

**Japanese Conservatism and Foreign Policy: A Focus on Prime Ministers Nakasone Yasuhiro, Koizumi Junichirō and Abe Shinzō**

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# Abstract

This dissertation investigates the influence of Japanese conservatism on the government’s foreign policy.

The core set of questions of this research consists of the following: what is the position and status of conservatism in the spectrum of post-war Japanese political thinking? How has conservative thinking (especially conservative intellectuals) affected the perceptions and behaviour of the leaders and how has the leaders’ foreign policy-making reflected their conservative thinking? What is the mechanism by which conservative thinking exerts its influence on Japan’s foreign policy-making? What are the different ways in which different Japanese prime ministers exploited conservative intellectuals and vice versa? And, how did this double-way exploitation affect foreign policy-making?

To address the research questions, first the place of conservatism among post-war Japanese ideologies is examined. Post-war Japan experienced a variety of ideological trends, including the partial revival of certain pre-war ideologies such as conservatism. Second, as the dominant ideology, how conservatism affected Japanese political practices, or what is the connection between conservative thinking and foreign policy is addressed. Third, Prime Ministers Nakasone Yasuhiro, Koizumi Junichirō and Abe Shinzō are taken up as cases to study the mechanism of how conservative thought affects foreign policy-making.

The role of the concept of conservatism in the policy-making process has been extensively studied in political science and international relations. Likewise, “from concept to foreign policy” is the focal question of this study. Specifically, the aim is to find out how conservative intellectuals affect real politics (*realpolitik*) and foreign policy. Three paths are investigated: first, direct conversions from conservative intellectuals to conservative politicians; second, conservative intellectuals acting as political advisors to the three prime ministers, thereby providing them with intellectual support; and third, conservative intellectuals disseminating their thinking in Japanese society using their own influence, and eventually affecting government policy through the force of public opinion.

This study draws on Robert A. Dahl’s pluralist theory of democracy, which suggests that political outcomes arise through competitive interest groups, rejecting the assumption that the state (or government) is the sole rational actor in politics. Using this insight, the dissertation examines the plural factors contributing to the origin and formation of the prime ministers’ conservative thought, including education, early environment, family legacy, and the relationships of the three prime ministers with their political advisors. In the Conclusions, a comparison of the conservative thought and foreign policies of the three prime ministers is carried out, examined in the context of the contemporary social ethos and international environment, leading to an elucidation of the causal mechanisms linking Japanese conservatism to Japanese foreign policy.

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# Note on Conventions

Regarding the transliteration of Japanese words and names, I have followed Hepburn Romannization standard for transliterating Japanese words and use macrons for long vowels. However, I have made exceptions when citing English- language sources that do not use macrons or spell out long vowels. And, Japanese and Chinese personal names are normally presented in the East Asian conventional style--family names first.

# Glossary of Main Terms and Abbreviations

*Anpo Hōsei (Anpo Hōan)* National Security Legislation

CLB Cabinet Legislation Bureau

DPJ (*Minshutō*) Democratic Party of Japan

GHQ General Headquarters

*Izoku-kai* Japan War-Bereaved Association

JCP Japanese Communist Party

JDA Japan Defence Agency

JSP (*Shakaitō*) Japan Socialist Party

*Kantei* The prime minister’s official residence

*kōenkai* local support group for politicians

Kōmeitō New Clean Government Party

LDP (*Jimintō*) Liberal Democratic Party

MITI Ministry of International Trade and Industry

MOFA Ministry of Foreign Affairs

NHK *Nippon Hōsō Kyōkai*

*Nippon Kaigi* the Japan Conference

PKO United Nations Peacekeeping Operations

SDF Self-Defence Forces

*Seichōkai* Policy Research Council

*Sengo Seiji no Sōkessan* Comprehensive Settlement of the Post-war Accounts

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# Chapter 1 Introduction to Conservatism and Research

