across the different sectors. This means that different factors and aspects are specifically bound to each sector; thus making it necessary to analyze each sector individually. This also returns to the argument of the Copenhagen School to include the unconventional environmental, societal and economic sectors into security analyses.

#### *The societal sector as environment of security studies*

If we look at what has been written and said about the discourse of Article 9, one might conclude that there is a great emphasis on the securitization of the issue within either the political or military sectors, or both. However, the Copenhagen School argues that this is a flaw of post-Cold War security analysis. Although issues like that of Article 9 seem only to revolve in the military or political sector, the issue actually has another function for Japan as a whole. This is the often forgotten aspect of societal factors. They consist of vague and

---

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

elusive concepts for the majority in security studies, but that should not be an argument for a total dismissal of social aspects in their analyses.

It is a paradox that national security is the key concept for the whole field of security issues and little thought is given to the nation as the referent object for security. As stated before, the traditional referent object in security studies is the state. Where the military and political sectors focus on the state, the societal sector focuses more on the nation as the referent object. The nation and the state are not the same thing, but they are closely related to one other: “Societal security is closely related to, but nonetheless distinct from, political security, which is about the organizational stability of states, systems of government, and the ideologies that give governments and states their legitimacy.”<sup>25</sup> This results, however, in one practical problem; the state and the nation – a society of ‘the same’ people – are two different concepts. The state is a permanent body based on fixed territory and formal membership, and the nation – as in societal integration – is more a flexible phenomenon; societal integration can occur on micro and macro levels and might sometimes transcend outside state boundaries. Therefore, the Copenhagen School proposes to examine “the ideas and practices that identify individuals as member of a social group” within societal security analysis; which are principally *identities*.<sup>26</sup>

Thus, societal security surrounds the security of their survival as a community. That does not necessarily mean that this standard community of analysis is the nation. Although national identity is often presented as the dominant collective identity of a region, this is not always the case. Of course, the focus of societal security is on large self-sustaining identity groups, and one may argue that the dominant group is per definition the one that represents the region’s identity as a whole. For some nations – such as those of contemporary Europe – this is correct. The collective sense of being part of a nation and acknowledging the nation as the region’s unit of being constitutes national identity as the region’s collective identity. However, in other regions such as in Africa or the Middle East religious or racial groups are more relevant as identities than that of a nation. This is one of the reasons that renders the concept of ‘nation’ as ambiguous, and is disregarded by many scholars.<sup>27</sup> There is no universalized protocol of how individual nations are structured and operate. Instead of

---

25 Ibid., p. 119.

26 Ibid.



rejecting the concept of the nation as a focus of security studies, one should examine each nation separately to understand its social organization, characteristics and its attributes. A constructivist way to analyze nations is possible through the revolutionary concept of 'imagined communities' by Benedict Anderson (2006). Anderson argues that nationhood is not an abstract analytical tool that can be applied more to one nation than another. Nationhood and national identity involve objective factors such as language, location, political preferences and ideologies. Through the consensus of communities, people are able to conceptualize a national identity together with the construct of 'nation' itself.

In the case of Japan, national identity is a significant societal security issue; especially because of its unique character as first a 'modern' state in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, secondly because its aggressive Asian power during the Second World War and lastly because it has become a pacifist state closely related to the United States in the postwar era. Japanese nationalism was created and empowered by the prewar Japanese government in order to create a sense of uniqueness of the Japanese people with the purpose of legitimating their racial supremacy over other Asian races, and consequently legitimating the right to subject other people to Japanese government. After Japan's defeat in the Second World War, the new Japanese constitution bolstered the adoption of pacifist ideology; mainly serving as a guarantee for Japan not to repeat its wartime past. While there are, of course, diverse and often competing 'nationalisms' in Japan, nationalism which authorized Japan prewar and wartime ideologies now functioned as a way to commit the Japanese nation to the new postwar ideology of pacifism. The ideology of pacifism is therefore often regarded as part of the Japanese national identity. Both the rhetoric of Japanese nationalism - which originated at its most recognizable form in the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century - and postwar pacifism are two extreme nationalist discourses that still exist in Japanese thought considering nationhood and identity, and create tension in Japanese politics. This will become apparent when we discuss Abe's strategy and its reception by the left-wing. Again, regarding the case of the issue on collective self-defense, this thesis does not aim to downplay analyses that focus on the political and military sectors, but rather displays an additional layer of the societal sector within securitization theory. As Copenhagen School has explained in Chapter 8 of their book *Security: A New Framework of Analysis*, a security issue

---

27 Hagström (2015), p. 3.

can be involved in different sectors at the same time. The political and military sectors are traditional topics of discussion when it comes to security issues. This thesis will expose the third dimension of the societal sector on the issue, while acknowledging its involvement in the traditional sectors.

