



FPC Briefing: Separating historical fact from political fiction-reconsidering Japan's militaristic past

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With the conclusion of the Pacific War approaching its 70th anniversary, Japan once again finds itself at the center of a controversy. Prime Minister Abe Shinzō has in recent months repeatedly struck the nationalist war drum, leaving leaders in Beijing and Seoul increasingly worried about a resurgent Japan. Of particular concern is Abe's gifting of a sakaki tree, a sacred symbol to Japan's native Shintoism, to the Yasukuni war shrine.¹

The shrine commemorates over two million of Japanese nationals who died in service to the state. Among those honored at the shrine are 1,068 war criminals, including 14 military and political leaders convicted at the Tokyo Trials² for conspiracy to wage offensive war or other crimes against peace.³ In the past, Abe and other Japanese leaders have visited the shrine, sparking outcries that their actions legitimize Imperial Japan's war crimes. Further contributing to the controversy, is the lingering concern that Japan's leaders have historically only issued a partial apology for these war crimes. Despite repeated calls for additional statements of remorse, Abe recently countered this sentiment by stating 'I uphold the basic thinking behind past war apologies, which means there isn't a need to reiterate them'.⁴

As with any controversial historical issue, there is a multiplicity of factors that must be taken into account. Reports of Abe's revisionism or Japanese nationalism are often based upon politically motivated biases regarding Japan's past. The most prevalent criticism directed against Abe and other conservatives is that Imperial Japan must only be discussed in a negative light. From this perspective, anything short of full and continual remorse from Japan's leaders is a signal that the Japanese people are returning to their latent militaristic roots. Liu Xiaoming, the Chinese ambassador to the United Kingdom, even warned that China 'will not allow' Abe to rewrite history and reassert itself as an aggressive military power.⁵

Reductionist accounts of Japanese history prevent useful dialogue regarding the broader, and far more pressing, issues of regional security. The Asia-Pacific region is home to the three largest global economies. It contains some of the most advanced militaries in the world, including the lone remaining superpower, and five other nuclear states that each impact regional stability. North Korea is widely considered a rogue state, Russia is on a path to reassert its military might, India and Pakistan remain at odds over religious and territorial disputes, and China's rapidly expanding economy is bolstering its military strength. It is amidst these pressing security concerns that Japan, a relatively small state riddled with geopolitical vulnerabilities, is seeking to fortify its national security.

Herein lies the fundamental problem facing Japan's leaders. For the vast majority of states within the international system, national security is a result of a process of political bargaining between state elites. Although this process varies from state to state, it is widely accepted that each state is charged with crafting its own foreign policy agenda. The Montevideo Convention of 1933 - which codified a declarative theory of statehood used extensively in contemporary international law - recognizes that

¹ Afp, 'Japan Pm Hints at Absence of Apology in Wwii Speech,' Taipei Times 22 April 2015.

² Colloquial name for the International Military Tribunal for the Far East.

³ Breen, *Yasukuni, the War Dead and the Struggle for Japan's Past* (Columbia University Press, 2008), 131.

⁴ 'Enough with Wwii Apologies: Japan PM Sees No Need to Reinforce Remorse,' Russia Today 21 April 2015.

⁵ Xiaoming, 'Liu Xiaoming: China and Britain Won the War Together,' The Telegraph 1 Jan 2014.



‘the state has the right to defend its integrity and independence’.⁶ The convention also acknowledges that ‘[s]tates are juridically equal, enjoy the same rights, and have equal capacity in their exercise’.⁷ The implied self-governance of these statements imbues state leaders with the power to determine the best course of action for their country.

Japanese leaders, however, do not have the same freedom. Following the surrender of Imperial Japan in 1945, Japan was occupied by the victorious Allies. Under the direction of General Douglas MacArthur, the immediate goal of the occupying forces was to secure Japan and dismantle Imperial Japan’s war machine. To this end, the American lawyers drafted a pacifist constitution that effectively capitulated Japanese security to America. With the help of Japan’s newly legitimized liberal politicians, Allied Forces pushed the postwar constitution through the occupation government.⁸ Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution reads: ‘[T]he Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes’.⁹

The persistence of Article 9 intrinsically links any discussion of Japan’s national security with the occupation and by extension Japanese imperialism. In this sense, Japanese leaders are unable to escape the legacy of Japan’s past. Abe acknowledged this connection during his first term as Prime Minister in 2007. When asked about possible constitutional revisions, Abe remarked: ‘This constitution was drafted while Japan was under occupation. I believe it is important that we Japanese write a constitution for ourselves that would reflect the shape of the country we consider desirable in the 21st century’.¹⁰ Predictably, negative reactions to the comment mirror the recent criticisms directed at Abe.