Conservatism is both an ideology and a social phenomenon with universal presence in most of the nations of the world, though more prevalent in some nations than in others. The universality of conservatism does not eclipse its distinctiveness in different times and places, as in the case of Japan, which has developed a unique brand of conservatism (Pyle 1998: 98-124; Nakajima 2010: 7-8). The primary subject of this thesis is how leading conservative politicians (prime ministers) after the 1980s carried out the transgression of the post-war Conservative Mainstream (*hoshu honryū*) policies step by step. To proceed with the research, the following questions need to be clarified first: What are the discontents held by the conservative intellectuals and politicians about Japan’s post-war political order and how do they express them? Second, in what ways do conservative thinkers make their convergence with real politics, or how have Japanese politicians after the 1980s made use of the conservative thinkers to serve their political purposes? Third, what theories in political science do these processes follow? The approach to these questions and the research frame are to be discussed in this chapter.

## 1.1 Research Questions

After the Meiji Restoration, Japan embarked on the journey of a modern nation state. Just like many Western predecessors, the journey has been riddled with and sometimes fundamentally changed by debates and confrontations between isolationism and openness, reform and tradition, progressivism and conservatism, monarchy and democracy as well as militarism and pacifism. Ideological questions eventually would materialize into practical problems, particularly in the case of Japanese government policies. The core set of questions of this research consists of the following: what is the position and status of conservatism in the spectrum of post-war Japanese political thinking? How has conservative thinking (especially conservative intellectuals) affected the perceptions and behaviour of the leaders and how has the leaders’ foreign policy-making reflected their conservative thinking? What is the mechanism by which conservative thinking exerts its influence on Japan’s foreign policy-making? What are the different ways in which different Japanese prime ministers exploited conservative intellectuals and *vice versa*? And, how did this double-way exploitation affect foreign policy-making?

Social science research entails exploration of cause-and-effect hidden behind the maze of social and historical events, and furthermore, establishment of an explanatory mechanism or theoretical models (King, Keohane, and Verba 1994: 75). This study falls into the category of explanatory empirical research, which proceeds by harnessing existing theories and models and concludes by testing-and-verifying them against empirical facts, with adequate adaption for “Japanese uniqueness” appropriate for a regional perspective.[[1]](#footnote-1) A balance between the generality of theories and the particularity of cases is vigorously sought throughout this study, with attempts to conduct a convincing research project on the relation between post-war Japanese conservatism and real politics, and an aspiration to add some originality to Japanese studies. To achieve such aims, both a theoretical review and field research are conducted, and the following questions held drive the research in the thesis.

First, what exactly is post-war Japanese conservatism? For conservatism *per se*, there must be a universal concept or definition, despite the fact that the understanding may vary amongst different researchers (Nakajima 2011; Winkler 2011b; Kaihara 2009; Mannheim [1925] 1986). A general definition could be achieved by extracting the common denominator from a variety of definitions. But in the case of post-war Japanese conservatism, we need to take the distinctiveness of this local variation into account, as well as its particular mechanism of infiltrating political practices. In other words, post-war Japanese politics is, in essence, predominantly conservative politics. On such a basis, conservative thinking naturally thrives and interacts with real politics.

Second, how has conservative thinking affected real politics? Despite the vast volume of the extant literatures on conservatism, there are few scholarly outputs focused on the connecting mechanism between contemporary conservative thinking and concrete government policies (e.g. security policy and foreign policy), and even fewer on the case of Japan. This is the motivation behind this study. Before delving into such an undertaking, the prerequisites to be clarified include the representative figures of conservative thinking and their points of view; prominent conservative Japanese politicians and their major positions, as well as how the two fronts bind together. Three pathways are investigated in this thesis, through which conservative thinking (and thinkers) casts influence on real politics and policies, and their efficacy is analysed respectively. Meanwhile, in the convergence of conservative thinking and real politics, certain politicians took vital initiatives from their hub position, rendering their personal factors (such as personal values) an important link in political processes as well as indispensable cues to understand Japanese conservatism.

