

# Less heat, more light: (Re-)Assessing Change in Japan's Security Policy

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## **Abstract**

Since Abe Shinzo returned as Prime Minister of Japan, the question about just where his ambitions will lead Japan have become much more frequent. Through a range of bills and measurements, he has sparked a debate as to whether Japan has seen radical change, or whether it is merely incremental in nature. This thesis contributes by adding a nuanced approach to ‘measuring’ change in Japan’s security policy. By employing a graduated level of change approach, change in its security realm is critically examined. Empirically, this thesis relies on policy documents to establish the extent of change than can be attributed to Abe’s administration. The thesis finds that change is visible at different levels, such as effort or methods/means, but that these do not explicitly exhibit a complete reversal of Japan’s security posture. While we may not witness a complete reversal of Japan’s original security posture, the findings still suggest that Abe has left a lasting impact in the security realm. Thus, contrary to belief, changes in security policy take a variety of forms and should each be acknowledged carefully to make informed judgements. For Japan under Abe, it stands to reason that change has left a decisive mark, which should neither be overestimated in scope nor should it be understood as a purely systemic continuation of previous policies.

**Keywords:** Security Policy, Abe Shinzo, Japan, Policy change, Graduated levels, Capabilities, Proactive Pacifism, Security cooperation

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## Acronyms

ASDF	Air Self Defense Forces
CSD	Collective Self-Defense
FPC	Foreign Policy Change
MOD	Ministry of Defense (Japan)
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Japan)
MSDF	Maritime Self Defense Forces
NDPG	National Defense Programme Guidelines
NSC	National Security Council (of Japan)
NSS	National Security Strategy (of Japan)
PKO	Peace Keeping Operation
PM	Prime Minister
SIPRI	Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
UN	United Nations
US	United States of America

# Introduction

## Background and relevance

“So far, so good...” reads the speech bubble hovering over Abe Shinzo<sup>1</sup>'s head, in his hands: a military ship called “nationalistic agenda” and a glass bottle entitled the “Pacifist Constitution” (New York Times 2013). Metaphorically speaking, he sets out to create what does not seem to fit: a large ship could not possibly fit through a narrow bottle opening. Back in real life and a range of security related bills and measures later, it appears tempting to proclaim that Abe is doing just that: creating the impossible bottle – attempting to undercut the pacifist constitution post-war Japan's security had been built upon (Maslow 2015, p.751). It is in this light that voices grew louder that with Abe as Prime Minister<sup>2</sup> “fundamental change [was] in the works” (IFPA 2015, p.2) or that “drastic changes” (Yamagami 2016, p.23) were just around the corner. Is the impossible bottle in the making, or does such assessment “create a lot of heat and very little light” and rely far too much on “ill-defined memes” (Liff 2018)?

While more explicitly pronounced, the notion of change is hardly a new phenomenon in Japan's history, not to mention national security. Change has been manifest on several occasions, ranging from the opening of the country during the Meiji restoration or the quick turns towards fascism and later endorsing pacifism – and these were rather ‘drastic’ (Hagström and Williamson 2009, p.242; cf. Pyle 2007). The emphasis on economic growth over military power, which the pacifist Yoshida doctrine embodied, was called into question over its continuity in the long-run. Stability and change, two landmark concepts alongside which the debate about Japan's security posture took root. While change was characterised by a mismatch of theory and practice (cf. Arase 2007; Green 2003; Hughes 2004, 2005; Pyle 2007; Samuels 2006, 2007) – an economically strong country with a simultaneously weak military – stood in strong contrast to those who saw a long-lasting impact of pacifist norms and institutions (cf. Berger 1998; Katzenstein and Okawara 1993). Spurred by the end of the Cold War and 9/11 a decade later, this debate reached a peak. At this point, however, it appeared that change was an integral part of foreign and security policy. Therefore, the question no longer asked whether or

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<sup>1</sup> Henceforth Abe

<sup>2</sup> Henceforth PM

not we would witness change, but rather at what rate: incremental<sup>3</sup> (slowly changing over time) or radical<sup>4</sup> (immediate reaction).

With a plethora of academic work having emerged to tackle the question of incremental or radical, one would expect an assessment of this sort to be based on conceptual rigour. Yet, that what is to be explained – change – remains largely under-operationalised. A route commonly taken to assess change is made through an explanatory ‘why’ lens. While the resulting focus on incremental or radical change stands to reason, it arguably side-lines the explanandum – change. It is at the intersection that this thesis situates itself, setting out to argue that assessing change needs to go beyond a dichotomous ‘radical’ versus ‘incremental’ if it was to reveal fruitful assessments about Japan’s security policy in the future. It proposes that graduated levels of change are an alternative lens to increase our understanding of *what* has changed and at what level to deliver an informed judgement. Drawing on Scott and Carter (2016), change can take different forms – adjustment (change in effort of a given policy portfolio), refinement (new means/methods are introduced, goals are persistent), reform (changes to the policy portfolio’s goals are made), and restructuring (the overall posture/guiding principle of a policy portfolio changes). By giving more weight to the explanandum – ‘change’ – this thesis sets out to provide more ‘light’ rather than ‘heat’, both in terms of conceptual operationalisation and Japan’s security policy.

Consequently, the main research question and sub-questions are as follows.

### **Research Question**

- a. To what extent has the return of Abe Shinzo as Japan’s PM led to an overall altered security policy?
  - a. What has, in fact, changed in Japan’s security policy?
  - b. To what level (effort, methods/means, goals, overall posture including goals, means, and purpose) can change be attributed?
  - c. What implications can we derive from a graduated levels of change approach to understand the direction in which Japan’s security policy is currently headed?

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<sup>3</sup> Incremental is also commonly referred to as evolutionary (cf. Liff 2018)

<sup>4</sup> The literature either also refers to it as revolutionary, drastic, or fundamental (cf. Liff 2018; Pyle 2018). Throughout this thesis ‘incremental’ and ‘radical’ will be used whenever the two positions are highlighted.



## **Disposition**

This thesis is structured as follows. The first chapter, the *Literature Review*, is divided into two sections. The first sketches out Japan's security policy approach since the end of World War II. The second part then fleshes out the concurrent debate about Japan's security posture. This is then followed by how this thesis will contribute. The *Method* chapter outlines the philosophical and methodological foundations informing this project. As such, it will provide both epistemological and ontological considerations, how data was collected and selected, the analytical approach, as well as ethical considerations, reflexivity, and study limitations. Afterwards, the *Conceptual model* elaborates on how basic concepts need to be understood in this present inquiry. The model draws on influential works made in the foreign policy change literature, and more specifically on the graduated levels of change approach. Following from there, in the *Analysis* the conceptual model will be applied towards the current security policy pursued under Abe Shinzo, which is divided into five key themes: policy foundations, the overall policy approach, Japan's capabilities, the US alliance and international security cooperation. In the *Conclusion*, the empirical findings will be synthesised to answer the research question as to what extent security policy can be said to have changed.

## Literature Review

This first chapter has two main objectives. The first is to provide an overview over change and continuity in post-war Japan's security policy. It is a necessary requirement to understand the post-war situation before continuing with the second objective, which is to outline the academic debate, its assumptions, and reasoning. This debate about change in, and direction of, Japan's security policy is mapped out in the second half of this section. A critical reading of the literature establishes the current configuration of the debate, but also problematises the very issue at stake: how to understand and classify change for assessing the direction of Japan's security policy. As will be shown below, the literature remains largely ambiguous about the grounds on which change in security policy is being assessed. This research puzzle provides for the niche in which this thesis is situated.

### **Japan's post-war security policy: change and continuity in perspective**

Before the Cold War came to a decisive end, Japan's security policy was largely governed by the Security Treaty with the United States. The treaty was drafted at the end of World War II and Japan's "unconditional acceptance of the Potsdam Declaration" (Honda 2002, p.103). With it came the rewriting of the constitution, which emphasised the "permanent renunciation of war" (Moses and Iwami 2009, p.71) as epitomised by Article 9. Japan thus settled under the U.S.'s "nuclear umbrella" (Fatton 2018, p.3; Maslow 2015, p.742) for security and focused all energy on domestic rebuilding. The so-called Yoshida doctrine, after PM Yoshida, encapsulated minimal defence development with a simultaneously strong economic posture. Strict legislative changes governing arms exports or a non-binding limit of 1% of GDP limit to be spent on defence matters further institutionalised the doctrine's principle of economic growth over military build-up (cf. Hughes 2005, p.21; Maslow 2015, p.743; Pyle 2007, p.32). All in all, Japan's "defensive defense" (Samuels 2006, p.113) was largely persistent throughout the post-war years. It would be wrong, however, to assume that the pacifist ground on which Japan's security policy was built was entirely devoid of change after its initial establishment.

After all, the Yoshida doctrine was not set in stone. With threats looming large during Cold War times, the 'defensive defense' posture appeared no longer feasible in such an increasingly uncertain environment. A 'bulwark against communism', the US strategy shifted

to bolster Japan's posture in East Asia. At this point in time, a first attempt was made to circumvent the restrictions placed on Japan in the form of Article 9 of the constitution. The 1951 "Initial Steps for Rearmament" memorandum formally acknowledged this position by calling for Japan to "embark upon a program of rearmament" (ibid. p.73). With the Korean War being in close vicinity, the memorandum was quickly followed by action. PM Yoshida was instructed by the Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces, General MacArthur, to establish and gradually upgrade the national police force in the name of preserving the "domestic order" (Moses and Iwami 2009, pp.71, 73-74). Arguably, the main reasoning on behalf of Yoshida was to use their establishment as a "bargaining chip" (Honda 2002, p.104) for economic assistance from the US. As Moses and Iwami (2009, p.74) state "Yoshida did not rule out remilitarisation" per se, yet his concern at this time merely reflected the need for economic prosperity and reconstruction. Thus, while it may have been a primarily strategic move by Yoshida to gain economically, a change of Article 9 in the future was not completely out of touch with his own political convictions either (ibid.). In line with the constitutional restrictions, however, the SDF were strictly defensive in character and only meant for the very purpose of their name, which was legally entrenched in the 1957 Basic Policy for National Defence (Fetton 2018; MOD n.d.; Samuels 2007). Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, a range of politicians sought advice on the possibilities of further "freeing up" (Moses and Iwami 2009, p.75) the SDF restrictions, so as to support US missions. This was reflected in the 1960 revision of the US-Japan Security Treaty which emphasised "international peace and security" as a common goal (Moses and Iwami 2009, p.75), which raised eyebrows over constitutional legitimacy and boundaries. In addition, economic prosperity allowed for defense spending to be increased proportionally (ibid. pp.75-76). PM Miki's 1976 1% ceiling was scrutinised by the subsequent Nakasone administration, even though the actual spending capacity, after all, did not increase. Thus, it seems safe to argue that change was never considered a taboo per se, although many of these bills were met with severe domestic opposition (Gordon 2014, pp.272,275).

