

Japanese Debate on Rearmament

Introduction

Japanese expansion of power throughout the Asia-Pacific War (1931-1945) was a violent affair that decimated the peoples of Asia. The poor treatment of prisoners of war (POWs) by the Japanese during that time was also a well-known fact and after the war many of the commanders of the war camps were tried with war crimes. After the war, the United States occupied Japan, reforming the country with the hope that the military would never again take control of Japan, thus preventing another violent expansion overseas. Among other things the United States did, it drafted and enacted a "Peace Constitution" for Japan. The constitution was enacted on November 3, 1946. Article 9 of the new constitution renounces war, stating:

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.

There are several reasons for supporting the movement to amend article 9. Since the end of World War II, Japan has shown no indication that it has any war-like potential. The country has concentrated on economic growth and is today one of the strongest economies in the world. Japan has also shown a desire to involve itself in international problems as a world power. That attempt has been severely limited by article 9, which directly forbids maintaining any war potential, effectively preventing Japan from sending troops overseas even for preventive measures. Because it is not legal for Japan to have an official military, the U.S.- Japanese Security Treaty dictates that the United States is to protect Japan against outside forces. While this has been contributed to allowing Japan to dispense its gross income towards trade and domestic needs, Japan has also been compelled to support the United States in its military intervention overseas, causing others to criticize Japan, calling Japan America's 'little brother'. It has also been argued that article 9 prevents the self-defense (jishu-boei) of a truly independent state. Another issue that has developed from article 9 is the question of whether the Japanese constitution will become obsolete because of tiptoeing around amending it. The more individual laws Japan passes that allow them to 'get around' the constitution, the less effective the constitutional will be, until it is merely a parchment inapplicable to current situations.

The other side of the debate, against amendment, also has a strong basis. The Japanese government has not officially apologized for some of the atrocities committed by Japan before and during WWII. Some issues, such as the Nanjing Incident, have not even been recognized as a true event in world history, causing friction between Japan and China. Over these and other issues China, North and South Korea, and other Asian countries do

not trust Japan. If Japan were to try to amend article 9, these countries would protest strongly.

Another argument against change is the right to live in peace. The constitution of Japan is based on an ideal of peace: the preface states, “We recognize that all peoples of the world have the right to live in the peace, free from fear and want.” The Japanese Peace Constitution is seen as an important document leading the world towards a world peace. Many people believe that instead of changing or deleting article 9, Japan should be convincing other countries to adopt the same principle. The last reason not to change the article is due to simple indecision. Change is supported by only half of the Japanese people. Even if this percentage were to go up the question of how to amend article 9 would still be a source of debate.

Question

This research thesis will deal with the broad question of article 9. Whether article 9 should be amended, and how.

The issue of article 9 in the Japanese constitution is one that the Japanese are currently wrestling with. The question of whether the article should be amended, and if amended, how it should be amended is a very complicated question with ramifications not only for Japan, but also for the world. This research thesis will pursue the questions of if article 9 should be amended and also how it should be amended. My thesis will explore the history of article 9, the origins of the article and how the origins affect the way the article is viewed. Another important issue is how Japan’s neighbors will react to rearmament of Japan, particularly China, South and North Korea and Russia. US-Japan relations may also be affected by the amendment. The extent these relations would be altered is going to play a significant role in whether or not Japan will change article 9. Trade relations with various countries, especially China as a rising economic power, is also an important subject. The opinion of Japanese citizens about the constitutional amendment in the context of domestic policies will naturally play an important role in the question of amendment.

Methodology

This question of article 9 is an issue that is under a lot of scrutiny not only in Japan, but also in the world. Therefore it is important to examine more than one type of information when researching this issue. In order to research this subject thoroughly, I plan on looking at many different sources, from the official stance of various Japanese political parties, to news media and also academic opinions. I will also consider the possible reaction of China, South Korea, Russia and the United States. The opinions of the government and the people of these countries are essential to whether or not Japan should amend article 9.

The principal Japanese political party essential to my study is the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) that supports amending article 9. This is an important party because it is the ruling party in Japan. Other Japanese political parties, namely,

Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), New Komeito, Japanese Communist Party (JCP) and Social Democratic Party (SDP) support preservation of article 9.

News media and other forms of media, magazines and newspapers are also an important source that I will be researching. The *Japan Times* and *Asahi Newspaper* are two Japanese newspapers I will look into. The *Japan Times* showing the government's position, while the *Asahi Newspaper* is more liberal than the *Japan Times* and will have interesting information that may contrast that in the *Japan Times*.

The last type of source that I will look into will be academic opinions. These will range from "Think Tanks", pools of information and ideas, to academic journal articles. The scholars in the field will undoubtedly have different opinions on whether or not to amend article 9. Each of these different types of sources will provide necessary information to understand the overall situation and help me form a comprehensive view of the controversy.

During the first few weeks I will study the expert opinions written in English to best grasp the overall nature of the controversy. During this time I will also familiarize myself with the "think tanks". I plan on using the think tanks to see what experts are thinking on the subject in order to supplement my own ideas, and also what they deem are important subjects to look into. At this time I will familiarize myself with the controversy and begin looking at specific countries and their opinion. First of these will be the Japanese opinion. I will look at the domestic politics and public opinion, the news media of Japan, the viewpoints of different newspapers and different parties. All of these sources will give me a feel for the situation in Japan, which I can then build from to see the overall world view.

After I have studied Japanese domestic opinions, I will start looking at other areas of the world. How an amendment to article 9 will affect these countries and how the different areas feel about the proposed amendment. For the Asian countries this is an emotionally charged issue due to Japanese Asia-Pacific War expansion and war crimes, and if handled poorly could cause riots throughout Asia.

When I have studied all the different regions and the different types of sources I will analyze the relative importance of the opinions as seen from the Japanese prospective. As the final decision is for Japan to make, I will include a discussion of how likely it is for the amendment to take place and how likely it is that article 9 will remain as it is for a time. The very end of my thesis will be my own informed judgment on whether or not Japan should amend article 9.

Expected Results

After studying these different sources of information and analyzing them, I will make a conclusion. I will have a conclusion to the situation as it stands now in the world, judging how likely it is that Japan will amend article 9. Then I will also make an informed judgment as to whether or not Japan should amend article 9. This is an issue that is facing Japan today, and amendment would have ramifications for not just Japan but for the United States, and other countries as well.

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