At the heart of the current controversy surrounding Abe’s actions is a misrepresentation of Imperial Japan. Before continuing, however, it must be stated unequivocally that the Empire of Japan committed innumerable atrocities that plunged much of the region into two decades of terror that only ceased with the unleashing of two nuclear bombs. Sanctioned mass murders occurred throughout Japanese occupied territories, including the Nanjing Massacre (between 70,000 - 300,000 deaths)¹¹ and the Manila Massacre (approximately 100,000 deaths).¹² Prisoners of war were widely executed. Tens of thousands (some estimates are in the hundreds of thousands) of ‘comfort women’ were forced into prostitution.¹³ Unit 731, a covert research unit, conducted countless biological and chemical experiments on human subjects.¹⁴ All of these atrocities transpired with at least nominal sanctioning by the Japanese government, whose questionable involvement remains contested even today.

There is no excusing the criminal acts carried out by Imperial forces. However, without a proper understanding of the historical context of the Pacific War, criticisms levied against Japan’s supposed militaristic roots fall flat. Even the issue of war criminality, which underwrites the controversy

⁶ Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States, Article 3

⁷ Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States, Article 4

⁸ Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002), 666-7.

⁹ *The Constitution of Japan, Article 9.*

¹⁰ Weymouth, ‘A Conversation with Shinzo Abe,’ *The Washington Post* 22 April 2007.

¹¹ The number of civilians killed is highly disputed. For a more detailed analysis see: Yoshida, *The Making of the ‘Rape of Nanking’: History and Memory in Japan, China, and the United States: History and Memory in Japan, China, and the United States* (Oxford University Press, USA, 2006), 94-6.

¹² Gruhl, *Imperial Japan's World War Two: 1931-1945* (Transaction Publishers, 2009), 97.

¹³ Tanaka, *Hidden Horrors: Japanese War Crimes in World War II* (Westview Press, 1997), 92-104. See also: Tanaka, *Japan's Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery and Prostitution During World War II and the US Occupation* (Routledge Chapman & Hall, 2002).

¹⁴ Peter Williams, *Unit 731: Japan's Secret Biological Warfare in World War 2* (Free Press, 1989).



surrounding Yasukuni, is inherently complex. The most notorious Japanese leader tried at the Tokyo Trials was Japan's militaristic Prime Minister from 1941-44, Tōjō Hideki, who was sentenced to death for waging unprovoked wars of aggression. Throughout the trial, Tōjō and his supporters criticized the Allies, with Tōjō exclaiming: '[T]his trial was a political trial. It was only victors' justice.'^{15,16}

This cry of victor's justice resonated across Japan. Throughout the latter stages of the Pacific War, Allied Forces indiscriminately targeted Japanese civilians through fire bombing campaigns and the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The trials and corresponding political purge¹⁷ were perceived by many within Japan as a witch hunt, calling into question the legitimacy of the occupation.¹⁸

Garnering the cooperation of Japanese politicians was necessary for MacArthur to reaffirm his position. In stark contrast to the postwar political environment in Germany, where the Nazi government was thoroughly dismantled, MacArthur was eager to utilize the Japanese government as a means of furthering his objectives. MacArthur reasoned that if he exonerated Emperor Hirohito and allowed the emperor to retain figurative power, Hirohito could provide the Japanese people with a 'symbol' of continuity and thus undermine anti-occupation dissent.¹⁹ Hirohito's involvement within the armed forces is subject to debate, but some historians contest that he held substantial leverage over the wartime military and that MacArthur went to extraordinary lengths to spare Hirohito from war crime indictment. This may have included corrupting witness testimony to defer political responsibility away from Hirohito and onto other prominent figures, namely Tōjō.²⁰

While Hirohito's complicity is disputed, his relationship with MacArthur reinforced modern Japan's intrinsic ties with the Western powers of Europe and America. One of the most overlooked aspects of Japan's past is how it rose to prominence within the international system. For centuries, some semblance of the Chinese state dominated the East Asian regional hierarchy. Japanese officials ostensibly, albeit often times begrudgingly, accepted Japan's position as a secondary power, which enabled mutually beneficial trade relations between the two pre-modern states.²¹