What for years had guided security policies started to wane in the light of the Cold War coming to an end. Japan's security concerns, which used to be handled for the most part under the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty (Maslow 2015, pp.742-744; Pyle 2007), came under intense pressure both from within Japan as well as the from the US. The event that stood out in the eyes of many commentators was the 1990/91 Gulf Crisis, which was conceived of as a major humiliation for Japan (Catalinac 2007; Howe and Campbell 2013). With domestic resistance putting a swift response on hold, Japan decided to contribute financially, as it had done for many decades, despite calls for a more active role. Grappling with a volley of reproaches from

the international community, the main critique concerned Japan's insufficient contribution, which prioritised "checkbook diplomacy" (Arase 2007, p.567) over actual "boots on the ground" (Kelly and Kubo 2015). After all, the situational 'paralysis' Japan appeared to be in, was only underscored by the considerably traumatic experience of failing to live up to international expectations (Hughes 2005; Takao 2008, pp. 26-28).

It was the accumulation of prior changes to the Yoshida doctrine in combination with the Gulf War crisis that set the scene for policy change to feature more prominently in both public and political debates from now on. Growing uncertainty over the U.S.-Japan security alliance operating outside its original purpose, the end of the Cold War demanded for a quick response to forego further embarrassment for Japan's administration (Berger, Mochizuki and Tsuchiyama 2007, p.4). Therefore, the 1990s and early 2000s saw several initiatives and policy adjustments to allow for Japan to play a more active role (Fatton 2018, p.4). Both within the US-Japan partnership as well as independently did the Japanese government start to further expand previous legal restrictions. As such, the 1992 Peace Keeping Operations (PKO) law enabled the SDF to be sent abroad for the first time to be part of UN Peacekeeping missions, such as in Cambodia or the Golan Heights. The legislation came under fire again in 1997 when proposals to expand UN activity even further were passed (Arase 2007, p.567; Berger 1998, pp.191-192; Hughes 2005, p.11). In 2000, a US governmental report, also known as the Armitage report, similarly called for an active increase in contribution and expansion of Japan's security role (Arase 2007, p.570; Hughes 2005, p. 11).

Not long after, the 9/11 attacks spurred the Koizumi administration to quickly send SDF forces in support of the US in the global War Against Terror. Also known as "Operation Enduring Freedom" (Tang 2007, p.25), the move did not fare well with a large section of both the domestic population. As Tang (2007, p.25) notes, the fast-paced 9/11 environment gave rise to a "window of opportunity" to circumvent the UN framework of PKO missions, which had guided the deployment of Japan's SDF up until then. As such, it was the first time Japanese forces were actively engaged abroad without a corresponding UN mandate. Despite growing concerns, the Koizumi government passed an Anti-Terrorism Law in 2001, a War Contingency Law in 2003 and, thus, began to involve Japanese armed forces further beyond constitutional constraints (Tang 2007, p.25; Buszynski 2006, pp.95-96). Referred to as "Koizumi's grand strategy" (Tang 2007, p.26), the security measures taken under his government proved to be decisive for Japan as an international actor, albeit its legal legitimacy remaining contested even today. All in all, it is safe to say that questions about change and continuity were never entirely

absent in policy circles, and changes seemed somewhat frequent after the end of the Cold War. As the following section will show, the debate about just how far Japan would be able to go within its constitutional limits or if it was to abandon this position altogether shaped the interest of many scholars since then.

### **Much heat, little light – The debate about change in Japan’s security policy**

Named the “comeback kid” (Dobson 2016, p.1), Abe Shinzo’s return to the political stage in 2012 raised suspicion over his security ambitions for Japan. The main question now posed was whether we would now witness a “security revolution” (Pugliese 2017, pp.154-155) if Abe was enabled to further free up, and potentially revise, the constitution. Or, in other words, whether his administrations made ever more decisive changes to Japan’s security policy as compared previous PMs (Okano-Heijmans 2012, p.3; Sakaki 2015, p.33). What will not follow is a critical reading of the current literature concerning the status of security policy in Japan. Overall the dividing line among commentators resembles an either-or dichotomy: incremental versus radical. The incremental camp posits that changes made under Abe do not reflect an overall repositioning but contend that these are mere continuations based on past changes without breaking away from past principles. In contrast, the radical camp states that changes to the security posture will have a much more profound impact, as they embody a fast-paced shift as well as an overall break with the past.

A recent symposium report stated that “fundamental change in Japan’s capacity and willingness to take strategic action is clearly in the works” (IFPA 2015, p.2). Even though the report also noted that change will not be enforced over-night, it remained somewhat ambiguous about the definition of ‘fundamental’. Another commentator, Christopher Hughes, in his recent monograph (2015) asked whether Abe’s push in security policy constitutes “new dynamism or a new dead end?”. He concludes that, the worst-case scenario, which is a likely one, would be a “dead end”, despite security policy having moved to the top of the policy agenda (ibid. p.91). In other words, the ambitious and wide-ranging policy initiatives Abe proposed upon taking office have fallen short in delivering what they were intended to do. Arguably, this recent contribution tones down previous works (2004; 2005) in which he characterised Japan’s security policy changes after the Cold War as on the verge of “abandoning many of the most vital elements” (2004, p.240) of its pacifist posture. Nonetheless, his stance still stands strong that change should not be underestimated. Thereby, he echoes Kenneth B. Pyle (2007, p. 374; cf. 2011), who asserted that “Japan is on the threshold of a new era” and that “the Yoshida

Doctrine [...] is a dead letter”. Since then Pyle reaffirmed this position, with claims such as that “sea change” was under way (2014, n.p.) or that Japan is about to break-free from its imposed constraints in favour of “activist and assertive” (2018, p.70) policy choices under Abe. Although unsure about the very effect Abe’s policy initiatives will ultimately have, he posits that, albeit “quiet” in nature, a “revolution” could not be ruled out (2014, n.p.).

In contrast to these assertions, a more cautious camp of research highlights the still “risk averse” (Curtis 2013, p.2) foundations of Japan’s security policy. A number of proponents of this camp draw on constructivist theories, meaning that it is not so much the material reality of security policy that is solely decisive for assessing change. Instead, they highlight that normative ideas need to be taken into account as well. The critique is directed towards scholars such as Pyle and Hughes for dismissing crucial issues of national identity, norms, and values which hinder material considerations to be employed fully. Emphasis is placed on the long-standing stable principle of anti-militarism guiding foreign and security policy, which continues to be a cornerstone in policy-making (Berger 1998; Katzenstein and Okawara 1993; Hagström and Williamson 2009; Welch 2011). Oros (2008, p.198, cf. 2015) states that changes in security legislation are still confined to the paradigm of an “enduring [Pacifist] security identity”, disproving the argument that Japan is “once again becom[ing] a great, civilian power”. In a similar vein, Berger already noted in 1998 that Japan will “not succumb to revived dreams of martial glory and the quest for power” but may be required “to become more active” at any point in time if required. Takao (2008, p.142) posits that “Japan continues to display great restraint in its military security policy”. For Katzenstein and Okawara (2001), those researchers seeing radical changes are guided by misperceptions about what many referred to as ‘normalcy’. The argument that a ‘normal’ Japan – one that revises Article 9 indefinitely, making space for a regular army rather than self-defense forces and which gives equal weight to military build-up as it does economically – is too Western-centric (Howe and Campbell 2013, p.101).

These concerns raised further doubt about realist assumptions that Japan was on the verge of becoming a ‘normal’ power simply in capability terms. In other words, despite potential build-ups, the domestic aversion towards a stronger military posture and overseas engagement of the SDF override the material. It was further questioned whether a ‘normal’ country can only be whose military is equally strong as its economic power, or whether ‘normal’ may also indicate a pacifist country (ibid.). After all, ‘normal’ presupposes that ‘normal’ exists and that Japan was at any point not ‘normal’ if it seeks to return to such position (ibid.).

Although commentators today also acknowledge that change does happen (cf. Oros 2015), the underlying Pacifist norm could not easily be dismissed as outdated. In a similar vein, Sakaki (2015) accused those of envisioning more radical shifts of overstating the obvious. Although her analysis is largely vested in realist ideals, her standpoint indicates that the current changes under PM Abe do not have the potential to shake the very bedrocks of Japan's security policy (ibid., p.6). She remains sceptical about conceiving of the many security bills and advances as 'radical'. Adam Liff (2015, p. 79) posits a similar point of view and defies that Abe being "Japan's most transformative leader" could not be considered equivalent to a broadly changing security policy. The changes, he continues, have long been prepared and, consequently, should not be reflective of any "abrupt transformations" (ibid. p.80). A range of political and financial obstacles continue to hinder any such development, once again fostering the "evolution, not revolution" (Howe and Campbell 2013, p.100) position.

Whilst both camps have made categorical claims about the future of, and assessment of change within, Japan's security policy, neither offers clear conceptual evidence for how these conclusions came into being. Those positing a radical shift away from Pacifism and Article 9 of the constitution highlight the material capabilities as strong evidence for this hypothesis. Yet, such an assessment begs the question why certain capability configurations would, indeed, constitute a radical change while previous configurations did not. Contrary to this position, those in favour of a strong standing Pacifist norm as well as those highlighting incremental as the ideal classification do neither exhibit clear frameworks for how such assessment was achieved. This has already been picked up by Hagström and Williamson (2009). Their main point of contention was that assessing change was both side-lined and based on seemingly arbitrary yardsticks (ibid.). Their contribution already sought to resolve the ongoing trend of fuzzy concepts but seems to have fallen on deaf ears in the scholarly community. Howe and Campbell (2013) echo a similar view by stating that the extent of change has largely been miscalculated. Both works already hint upon the fact that change rarely takes centre stage in the many analyses. Neither side of the argument is explicit about that what change would entail once there, not to mention the continuous application of an either-or dichotomy which is rarely called into question.