Next, pathways and mechanisms are tested and verified through comparative case studies. One hypothesis proposed in this research is of a pathway through which conservative thinking affects real politics. The test consists of three empirical cases, specifically the respective foreign policies of the Nakasone Yasuhiro, Koizumi Junichirō and Abe Shinzō Cabinets. These three Prime Ministers share the characteristic of charisma, long tenures and a conservative political inclination (objectively or subjectively). Hence there is robust comparability between the conservative thinking and foreign policies during their administrations. Meanwhile, their active time in office, personalities and supporting political advisors differ from one another, causing further differences in their understanding and perception of conservatism. This is a typical makeup of comparative case study research.[[2]](#footnote-2) The case comparison can be expected to reveal different mechanisms of intervention in real politics from conservative thinking, resulting in different policy outcomes.

In the research framework of this study conservative thinking is considered an *independent variable* without much significant change. Japanese foreign policy, on the other hand, is the *dependent variable* under the influence of the independent variable of conservative thinking (For details on variables, see King, Keohane and Verba 1994: 139). Note that this is not a denial of Japanese foreign policy-making as a politically pluralistic process; in fact, many studies recognize paths based on political pluralism in the Japanese foreign policy-making mechanism (Cohen 1957; Scalapino 1977; Shinoda 2007). The influence of conservative thinking is significant, yet remains one of multiple factors. Another subtle problem is that conservative thinking and real politics are not directly connected but in need of a crucial *intermediate variable*: the politicians (prime ministers, in particular), who in themselves could craft foreign policies thus were considered another independent variable in generic political process models. Therefore, they are treated as the *control variable* in this study, otherwise (if their political thinking and value are not presumed to be under control) the examination of the connection between conservative thinking and foreign policy would be hardly definitive, and the test-and-verify approach hardly conclusive.[[3]](#footnote-3) Certainly, there are other factors (variables) contributing to the conservatism of politicians, such as Japan’s bureaucratic system. However, this study refrained from accounting for the influence of such factors, for the benefit of focus and clarity.[[4]](#footnote-4) It remains a challenge to maintain the balance and to control the dynamic between independent variable, dependent variable and control variable, as well as to find the answers for the questions presented.

## 1.2 Research Methodology

Generally, the methodology in the social sciences is divided into quantitative and qualitative types (Brady and Collier 2010). This thesis adopts qualitative methods in accordance with a research topic focusing on a combination of the history of conservative thought and actual policies. The pros-and-cons of comparison of quantitative/qualitative as research methods have always been one of the most volatile topics of academic controversy, which this study has no intention to take up. Instead, the methodological discussion here focuses on the reasons to choose qualitative methods, as well as a brief introduction to the specifics of the methods implemented (Brady and Collier 2010; George and Bennett 2005).

Undoubtedly, quantitative methods took a dominant position in social science study after the rise of behavioral science in post-war American academia, to the extent that the phenomenon is named “Quantitative Imperialism” (Gschwend and Schimmelfennig 2007:15; Bartels 2010: 83-88). However, in academia there are plenty of reflections on the pro-quantitative trend. In *Designing Social Inquiry*, co-authored by Gary King, Robert O. Keohane and Sidney Verba, the importance and advantages of quantitative methods are nevertheless recognized yet vigorous attempts are made to reclaim a deserving position for qualitative methods in social science study (King, Keohane and Verba 1994). They contend that qualitative research certainly needs the supplement of scientific research design, but what is more needed is the mastery of historical and cultural background and the systematic knowledge built upon such basis. “Both quantitative and qualitative research can be systematic and scientific. Historical research can be analytical, seeking to evaluate alternative explanations through a process of valid causal inference” (King, Keohane and Verba 1994:4-5). Scientific methods are not rejected in the general history and thinking of history studies, as Theda Skocpol put it: “History, or historical sociology, is not incompatible with social science” (Skocpol 1984:374-86). Other concerns in terms of methodology involve the distinctiveness of this topic. Even with scientific research methods, post-war Japanese political thinking is riddled with collisions between conservative and progressive, or Left and Right. How to deal with the ethos of specific research subjects and how to minimize the interference of the researcher’s own ideology are typical concerns in the study of political thought. In the research of Kabashima et al. attempted to project political thought and ideology as operable code, through which the conservative/progressive and left/right of post-war Japan can be designated (Kabashima and Steel 2010; Kabashima and Tekenaka 1996; Kabashima and Tekenaka 2012). Their studies are important references for this thesis to investigate the conservative thought and foreign policy of Japanese politicians.