*Critique on the Copenhagen School's societal sector theory*

However, the notion of a societal sector within the Copenhagen School's model of security affairs has received its share of criticism. Bill McSweeney notes that the Copenhagen School describes society and societal security as “projected realities.”<sup>28</sup> He argues that within the societal sector anyone can make claims on its shared identity and possible threats towards it, entailing the ambiguity of societal identity – which national identity is one form of. Who is the society? Who is ‘us’? In comparison with the political and military sectors, McSweeney asserts that the societal sector lacks a clear referent and verifiable actors. Therefore, he states: “It is clear that ‘societal security’ is the object of an *assumption* about its referent, not the object of inquiry.”<sup>29</sup> Moreover, McSweeney undermines the idea of ‘identity’ as a societal given; “Identity is not a fact of society; it is a process of negotiation among people and interest groups. Being English, Irish, or Danish is a consequence of a political process, and it is that process, not the label symbolizing it, which constitutes the reality that needs explication.”<sup>30</sup> This is a solid argument. In this regard, the Copenhagen School did underestimate the complexity of identity formation within societies when incorporating the societal sector within their framework. However, societal identity as it is defined by the Copenhagen School might perform in the case of Japan's national identity. In this case, the referent object of securitization for both the prime minister and his opponents is closely associated with the ‘peace’ constitution. Japan's pacifist constraint is prescribed by the Japanese constitution and therefore – and thereby – a part of Japan's societal identity. On one side of the debate are the Japanese pacifists who make the constitution the referent, by pointing to a threat discourse including notions that Japan will become entrapped in wars if

---

28 McSweeney (1996), p. 83.

29 Ibid., p. 84.

30 Ibid., p. 85.

the article is rescinded, changing the pacifist character of the nation. At the other side of the spectrum is Prime Minister Abe who distinguishes Japanese pacifism not as the referent object of securitization, but as a threat to Japan's defense. We will notice how Abe thinks that the current constitution harms Japan's national identity and how the securitization process of his opponents also is involved in national identity in the following sections. The debates surrounding collective self-defense and Article 9 therefore involve the issue of national identity as well, which revolves within the societal sector. Abe's framing of Japanese pacifism – particularly as interpreted from Article 9 by the CBL – as a threat to Japan's future security policies will be examined in the next section. Thus, McSweeney's critique on the Copenhagen School's notion of societal security being too elusive for an object of research might be legitimate. Still, in the case of Japan's national identity we are able to set the boundaries of discussion due to the fact that Japanese pacifism is prescribed by the constitution.

### **Shinzō Abe's thoughts on constitutional reinterpretation**

In order to understand Abe's ideological perspective on Japan's right to collective self-defense, we should look at his publications about the matter. The following two texts are the subjects of examination because both of these texts are firstly written by the actor who is securitizing the issue of constitutional reinterpretation. Abe expresses his opinion surrounding the issue in both texts; which helps to understand his motives and rhetoric. In other words; the texts are self-identifying Abe as the securitizing actor. Secondly, both texts were carefully chosen; the first text is written before Abe became prime minister and the second text is a publication he wrote while he was in office as prime minister. These texts were specifically chosen so it can be analyzed whether Abe's perspective on the matter has changed or not over the years. Furthermore, the change of attitude of the left-wing has to be understood through the logic of their opponent. As Buzan et al. note: "[r]egardless of whether an analyst finds that an actor's disposition toward high or low thresholds leads to correct assessments, this disposition has real effects. And other actors need to grasp the logic this unit follows."<sup>31</sup> To understand a shift in attitude of the left-wing means to understand the logic of Abe's process of and motives for securitizing the issue of

---

31 Buzan et al. (1998), p. 30.

constitutional reinterpretation; particularly in the case of securitization where the governing actor is operating in a different mode. The sudden change in the left-wing's perspective on the issue of the constitution is a direct consequence of the rhetoric Abe uses in the texts.

Firstly, we should examine a publication which he wrote prior to his position as prime minister of Japan. Together with diplomat and political commentator Hisahiko Okazaki, Shinzō Abe showed his initial views on collective self-defense with their book *The Determination to Protect this Country (Kono kuni wo mamoru ketsui, 2004)*. Abe was at this time (acting) Secretary-General and Chairman of Reform Promotion Headquarters of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP).<sup>32</sup> In the second chapter of their book, Abe and Okazaki discuss their views on the Japan-U.S. alliance and Japan's right to collective self-defense.

The tone of the chapter is set by their argument that over the years global politics has turned to a U.S.-centered arena; characterized by the 'war on terrorism' which was initiated by the Bush administration. Abe points out that although the economic ties with the U.S. were not at its best at the time; Japan's shown support in the 'war on terrorism' was carried out smoothly according to U.S. officials. Therefore Abe argues that this ideological bond with the U.S. – nurtured by the 'war on terrorism' – is the backbone of the Japan-U.S. alliance. He states that Japan's engagement within the alliance is vital for Japan's involvement in international politics and that it is imperative to continue to cooperate with the U.S. at all times.<sup>33</sup> The two main reasons Abe mentions to support the U.S. in their endeavors are the ambition to counter illegal production of weapons of mass destruction, and that Japan will enjoy an improved international status by maintaining the alliance. The latter is emphasized by the threat Japan 'suffers' from North Korea, or as Abe frames it; the threat *East Asia* suffers from North Korea. As Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary in the Yoshirō Mori and Junichiro Koizumi Cabinets from 2000 to 2003, Abe stated that Japan is obligated to react to North Korea's missile attacks and should not merely depend on support of the U.S. Although the U.S. is committed to aid Japan when it is attacked directly, Abe asserts that Japan should take action by itself and should not wait for a reaction of the U.S.