## **Research puzzle and contribution**

As outlined above, the debate concerning Japan's security policy direction is guided to a large degree by questions about why change is more or less likely to be decisive, especially under PM Abe. This is not meant to discredit either strand or the valuable input they offer in terms of explaining change. Rather, the issue at stake is that any claims and assessments about how change should be understood lack a thorough conceptualisation. Considering that change features consistently in most works, it seems striking that hardly any attempts were made to go beyond accepting change as a given fact. Despite efforts to categorise change along the lines of 'incremental' or 'radical', the reasoning behind these classifications is nebulous and dismissive. Arguably, such dichotomy too often obfuscates the extent and content of change. With explanations and many works endorsing the two-sided assessment existing in abundance, a valid next step is to bring conceptual clarity back to the negotiating table. Thus, the research puzzle at hand is how change is best understood and operationalised. In other words, it is timely to shift focus to explicate that what all commentators refer to, but rarely articulately in clear terms. This is where this thesis enters the ongoing debate. It seeks to contribute with a nuanced approach to studying change as exemplified by 'graduated levels' of policy change. Thereby, it aims to bring back conceptual rigour to a debate that for too long worked with unclear concepts, whereby largely creating heat but hardly any light. The next section maps out the conceptual framework which will be employed to study change in Japan's security policy.



## Conceptual model

The following section will sketch out the conceptual framework guiding this project. As the goal is to identify the extent of change in security policy under PM Abe, the framework needed to correspond accordingly. Therefore, this chapter starts off by discussing the chosen model in relation to other possible approaches. It then demarcates the research area, namely security policy, its definition and why starting off as such is a key requirement for the conceptual framework. The subsequent section outlines the graduated levels of change approach as employed in the Foreign Policy Change (FPC) literature. Echoing both the literature on Japan and on FPC, the aim is to be as consistent and clear as possible about “what it is that is to be explained” (Gustavsson 1999, p.75). The overarching aim is to sharpen the investigative lens through which to study policy change and how this approach is operationalised in this thesis.

### **Deliberate choice – discussing the conceptual model**

As it is the aim of this project to go beyond conventional dichotomies in policy change, some models were considered more suitable than others. A graduated level approach allows for a differentiated assessment of change as it occurs at various levels. As Hermann (1990, p.20) notes, it is up to the researcher “to promote the exercise of wisdom in the redirection of policy that may result”. Thus, a graduated level approach improves how we can make sense of change, and subsequently address it for our own purposes (Scott and Carter 2016).

A possible path could have been to address the foreign and security decision-making process (Howe and Campbell 2013). Through this lens this thesis may have applied different decision-making approaches, such as the rational actor model, in order to understand why, or why not, Japan’s security policy is changing. Due to the specific focus on *why*, this approach was dismissed as it would have again given in to the existing dichotomy, which is the focal point of critique this thesis contends to circumvent. Therefore, a graduated level approach appeared the most suitable.

### **A rough demarcation: Security policy as a research area**

Studying ‘security’, or ‘security policy’ brings with it fundamental challenges. With a vast research paradigm to begin with, there exists no singly definition of ‘security’ (Williams 2008, p.510). As such, defining what security means for this thesis cannot consider

all possibilities. The main challenge lies in providing a workable definition, which echoes instances of previous research on Japan's security policy. Within this literature, much emphasis was placed on more *traditional* conceptions of security. But, before elaborating on this notion, the starting point should be what it means to be 'secure'. What is worth remembering, however, is that this brief section will not encapsulate what decades of research have produced. A basic understanding needs to suffice to establish a common ground and ready-to-use conceptualisation for this project.

Jarvis and Holland (2015, p.22) note that any attempt to define what security means is context dependent. The main question is, what is it that needs to be 'secured' - are people or the state the backbone of security debates (ibid.)? Further, *what* does it mean to be 'secure' and from *what*? Even though no real consensus exists, the overarching association for many is that of the defense and military posture, hence the state as that what is in need of security. This notion was strengthened with the onset, and throughout, the Cold War period in which security was almost synonymous with "national (i.e. state) security" (ibid. p.23). The dominance of this realist stance, positing that national security, e.g. its integrity and sovereignty, can only be achieved through material (military) means, persisted. The purely materialist stance to achieve security for the state long went unquestioned, and it was only during the later 20<sup>th</sup> century that the pessimism of the realist camp came to be challenged. Liberals proposed that through international cooperation and common institutions the inevitability of a realist military competition could be reversed (ibid. p.24). This idea of achieving security by engaging with one another on issues ranging from politics to economics ended purely materialist considerations.

The "traditional" security setting (ibid. p.28) has since been further challenged by newer approaches. The sole focus on a state's "survival" in the international system would not do justice to the wide range of "non-traditional" security threats (ibid. pp.28-29). As such, the "narrow (or traditional) definition" (ibid. p.28) was criticised for neglecting those factors not associated with military might, including "human security", economic disparities, and social injustice (ibid.). It is not difficult, then, to envision why defining security is heavily dependent on context and the underlying assumptions about who and what is to be secured. In recent years, the realm of security studies has long gone beyond a materialist world, proposing that "ideational" factors play a vital role in addition to material conditions (ibid. p.39). In other words, security depends on how it is framed and understood. One example here would be the Copenhagen School, which rests its argument on the assumption that anything could be a

security issue once constructed as such. In other words, it questions that security issues simply come into being, but rather are socially constructed through discursive means (McDonald 2008, pp.68-69).

Each definition and conceptualisation of security has its own purpose. While newer approaches cannot, and shall not, be dismissed, this project's focus lies with a more traditional approaches to defining security. The debate on Japan's security policy relies largely on the traditional conceptualisation, which will be reflected in this thesis. With the aim of contributing to a debate, it seems worthwhile to stay within the given boundaries and to subscribe to the traditional security definition. It is the traditional - national security aspect - that is said to have seen the most changes made to it (see *Literature Review*).

From a perspective of previous research, studying Japan's security policy is limited in scope. Since the most controversy arose from Abe Shinzo's plans and policy initiatives to the realm of security, the debate already sets the boundaries to which this thesis will contribute. Foreign Policy Change as a research area, as the name implies, is concerned with foreign policy in general. Despite the name, the framework works well when applied to aspects, including national security, of foreign policy. Therefore, to forego terminological confusion, the focal point is that of security policy, despite the conceptual framework pertaining to a broader research area.

### **Conceptualising Policy Change**

Having established the basic premises of 'security policy', it is now time to shift attention to the cornerstone of this thesis: policy change. Despite it appearing to be an obvious concept at first sight, from a theoretical point of view it carries a much more ambiguous connotation. Does change imply moving away from previous policies, or does it refer to adding/reducing policy methods and means? Or even entire policy portfolios? All the more surprising, not many attempts have been made to thoroughly operationalise 'change' within the broader literature (Sinko 2016, p.228). The diversity of interpretations (cf. Sinko 2016) range from a claim that policy embodies change (cf. Hermann 1990, p.5) to change being inherently volatile, hence not worth of being studied. With such variety, the prima facie understanding of change as unambiguous requires further scrutiny. A multi-faceted definition of change, without clear boundaries and requirements, falls short in terms of analytical rigour. According to Sinko

(2016, p.232), “change occurs with the change in intrinsic properties [of a policy]”, which will be the very focus of this thesis.

In the foreign policy literature change according to Hermann (1990, p) indicates “a reversal or, at least, a profound redirection of a country’s foreign policy”. Hermann (1990), a pioneer in addressing change as a distinct category in foreign policy analysis, already hints at the nebulous subjectivity the term brings with it. Foreign policy change, he notes, “is one of the most difficult theoretical problems for scholars and policymakers alike” (ibid. 1990, p.5). The cornerstone of contention Hermann (1990), and more recently Sinko (2016), touch upon lies with the inclination within the academic community to *explain* rather than *assess* (cf. Hagström & Williamson 2009, pp. 243-4). As Bauer and Knill highlight in a study on public policy, “[i]t is obvious that the way change is assessed can affect our theoretical conclusions, and yet this problem is rarely made explicit” (2014, p.29). From a policy perspective, foreign and security policy analysis would benefit from a similar shift in the research agenda to explicate how change, once well-defined, can benefit the assessment of policy change. It is in this light that a range of literature emerged to tackle this problem and propose conceptual models, which the next section will now address in more detail.

### **Typecasting change – levels and analytical implementation**

As it is the goal of this thesis to evaluate change in security policy under Abe, the conceptual model had to go beyond the dichotomy used in the literature. Hermann (1990) was one of the first to address the “magnitude of [change]” (ibid., p.3) in a model. It is concerned with what he terms “self-correcting change” (ibid., p.5), which refers to governmental deliberations rather than changes in government itself. After going through the process of identifying the source of change, the “graduated levels of change” are as follows: The first related to “adjustment change”, which did not extend beyond the mere “efforts” of a certain policy. In other words, adjusting foreign policy meant a quantitative change in the foreign policy means. The second type refers to a “program change”, which, in contrast to adjustments, does imply a qualitative change in the means to achieve certain foreign policy goals. Type three would reconsider the “initial problem”, or what it is which should be achieved. Here, the means are not necessarily changed in a similar manner. The most radical change would be found in type four, which alludes to a complete redirection in both foreign policy means and goals.

Hence, his model elaborates on, and distinguishes between levels of change, which would have made it an applicable model for this inquiry.

Since Hermann, others have also contributed to the debate surrounding policy change. Rosati (1994, p.236) similarly considered four types of change: “intensification”, “refinement”, “reform” and “restructuring”. Alongside these levels, change would be assessed in terms of overall policy capacity, targets and scheme. Goldmann (1988, p.10), prior to Hermann, stated that change simply refers to new approaches in already known situations or existing approaches now applicable to new situations. Skidmore (1994, pp.43-64) is probably the closest to how change has been categorised in the current literature on Japan’s security policy. It identifies change either as “sporadic” or as “evolutionary”. Since this typology of either ‘sporadic’ or ‘evolutionary’ is the focal point of critique of this thesis, its applicability remains questionable. Skidmore’s typology does not go into depth in comparison to Hermann or Rosati. Gustavsson’s (1999) work intended to address what he thought of as lacking dynamism in the literature. His work evaluated the other works in terms of applicability and clarity (cf. Holsti 1982; Goldmann 1988; Carlsnaes 1992; Skidmore 1984; Rosati 1984 cited in Gustavsson 1999, p.74). He concluded that Hermann’s typology did not need any further adjustment to be analytically feasible (ibid., p.85).