There are four conventional analytical methods commonly used in case studies: process tracing, congruence testing, counter factual analysis and comparative case study (Fearon 1991; Gerring 2007; George and Bennett 2005). Process tracing and comparative case study are the two primary methods implemented in this study. Methodologically, case study is not devoid of drawbacks, such as the propensity of case-choosing bias, the difficulty in controlling the influence of variables, and so on. Yet the advantages of case study are more impressive: it could help us in explaining comprehensive and explicit cause-and-effect mechanisms; its theory tests are strong tests; it is more accurate in detecting causal relations than a large sample method (Van [Evera](http://en.bookfi.org/g/Stephen%20Van%20Evera) 1997:51-55).[[5]](#footnote-5)

The design of this study is based on the combination of “thinking and practices” thus mainly implemented qualitative research methods, especially focusing on the significance of individuals and elite groups in historical sociology study. Through Process Tracing, reconstructions are formed on how conservative thinking (especially conservative intellectuals) affected the perceptions and behaviour of the leaders and how the leaders’ foreign policy-making reflected their conservative thinking. Process Tracing is a common method in sociological, psychological and political science studies, generally classified as Qualitative (Bennet 2010: 207). It involves studies of the extant literature, biographies, memoirs and archives (which is common in diplomatic history research) and tracing the historical background as well as cause-and-effect analysis of events (Beach and Pederson 2013). Specifically in this thesis, Process Tracing instruments include biographies, memoirs and other publications of Japanese leaders; the works of conservative thinkers and contemporary critiques; research reports and policy suggestions of conservative scholars as advisors in the policy-making process; official data from Japanese government (Parliament databases, diplomatic blue papers, etc.), backed up by a number of interviews.

Another qualitative method used in this study is the Comparative Case Study, which makes comparative analysis of two or more cases. Its greatest strength is that by scrutinizing different cases through controlled comparison and event process tracing, the explanation of mechanisms can be found and the cause-and-effect connections can be more easily established. With consistency and distinctiveness drawn from comparisons and tracing of multiple cases, the Comparative Case Study is decidedly more convincing than a single case study (George and Bennett 2005). Meanwhile, since conservative thinking is the most important thread of this study, the research on conservative political thought is another indispensable basis, the elements of which are dynamically blended into the case studies.

The major cases used in investigating the subject of Japan’s conservative thinking and foreign policy are the connections and interactions between the two during the Nakasone, Koizumi and Abe Administrations. The actual choices of these three politicians bore consideration in several respects. Through comparative analysis of the three cases, the influence of conservative thinking on foreign policy and acceptance of conservative thinking by the prime ministers are clarified. The actual choices of these three politicians bore considerations in several respects:

First, Nakasone Yasuhiro, Koizumi Junichirō and Abe Shinzō (the incumbent prime minister) have been prime ministers with long tenure, started by our first case of the Nakasone Administration. Nakasone and Koizumi had the 7th and 6th longest tenure of office in the history of the Japanese Cabinet System. As of June 2017，the length of incumbent Prime Minister Abe’s tenure has surpassed those of Nakasone and Koizumi’s, and became the 5th longest in the history of Japan’s constitutional cabinet. In Japan, a country that shuffles the Prime Ministers regularly, 4-5 years of ruling is considered long-term enough. The tenures alone speak for the significance of Nakasone, Koizumi and Abe as well as their policies.