As technological advances enabled the European colonial powers to expand their empires, anti-European sentiment spread throughout Japan. Of particular concern was the Spanish conquest of the Philippines in 1521, which was viewed as a harbinger of doom in Japan. In response, Tokugawa Iemitsu instituted *sakoku* - the official closing of Japan through a series of edicts enacted from 1633 - 1639. Under *sakoku*, Japanese nationals were prohibited from leaving Japan and European entry into Japan was extremely limited.²² These policies of national isolation coincided with a centralization of state power that resulted in nearly 250 years peace and prosperity in Japan.²³

¹⁵ Minear, *Victors' Justice: The Tokyo War Crimes Trial* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), 1.

¹⁶ Abe has made statements supporting this view of victors' justice. Ryall, 'Japan Pm Dismisses WWII War Crimes Trials as 'Victors' Justice', *The Telegraph* 14 March 2013.

¹⁷ Jansen 2002, 672.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 666-7.

¹⁹ Bix, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan* (HarperCollins, 2009), 12-7, 575-80.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 584-605.

²¹ Kang, *China Rising: Peace, Power, and Order in East Asia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 30-6.

²² Laver, *The Sakoku Edicts and the Politics of Tokugawa Hegemony* (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2011), 63-7.

²³ Jansen, 'The Ruling Class,' in *Japan in Transition: From Tokugawa to Meiji*, ed. Marius B. Jansen and Gilbert Rozman (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1986), 71-6.



By the mid-nineteenth century, however, the industrial revolution enabled the Western powers to further disrupt the existing regional system, compromising Japan's ability to remain isolated. At the crosshairs of Western imperial desires was the vast wealth of China. Armed with steam power and naval artillery, the Imperial states initiated a systematic undermining of Chinese power through gunboat diplomacy. The strategy was simple. Force the Chinese authorities to accept a series of unequal trade agreements that enabled the Western powers to extract China's wealth. Resistance was countered with displays of military prowess. The most deleterious consequence of the power imbalance occurred during the Opium Wars (1839-42 & 1856-60), where Britain and its allies succeeded in imposing their diplomatic and trade preferences on China, thereby undermining the authority of the Qing Dynasty.²⁴

Owing to their success in effectively colonizing China, the Western powers soon turned their attention towards opening Japan to trade and accessing Japanese ports for refueling their gunboats.²⁵ Although many traditionalists strictly opposed submitting to Western desires, the shift in the regional dynamics presented a unique opportunity. Revolutionaries from Satsuma and Chōshū, two southern provinces distanced from the traditionalists concentrated in central Japan, forged a working alliance with British and American arms dealers. These relationships facilitated the flow of advance weaponry into Japan, which enabled Satsuma and Chōshū forces to overthrow the existing government and restore power to Emperor Meiji.²⁶

Sensing the unique opportunity presented by China's collapse, the new Meiji government embarked on an ambitious modernization program. In order to gain greater access to Western technology, Meiji authorities accepted a series of unequal treaties with the Western powers. In addition to the economic benefits that favored the Western powers, the treaties also granted extraterritorial privileges to Westerners in Japan.²⁷ While these treaties fundamentally undermined Japanese sovereignty, they facilitated Japan's transition into an industrial state. Western advisors were employed to modernize the military and national infrastructure, and the Meiji government initiated a mass education program designed to train Japanese youths as Western-style technocrats.²⁸

In less than forty years, Japan transformed from an isolated feudal state into an imperial powerhouse. Japan's blossoming power rested upon incorporating Western-style imperial practices and leveraging these advancements against the shifting regional order. During the decisive First Sino-Japanese War of 1894-5, Japan decimated Chinese forces and firmly established itself as the premier Asian power.²⁹ A decade later, Japan routed the Russian empire's Pacific fleet and overran Russian strongholds in Northeast Asia. Japan's victory in the Russo-Japanese War (1904-5) sent shockwaves throughout the international system. The Russo-Japanese War marked the first modern victory of an Asian state over a European power.³⁰ No longer was industrialized military strength the trump card of the Western world.

²⁴ Lovell, *The Opium War: Drugs, Dreams and the Making of China* (Basingstoke/Oxford, Picador, 2011), Introduction.

