

BOOK REVIEW

Japan's Evolving Security Policy: Militarisation within a Pacifist Tradition, by Kyoko Hatakeyama.
London: Routledge, 2021, E-book: 178pp.

Kyoko Hatakeyama's *Japan's Evolving Security Policy: Militarisation within a Pacific Tradition* is a helpful addition to the body of literature that seeks to explain Japan's national security decision making. Adopting an international relations constructivist framework, the book focuses on the interplay of Japanese domestic political parties and the role of international norms in governing changes to Japan's security policy. The author is a professor of international relations at the Graduate School of International Studies and Regional Development, University of Niigata Prefecture. The book draws on the research she conducted while training for her PhD at Macquarie University in Australia and as a visiting scholar at Leiden University in the Netherlands. That research was originally published in journal articles and book chapters, covering a range of topics related to Japanese policy decisions regarding arms exports and regional leadership. Themes and data from this previously published work are brought together with new material to deliver a fresh evaluation of how and why Japan has re-emerged as a global political-military power and pivotal strategic partner in the Indo-Pacific. The book focuses on three specific areas of Japan's security policy: arms trade restrictions, participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations, and enlarged military roles in international security.

Japan's Evolving Security Policy offers a richly detailed analysis that specifically fills two gaps in the literature regarding Japan's security policy. First, it presents evidence to show how ideational competition between Japan's political parties has shaped its national security policy. This is important because the existing literature in English has, with the exception of the body of analysis examining the leading Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) from 2009 to 2012, mostly focused on competition within the dominant Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). While the LDP's consistent control of the government makes intraparty contests very important, Hatakeyama aptly demonstrates how junior partner parties have influenced the decisions of LDP-led coalition governments and how opposition parties have contributed in restraining the LDP from implementing its policy and legal preferences.

The book is even more interesting as it fills a second gap. Here it explains how the localization of international norms has encouraged Japan to broaden its security policy and assigned new military roles to the Self-Defense Forces (SDF). Much of the existing constructivist discourse regarding Japan's national security decision making is focused on how domestic norms have governed or restrained policy. These examinations can be simplified to discussions of the tension between

the domestic norms associated with what Hatakeyama calls the “anti-militarist idea” and the drive for a more proactive national defense posture by leaders who hold the “normal state idea.” The anti-militarists tend to believe in a strict interpretation of Japan’s post–World War II constitution that states in its Article IX that “land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained.” The “norm state idea” argues that Japan should only be bound to avoid the use of force as a means to settle international disputes to the same extent as other United Nations member states under international law.

The book demonstrates how, in the post–Cold War period, international norms regarding expectations for major states to provide military contributions in support of global security began to shift the assumptions brought into Japanese policy debates. Over time, these international ideas altered domestic norms such that the SDF could be used more proactively abroad. The change in conceptualization meant that carefully managed international transfers of defense equipment, support for peacekeeping operations, and more participation in international security projects became acceptable to both the anti-militarists and the normal state advocates. This approach is a helpful take on how to square the dichotomies that are present in a Japan that fields a Self-Defense Force with considerable capability yet adheres to the constitution. Yet, it does not quite solve the puzzle in that it assumes anti-militarist norms are baked into Japanese decision making, whereas scholars such as Christopher Hughes have shown how realist models can sometimes better explain Japan’s decisions.

The book’s strength comes when it braces the framework of existing literature, but it is not without its limitations. As a compilation of fresh takes and analytical angles that fill research gaps, this book will provide value to advanced students of Japanese policy studies. At the same time, it is unclear why the book selects domestic parties and international norms as the main lenses through which to examine Japanese decision making. While it shows these have been insufficiently analyzed by previous studies, it falls short of making a fully persuasive case that these are the only, or most important, factors in understanding the resultant policies. Furthermore, the two factors do not appear to be linked beyond the fact that both had been previously underexamined. For example, when arguing that expanded international roles for the SDF have been enabled by the weakening of left-wing political opposition and driven by international norms, Hatakeyama provides rich detail regarding how and why those factors were important but is less persuasive on why readers should not also focus on factors such as shifting geopolitical developments, evolving domestic norms, and the ideological drive of individual leaders.

Other recent works such as Sheila Smith's *Japan Rearmed* (Harvard University Press, 2019) and Andrew Oros' *Japan's Security Renaissance* (Columbia University Press, 2017) examine the same Japanese policy developments by factoring in a wider range of factors. Readers who have read those books or are otherwise steeped in the library of works examining Japanese security policy will find *Japan's Evolving Security Policy* full of interesting and useful new insights, but generalists new to this forest may be disappointed or even confused. Hatakeyama's focused examination of two trees (political parties and international norms) shows there are important parts of the Japanese security policy decision-making process, but it falls a bit short when describing their relationship with other factors and does little to illuminate the wider landscape. The book is aimed squarely at a specialist audience, and, for those readers, it hits the mark by adding a new layer to the discussion regarding the factors that govern changes in Japan's defense policy.

Hatakeyama's examination of political party positions and international norms helps inform speculation about the future of Japan's security policies. For decades, Japanese policy has moved incrementally in the direction preferred by those holding "the normal state idea" and rarely toward the goals of the anti-militarist camp. In several areas, including the overseas deployment of the SDF, even the center-left DPJ leaders continued to carry Japan along this course. It seems unlikely that the DPJ's successor, the Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan, will be positioned to alter the policy trajectory even if the party could somehow wrest control of the government away from the ruling LDP–Komeito coalition. Still, the junior coalition partner, Komeito, will be able to act as a restraint on the LDP's policy implementation, as the ruling party continues to rely on its now 22-year-old alliance with its junior partner to engineer election victories and remain in control of the government.

The Komeito has already demonstrated its power to influence specific security policy proposals. For example, the reinterpretation of Article IX of the constitution championed by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was directly negotiated in a series of meetings with the Komeito. Now, as the LDP looks to formally amend the constitution, it will have to go back to the negotiating table with the Komeito. Given the tendency for policy implementation to trail political alignment by some time—a trend Hatakeyama's book documents well—constitutional amendment remains unlikely in the next few years. In the more immediate future, Komeito concurrence with the recent decisions to boost security partnerships with other foreign partners means that Australia, Canada, France, the United Kingdom, and others can capitalize on security policies that the Komeito has acceded to in the past decade.

The impact of evolving international security norms will have on Japan is less clear. As multipolar security competition intensifies, postmodern military efforts such as peacekeeping and disaster relief will become increasingly difficult to coordinate and prioritize. Therefore, Japan may feel less pressured to participate, but that does not mean a resetting of the norms governing Japanese policy options. At the same time, challenges posed by North Korea and China will likely become more severe, and Japan will focus its security resources in this area. However, with a wide range of options, even defensive strike operations, having had the policy green light since the Cold War, the distribution of resources seems a matter better suited for evaluation by the realists than constructivists works such as *Japan's Evolving Security Policy*.

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