Second, all three Prime Ministers have considerable conservative traits, not only in the policies of their Prime Ministership, but also in their positions and behavior prior to their taking office. Of course, other Japanese prime ministers not selected as case studies are not necessarily presumed to be non-conservative. After all, in the phase of Japan’s overall conservatism after 1980, whoever came into the prime minister’s office cannot be exempt from conservative-leaning policies, including DPJ leaders such as Prime Minister Noda Yoshihiko.

Finally, Japan experienced periods of grave domestic and international transition during all three of their administrations. In Nakasone’s time as aforementioned, Reagan and Thatcher led the global neo-conservative charge and the Cold War against the Soviet Union reached its apex following Reagan’s Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI). Domestically, Nakasone led the movement of General Settlement of Post-war Politics (*sengo seiji no sōkessan*) instigating heated debates on issues such as security and the view of history. In Koizumi’s tenure, the anti-terror cause became the ultimate pretext of American neo-conservatives after the 9/11 Attack. In the same style Japan took unprecedented actions such as the deployment of the SDF in Iraq, pushed by the powerful Koizumi Cabinet. Besides, Koizumi’s repeated visits to the Yasukuni Shrine caused domestic conflicts in view of history and undermined the trust between East Asian countries. Under the current Abe Administration, one of the most important changes in the international environment is the reversal of the power balance between Japan and China. Abe’s personal values also led to drastic changes in Japan’s foreign and security policies, such as his success in lifting the ban on exercising the right of collective self-defence through reinterpretation of the Constitution, the forming of the National Security Council (NSC, Japan) and the passing of the Act on Protection of Specified Secrets (State Secrecy Law), all of which can be counted as important practices of conservatism in Japan’s foreign policy.

## 1.3 Dissertation Structure

The central research questions of this thesis can be rephrased more specifically as follows: In Japan’s case, how has conservative thinking been manifested in real politics? More specifically, what inheritance and interpretation of conservatism are developed by Japanese prime ministers and how have they influenced Japan’s foreign policies? What kind of function is carried out by conservative thinkers as advisors to the prime ministers? The primary research method of this thesis is comparative case study, which use presentation, analysis and conclusion as three types of structural parts to this work. Specifically, the structure of this dissertation is as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction to the research questions, methodology and structure. As far as research methodology is concerned, Comparative Case Study is adopted as the primary qualitative method, mainly using Process Tracing with a focus on literature analysis as the operational method.

Chapter 2: The foremost questions to be answered in this chapter are: What is conservatism and what is Japanese conservatism? What are the positions of post-war Japanese conservative theories in foreign policy and how are they linked to real politics? The extant literature on post-war Japanese conservatism and conservative policies are systematically reviewed. Meanwhile, the distinctiveness of Japanese conservatism is sought, as well as its influence on foreign policy. The next priority is to examine how Japanese leaders understand and accept conservative thinking and the paths to implement it in their policies. Next, to address the important influence of the public sphere on conservative thinking, *sōgō zasshi* (comprehensive journals) are discussed concerning their roles and impacts in the shaping of post-war conservative thinking. The analysis on comprehensive journals is also an important path to be adopted in the case study of this thesis. This chapter also presents an account of post-war Japanese conservative political history as well as foreign policies, and at the same time investigates the mechanism through which conservative thinking affects foreign policy-making.

Chapter 3-5: Case Studies. Case studies are the core parts of this thesis. These three chapters will study Nakasone Yasuhiro, Koizumi Junichirō and Abe Shinzō and their respective foreign policies. Representative conservative intellectuals and their convergence with real politics will also be taken into account. Specifically, multiple elements of these political leaders will be studied as factors influencing foreign policy-making, including their early years and experiences, value systems, supporting advisors/think-tank personnel, and so forth.

