

they were to succeed they would move ASEAN into a whole new level of activity. However, once again it appears the Association's reach exceeds its grasp. An apt illustration is the 2011 border skirmishes between Cambodian and Thai armed forces. As ASEAN's current chair, Indonesian President Yudhoyono tried to mediate – an initial test of the ASEAN Security Community's efficacy. Alas, as of mid-2011, Indonesia's efforts have fallen short. The border war continues, casualties increase, and thousands of refugees have been created on both sides. Hard security conflicts continue to be beyond the ameliorative ability of Asian multilateralism.

Sheldon W. Simon

School of Politics and Global Studies, Arizona State University USA
shells@asu.edu

doi:10.1093/irap/lcr016

Advance Access published on 28 July 2011

Rethinking Japanese Public Opinion and Security: From Pacifism to Realism?

Paul Midford,

Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011, 272 pp.

ISBN: 9780804772167 (Cloth US\$ 75.00)

ISBN: 9780804772174 (Paper US\$ 24.95)

Until the Japanese government's decision to participate in the so-called war on terror by first sending maritime self-defense force (SDF) ships to refueling missions in the Indian Ocean in 2001, and then by dispatching ground self-defense force troops to Southern Iraq, the overall view of Japanese security policy had been that it was constrained by article 9 as well as strong public support for perhaps pacifist attitudes. However, these developments and, so it seemed, fundamental changes in Japanese security posture after 9/11 have been taken as evidence that either anti-militarism was waning, or that the Japanese government, particularly under Prime Minister Koizumi, had been successful in convincing the Japanese public that it was the time for a fundamental shift in Japan's

security policy (Green, 2001; Hughes, 2009; Samuels, 2007). This book challenges this assumption and tries to prove that public opinion is not only stable, but also rational, and that it does continue to constrain Japanese government security policy decisions.

The first question Midford asks is: Is Japanese public opinion coherent, stable, and influential enough to constrain Japanese policy-makers, and in preventing Japan from militarizing? If this were the case, it would support a pluralist model of Japanese democracy. If not, it might give the support to an elitist model of public opinion. The elite view assumes that an elite does not only influence policy outcomes directly, but also indirectly influences public attitudes, so that public opinion basically follows the direction provided by the elite or dominant views reported in the mass media. The assumed decline or weakening of anti-militarist values since the early 1990s and most obviously under Prime Minister Koizumi could then be explained by his ability to emphasize the North Korean or Chinese threat. The pluralist view, on the other hand, assumes that public opinion is stable and relatively coherent, and that it responds to new information in a relatively rational and predictable way. While public opinion does change and is influenced by outside factors, these shifts and changes do not happen because of elite tampering, but are based on a kind of 'crowd' knowledge. Public opinion then acts as 'dikes', constraining policy options. The overall purpose of this book is then to prove that the pluralist view better explains the Japanese foreign policy behavior not just in the postwar period, but also over the last 10 years.

After critically reviewing the literature on Japanese security policy, such as Michael Green's 'Reluctant Realism', or Chris Hughes' 'Japan's Remilitarisation' and others, who are making the argument that Japan is gradually abandoning its pacifist past and is developing towards a 'normal state' with an increasingly Realist view of the world, Midford argues that the policy and opinion changes in recent years are much less significant than widely believed. He argues that Japan's postwar security policy and public opinion have never been pacifist or simply non-militarist, and that the Japanese political elite and public alike have long supported the role of the SDF for national defense.

The main part of the book consists of four case studies covering the first Gulf War in 1991, the subsequent debate about the Japanese participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations, the response to 9/11

and the Afghan invasion, and the SDF participation in the Iraq War. For each of these cases, Midford provides a chronological analysis and demonstrates how the respective governments tried to explain the necessity of Japanese military involvement to the public, and how public opinion constrained policy options in every single case. Almost like a classical international relations textbook, each chapter ends with counterfactuals to show that the same outcome would not have happened if the Japanese public had been overwhelmingly pacifist, or if public opinion had not influenced government decisions at all.

Midford identifies two core attitudes towards security policy, antimilitarist distrust (not pacifism), and attitudinal defensive realism. He argues that while anti-militarist attitudes have weakened over time because the Japanese SDF has proven to act responsibly and has even led to a level of pride about their successful peacekeeping and reconstruction missions, defensive realism has proven to be most robust in explaining policy preferences in the postwar era, and particularly in the past decade. For the Japanese government and its major allies, this means that Japan might be ready to take over more responsibility for its own national defense, but not ready for out-of-area combat missions.

The main strength of the book is the large number of polling data; however, this can also be a problem when the wording of questions changes over time, or when questions are preceded by leading introductory sentences, as is often the case in newspaper polls about current events, and the author himself mentioned this caveat. This does sometimes mean that newspaper polls taken at the same time but with slightly different questions indicate either opposition or support for the Iraq mission, or shifts in support within one month (p. 133). In other cases, Midford interprets survey questions such as the danger of Japan being involved in a war (p.42) as fear of entrapment. Because he assumes that Japanese public opinion is rational, and is reflecting real world threats, data analysis remains on the national and does not extend to the individual level. In each of the case studies, this argument is illustrated by using a large number of opinion polls from a variety of sources. Data analysis, though, remains on the aggregate level and does not include statistical analysis of data sets to show exactly how attitudes of individuals are shaped and whether they are reflecting defensive realist dispositions, or whether they might also be influenced by less rational factors such as nationalism or fear.

Midford needs to be praised for collecting such a large number of opinion data and bringing them together in an easy-to-read narrative, illustrating the shifts and changes in public opinion, the original and then changing government narrative, and how public attitudes shaped these changes. Everyone interested in how public opinion on security policy has developed, especially in the last two decades, can use this book as a first reference point. Some of the data are presented in table form, many appear only in the text itself. While overall, this is not a problem, it would have been better if the presentation of some data had been more consistent – sometimes they appear in alphanumeric format and sometimes in numeric format.

This book is the first in-depth analysis of Japanese public attitudes towards security since Thomas Berger's (1998) 'Cultures of Antimilitarism' and Glenn Hook's (1996) 'Militarization and Demilitarization in Contemporary Japan', and the only one covering the post-9/11 changes to Japan's security policy. Anyone who thinks that the SDF Iraq mission is clear evidence for the decline of anti-militarist values and that Japan is now ready to engage in combat missions, and anyone who thinks that pacifism is still the dominant norm explaining Japan security policy should read this book. Overall, this book is an important contribution not only to Japanese security studies, but also to the study of Japanese democracy.

Wilhelm M. Vosse

Department of Politics and International Relations

International Christian University

Japan

vosse@icu.ac.jp

doi:10.1093/irap/lcr015

Advance Access published on 26 July 2011