²⁵ Beasley, 'The Foreign Threat and the Opening of the Ports,' in *The Cambridge History of Japan: The Nineteenth Century*, ed. Marius B. Jansen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 269.

²⁶ Craig, *Chōshū in the Meiji Restoration* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2000), 314-7.

²⁷ Akira, 'Japan's Drive to Great-Power Status,' in *The Cambridge History of Japan*, ed. Marius B. Jansen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 725-7. Akira 1989, 725-7 MORE?

²⁸ Sukehiro, 'Japan's Turn to the West,' in *The Cambridge History of Japan*, ed. B. Marius Jansen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 468.

²⁹ Paine, *The Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895: Perceptions, Power, and Primacy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 113.

³⁰ Jukes, *The Russo-Japanese War 1904-1905*, vol. 31, *Essential Histories* (Osprey Publishing, 2002), 96



It is too simplistic to contribute these events as nascent outpouring of the jingoism that would surface in Japan over the next half century. Aggressive military expansionism is today considered taboo, but it was par for the course in the nineteenth and early twentieth century international system. A quick survey of Western territorial holdings across Africa and Asia reveal the extent to which the industrial powers dominated the world.

Furthermore, Japanese expansionism was outright rewarded by the international system. As a result of Japan's expanding military strength, the Western powers rescinded their unequal treaties with Japan. In 1902, the British, while still at the height of its imperial clout, negotiated an alliance with the Japanese. The alliance was itself the culmination of Japanese efforts to reach a level of parity with the Western powers.³¹ A little over a decade later during the Siege of Tsingtao, the British placed a small force of army and navy personnel directly under the control of the Japanese, marking the first time in history that Western soldiers fought under Japanese commanders. Although a minor affair in the First World War, this rare occurrence reveals just how far Japan had advanced in the eyes of the leading imperial powers.³²

Understanding Japan's position during the Age of Imperialism is necessary for addressing the perceived militaristic roots of Japanese culture often cited when Abe and other conservatives seek to adjust Japan's security posture. Japan transformed into an imperial power as a result of external constraints. Rather than attempting to counter Western influence, as was China's strategy during the Opium Wars, Japanese leaders embraced the norms of the imperialist world order. This transition was encouraged by the great powers of the day, namely the British and Americans, and enabled Meiji leaders to reassert Japanese power. This in no uncertain terms represents the strategy of a status quo power. Much in the same way that China is currently seeking to expand its influence in the world through accepting global capitalist practices, turn of the century Japan actively embraced the imperial practices of Europe and America.

As with any multifaceted historical trend, it is difficult to determine the exact moment of shifts within the international system. Nevertheless, less than four years after the First World War, the norms of imperialism began to give way to new global trends. Through the Paris Peace Conference (1919) and the Washington Conference (1921-22), America and Britain instituted a new international order that replaced the old balance of power system with the ideals embodied by international liberalism.³³ The emerging system represented a shift away from outright imperialism towards economic openness, which undermined Japan's existing foreign policy strategy and forced Japanese leaders to explore new means for affirming Japanese power.

Initially, Japanese leaders tentatively embraced the emerging global order. Prime Minister Hara Takashi expressed a desire to pursue Japanese national interests within the context of the emerging 'global trends' of internationalism by focusing his efforts on the League of Nations.³⁴ Government leaders concluded that they should actively participate in the Paris Peace Conference as a means of

³¹ Nish, *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance: The Diplomacy of Two Island Empires, 1894-1907*, Historical Studies / University of London; 33 (London: Athlone P., 1968), 378-85.

³² Kennedy, *A History of Japan* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1963), 224-5.

³³ Pyle, *Japan Rising: The Resurgence of Japanese Power and Purpose*, A Century Foundation Book (New York: Public Affairs, 2007), 139-43.