A more recent attempt to take a closer look at assessing change comes from Eidenfalk (2006 & 2009). Hermann’s four types of policy change were not enough, he argues. His contribution added another three layers to differentiate levels of policy change further. The seven layers of change (Eidenfalk 2009, p.52) are defined as: a) “stability”, no change detectable, b) “intensification/ reduction”, quantitative changes in policy means, c) refinement, qualitative change in policy, d) “reform”, a qualitative change including a change in policy means, e) “redirection”, new policy goals added, f) reorientation, resembling Hermann’s “problem/goal change”, and g) restructuring, the ultimate overhaul of foreign policy. Even though a further refinement appears expedient, its added complexity was not as straightforward when applied to data. His approach was exploratively applied to this study’s empirical material but did not reveal a more nuanced picture than the four-type typology which was ultimately applied. Therefore, the extra levels did not have added value to the study.

Scott and Carter (2016, p.301), in a study on foreign aid as a tool in US foreign policy, introduced a new typology. It consists of four levels. Loosely similar to the four graduated levels by Hermann, they are as follows (adjusted from Scott and Carter 2016, p.301):

- a. *Adjustment* (either increasing/expanding or decreasing/retracting policy effort; e.g. financial means, more/less receivers, more troops/helpers, all of which does not change the underlying goal of a policy portfolio)
- b. *Refinement* (policy methods/means are changed; the policy goal is not changed, e.g. policy is now handled through financial rather than military means)
- c. *Reform* (policy goal is adjusted and, subsequently, “new initiatives or approaches” are introduced; e.g. security becomes prioritised through new institutional ways or is supplemented by other approaches to achieve security)
- d. *Restructuring* (both goals, means and perceptions of what it is that is to be achieved are changed; e.g. security policy is entirely shifted from cooperation to isolation)

As this thesis sets out to assess change in security policy, the literature on policy change with its refined models for evaluation provide the springboard for the upcoming analysis. To illustrate the typology, a few examples suffice. An adjustment change would, for instance, be an increase in the number of SDF members Japan was to send to support UN missions. If the original method or means of achieving security was a to send financial contributions, a refinement would be if this now was done through the SDF's presence. A reform in Japan's case would be visible if foreign missiles were not considered a viable threat but would now be considered a threat in need of change. As for the highest form of change, it would be if Pacifism was to be entirely abandoned, as this would change the overall posture.

## **Methodology**

This section is designated to the methodological approach governing this qualitative study. At first, it will illustrate how the research design for this thesis was selected, which will then be addressed individually in this section. It starts off by clarifying the ontological and epistemological positioning which will guide this research. Afterwards, the analytical method – document analysis – will be outlined, which includes a discussion on why this method was deemed most suitable followed by how it will be operationalised in this thesis. The ultimate part is designated to a discussion of ethical considerations, reflexivity, as well as the limitations of this thesis.

### **Research design**

The research presented here is of qualitative nature and epitomises a structural perspective (Carlsnaes 2007, p.130). While in social science research ‘structural’ may rather be referred to in terms of objectivist/positivist, in the subfield of Foreign Policy Analysis the terms are somewhat different although they may connote a similar positioning (ibid.; cf. Bryman 2012, p.28). Even though such worldview does not presuppose a qualitative approach, the position represented here does not deviate much from the literature on security policy change in Japan. The choice of a thematic analysis as a methodology was the result of a careful consideration of that what was going to be the core of the analysis – policy change. The next section will now highlight the epistemological and ontological stances represented by this thesis.

### **Ontology & Epistemology**

As Carlsnaes (2007, p.131) notes, while the theoretical positioning may be easy on paper, it is less straight forward when applied to the real world. What will follow below is therefore a *consideration* of ontology and epistemology, which may not match the empirical reality in minutest detail. Ontology, or the “nature of social entities” (Bryman 2012, p.32), is concerned with whether entities can be considered objectively or whether they are socially constructed. In the realm of foreign policy analysis, these are either termed holistic (objective) or individualistic (socially constructed) (Carlsnaes 2007, p.131). Since the aim of this thesis is not to deconstruct the meaning-making process, the ontological positioning represented here is a *holistic (objective)* one. As such, it holds that the social reality can exist outside of individual agency. Corresponding to this ontological position, the epistemological position taken here is that of objectivism (Carlsnaes 2007, p.130) through which “what is (or should be) regarded as

acceptable knowledge” (Bryman 2012, p.27) is addressed. In contrast to interpretivism, which posits that one considers the social world from the “inside” (Carlsnaes, 2007, p.129), an objectivist epistemology takes an “outside” point of view.

### **Method: Document analysis**

The method deemed most suitable for typecasting the extent of change in security policy was a document analysis. It refers to “a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents” (Bowen 2009, p.27). A document, so Bowen further (ibid.) could be many things, such as a letter, a book, a magazine or a public, or governmental, publication. The process of a document analysis refers to “findings, selecting, appraising (making sense of), and synthesising data” (ibid. p.28). In other words, a document analysis is not merely the process of collecting and using relevant material at the researcher’s discretion. Rather, as a method it requires a sensitive approach to the data and its underlying assumptions so as not to risk invalidating both data and findings (ibid.; Bryman 2012, p.543).

Normally, a document analysis would be combined with other qualitative approaches, such as interviews, but could also be found in mixed-method approaches. As such, it is an ideal method for data triangulation (ibid.), in order to forego accusations of only relying on simplistic research methods. Since this thesis is qualitative in nature and interviews were not considered feasible, this will have to be acknowledged as a potential downside. Nonetheless, a document analysis is suitable for the research question posed here and also largely resembles the previous research conducted policy change in Japan, though this is never explicitly marked. While certainly rare, the case for document analysis as a “stand-alone method” has been made and depends on what it is that one seeks to uncover (ibid. p.29).

According to Bowen, document analysis is a vehicle to “[track] change and development” (2009, p.30). In the case of Japan, policy documents are available for many years in online archives and therefore allow for such tracking. For the purpose of this thesis then, document analysis proved to be valuable and could be considered as a single method. However, documents may not give a full picture and need to be seen in the context of research and the questions being asked (ibid.). Even though the process of using documents as the primary data source does not come without its own problems, its advantages allow for an “unobstrusive” and “non-reactive” (Bowen 2009, p.31) research inquiry. In other words, the documents have not been interfered with on the side of the researcher. However, as with every research method, document analysis has “potential flaws”, as Bowen (ibid., p.32) notes. Besides issues of



accessibility, the documents should always be analysed within the paradigm within which they were produced. This is to say that there might as well be a political motive or agenda hidden even in official documents, such as governments, ministries or agencies publishing for a particular reason (Atkinson and Coffey 2004, p.57; Bowen 2009).

Moreover, emphasis should be given to the fact that documents are not “stand-alone” (Atkinson and Coffey 2004, p.66) products. Therefore, the documents underlying this research are, on the one hand, individual documents with a particular social reality to them and yet, on the other hand, they need to be assessed within a given context (ibid. p.67). Pertaining to the former, documentary reality as evidence brings with it its own set of problems, including a contorted reality. Thus, when seeking to assess change in Japan’s security policy, the documents both stand representative for a given reality and, simultaneously, they were produced for a certain purpose and audience. Therefore, substantiating the official policy documents with other sources is supposed to give a broader picture. Nonetheless, documents in the manner used here, present a type of reality and, thus, contain a shared meaning for a socially organised group (Atkinson and Coffey 1997 cited in Bowen 2009, p.27; Bryman 2012, p.550). After all, it is this reality that gives rise to policy change and, consequently, should be treated as is. In contrast to constructivist approaches, the goal here is to assess the outcome, not the process or implied reality constructs. With these underlying assumptions in mind, the next section will highlight how document analysis as a method was operationalised.

#### *Operationalisation: Thematic analysis*

According to Bowen (2009, p.28) document analysis requires “[...] appraising (making sense of), and synthesising data”. This still begs the question of how this is best achieved. The process through which ‘sense making’ took place was through a *thematic analysis*. This is one of two potential ways of how documents may be approached, the other being content analysis (ibid. p.32). For this project, a thematic analysis was deemed most insightful, although a content analysis, both qualitatively and quantitatively (Bryman 2012, pp.290-291), could have been considered, but was dismissed for being largely meant to quantify data (ibid.). This thesis followed the logic of a thematic analysis as outlined by Bowen (2009, p.32). After scanning all potential documents, a subsequent round of reading revealed several codes. These were both derived from the data itself, as recurring themes, while some themes were also pre-confined according to the literature on Japan’s security policy under Abe. This came about as a response

to an ongoing debate, which implies that certain aspects of security policy change have caused considerable ruckus among researchers, many of which needed to be considered. The emerging themes were then down-sized to a workable number, while some were dismissed due to lacking relevance. Although all themes were related to policy change, the document itself does always translate into a policy action. This has been kept in mind whenever doubt arose. These “category construction[s]” (Bowen 2009, p.32) were then analysed according to the graduated level of change model outlined in the previous chapter. What follows now is the method used to collect data as well as the sources deemed most informative.

### **Data collection method**

With the aim of problematising and re-assessing changes in security policy, the data collection method was already narrowed down. While interviews were briefly considered, the fact that access to government officials was deemed unfeasible for this project. Instead, data for this thesis is comprised of ‘documents’. According to Bowen (2009, p.27), documents may be “words”, but also “images” or “cultural artefacts”. For this research, only written documents, hence containing words, were chosen. A considerable advantage of this is that the data was retrieved in an “unobtrusive” (ibid. p.31) manner, since they were not produced for the sole purpose of research.