---

32 From the official site of the Japanese Government: Prime minister of Japan and His Cabinet. "Profile of the Prime minister." See Bibliography.

33 Translated by the author. From Abe and Okazaki (2004), p. 57.

This shows not only Abe's view on the alliance, but also what kind of role Japan should take in the East Asian region in case of an attack by another nation such as North Korea. Then Abe continues to assess Japan's dependency on the U.S. In order to secure assistance of the U.S. in this kind of situation, prime minister Koizumi had stated that Japan would support the U.S. in its regional policies in Asia and its war against terrorism.<sup>34</sup> This shows the essence of the alliance according to Abe, as it is prescribed in the old Japan-U.S. security treaty of 1951, which was amended in 1960. The basis of both the treaty and the alliance is *mutual effort*; fueled by a 'sense of solidarity, rather than a piece of paper', thus implying the one-sidedness of formal wording of the treaty.<sup>35</sup> Abe continues to argue that the security treaty was composed hastily by the preceding generation, whom did not take the future of the alliance into consideration. Japan should take its share of responsibility within the alliance and revisit the spirit of the treaty. He speaks of a possible 'blood alliance', since young men from Japan should shed blood as the youngmen of the U.S. ('young men' "*wagamono*"; 'blood alliance' "*chi no doumei*").<sup>36</sup> If Japan could take its responsibility in this way, the alliance would be more likely bilateral as – according to Abe – it was initially intended to be.

Abe and Okazaki continue to explain the importance of strengthening the Japan-U.S. alliance, Japan's role within the alliance, and even beyond that. With Japan's response to the 'war on terrorism', Japan had ended an ostensible troubled relation with the White House and revamped its alliance with the U.S. In Abe's point of view, this alliance can only become stronger and sustainable when Japan tackles its 'problem with right to collective self-defense' (*Shuudanteki jieiken no mondai*), or in other words: Japan's *constitution*.<sup>37</sup> Abe argues that Japan *does* have the right to collective self-defense under Article 51 of the UN Charter, but is being obstructed by Article 9 of its own constitution. The CLB is therefore wrong in their assessment of interpreting the constitution, and Abe is determined to rectify this error,

---

34 Abe and Okazaki (2004), p. 59.

35 Ibid., p. 61.

36 Ibid., p. 63.

37 Ibid., p. 73.

which he identifies as ‘the responsibility of our generation’ (*sedai no sekinin*).<sup>38</sup> He realizes that this change in attitude will not only change Japan’s role as an ally of the U.S., but also will change Japan’s role in Asia. Although Abe regards the U.S. as a key actor vis-à-vis regional economy and security, he asserts that Japan should take a leading role in the East Asian region. He mentions the growing pressure from China as the prominent factor for Japan to adopt a more rigid presence in the region, as an act of counter-balancing China’s expanding influence.<sup>39</sup> It is considered as an issue of power relations and influence, which Okazaki clarifies with his following statement: “[Japan had missed a chance. If Japan had recognized its right to collective self-defense one year earlier, it would have become one of the world’s three major powers who are engaged in the current war in Iraq.]”<sup>40</sup>

As the prime minister of Japan, Abe has published a second book concerning his standpoint on Japan’s issues such as collective self-defense; *Towards a Beautiful Country* (*Utsukushii Kuni he*, 2006). Within his fourth chapter ‘The Japan-U.S. alliance’, he describes his thoughts about the alliance, his opinion on the U.S. role in world politics and as Japan’s precious ally, the role of the JSDF, similarities between Japan’s and Germany’s postwar situations, and – above all – his argument of Japan’s right to collective self-defense. This chapter possesses a tone that is similar to the chapter of *The Determination to Protect this Country*. Abe stresses again the importance of Japan’s alliance with the U.S. by showing his solidarity with the U.S. in their ‘war on terrorism’. He justifies the involvement of the U.S. in affairs overseas such as Afghanistan and Iraq by claiming that the U.S. is fighting for a righteous cause; offering freedom and democracy there were it is needed. Abe describes the power of the U.S. in global politics as that of a *Leviathan*; thus referencing, on an international level, Hobbes’ perfect government in the form of a commonwealth which strives to achieve peace and social unity through *social contract*; a voluntary agreement among individuals which creates an organized society in which all members invest in securing their mutual protection and welfare. According to Abe, the notion of a Leviathan is in this sense comparable to the U.S. behavior in postwar world politics; the U.S. has developed itself

---

38 Ibid., p. 76.

39 Ibid., p. 82.

40 Translated by the author. From Abe and Okazaki (2004), p. 86.

as a world leader in the postwar era through expanding its dominance within the world vis-à-vis its military power, ideology and culture. Especially considering its fundamental beliefs of freedom and democracy is the U.S. determined to exercise its power to ensure that U.S. values will remain dominant within the world; Abe shows this by addressing George W. Bush's presidency and his motives for entailing the war against terrorism.