³⁴ Hata, 'Continental Expansion, 1905-1941,' in *The Cambridge History of Japan*, ed. Marius B. Jansen John W. Hall, Madoka Kanai, Denis Twitchett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 283.



demonstrating Japan's commitment to peace.³⁵ Official communications between the Japanese delegation and Tokyo expressed a 'wholehearted agreement in principle to [the] draft resolution'.³⁶

Despite some early progress that witnessed Japanese leaders willingly signing disadvantageous arms agreements with Britain and America to maintain peaceful relations, a confluence of factors prevented Japan from adapting to the 'global trends' of the emerging Versailles-Washington System.³⁷ The League of Nations proved ineffectual, the new international order faced domestic upheavals in China and Russia, the Anglo-American alliance faltered as America emerged as the predominate Pacific naval power, and the global economy collapsed, sending the developed nations into an economic depression. Perhaps most significantly, America and Britain reneged their self-assigned responsibilities within the Versailles-Washington System. Neither state was willing to commit the necessary resources to assure prolonged stability in East Asia; when confronted with the ongoing pressures of the international environment, they reacted with insular and protectionist policies that undermined the idealistic principles upon which the system was founded.³⁸

With America and Britain largely withdrawn from the region, Japan became isolated from its former allies. Prominent Japanese politicians who favored the liberal principles of Versailles-Washington System, such as Foreign Minister Shidehara Kijūrō, soon found themselves without the necessary international support.³⁹ As the Versailles-Washington System collapsed, right-wing politicians and the Japanese military seized control of the Japanese polity and reaffirmed Japan's imperial clout by encouraging rampant expansionism that plunged the region into fifteen years of war.

While Japan's initiation of the Pacific War ultimately led to the collapse of Imperial Japan, the prevailing ambiguity of the international system greatly constrained the options available to Japanese leaders. By returning to the imperialist strategy that had enabled Japan's rise to great power status, Japanese leaders hoped to reinforce Japanese power amidst the uncertainty of the period. None of this excuses the transition from imperialism to outright militarism or the seizing of political power by the Imperial Army that occurred during the late 1930s.

The later dismantling of Imperial Japan by occupation forces was initially designed to pave the way for a new economic regional order centered on America akin to failed Versailles-Washington System.⁴⁰ The purge of the Japanese polity and the disarmament of its military infrastructure facilitated the rise of liberal minded politicians that supported the pacifist elements of the postwar constitution. Chief among these was Yoshida Shigeru, whose two terms as Prime Minister between 1946 - 1953 had an indelible impact on the direction of Japanese foreign policy.

The onset of the Cold War shifted the nature of US-Japanese relations. During the first years of the occupation, the American strategy hinged upon disarming Japan. As American foreign policy became increasingly focused on countering Communism, the prospect of a non-industrialized and demilitarized

³⁵ Kajima and Kajima Heiwa, *The Diplomacy of Japan, 1894-1922*, vol. III (Tokyo: Kajima Institute of International Peace: Distributed by Kajima Pub. Co., 1976), 447-54.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 525-6.

³⁷ Kennedy 1963, 234-5.

³⁸ Pyle 2007, 168-69.

³⁹ Beasley, *Japanese Imperialism, 1894-1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 189-90.

⁴⁰ 'Potsdam Declaration, Clause 11,' (July 26, 1945).



Japan concerned American policy experts who worried that Japan may succumb to the Communist tide.⁴¹ Despite considerable pressure from American officials, Yoshida and his allies rejected calls for Japan to participate more fully in its national defense, thereby forcing the US to extend its protection of Japan. As justification, Yoshida cited the restrictions of Article 9. Yoshida's careful political maneuvering was motivated by his desire to avoid burdening the anemic postbellum economy with the costs of participating in the fight against communism.⁴²

Yoshida's preference for economic development and deference to the American military became collectively known as the 'Yoshida Doctrine'.⁴³ The economic mindedness of Yoshida and other key leaders, such as Ikeda Hayato, remained at the heart of Japan's postwar policies, and became a key component in developing a foreign policy strategy once the occupation ended.⁴⁴ The Yoshida Doctrine was a resounding success. Japanese economic growth averaged 9.2 percent per annum between 1956-1973 and by the end of the Cold War Japan possessed the second largest economy in the world.⁴⁵

The collapse of the Soviet Union fundamentally altered the international system, and placed new pressures upon Japan's economically driven foreign policy. Despite broad international support to move against Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait, Japan found itself handcuffed to its pacifist constitution. Prime Minister Kaifu Toshiki who held that deployment of Japanese forces was 'constitutionally impossible'.⁴⁶ The backlash crippled Japan's international prestige, and led prominent American leaders to publicly question the practicality of the US-Japanese alliance.⁴⁷ A more damaging blow to Japan's global position came with the crashes of the Tokyo stock exchange in 1990 and 1992, which plummeted Japan into an economic malaise.⁴⁸ For the rest of the decade, Japan leaders floundered through a series of failed attempts to revive the Japanese economy.