In this thesis, the documents stem from governmental websites and repositories: the Ministry of Defense (MOD), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), Japan’s Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) and the newly established Acquisition, Technology & Logistics Agency (ATLA). The publications include press conference material as well as policy documents from both MOFA and MOD. For example, the *Defense Programs and Budget* and the *National Defense Program Guidelines* published by the MOD, or the *US-Japan Security Cooperation* guidelines published by the MOFA. Since the focus of this thesis was to analyse the extent of change, the most useful information was found in policy documents. Yet, cross-references to press conference and other website material was found to be of value for data triangulation (Bowen 2009). In the case of capabilities, the manufacturer of certain weaponry was found to be a valuable source for technical information. Similarly, newspaper articles were consulted for uncovering the status of security policies. The information was validated, where possible, in English language media, such as the *Japan Times*. Additionally, the *National Security Strategy* and information about the *National Security Council* were found on the

website hosted by the Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet (Kantei). All documents were accessible publicly and in English.

### **Empirical time frame**

The data collected for this project is broadly consistent with the time Prime Minister Abe Shinzo's second time in office. The fact that the current debate on where Japan's security policy may be headed is largely confined to his second term in office, his first term as Prime Minister from 2006 to 2007 is omitted (BBC 2017). The total time span covered is from January 1<sup>st</sup> 2013 until late 2017. Although his inauguration was in late 2012, most changes have not occurred until the next year (2013). In other words, the first few weeks in 2012 did not reveal any relevant data for this thesis. Since change does not come in fixed intervals, data collection was continued until the beginning of 2018. Consequently, the thesis neither considers every instance of change in the minutest details nor is policy change constantly present. While for some periods of time a great deal of material was considered relevant, other periods did not lend themselves to scrutiny due to no (or minor) change occurring. Consequently, the time frame had two functions to fulfil. First and foremost, it had to include Abe Shinzo's tenure, since his policy approach caused the most controversy. Second, as the point of inquiry was to assess change by and large, a temporary assessment of policy change would not allow for a generalisable conclusion. At the time of writing (2018), Abe is still in office and likely to stay for some time. From an empirical point of view, excluding most of 2018 runs the risk of leaving out relevant data. Throughout the writing period, the situation was constantly monitored, and major changes would have been included. It appears unlikely that Abe will attempt another go at constitutional revision, even though another plan to do so was put forward in late August 2018 (Japan Times 2018). The internal friction of his LDP on constitutional revision is nowhere near consensus (Jain and Kobayashi 2018).

### **Ethical considerations, reflexivity, and study limitations**

Despite this thesis not relying on interviews or observation, both of which demand careful consideration of being ethical, it is, nonetheless, fundamental for any form of academic inquiry. Even though David Silverman's (2010, p. 152) statement, that "qualitative research inevitably involves contact with human subjects in the 'field'" appears disproportionate, each

project will have to deal with ethics individually (Denscombe 2014, pp. 306-311; Fujii 2012, p.717). Concerning this thesis, the material used is already open source, thus not requiring access to be obtained in any way. In a similar vein, conducting qualitative research based on official documents and publications circumvents potential pitfalls pertaining to protecting participants and their confidentiality (Bryman 2012, pp.148-151). Thus, even if no direct risk or consequences for anyone may be immediately inferred, there exists a certain responsibility on my behalf to address the issue at stake. Conducting a document analysis, one may be tempted to argue that ethical conduct is of no particular relevance. Even though it may be true that analysing documents does not bring with it similar problems, as opposed to ethnographic field work or interviews, being ethical, as in this case, might need to be addressed from a different angle.

I may not be able to predict and control the very notion of ‘being ethical’, however, what I can – or attempt to – address is that of being reflexive as a researcher. Whilst the above may be mere “procedural ethics” (Guillemin and Gillam 2004, p.263), which gets ticked off without much consideration, being self-critical is not addressed as easily. “Reflexivity” (Guillemin and Gilland 2004, p.274), has become somewhat of a cornerstone in qualitative inquiry. No researcher can, and probably should neither aspire to, be entirely objective when engaging in producing knowledge (ibid.; Sword 1999, p.277). Coming from a particular background and subscribing to particular politics, the position I am about to take is unquestionably biased (Malterud 2001). Therefore, throughout this journey of collecting data, analysing and writing up my findings, I had to be attentive to “self-supervision” (Berger 2013, p.222). Catapulting myself into the vast literature on Japan’s foreign and security policy, I was neither a complete outsider, nor could I claim to be an insider either. Not being an insider and setting out to “studying the [largely] unfamiliar” (ibid. p.227) is advantageous, as I do not have a preconceived opinion (ibid. p.223). In the following, I seek to be as objective as possible, having acknowledged that “personal and professional meanings [have] permeate[d] [the] analysis” (Sword 1999, p.276). As I am about to engage in a debate about the future of Japan’s security policy posture, I hope not to have committed what Berger refers to as “unconscious editing” (2013, pp.221-222), or leaving out of information not considered worthwhile. Throughout the months of writing this thesis, I have tried to envision policy changes from various angles in order to circumvent leaving out important details. Successful or not, this is not up to me judge. Acknowledging that I have come this point due to a particular set of presumptions, I cannot override them completely for the purpose of pure objectivity. Also, as Berger (2013, p.229) further notes, acknowledging that the self is inevitably informing any decision in the research

process, this should not be judged as a weakness. More often than not does it enhance the researcher's "credibility" (ibid.) when conducting research work.

In addition to ethical and reflexive considerations, "systemic bias" (Price and Murnan 2004, p.66) in the form of research limitations is another important aspect to cover. As Price and Murnan (2004) highlight, limitations are easily dismissed. Leaving out what could undermine a study's validity "place[s] more credit on a study's findings than warranted" (ibid. p.67). In this regard, a number of limitations should be addressed.

A first potential drawback is the use of English-language translations of originally Japanese documents. The material has been translated by members of the relevant institutions, such as MOFA and MOD, and thus bear the potential of nuances in wording being lost in this process (Bryman 2012, p.314). According to Smith (1996, pp.160-161), "translation often does not quite convey 'original' meanings and association". Therefore, when engaging with already translated Japanese governmental documents implies that there may be a discrepancy in meaning which potentially interferes with the research findings and their subsequent analysis. As such, it is upon me, as a researcher, to ensure that the usage of translated documents does not infringe on the validity of such data. Moreover, using documents from one or several governmental institutions in a language other than the original, it occurred that some data are yet to be made available in English. One example is the website of a newly created governmental agency for the transfer and oversight of weapons and defense technology (ATLA; see *Analysis* section). The website's different sections are all accessible in Japanese, whilst the English-language version is incomplete. However, this was the only instance of non-accessibility, which did not greatly hinder the research process.

## Analysis

To what extent has Japan's security policy been subject to change under the Abe administration – is the impossible ship in the making after all? This question is now considered through the lens of graduated levels of policy change as explicated above. Drawing on Scott and Carter's (2016) four level typology – adjustment (change in effort), refinement (change in means/methods), reform (change in goal, new approaches) and restructuring (change in goals, means, and overall purpose) – the aim is to sketch out how change should ideally be understood and assessed for a sound judgement about the future of Japan's security policy. In contrast to applying a dichotomous typology of radical or incremental, the analysis will show that change can take a variety of forms and appear at different levels (effort, means/methods, goal, and a combination of goals, means, and purpose). Thus, a graduated levels approach complicates the picture of security policy assessment in that it gives considerable weight to the explanandum – *change*. The analysis will therefore proceed as follows: The first section is concerned with the foundations of Japan's security policy, namely the building blocks of how security policy is shaped, including the National Security Strategy (NSS) paper as well as the National Security Council (NSC). The next section then goes on to analyse the general policy approach which the Abe administration pursues: 'Proactive Pacifism' and the measures taken to advance this approach, as well as Japan's capabilities, the US alliance, and international security cooperation.

### Reforming foundations

Upon returning to office Abe's position was no easy one. Economically the country was facing strong headwinds, demanding the new administration to boost the domestic economy. Meanwhile, the security environment Japan was facing at that time was no picnic in the park either. Whether it be what many Japanese security experts call China's "salami slicing" strategy (Sakaki 2015, p.9), meaning a step-by-step claiming of disputed territory, or the North Korean atomic weapons programme, the situation was not always stress-free. With a difficult environment, changes to the very foundations of security policy were expected. As Abe himself stated in his inaugural press conference, "[Japan's] security is not someone else's problem" and that "a crisis" was all too present for Japan not to do anything (The Prime Minister and His Cabinet 2012). The following will now examine the changes made to the foundations of Japan's security posture, which is the National Security Strategy (NSS) as a key document as well as

the State Secrecy law and the National Security Council. While all three are key policy approaches, they all have an impact on the structural underpinnings of the security legislation. As they started out as policy proposals, they have become integral structural working parts in the Japanese security apparatus.

With the establishment of the NSS (National Security Strategy) a first step was made to align security strategically (Kantei 2013b). As a document highlighting what Japan's security is going to look like in the long-run, its main purpose is to make explicit the steps and policies needed to achieve security for the country. It has been hailed a milestone to overcome the 'reactive' state hypothesis many commentators have lamented in the immediate post-Cold War period (Kantei 2013b; Maslow 2015). If one was to judge the book by its cover, the overall posture promulgated in the NSS still refers to a Japan with "peaceful" intentions (Kantei 2013b, p.1). Diving deeper, however, the document elucidates that for security policy to be formulated efficiently structural adjustments would be required (ibid.). As the main purpose of the NSS is that of road-mapping, it goes beyond refinement. Refining would only address that new methods or means have been introduced, not that the goal has changed. However, the NSS is much more explicit in its treatment of national security in that it addresses not only how security shall be achieved method-wise. It also gives new impetus for security to be treated in a far more strategic manner than before, therefore, the NSS represents a *reform* of the existing structure.

The NSS itself will be continuously updated and scrutinised through a control organ, called the National Security Council (NSC). According to the NSS (Kantei 2013b, p.2), the council is supposed to function as a "control tower" which facilitates policy-making and implementation. Its formation does not per se indicate any change in security institutions, since it simply replaces the former Security Council dating back to 1986 (Maslow 2015, p.753; MOD 2013, p.105). In contrast to its predecessor, however, the NSC will convene regularly and will be headed by Yachi Shotaro, a close supporter of Abe (Maslow 2015, p.754). Rested firmly within the Prime Minister's Office, the close alliance between Prime Minister and the NSC reconfirms that the NSS as a central tenant reshapes the overall approach to security under Abe at the level of reform.