Chapter 3 is a case study of Nakasone Yasuhiro. Section 1 is a brief introduction on the politician himself and his political positions. Section 2 investigates the sources of his conservative thinking by tracing his early years of education and military service, and possible influences on his thinking on politics and foreign relations. Section 3 traces his post-war political trajectory and presents corresponding evaluations. Section 4 introduces conservative intellectuals connected to Nakasone and their influences on the policy-making of the Nakasone Administration. Section 5 is a general conclusion and evaluation on Nakasone’s conservative thinking and policies.

Chapter 4 is a case study on Koizumi Junichirō. Section 1 deals with the question: Is it justifiable to label Koizumi Junichirō as a conservative politician? The extant research on Koizumi is explored in this section to support the justifications made. Section 2 probes the source of his conservative thinking by recounting his early education years and political career. Section 3 introduces conservative intellectuals connected to Koizumi and their influences on the policy-making of the Koizumi administration. Section 4 analyses the “Koizumi Theatrics” (*Koizumi Gekijō*) in light of populism and its practices in Japanese conservative foreign policy. Section 5 is a general conclusion and evaluation of Koizumi’s conservative thinking and policies.

Chapter 5 is a case study on Abe Shinzō. The study of Abe, who is the incumbent prime minister, is more or less susceptible to “present time” factors such as the update of data and the personal preferences of the researcher. These objective and subjective difficulties present a challenge to the writing of this chapter. Section 1 is a brief introduction on Abe Shinzō and his political positions. Section 2 deals with his early years, especially the influences on his political perceptions cast by Kishi Nobusuke, his grandfather, and Abe Shintarō, his father. Section 3 introduces conservative intellectuals connected to Abe and their influences on the policy-making of the Abe administration. Section 4 recounts and evaluates several important measures in Abe’s foreign policy, such as the proclamation of “Proactive Pacifism” (*sekkyokuteki heiwashugi*) and the creation of National Security Council (NSC, Japan). Section 5 is a general conclusion and evaluation on Abe’s conservative thinking and policies.

Chapter 6: Comparisons and conclusions. Through comparative case studies, the research goal is to find out how conservative thinking affected the foreign policy-making of these three prime ministers; what are the differences in the three leaders’ foreign policies and the causes of these differences; what are the significances of conservative thinkers as the leaders’ advisors in foreign policy-making and what influences were cast upon policy-making by the leaders’ value system, educational background and early experience? These are the challenging questions to be answered.

This thesis focuses on Japanese conservative thinking and practices in Japan’s foreign policies. However, in order to set the context for research on Japan, I have included essential information on general conservatism theories and the evolution of post-war Japanese conservatism and an analysis of the categories of post-war Japanese conservatism (Chapter 2). These contents serve as a necessary foundation for the understanding of post-war Japanese conservatism. It is also my understanding that Japan’s conservative political trend after the 1980s had its origin in the immediate post-war period, which further justified the inclusion of these contents in Chapter 2 in terms of continuity. In the case-study parts I chose Nakasone Yasuhiro, Koizumi Junichirō and Abe Shinzō as cases in point, who are generally recognized conservative politicians, while at the same time distinctive from one another in political thinking, early experience, career trajectory and reception of intellectual influence. It is exactly their distinctiveness that provided the comparability for the case studies in this thesis.

# Chapter 2 Post-war Japanese Conservatism and Its Convergence with Real Politics

This chapter offers a comprehensive review of traditional Japanese conservatism and neo-conservatism in post-war Japanese politics, with an emphasis on the differentiation between the two. We then proceed to a brief account of post-war Japan’s conservative political practices. In the process of addressing conservatism as representing both ideology and political practices, I attempt to find the boundary as well as the connection between the two. Next, the chapter addresses the ideological development of post-war Japanese journalism, in order to identify the position of conservative narratives in the journalistic sphere and to understand their influence on Japanese politics and foreign policy-making. Last, the convergence of conservative thinking and real politics is investigated, focusing on the pathway between them through conservative intellectuals.