The September 11th attacks and subsequent War on Terror presented Japanese leaders with an opportunity to reaffirm both Japan's waning national power and the US-Japanese alliance. Although Article 9 remained in place, Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro enacted emergence measures that enabled Japan to support America's armed response against the Taliban send support vessels and personnel into the Persian Gulf.⁴⁹ Koizumi's efforts distanced Japan from the increasingly ineffectual policies of the Yoshida Doctrine, thereby enabling Japanese leaders to proactively ensure Japanese security through strengthening the US-Japanese alliance. This sidestepping of Article 9, however, created legal ambiguities that continue to surface under Abe's leadership.⁵⁰

When considering Abe's efforts to bolster Japanese power or his controversial reinterpretation of Japan's past, it is essential to separate historical fact from political fiction. Yes, Imperial forces carried

⁴¹ Mcdougall, *Asia Pacific in World Politics* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2007), 77-9.

⁴² Yoshida, *Yoshida Shigeru: Last Meiji Man*, trans. Hiroshi Nara Shigeru Yoshida, Ken'ichi Yoshida (Rowman & Littlefield Pub Incorporated, 2007), 239-44.

⁴³ Mackerras, 'From Imperialism to the End of the Cold War,' in *Asia-Pacific in the New World Order*, ed. Christopher Brook Anthony McGrew (New York, NY: Routledge, 1998), 48-50; Pyle, *The Japanese Question: Power and Purpose in a New Era* (AEI Press published for the American Enterprise Institute, 1996), 30-8.

⁴⁴ Matray, *Japan's Emergence as a Global Power* (Greenwood Publishing Group Incorporated, 2001), 170-1.

⁴⁵ Saitō, *The Japanese Economy* (World Scientific Publishing Company Incorporated, 2000), 100-3.

⁴⁶ Samuels, *Securing Japan: Toyko's Grand Strategy and the Future of East Asia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007), 66.

⁴⁷ Preble, 'Two Normal Countries Rethinking the U.S.-Japan Strategic Relationship,' *Policy Analysis*, no. 566 (2006): 4.

⁴⁸ Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 316.

⁴⁹ Goodman, *The Rule of Law in Japan: A Comparative Analysis* (Kluwer Law International, 2008), 232.

⁵⁰ Arase, 'Japan, the Active State? Security Policy after 9/11,' *Asian Survey* 47, no. 4 (July/August 2007): 571.



out human rights violations comparable to the Nazi regime in Europe. Yes, Japanese leaders never fully apologized for this barbarity. Yes, Abe has at times made disparaging comments regarding those victimized by Japan. It was, however, Allied forces during the occupation that prevented a clear severing of postwar Japan with its contentious past.

Furthermore, discussion of Japan's latent militarism flatly ignores the broader context of pre-Cold War power politics. Suggestions that Japan is returning to this supposed militarism misrepresents the legitimate concerns of Japan's current leaders over national security. Japan does not possess the material power nor the political will to rebuff its ties to America. No longer is Japan uniquely positioned to maintain the mercantilist foreign policy of the Yoshida Doctrine. Few foreign policy avenues exist outside of those hinted at by Colin Powell during Japan's failed bid for a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council in 2004. According to Powell: "If Japan is going to play a full role on the world stage and become a full active participating member of the Security Council...Article Nine would have to be examined".⁵¹

There are serious questions that must be asked about Abe and his vision for Japan, but these questions should not be clouded in misrepresentations of history. All of the imperial powers engaged in horrific acts of violence. No one should forget what the British instituted in Kenya, how the French asserted themselves in Algeria, or the innumerable violations carried out by the Japanese against the peoples of Asia. Where Japan differed is that it industrialized after its Western counterparts, it maintained an imperial foreign policy after the norms of the international system had begun to shift, and its constitution carries the burden of Japan's imperial past. Asserting that this dynamic represents some inherent militarism present within the collective Japanese consciousness, as many of Abe's detractors have suggested, unfairly vilifies the Japanese people. It furthermore inhibits a useful discussion regarding Japan's responsibilities as a great power within a region undergoing shifts in its power dynamics.

⁵¹ BBC News, US Questions Japan's Pacifism, August 2004.