This brings Abe to the topic of the Japanese constitution and the Japanese self-defense forces. The U.S. has given Japan the opportunity to regain trust from other countries by prescribing Japan's strive for a peaceful and righteous society in the preamble of Japan's postwar constitution. However, Abe argues that this forced commitment has a downside as well; committing a society forcefully to build particularly upon peace jeopardizes the safety and survival of the people.<sup>41</sup> Certainly, this also refers to the limitations brought upon the JSDF in its activities. Under the Yoshida Cabinet, the Japanese Police Reserve (*keisatsu yobitai*) has been reorganized as the Japanese security forces (*hoantai*) and has later become the JSDF.<sup>42</sup> It was greatly discussed to what degree these forces could exercise the right of force and how these forces could coexist under the constitutional Article 9. Abe asserts that these limitations should be removed from the JSDF, because Japan strives to maintain its own security and should take their own responsibility when it comes to its own defense.<sup>43</sup>

At last, Abe comes to the same conclusion as he did in *The Determination to Protect this Country*, with the same kind of arguments. He did not change his stance on expanding the JSDF capabilities, and might even emphasize the impotence of the JSDF today even more as Prime minister. By pointing out the ongoing issues surrounding constitutional limitations on defense – such as Japan's missile defense, securitizing Japan's waters and the proliferation of arms in Japanese territory – he displays the urge to revise the constitutional perception of defense self. What is defense and did the meaning of defense change over the years? Is a preemptive strike a form of defense, offense or perhaps both? Abe is aware of these

---

41 Abe (2006), p. 122.

42 Ibid., p. 124.

43 Ibid., p. 125.

questions regarding security, and poses a solution – albeit extreme – to Japan’s seemingly outdated constitution.

What is remarkable about Abe’s argument in both of these texts is that he frames collective self-defense as an ideological statement rather than a strategic option for Japan’s security. Abe portrays the alliance with the U.S. sort of as a legacy that has to be maintained in order for Japan to survive the ‘threats’ of North Korea and China, rather than a foundation for improving diplomatic relations with the two nations. This brings us to Abe’s careful framing of the collective self-defense issue. He clearly stated that Japan should have the right to collective self-defense, and that the Japanese constitution represses Japan from abandoning its typical postwar *laissez-faire* security posture. However, this was the very purpose of Japan’s postwar constitution. Furthermore, he attempts to frame the issue of contemporary security as the result of historical events and ideologies. For example, Abe mentions in *Towards a Beautiful Country* that Japan’s situation is similar that of Germany. This can be considered as a constructivist approach – with Abe analyzing both cases of postwar Japan and Germany and ultimately comparing both cases, but he focuses only on those aspects which are in favor of his ideas. While too complex to consider here, Abe did not explore – for example – the Nazi wartime past in German thought and Japan’s wartime past in Japanese thought. A controversy such as that of the Yasukuni shrine could never occur in Germany due to Germany’s different stance towards its wartime past. Abe did not include any of such notions in his works, rendering his seemingly constructivist approach insufficient. Therefore, Abe’s careful framing of the issue makes it – along with the sense of urgency he attaches to it – a matter of *securitization*, as defined by the Copenhagen School of Security Studies.

As discussed before, a securitized issue requires emergency measures outside the normal bounds of political processes (hence Abe’s unconstitutional push for reinterpretation) and is driven by an existential threat. From Abe and Okazaki’s chapter we can conclude that they are framing North Korea and China as an existential threat, and maybe even the pressure of U.S. security policies. Also the referent object becomes evident in the chapter; which is the Japanese nation-state. However, the answer to the question of what the securitized issue in this case is more complex. One could argue that Abe tries to securitize Japan’s right to collective self-defense. This could be the case, if only Abe and Okazaki posed a more concrete plan to achieve this goal. The right to collective self-defense is of course the



goal in their endeavor, but the lacking of an outlined plan and hypothesis of what will happen to Japan and its neighboring states hint that this might not be the case. If we look at the tone and language of the text, we can see that Abe is referring to Japan as *wareware*; or 'we'. He uses the phrases 'our responsibility' and 'our young men' to refer to JSDF soldiers; thus framing the right to collective self-defense as a *necessity for the survival of Japan as a nation*. Therefore, what Abe actually is securitizing is a specific aspect of *national identity*: Japan's pacifist attitude in international disputes undermines its capacity to act as a normal nation, thereby threatening both the security (in traditional terms) and the identity or 'spirit' of Japan, which explains the question why one should change a constitution in general and the backlash Abe encountered while arguing constitutional reinterpretation. By this means, one can argue that Abe is *reforming* Japan's national identity into one that is more adapted to the current international arena of geopolitics – or more in line with U.S. standards – by addressing Japan and its citizens as a *nation*.