While it is noteworthy that the NSC is supposed to facilitate how security policy is going to be established in the long-run, the promising intention may come with severe consequences. A first critique hinges upon the questionable nature of the council itself. By doing away with Diet control over security affairs (Maslow 2015, p.755), the Abe government runs the risk of shifting responsibility away from direct civilian control (Fatton 2015; Japan Times 2013). It

may be that only time will be able to tell whether civilian control will, after all, be affected. Considering a recent proposal made to strengthen the position of the Secretary General, Yachi Shotaro, of the NSC with significant leeway given to the council itself to draft security policy, such concerns may not be unsubstantiated (Japan Times 2018). As Fatton (2015) notes, the increased participation of SDF personnel within NSC operations undermines the, thus far, civilian control over security established in the post-war period to a considerable extent. In other words, SDF officials now has almost unhindered access to previously entirely civilian controlled areas of the government. With both accountability and transparency being the core concern, critiques argue that not only does the NSC remove the organ of representation - the Diet - away from a major policy area, it also becomes further disenfranchised through another bill passed in 2013. The State Secrecy Protection Law (Maslow 2015; Japan Times 2013), was designed to broaden the scope of what is to be declared a “special state secret”. These secrets will be designated as such upon suggestions of the Prime Minister and are not scrutinised by an external body for control (Repeta 2013). The overall extent of this law will depend upon the Abe government (or follow-up governments) to disclose. Even if no immediate effect might be felt, there exists concern that Japan is headed towards a slippery slope with the NSC and the state secrecy bill. The fact that control has been moved up the ladder, the centralisation does not speak to neither mere adjustments in efforts nor to a refinement in policy means. Instead, the established framework rather concerns the very nature of how security is to be addressed. This includes methods and means, but, first and foremost, it *reforms* the process of decision-making.

In sum, then, the structural changes made to Japan’s structural security apparatus allow for an overall classification as *reform*. The policy structure changes do not stray away from the overall security orientation, which is still to secure Japan and its citizens. Yet, the implementation and centralisation at the highest level of government addresses both the key importance of new policy initiatives as well as the impact of these on the policy structure. This is not to say that the changes in the institutional level of security policy will not have substantial consequences. The NSC and the secrecy law both run the risk of overhauling the state-civil relationship in more drastic ways in the future. For now, both represent a new approach used to address a largely unchanging posture. If the foundational level would be further altered, one would potentially have to rethink this classification. One can infer that change is in the making, but it would be too speculative to go beyond reform due to a strong oppositional forces.



## **Proactive Pacifism for a change?**

Turning from the nexus of policy and structure to the policy program pursued under Abe. What stands out, and what many have picked up when assessing change, is the new guiding principle of ‘sekkyokuteki heiwashugi’ (積極的平和主義), which in the English language is often translated as ‘proactive pacifism’ or ‘proactive contribution to peace’ (Kantei 2013b, p.1; Sakaki 2015, p.16). The somewhat contradictory message makes the term a frequently cited reason why Japan is about to see radical changes in its security policy (Sakaki 2015). It conveys that pacifism still guides the security posture, and potentially beyond, whilst adding nuances of renewed energy and focus. As the NSS states, ‘proactive pacifism’ envisions a closer “international cooperation” (Kantei 2013b, p.1). Thus, the new principle under which Japan will operate adds additional scope and efforts of collaboration. Its implementation raised questions about the durability of the Yoshida doctrine. Four main policies are of interest when elucidating the extent of change and to answer whether the Abe administration has, indeed, been at the forefront of radically changing the overarching approach to security policy: collective self-defense, weapon exports, research and development and the use of outer space. These will now be evaluated individually and their findings will highlight why a detailed analysis of change alongside different levels is crucial for our understanding of the matter.

Up until July 2014, collective self-defense (CSD) was seen as incompatible with the constitutional limits of Article 9. One of the major items on Abe’s agenda was to seek revision of the constitution to remove this restriction, which for him are no longer appropriate (Hamilton 2018; Maslow 2015, p.752). It appears, though, that a complete revision of the constitution is still unattainable. The stakes are high for revision, not only would Abe require a two-thirds majority (for both the lower and upper House) in the Diet, he would also need a majority in a referendum, which is not an easy task with lacking support both from the public and the opposition parties (George Mulgan 2013). Instead ‘adding’ (*kaken*), or ‘stretching’ the existing framework, became a workable concession (Hamilton 2018). This form of ‘reinterpretation’ ultimately led to the passing of legislation which now allows CSD to be partially permitted. Yet, it can only be exercised within strict limits. The “three new conditions” (MOD 2016, p.7) state that: (a) Japan is now allowed to come to the defense of a “foreign country that is in a close relationship with Japan” which, subsequently, results in Japan’s own “survival” being at stake, (b) “when there is no other appropriate means available to repeal the attack, and (c) that the “use of force should be limited to the minimum extent necessary” (MOD 2016, p.7). For some

commentators (Sakaki 2015), these requirements are living-proof that CSD does not cross constitutional limits. Green and Hornung (2014) even claimed that envisioning a sea change in this matter would be a “myth” without substance, since it has long been practised before, such as 2009-2010 in Indian Ocean drills to support the US Afghanistan mission (cf. Sakaki 2015). In other words, CSD is neither new nor does it stretch the constitution, as it practically existed all along since the Koizumi years.

The “evolution rather than revolution” (Howe and Campbell 2013; Sakaki 2015, p.19) hypothesis, however, does not correspond well with the findings presented here. From a legal perspective, the discussion whether or not Japan is about to change course indefinitely does not strike a chord with the actual issue at stake. As Wakefield and Craig (2014) note, any reinterpretation of Article 9 further erodes the fundamentals of the constitution, regardless of the strategic implications. If constitutional limits are, in fact, easily dismissed simply by adjusting its interpretative value, any future government may have extensive leeway (ibid.). Besides the questionable legal nature, the strategic implications weigh in on a changing course of the Abe administration. By removing the basic tenet of only individual self-defense, the scope of security operations abroad is now legally attainable. With the ‘requirements’ for the SDF rather loosely framed, the nature of self-defense could be said to have experienced a *reform*. In this regard, and albeit assessments made to the contrary, CSD does not only change the strategic dimension of Article 9. It, first and foremost, challenges the basic premise of the constitution as it is written? As Hagström and Williamson (2009, p.247) note, any attempt at revising the constitution would constitute an ‘international reorientation’, or ‘restructuring’ on Scott and Carter’s scale, due to its overall effect on the “bedrocks” of security policy. Thus, the argument that the changes made under Abe are merely pro-forma dismisses change as a side-effect of already existing conventions. Therefore, the introduction of CSD embodies change at the level of *reform*, as it represents a new approach rather than a change in lower levels.

Apart from CSD, an additional feature of ‘Proactive Pacifism’ was the revision of the “Three Principles of Defense Equipment and Technology” in order to allow the export and transfer of weaponry internationally (MOFA 2014). Under the banner of pacifism, the 1967 policy almost entirely banned exports, in particular to communist countries, countries under UN arms embargos, as well as countries currently, or likely to become, embroiled in disputes of any form (MOFA 2014). Exceptions existed only within the US-Japan alliance for which no separate legislation was needed, as it drew its legitimacy from the combined security treaty. Whilst the original plans to loosen the transfer and export restrictions were drafted under the

DPJ, the current Abe government passed the legislation indefinitely (Maslow 2015, p.760). The new legislation could arguably constitute a complete restructuring. If the overall purpose is changed, which may be the case when defense technology transfers were allowed without restriction, then this classification would hold true. However, the ban has not been lifted entirely and continues to prohibit a range of cases. So are transfers which “violate obligations under treaties [and] international agreements” and to countries which are “party to a conflict” still forbidden (MOFA 2014; MOD n.d.). Even though these restrictions appear tight, it is striking that the ‘Second Principle’ notes that if the transfer process was to contribute actively to either international or Japanese security, the restrictions would not be applicable and would consequently allow more transfers of this sort. As a case in point, Japan has transferred two TC-90 King Air aircraft to the Philippines in 2017 with three more to be delivered throughout 2018 (Cruz de Castro 2016; SIPRI 2018). The reconnaissance aircraft are used to conduct surveillance operations. The fast-paced deal and the nature of the aircraft give rise to the assumption that urgency reigns in on finalising deals in light of Chinese expansions in the South China Sea (Cruz de Castro 2016). It appears safe to argue that the means and methods through which defense transfers are going to be handled open new pathways. Thus the changes may be assigned a slot in between *reform* (in the long run: *restructuring*).

Under the banner of loosened defense equipment transfers, another niche opened up for Japan to promote changes. R&D (research and development) efforts have become an integral part of Japan’s National Defense Program Guidelines (2013) and the NSS (2014). The former states that “[R&D] is essential” since what is going to be developed needs to “fit[s] the operational environment” (MOD 2013, pp.26, 28). The goal set by the MOD to “utilize civilian technology” for R&D purposes comes at a crucial cross-road of fiscal difficulties and the need to foster home-grown efforts. Aiming at developing close links with civilian institutions, including independent research facilities, the research efforts for civilian technology can now be used for military purposes as well (ibid.). An officially passed statement put forward by the Science Council of Japan in 2017 voiced concern and called on scientists to “boycott” the ministry’s decision (The Mainichi Shimbun 2017b). Since this niche cannot be considered a mere adjustment to efforts as it breaks down existing civil-military boundaries, the classification of R&D under ‘proactive pacifism’ represents a *reform*.