It is necessary to carry out analyses of the definition and classification of conservatism before embarking on the study of post-war Japanese conservative foreign policy. An analysis of the distinctive features of Japanese conservatism is also essential. These pre-analyses serve to lay the foundation for this thesis and to build the rationale for the choice of the three case studies of prime ministers.

## 2.1 Understanding Japanese Conservatism

### 2.1.1 The Reception and Application of Conservatism in Japan

Taken as a generic word, the meaning of the word “conservative” is easily intuitive. But in different historical epochs and social contexts, it actually has very different connotations. According to the definition in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, conservatism is “a political doctrine that emphasizes the value of traditional institutions and practices.”[[6]](#footnote-6) This is an explanation focusing on political philosophy. The popular Japanese dictionary *Kojien* offers a broader perspective: to be conservative means “to value customs and traditions from the past and to be willing to maintain them” (Shinmura 2008: 2586). This definition is equally applicable in politics, economics and social institutions as well as in culture, art, religion and way of life. By this definition, as a concept conservatism is ubiquitous. In the academic sphere the study of conservatism is mainly found in the domains of politics, economics, sociology and culture, but the general characteristics of conservatism can be identified, despite this diversified range.[[7]](#footnote-7) Certainly, a default premise must be recognized that conservatism is foremost a philosophical concept, as most of the words with the “-ism” suffix intimate.

Japanese scholar Komatsu Shigeo once divided conservatism into political conservatism and non-political conservatism. In this division, the study of Japanese conservative foreign policies in this chapter naturally falls into the former category (Komatsu 1957:219-258). Hugh Cecil also classified conservatism into natural conservatism (with lower case c) and political Conservatism (with capital C) (Cecil 2010). Natural conservatism points to the natural human mindset of clinging to the *status quo* and resisting change, which fits into the aforementioned *Kojien* definition, while political Conservatism refers to a doctrine or inclination of upholding the present political order. Based on Cecil’s classification, Kitaoka Isao put forward a thorough reading of Japanese conservatism since the age of the Tokugawa Shogunate (Kitaoka 1964:1-74).

As a political concept, conservatism dates back only to the early nineteenth century. According to Japanese political historian Maruyama Masao, the word “conservative” (*hoshu*) did not possess a potent political meaning until the founding issue of the French political magazine *Conservateur littéraire* in 1818 (Maruyama 1957: 9)*.* Its transplant to Japan happened only after the Meiji Restoration of 1868, yet it rapidly took roots and thrived thanks to the intrinsically solid conservative soil in Japan, not only in the sense of a geopolitical island mentality, but also closely connected to Japanese history. In the works of Japanese folklorist Yanagida Kunio and social psychologist Minami Hiroshi, these connections between Japanese nationality and conservatism were viewed as part of a longer tradition of “conservatism” in Japan (Yanagida 1976; Minami 2006).

For someone familiar with Japanese history, it is not hard to notice that the narratives concerning Japan’s historical origin or the imperial ancestry derived directly from mythological classics such as *Nihon-Shoki* or *Kojiki* (Records of Ancient Matters) (Inoue 1960; Inoue 1965). From the perspective of nationality, this bespeaks both a strong conservative tradition and a robust popular base for conservatism in Japan, which in turn made it possible for the revival of post-war Japan’s conservatism.

This conventional definition of political Conservatism is seemingly off-target when applied to the post-war political system of Japan. This has become particularly evident after the 1980s, when leading Japanese politicians catered to the conservatives by exhibiting both the intention and the action to break the present political order in a series of issues like constitutional revision, the view of history regarding World War II, and national security. For them, it is impossible to overthrow the post-war Japanese political order, at least for now. But the sentiment and efforts effectively focus on Article 9 of the Constitution of Japan (that Japan as a peaceful country keeps no regular armed forces and forfeits the right to wage war),[[8]](#footnote-8) which has been a major source of distress to the conservatives. Thus to Japanese conservatives, to be conservative does not mean to maintain the present order, but to restore a certain previous order. Put another way using Ozawa Ichirō’s words, post-war Japan is an “abnormal country.” What Japanese conservatives strive for is Japan’s eventual normalization (Ozawa 1994).