If a key political actor such as Abe attempts to justify the extreme measure of altering the meaning of the constitution, which is nothing less than *the foundation of the state*, it is logical that the discussion of 'who are we' – or 'who are we now' – is being invoked. If the postwar pacifist approach is outdated, then what approach should Japan take? These questions are directed to the nation rather than the state, since it involves the identity of the nation; which a democratic state should represent *in theory*. This brings us to the reaction of the political left-wing in Japan.

### **The emergence of the Alternative Left**

The Japanese political left is mainly characterized by its posture of maintaining and defending vis-à-vis pacifism in Japan. The general consensus among left-wing politicians and other activists is that Article 9 of the Japanese constitution is carrying the ideology of pacifism for a reason; although the article was forced upon Japan in the early postwar period together with the rest of the constitution, the idea of striving for peace through pacifism has become a pillar within Japanese post-war thought and national identity. Wartime memorial museums such as Hiroshima and Nagasaki promote this ideology through displaying the horrors of war, in the hope that these horrors will stay in the past and not be repeated in the future. The Atomic Bomb Museum in Nagasaki (*Nagasaki Genbaku Shiriyōkan*) even let their visitor sign a commitment for the future; the promise that the visitor will support the cause for living in a

peaceful world which is free of nuclear weapons. This is the very message the Japanese political left aims to hold on to. Therefore, the Japanese political left activists – especially the extreme left activists – are regarded as Japan’s pacifists. In order to define ‘the Japanese left-wing’ and its activists, we should examine the voices of the left-wing. These voices will show how the left-wing is structured and organized in Japan.

Pacifism is one of the most identifiable pillars of the Japanese left-wing ideology. However, Yasuhiro Izumikawa explains that not only pacifism is fueling the opinion of antimilitarism: “I argue that antimilitarism is not a monolithic concept. Rather, it consists of three elements: pacifism, antitraditionalism, and the fear of entrapment.”<sup>44</sup> According to Izumikawa, these elements will explain Japan’s unwillingness in playing an active military role overseas, which is also part of the discussion on collective self-defense. In the collective self-defense discussion, the fear of entrapment is represented through its alliance with the U.S. The fear is grounded in the situation when Japan has its right to collective self-defense, Japan risks involving itself in unnecessary – or, fruitless – conflict through U.S. agenda. Secondly, there is the anti-traditionalist sentiment. This ideology opposes to traditionalism; which is the belief that the Japanese people have unique social values and that these values were weakened by the postwar U.S. occupation. Traditionalists strive to reinstitute these values by amending the constitution. Leading scholars in Japanese political ideology argue that the postwar Japanese politics can be conceptualized as an ideological battle between these traditionalists and the opposing anti-traditionalists.<sup>45</sup> Izumikawa notes that the third element of pacifism comes closest to what is regarded as anti-militarism; “in the sense that Japan’s pacifists detest military organizations.”<sup>46</sup> This is true for the group who genuinely believe in the Japanese philosophy of postwar pacifism; on the political spectrum of political left and right, they are considered to be the extreme left. What we will discover is a change of rhetoric of this extreme left. What we will witness is a leftist rhetoric which has changed the very nature of left-wing politics and how this new group within the left-wing has differentiated itself from the extreme left by transforming the leftist characteristic notions on

---

44 Izumikawa (2010), p. 125.

45 Ibid., p. 130.

46 Ibid., p. 129.

pacifism, anti-traditionalism and fear of entrapment into a new perspective within Japanese political thought. However, before we will define the new left group, we must define the hard left from which the new group wants to differentiate itself with.

In their book *The Abe Experiment and the future of Japan: Don't repeat history*, Junji Banno and Jiro Yamaguchi argue that the concept of peace ought to be reconsidered. According to Banno and Yamaguchi, defending the Japanese constitution – with Article 9 in particular – has become a mindless exercise for many left-wing politicians and activists. For example, Japan is still unable to post-war issues such as the international disputes surrounding the Takeshima and Senkaku Islands. The two scholars argue that this is due to Japan's irrational and blind support of peace. In the period immediately after the war, pacifism has become a major value for Japan's reconstruction. However, Banno and Yamaguchi deemed this postwar framework of peace shallow, and therefore an irrational ideology to follow as it is constructed now.<sup>47</sup> The promotion of pacifism was ultimately the manner of accepting Japan's defeat. This kind of rhetoric points to the concept of the James J. Orr's book *The victim as hero*; the Japanese people have adopted the notion that during the war the people were the victim of a militarist government and therefore celebrate and promote pacifism in remembrance of these victims. Nevertheless, Banno and Yamaguchi argue that this form of pacifism was empty. As for Abe and his push for constitutional reinterpretation, both Banno and Yamaguchi declare the prime minister as “anti-intellectual” and in negligence of history; full of self-absorption and narcissism.<sup>48</sup> They too feel that Abe is telling history as it is a factual story: “There have never been a previous time when history has been politicized to such extent.”<sup>49</sup> Despite their dislike of Abe and his undertakings, both Banno and Yamaguchi agree that the main problem is the lack of left-wing elite who can oppose politicians such as Abe. They consider this shortcoming has been represented in the Diet's failing under the rule of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ); which preceded Abe's current LDP cabinet.