Another merger of significant value came with the designation of Japan’s Space Agency (JAXA) as a “National Research and Development Agency” (JAXA n.d.). The consortium is comprised of the agency for “Space and Astronautical Science”, “National Aerospace

Laboratory of Japan”, and the “National Space Development Agency of Japan” (ibid.). For purposes of national security the Abe administration revised the “Basic Plan on Space Policy” in 2013. It thereby replaces the 2008 version of the document and marks that adjustments have been made to the institutional structure of JAXA. With the new plan, JAXA’s oversight was moved to the Cabinet Office under the ‘Law for Partial Amendment of Laws for Establishment of Cabinet Office’ (sic) (ibid.). It confirms that the dual-use statute shall also be pursued in space research. To decrease “overdependence on governmental investment in R&D”, space technology is now just as much a dual-use endeavour as other defense related measures. JAXA’s main purpose is two-fold. On the one hand, it was established to strengthen Japan’s own surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities vis-à-vis a deteriorating security environment. By that it refers to both threats from North Korea or China’s activities in the maritime sphere (ibid., p.7), but also to ensure that Japan is sufficiently equipped to handle environmental disasters, such as the Great Japan Earthquake in 2011, via better land-observing satellites (Strategic Headquarters for Space Policy 2013, p. 5). On the other hand, JAXA now handles cooperation with other countries on surveillance and reconnaissance. Under the veil of fiscal constraints, Japan promoted space cooperation with Turkey and Vietnam (MOFA 2016). Strikingly, the Basic Policy on Space’s call for the “peaceful utilisation of outer space” (2013, p.34) now becomes an ambiguous symbol of enlarging the security radius in which Japan operates. The duality of expanding and simultaneously advocating for limiting the use of space for only peaceful means fits within the ‘Proactive Pacifism’ strategy. The case of new outer space guidelines matches the central idea of ‘proactive pacifism’. Thus it marks a *reform* of existing policy approaches by adding new means and methods (dual-use technology) but also altering the goal of actively using space for the sake of security.

To sum up, the notion of ‘proactive pacifism’ as stipulated by the current administration has altered the basic idea of security policy. Most of the changes outlined above amount to *reform*. Rather than simply widening the scope of previous policies, which would be an adjustment, the evidence suggests that both the goal and the methods and means were altered. The goal of ‘proactive pacifism’ to boost Japan’s activity record and make use of previously closed channels thus makes for a *reform* of the security posture. The evidence does not speak for a sea change in the security approach under the new banner of ‘proactive pacifism’. All of this is not to say that the overall purpose of Japan’s security policy is not changing after all, this argument may require being dusted off again in the future. Yet, the situation as it is, envisions Japan with a similar overall posture and purpose, solely the goal is now one of increased activity and new approaches to achieve this active position. All in all, the assessment here cannot attest

that Japan is on the verge of a radical change in its security posture. The following will assess in more detail the three key pillars of Japan's security policy, its own capabilities, the US-Japan alliance, and international cooperation.

### **Japan's capabilities – where change remains ambiguous**

The “independent efforts” (MOD 2013, p.6) as the new defense guidelines refer to them concern the build-up and maintenance of Japan's own capabilities. Overall, the governmental reports and defense strategies all outline a stronger defense posture with better equipment for the SDF to respond to a number of different scenarios. As the NDPG (ibid. pp.7-8) state, capabilities should be “adequate both in quantity and quality that underpin various activities”. This is particularly relevant to areas of concern, such as remote islands (e.g. Diayou/Senkaku), airspace incursions, and nuclear missiles from North Korea. With an alleged risk increase in all of these areas, possessing capabilities to deter any such threat were deemed necessary, which was reflected in the yearly defense budget and procurement and maintenance plans (MOD 2013, p.14).

A possible *reform* can be seen with the Maritime Self Defense Forces (MSDF). The introduction of “helicopter destroyers” (MOD 2013a, p.5) earned severe critique. This was guided towards the fact the destroyers are *de facto* aircraft carriers, which would indicate that it is no longer a new approach, but an in toto reversal of the purpose of these ships. The government has so far repudiated any such claims and relegate to the fact that the new Izumo class ships do not cater to the needs and equipment necessary for a full-fledged aircraft carrier (Wallace 2013 a,b). The “aircraft carrier in disguise” (Wallace 2013 a,b), mirrors the ambiguity associated with procuring anything with “war potential” (ibid.), and thus further stretching the constitutional limits of a defensive security posture. The reassurance of the government to not make use of it as an aircraft carrier should, in all respect, be taken with a pinch of salt. As of now, however, the Izumo class does not represent a full restructuring, since the Izumo is supposed to carry helicopters, which supports that these changes are a refinement (Wallace 2013). Only if Japan was to acquire F35B fixed-wing aircraft and simultaneously equip the Izumo with vertical/short take-off and landing capability (ibid.) could one assume that it would be more than a refinement. If Japan was to acquire these aircraft, then it may reverse any claim of being defensive, which would have to be reflected in attributing it the highest level of change – restructuring.

Moreover, the MSDF's submarines currently in use are mostly refitted with new "intelligence gathering" (MOD 2017, p.5) capabilities, which does not represent an adjustment change due to the existing technology being upgraded. A potential restructuring might be seen in the acquiring of new diesel-electric submarines which have torpedo and harpoon missile launch capabilities, and, compared to previous submarines, are quiet (Mizokami 2014, 2016). With these capabilities built into the new Soryu class submarines their introduction is more than a simple adjustment change. As Hagström and Williamson (2009, p.251) noted in an early assessment of Japanese submarines, any form of missile capability increases the "tactical benefits" of the submarine to a considerable extent. As such, the submarines have achieved a *refinement* of the methods and means for anti-submarine warfare. What makes it a refinement rather than a reform or restructuring is the range the submarine can travel, which is about 6,100 nautical miles (Mizokami 2016). In this regard, the purpose of the Soryu remains confined to Japanese waters, despite their capability upgrade being all but insignificant.

Next in line are the Air Self-Defense Forces which still operate the PAC-3 missile interceptors, which had already been in place before Abe returned as PM. Thus, under this premiership, the ASDF's equipment for intercept ballistic missiles has not been upgraded. A yet unofficial plan Tokyo's to extend the range of PAC-3 missiles in light of advances in the North Korean missile programme and the Olympic Games in 2020, would have to be considered a *reform*, since the original goal of only defending Japanese islands would no longer apply (Kelly and Kubo 2016a). Additionally, the ASDF fighter jets have seen not only a face lift, but the introduction of entirely new aircraft. The 2014 budget mentions the acquisition of the F35A, which, however, would not replace but come in addition to the already existing F15 and F2 (MOD 2014). The new aircraft would come with enhanced capabilities such as night vision, which considerably extends the usage of the aircraft, thus marking a refinement rather a simple adjustment change. Japan's F15 will be upgraded with new radar capabilities, hence the changes here do not go beyond *adjustment* changes.

These developments beg the question whether Japan possess the necessary means for a first-strike capability. As Hagström and Williamson already noted in 2009 (p.252), this debate has long been under way in Japan. From a capability point of view, Japan's SDF have the necessary means to engage in pre-emptive strikes. In-flight refuelling has long been introduced in the form of a Boeing KC-767, with three additional ordered of which one is already in operation (MOD 2013a; MOD 2017). This could be seen as an *adjustment* change, since it does neither add new means nor goals, but expands existing capabilities. According to Lockheed

Martin (n.d.), the newly acquired F35A have in-flight refuelling built in, and the already operational F15 also possess this capability, which ASDF pilots have already put to the test in 2010 (US Pacific Forces 2010). Thus, in addition to the capability itself, pilots have received substantial training and can make use of it if required (ibid.). This not to say, however, that Tokyo will never consider this capability. Consequently, the additional acquisition of tankers for in-flight refuelling and fighter jets capable of an extended flying range when refuelled mid-air, this is only an adjustment since the technology already existed before Abe returned as PM (Hagström and Williamson 2009, p.252).

Moreover, Tokyo set out to upgrade its information gathering by investing in further radar stations, predominantly in Okinawa prefecture as well as Hokkaido. Fixed FPS-7 radar stations were introduced with enhanced detection capabilities, which is indicative of coastal and island surveillance operations being enhanced (MOD 2017, p.6). One of the stations was placed on Yonaguni, the island closest to Taiwan and now is the most western-ward radar station for Japan (Kelly and Kubo 2016b). Since the fixed radar stations exist in numerous places throughout Japan, it seems unreasonable to classify the introduction of new stations as more than *adjustment* in the scope. Although renewed focus is on the protection of remote islands, the technology has not been upgraded but comes in addition to stations on Japan's main islands. In contrast, the introduction of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV), commonly referred to as drones, represents a *refinement*. With vast areas of sea and islands spread to the West of Japan, the RQ-4B Global Hawk was acquired to support reconnaissance and information gathering whereby supplementing fixed radar stations (MOD 2017). Thus far only one was delivered but two more are ordered (ibid.). In contrast to fixed radar stations, UAVs are a much more flexible tool for the SDF to pursue information gathering and step-up surveillance of remote island territory. Thus, they add a new means to an existing problem in that the technological base and flexibility were previously not attainable.

In sum, the qualitative analysis of Japan's capabilities exhibits instances of *adjustment*, *refinement*, and *reform*. Change, thus, happened largely in efforts (such as increasing the number of in-flight refuelling aircraft or an increase in fixed radar stations) or the introduction of new means to handle existing problems (such as unmanned aerial vehicles). For now, change under the Abe administration in Japan's capabilities are largely confined to upgrading existing technology for already existing goals and problems. Thus, while some may state that Japan is ramping up its capabilities, there exists evidence that, while the technology is there, it would require considerable investment to refit helicopter carriers for full-fledged aircraft carriers, for

example. This is not to say that such change will never happen. It exhibits that the purpose of acquiring certain capabilities was done with a purpose other than ‘war-potential’ in mind, atleast for now.

### **U.S. alliance – adjustment and reform going hand in hand**

As one of the key pillars of Japan’s security policy, the alliance between Japan and the US remains largely untouched. The 1997 ‘Defense Cooperation Guidelines’, already then a revised version, underwent another revision in the years 2014-2015, with the final version being complete in 2015. Characterised as “indispensable” (MOFA 2015; US DOD 2015), the new version of 2015 relies on the same strategic framework and goals to be achieved as its 1997 predecessor. Thus, with the goal unchanged, the alliance could not have undergone a reform under the Abe administration, since this classification would imply that the goal of a given initiative would have changed. However, this is not to say that we could not witness change after all.

A few points have been addressed, but their scope does not give reason to attest change beyond scope and means. Primarily, the alliance shall now operate “seamlessly” (USDOD 2015, p.3), which enhances the intensity relationship between the US and Japan more than it changes its foundations. This would likely constitute an *adjustment* change. This is substantiated by the fact that the alliance will “[include] situations when an armed attack against Japan is not involved” (USDOD 2015, p.4). A yearly joint exercise held in the US called “Iron Fist”, which is meant to strengthen the interoperability of the armed forces of both countries, has seen a steady increase in the number of armed forces sent by Japan (Mauricio 2014). The expansion of joint exercises in scope also speaks to an overall *adjustment*. However, the introduction of new amphibious vehicles by the SDF in this context (Mauricio 2014) also adds a new means of conducting the joint exercises, but still within given limits.