Political actors that are considered as the ‘hard left’ are the aforementioned political party DPJ and the student organization Students Emergency Action for Liberal Democracy –

---

47 Banno and Yamaguchi (2016), p. 28.

48 Ibid., pp. 115-116.

49 Ibid., p. 116.

or SEALDs – among others. These two groups belong to the radical left-wing, as they argue for constitutionalism. In contrast to the beliefs of Banno and Yamaguchi, this hard left holds the constitutional procedure as particularly important. On its official website, the DPJ shows their objective in regard to the constitution: “[...] we shall embody the fundamental principles of the Constitution: popular sovereignty, respect for fundamental human rights, and pacifism.”<sup>50</sup> A similar statement can be found on the official website of SEALDs:

Seventy years after the war, our freedom and rights have been defended by the Constitution of Japan, along with our history and traditions. We will oppose to the current government and the Liberal Democratic Party, and their draft of constitutional amendment to deny the principles of the constitution fundamentally. And we, from the standpoint of protecting the practice and philosophy of the Constitution of Japan, will support politics that is very based on these constitutional principles, that is, the politics to respect the freedom and rights of the individual.<sup>51</sup>

The excerpts from the DPJ and SEALDs websites show how both organizations relate the principles of the constitution to the freedom and human rights of the Japanese citizens. According to their belief, the content of the constitution establishes an inviolable pillar of postwar Japan. Despite criticism on this rhetoric – such as that of Banno and Yamaguchi – these organizations maintain their support of constitutionalism, even after the debate of Abe’s constitutional reinterpretation.

The ideology of the new alternative left derived from this group, but this new group adjusted their hard left beliefs with a new rhetoric. Masahiro Sakata and Miho Aoi share the Banno and Yamaguchi’s thoughts on postwar pacifism. They both have expressed their notions in an issue of the monthly left-wing progressive political magazine *Sekai*. However, Sakata and Aoi’s perspective differentiate themselves from the hard left on crucial aspects. For instance, they argue that there has to be a system of minimum level proficiency

---

50 “The Democratic Party of Japan” (2016). See Bibliography.

51 Translated by the author. From SEALDs official website: “Sealds” (2016). See Bibliography.

regarding Japan's self-defense; or a "minimal self-defense potential" (*mainā jie-i-ken*).<sup>52</sup> In other words, they believe that Japan ought to have rights to defend the nation to some extent. They acknowledge the fact that among the members of the United Nations, Japan is the only member that does not exercise its right of collective self-defense under the UN Charter; a fact Shinzō Abe has pointed out frequently in his books. The restrictions on self-defense render the Japanese government incapable to manage issues concerning defense policy properly. Sakata even predicts a crisis if these current restrictions remain in effect.<sup>53</sup> Therefore, Sakata proposes to discuss the limitations of Article 9 in regard to collective self-defense, rather than discussing whether Article 9 'fits' into the system of international politics and security. This is a major shift in framing the issue from a left-wing perspective; in a way, Sakata recognizes the ineffectiveness of Article 9 within the contemporary Japanese state. He acknowledges Abe's argument that Japan is in a disadvantageous position when it comes to national self-defense, with Article 9 as its main cause. However, Sakata and Aoi do not agree that Japan is in need for exercising its right to collective self-defense; they consider that argument as a push for Japan's remilitarization. In that sense, they maintain their characteristic left-wing perspective of antimilitarism, but acknowledge the threat of entrapment Abe described in his works.

By acknowledging this threat, this new alternative left has transformed the hard left pacifist ideology through Abe's rhetoric of defending the nation from existential threats. As described before, Abe has securitized the issue of Article 9 through taking extreme measures by arguing for a constitutional reinterpretation. The point when the left-wing was split into a hard left and an alternative left can be demonstrated by the arguments of Banno and Yamaguchi. Firstly, the emptiness of the pacifist ideology has been acknowledged by the alternative leftists; Sakata and Aoi both argue that Article 9 has become a problem vis-à-vis Japanese security, thus recognizing the dangers of following pacifist ideology blindly. Second, Banno and Yamaguchi support the rise of a leftist elite who can oppose to unconstitutional efforts by people such as Abe. However, through the discussion surrounding Abe's reinterpretation, the left-wing has been weakened by splitting it into two groups; a new hard

---

52 Sakata and Aoi (2015), p. 77.

53 Ibid., p. 74.

left and a new alternative left. Another perspective to see this is as a shift from the political extreme left towards moderate left.