Another area of expanding scope, or *adjustment*, would be the introduction of “chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear (CBNR)” weaponry as areas of concerns (USDOD 2015, p.16). The same applies to space and cyberspace security, which moved up in the agenda, not just for the alliance but also domestically in Japan. For all the added areas, there exists potential for new methods and means to be introduced due to the very nature of the areas themselves. Each requires new technology and specific skill sets, but, as of now, the cooperation is still in the making and its extent yet unknown.



The 2015 guidelines still emphasise that anything Japan would be involved in is “in accordance with [its] respective constitution” (USDOD 2015, p.2). With the new “Legislation for Peace” (MOD 2016) and CSD now officially in place, the alliance has gained the most in this regard. This would constitute a counter-argument to the above in that the revised guidelines may also expand the scope, if CSD was to be made use of. This stands in stark contrast to Sakaki’s (2015) analysis, which did not draw a connection between CSD and the US alliance and, subsequently, did not characterise the US alliance as an area of *reform*. The constitutional barrier now pushed further, the SDF are able to contribute to the alliance with a stronger mandate. While it may be true that the move to allow for collective self-defense legalises what might have been practised before, it appears to underestimate implication of the new changes. In this regard, the possibility of Japanese forces protecting weaponry and other military equipment abroad does alter the original framework (MOD 2016). In this regard, it represents a new approach with a reworked purpose of intensifying the relations, i.e. a *reform*.

In sum, the alliance remains a steady pillar for Japan’s security policy. Both sides have agreed to strengthen their position, albeit under existing restrictions. With the expansion of scope on a range of security related issues, the change may overall be classified as *adjustment*. As the analysis has shown, however, the alliance can now make use of new channels of cooperation previously ambiguous from a legal perspective. With CSD, the alliance does gain new impetus, exhibiting change along the lines of a *reform*.

### **International security cooperation – reforming engagement**

Another aspect of Abe’s proactive security vision concerned the internationalisation of potential security threats and, subsequently, the need to enhance this branch of security policy. Besides Japan’s own efforts and the US alliance, cooperative measures with other countries moved up the priority ladder. Due to an ever-increasing level of global interconnectedness, the NDPG (2014, p.2) highlights that national security can no longer be a solely national exercise. “Countries which share interests” (MOD NDPG 2014, p.2), so the official stance, were subsequently of strategic interest to Japan’s security objective. It is in this light that both bilateral and multilateral efforts are key areas which have seen less coverage compared to the other areas analysed above.

Given the North Korean missile programme, Japan and South Korea have increased cooperation. In late 2016, an already long overdue deal to share intelligence information about the status of North Korean missiles came into force (Sakai 2017; Park and Yun 2016). The

“General Security of Military Information Agreement”, or GSOMIA, was supposed to facilitate the sharing of data on all issues related to North Korea’s capabilities and advances. Besides its legal status, GSOMIA, now enables direct cooperation between Japan and South Korea. Previously pushed forward by the Obama administration, thus through the US, the agreement now operates directly. (Fackler 2014; Park and Yun 2016). Since the deal had already been drawn up before, but has only now reached implementation, it constitutes more than an adjustment change. Also, since the agreement’s predecessor came to life before Abe’s return, the overall deal may not be counted as an entirely new approach to security, hence it is neither a reform. Consequently, it shall be categorised as a *refinement*. It underlines the Abe administration’s enduring position towards cooperation, despite North Korean objections (Johnson 2018).

While GSOMIA largely focusses on North Korean missiles and nuclear weapon arsenals, the NDPG from 2014 highlighted the key role Australia could play in maritime security (MOD 2014, p.5). Australia, so the NDPG, is of strategic importance for a number of reasons. First, maritime security concerns in the South China Sea have an impact on both Australia and Japan. Both countries have critiqued China for extending its sphere of influence in the area and have set goals to conduct regular training exercises. Second, both countries have previously signed a common framework agreement to collaborate under the banner of UN PKOs (MOFA 2010). The agreement has yet to be fully finalised, since harsh critique from China has caused controversy to arise in Australia over the scope of such an agreement in alienating their relations. Since security is in no way a new area to be covered, the Abe administration’s efforts to tighten cooperation may only add up to new means and methods being added to pre-existing goals of ensuring peace and stability, making it a *refinement* rather than a comprehensive reform.

Additionally, Abe proposed a “Democratic Security Diamond” (Abe 2012), which would encompass the US, Australia, and India. The rationale, so Abe, was to effectively and inclusively insure that the Pacific Ocean remains a sphere of “peace, stability, and freedom of navigation” (ibid.). The fact that much of Japan’s trade needs to manoeuvre through both the South China Sea and the Pacific Ocean, the call for “freedom of navigation” does not surprise. The sea lanes as “common good” were being turned into “a ‘Lake Beijing’” (ibid.). “Driven by [...] anxieties about a rising China” (Lee and Lee 2016, pp.289-290) “Japan under Abe is not sitting still”. As of today, however (2018), the initiative remains wishful thinking. If it was to push forward to implement the initiative, Japan would have broadened its spherical scope of security policy, which would only amount to *adjustment* change.

In sum, the cooperative mechanisms through which security is promoted have undergone changes, but these are far from radical. The evidence highlighted both *refinements* and *reforms*, with more changes being made to the methods rather than goals. However, it is similarly worth noting that the scope has been considerably broadened. Not only are further non-US arrangements on the rise, which highlight the need to diversify the collaborative aspect of security beyond US-centrism. The aim appears to be a wider range of security cooperation in the name of freedom, prosperity and the rule of law. How bilateral and multilateral initiatives would ultimately play out and how they might reign in on future assessments of Japan's security policy remains to be seen, since many proposals have yet to materialise.

## Conclusion

This thesis has adopted graduated levels approach change, and more specifically policy change in Japan's security realm of foreign policy. Drawing on Scott and Carter (2016), the aim was to shed new light on a gridlocked debate by problematising the established incremental-radical dichotomy. Instead of asking whether Japan's security policy was changing along these given lines, the thesis asked to what extent, and concurrently at what level, security policy under the Abe administration could be said to have changed. By doing so, this thesis finds its niche in overcoming the side-lining of the explanandum – 'change'. It subsequently sought to highlight the implications of a graduated level approach when dealing with question of policy change. The analysis went into depth on a range of issues pertaining to national security, these were the policy foundations, the legislative 'Proactive Pacifism', Japan's capabilities, the US alliance as well as international cooperation. Each section revealed numerous levels of change based on Scott and Carter's (2016) four level typology, ranging from adjustments to restructuring.

As shown above, the analysis did not yield any evidence relating to the highest level of change, restructuring. Neither of the categories analysed gave rise to the impression that Japan's overarching posture – of defending Japan and doing so within persistent constitutional and regulatory limits – has been altered to a large extent under the Abe administration. The foundations of security policy remained confined to refinement or reform. In other words, they address methods/ means and goals/ new approaches but remain silent on a changing international posture. The same holds true for 'Proactive Pacifism' as the new general security policy approach. In the qualitative analysis of Japan's capabilities, the evidence suggests that most change occurred along the lines of adjustment and refinement, hence in the overall effort and means employed. The notion of 'war-potential' remains ambiguous but does not allow for another classification due to persisting limits. As for the US alliance, Japan has made efforts to strengthen the alliance, but in most instances in terms of effort or the changing of goals. In the realm of international cooperation, we can witness increase in both means/methods and goals, which functions as an addition rather than a substitution of the US alliance, which remains strong.

Despite several different levels of change found in the analysis, one key finding is that the incremental-radical dichotomy commonly employed does not offer a similarly nuanced assessment of change. Its applicability might require rethinking. The debate arguably created much heat by employing an either-or lens but strayed away from shedding light on the very

concept of change itself. When seen through a graduated level of change lens, albeit the highest form remaining absent under Abe, a dichotomous assessment dismisses a complex concept all too easily. The ‘radical’ change argument fails to integrate that changes at the level of adjustment and refinement are many, as this work has shown. Changes at these levels do not automatically translate into an overall posture change, since an increase or decrease in effort or a change in means and methods does not need to have an impact on the posture after all. Similarly, those positing that change is merely incremental, might brush aside changes at reform level, or potentially refinement as well, as systemic or sequential. By that definition, change would have to be considered symptomatic rather than atypical, and worthy of being studied. While Abe certainly has been unable to push for more ambitious change, the changes that have been made will have a lasting impact on Japan’s security posture in the long-run. Consequently, neither camp can fully capture the nuances and levels at which change may occur. A graduated approach, however, highlights differences and thus enables a fine-grained assessment of policy change and its implications.

In conclusion, what does a graduated level approach imply for Japan’s security posture? While a range of measures alter the ways in which Japan can address both old and new threats to its national security, the overall posture remains largely intact. Yet, this does mean that its posture will not change soon, even though it currently is less likely. Instead, policy change in Japan should be understood as change at particular levels. For Japan it indicates a broader engagement with security than before, albeit one which may have to be taken with a pinch of salt. For East Asia, Japan’s security posture does not so much mirror a militarised past as it does emphasise an active policy posture.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Whilst answering the research question outlined above, a number of potential areas and questions for future research emerged. Starting with the more obvious, this thesis is empirically limited. Still in office, Abe may propose more legislative changes which would require a re-assessment. Similarly, one might want to ask whether the approach as it stands now is suitable for future research. The graduated levels may need to be refined to fit different purposes and questions. This is a pressing issue, as mentioned in the Conceptual Framework section, since Eidenfalk (2006, 2009) sought to refine the levels by adding an additional three. However, the refinement catered to a specific set of questions and concepts, making his changes not

universally applicable. Nonetheless, the approach has yielded a much more nuanced assessment of change, which could be considered for further application in Japan's foreign policy more generally, but also possibly beyond.

Besides, future research might want to consider examining the conceptual model across Japanese Prime Ministers. There might be differences which this thesis could not establish, since the sole focus was on the current Abe administration. These differences might be structural or political but should be considered as a difference in these areas might interfere with the applicability of the conceptual model. Thus, to examine change in Japan's security policy more broadly it would require a comparative approach. Additionally, a niche persists in the application of the conceptual framework across theoretical paradigms.

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