## **Conclusion**

The Japanese left-wing has shifted through the constitutional reinterpretation as articulated by Prime Minister Shinzō Abe. This thesis has shown how Abe's argument of a constitutional reinterpretation had initiated the shift of the left-wing directly. First, we have determined Abe's stance on constitutional reinterpretation by analyzing his perspective on Japan's right to collective self-defense. His books contain a strong ideological statement, namely that Japan's current defense policy is weak and should continue to expand the capabilities of the JSDF. In the context of the Copenhagen School's securitization framework, Abe is securitizing the issue of Article 9 through undertaking excessive measures by means of advocating for constitutional reinterpretation. These excessive measures and urgency alter the nature of this issue from politicalization to securitization; a state of matters in which the survival of the referent object (which is in this case Japan's defense posture and therefore the nation-state itself) is endangered by an immediate threat (which is in this case insecurity in the region, mainly caused by China and North Korea). In this context, the issue of collective self-defense resides in the traditional political and military sectors within security studies. However, what this thesis has offered is a third dimension of the matter; which is the societal sector. This became noticeable when we examined the left-wing reaction on Abe's push for constitutional reinterpretation. The new alternative left has realized that Japanese postwar pacifism – along with Article 9 which prescribes pacifism – does not suffice when dealing with Japan's current security environment; rendering the Japanese state ineffective in properly managing international affairs. Within the model of securitization, we can establish a shift in their attitude. As for a long period after the war, the Japanese left-wing was determined to advocate for pacifism and hinder a revision of Article 9 of the constitution. We can identify that this old posture consisted of a clear referent object; which is in this case Article 9 and Japan's pacifism, and an existential threat; which is Abe's push for constitutional interpretation and expanding the capabilities of the JSDF. The shift occurred when left-wing activists acknowledge that Article 9 – and therefore Japanese pacifism – is failing in both politics and rhetoric. The fall of the DPJ represented for many people the failure of Japanese pacifism in both aspects. If we place this new attitude of the left-wing, we can establish the

following: the existential threat has become the failing rhetoric of Japanese pacifism and the referent object has become Japanese pacifism itself. Sakata and Aoi already gave it away by naming their article "This is a constitutional issue". Through acknowledging the ineffectiveness of postwar Japanese pacifist ideology in Japan's current security environment, an alternative left has disassociated itself from its 'hard left' roots and emerged as a new entity on the political spectrum. Therefore we can conclude that Shinzō Abe's attempt of reinterpreting the constitution had a major impact on the political left-wing; by enflaming his opponents, Abe has successfully weakened the political left by creating discord in how the left should tackle the problem of 'filling' Japan's empty pacifism. It has divided the left into two camps; the hard left who still uphold the content of the constitution, and the new alternative left who was influenced by Abe's rhetoric of existential threats and securitization. Abe's influence can be seen in the alternative leftist argument of allowing Japan to use minimal war potential to defend itself. This can be considered as an act of counter-securitization; while Abe securitizes the issue of national identity and Article 9, the left alternative counter with the same logic in the favor of the left camp.

Through the shift in attitude of the political extreme left, the whole discussion on Japanese defense tends to change. The split between hard left and alternative left renders the left-wing a less strong opponent of Abe and his supporters. As Hornung and Mochizuki pointed out earlier, Abe's reinterpretation will not have a major impact on Japan's defense strategy. The debate of his reinterpretation, however, did have a great impact on his leftist opponents and has enflamed public opinion. Did Abe's effort to reinterpret the constitution mark the end of Japanese pacifism? Only time will tell if the divided left-wing is able to counterbalance future right-wing endeavors. This thesis did however establish the following; although Abe's motives and arguments for constitutional reinterpretation were not correct (as Wakefield mentioned amongst others), the security claim Abe proposed influenced the perspectives of the Japanese left-wing greatly. A part of the left-wing realized that Japan's 'empty pacifism' was not sufficient enough to counter Abe's security claim, thus they were forced to reshape their own identity as part of the political left. Consequentially, this has an impact on the meaning of pacifism in Japan's national identity as well since pacifism is one of its major pillars in Japan's postwar society. As these left-wing activists have come to realize that Article 9 is becoming more and more of a problem today, a new moderate left group within a newly structured left-wing is now challenged to reinvent itself within the political

arena; not only to regain its credibility as the opposition of Abe's cabinet, but also to remain as a unit on its own within the leftist camp.

## Bibliography

Abe, Shinzō, and Hisahiko Okazaki. (2004). "Nichibei Doumei to Shudanteki Jieiken (日本国と  
自衛権) [The Japan-U.S. alliance and the right of Collective Self-Defense]," in *Kono Kuni wo  
Mamoru Ketsui (この国を守る決意)[The Determination for Protecting this Country]*. Tokyo:  
Fusousha (フサウシャ): pp. 52-97.

Abe, Shinzō. (2006). "Nichibei Doumei (日本国と自衛権)[The Japan-U.S. Alliance], in *Utsukushii Kuni he  
(美しい国へ) [Towards a Beautiful Country]*. Tokyo: Bunshun Shinsho (ぶんしん): pp 110-144.

Abe, Shinzō. (2007). *Speeches and Statements by Prime minister Shinzo Abe*. Provisional  
translation. Accessed on 4 January 2016, from  
[http://japan.kantei.go.jp/abespeech/2007/01/26speech\\_e.html](http://japan.kantei.go.jp/abespeech/2007/01/26speech_e.html).

Anderson, B. (2006). *Imagined communities : Reflections on the origin and spread of  
nationalism* (Rev. ed. [with a new afterword]. ed.). London [etc.]: Verso.

Banno, Junji, and Jirō Yamaguchi (2016). *The Abe experiment and the future of Japan*. Trans.  
Arthur Stockwin. Folkestone: Renaissance Books.

Buzan, B. and Wæver, O. and Wilde, J. (1998). *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*.  
Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner Pub.

Buzan, B. and Wæver, O. (1997). "Slippery Contradictory? Sociologically Untenable? The  
Copenhagen School Replies," in *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 23 (2): pp. 241-50.

Gui, Yongtao. (2013). "Abe's Push Toward Collective Self-Defense Is Alarming," in *Global Asia*,  
50-52.

"The Democratic Party Of Japan". 2016. *Dpj.Or.Jp*. Accessed on 22 May 2016, from  
[https://www.dpj.or.jp/english/about\\_us/philosophy.html](https://www.dpj.or.jp/english/about_us/philosophy.html).

Hornung, Jeffrey W., and Mike M. Mochizuki. "Japan: Still An Exceptional U.S. Ally." *The  
Washington Quarterly* 39, no. 1 (2016): 95-116.

Hughes, Christopher W., and Ellis S. Krauss (2007). "Japan's New Security Agenda," in  
*Survival: Global Politics and Strategy*, Vol. 49:2, pp. 157-176.

Hughes, C. (2009). *Japan's remilitarization*. Abingdon: Routledge.



Hughes, Christopher W. (2012). "The Democratic Party of Japan's New (but Failing) Grand Security Strategy: From "Reluctant Realism" to "Resentful Realism"?," in *The Journal of Japanese Studies*, Vol. 38 (1), pp. 109-140.

Hughes, Christopher W. (2015). *Japan's foreign and security policy under the 'Abe Doctrine' : New dynamism or new dead end?* (Palgrave pivot). Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

Hughes, Christopher W., and Ellis S. Krauss. (2007). "Japan's New Security Agenda," in *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy*, Vol. 49:2, pp. 157-176.

Izumikawa, Yasuhiro. "Explaining Japanese Antimilitarism: Normative and Realist Constraints on Japan's Security Policy." *International Security* 35, no. 2 (2010): 123-60.

Kersten, Rikki. (2016). "Contextualising Australia–Japan security cooperation: The normative framing of Japanese security policy," in *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 70(1), 6-23.

Kitaoka, S. (2014). "A 'proactive contribution to peace' and the right of collective self-defense: The development of security policy in the Abe administration," in *Asia Pacific Review*, Vol 21 (2), pp. 1-18.

Mcsweeney, Bill. "Identity and Security: Buzan and the Copenhagen School (Book Review)." *Review of International Studies* 22, no. 1 (1996): 81-93.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. Translated. "Cabinet Decision on Development of Seamless Security Legislation to Ensure Japan's Survival and Protect Its People." *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan*. N.p., n.d. Web. Accessed on 17 Jan. 2016, from [http://www.mofa.go.jp/fp/nsp/page23e\\_000273.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/fp/nsp/page23e_000273.html).

Orr, J. (2001). *The victim as hero*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

Prime minister of Japan and His Cabinet. "Profile of the Prime minister" N.d. Web. Accessed on 23 Sep. 2015, from [http://japan.kantei.go.jp/96\\_abe/meibo/daijin/abe\\_e.html](http://japan.kantei.go.jp/96_abe/meibo/daijin/abe_e.html).

Prime minister of Japan and His Cabinet. "The Constitution of Japan." N.d. Web. Accessed on 23 Sep. 2015, from [http://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution\\_and\\_government\\_of\\_japan/constitution\\_e.html](http://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution_and_government_of_japan/constitution_e.html).

Sakata, Masahiro, and Miho Aoi (2014). "Kore wa kenpō mondai da (この憲法問題) [This is a constitutional issue]," in *Sekai* (世界), Issue 5 (2014): 70-79.

"Sealds". 2016. *Sealds.Com*. Accessed on 22 May 2016, from <http://www.sealds.com/#opinion>.

United Nations Official Website (n.d.). Chapter VII | United Nations. Accessed on 20 Dec. 2015, from

<http://www.un.org/en/sections/un-charter/chapter-vii/index.html>.

Wakefield, Bryce A. (2014). "Abe's Law: Domestic Dimensions of Japan's Collective Self-Defense Debate," in Goto S. (Ed.) *Japan's Vision for East Asia*. Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. 44-60.

Wakefield, Bryce A., and Craig Martin (2014). "Reexamining "Myths" About Japan's Collective Self-Defense Change - What critics (and the Japanese public) do understand about Japan's constitutional reinterpretation," in *The Asia Pacific Journal*, September 8, 2014.