### 2.1.2 Conservatism in Japanese Politics after World War II

Conservative, or conservatism, is a relative concept. Either it is born in response to a contrary concept, or its existence triggers the creation of a contrary concept. In the Western context, the contrary concept of conservatism is usually radicalism, or progressivism, or liberalism. But in the case of Japan, while roughly maintaining the generic meaning, the contrary concepts of conservatism are slightly different from their Western counterparts. The opposite of conservative in Japan is often reformist *(kakushin)* or progressive *(shimpo)*, while to conservatism, it is progressivism (Kabashima and Takenaka 1996). Pacifism is also regarded as a contrary concept to conservatism, albeit not all the conservatives have a tendency towards militarism and Japanese conservatism itself advocates the importance of Japan remaining a peaceful country. For instance, conservative political researcher Kitaoka Shinichi summarized Japanese conservative foreign policy as “proactive pacifism” (*sekkyokuteki heiwashugi*), which became the poster line of post-Cold-War neo-conservatism (Kitaoka 1992: 2-13). More notably, Abe Shinzō, the incumbent prime minister (since 2012), officially proposed a “Proactive Contribution to Peace” (also *sekkyokuteki heiwashugi* in Japanese) in 2013, reflecting the significant influence of Kitaoka Shinichi (*Asahi Shimbun*, 1 January 2014). Aside from the application of such concepts as conservatism, progressivism and pacifism in Japanese politics, realism and idealism, two opposite concepts in the theoretical studies of international relations, are also adopted by Japanese researchers in the analyses of post-war Japanese politics and foreign policy. In such kinds of studies we often find realists equated to conservatives, and idealists to liberals or pacifists, which do not always hold true in reality (Sakai 1996). This is an issue worthy of further discussion in Japan’s foreign relations.

Moreover, the word conservatism is hardly neutral. Among post-war Japanese academics, the word conservative or conservatism has usually born a negative connotation, i.e. conservative equates right-wing equates reactionary. conservative/right-wing/reactionary vs. progressive/left-wing was commonly perceived as the basic pattern of rivalry in the post-war Japanese political system (Serizawa 1980). The connection between conservative and right-wing is another post-war political narrative which needs to be further clarified. In fact, this perception is a misunderstanding in both a political and an ideological sense, so common that it became superficial commonsense. In his interlocution with Nakajima Takeshi, Miyadai Shinji admitted that there were inevitable connections between conservatives and the right-wing, with conservatism being a peacetime and commonplace mentality and right-wing being its wartime and high-profile incarnation (Nakajima 2010:134). Nevertheless, the distinctions between them are conspicuous. In his differentiation, Nakajima proposes that conservatives recognize the imperfection of society and human nature, and thus prefer gradual or piecemeal reforms; while the right-wing believes in the possibility of a perfect society, often being labeled as radicals (Nakajima 2010: 130).[[9]](#footnote-9) Maruyama Masao, Takeuchi Yoshimi and later Kabashima Ikuo made contributions to restore the original meaning of conservative in the Japanese political context, as discussed in detail below (Maruyama 1957; Takeuchi 1957; Kabashima and Takenaka 1996).

Then what is the connection between conservative (*hoshu*) and reactionary *(handō*)? In the same way right-wing (*uyoku*) is perceived by the left-wing (*sayoku*), being reactionary is the inevitable consequence of being right-wing.[[10]](#footnote-10) A Japanese politician could live with the label of being a conservative, but not that of being a reactionary or right-wing. According to Kaihara, the word *uyoku* “sometimes conjures up an image of people who use uncivilized measures (e.g. loud speakers) and actions (e. g. violence or arson) to express political opinions” (Kaihara 2009: 340). This explains why post-war Japanese politicians often are attracted to the word “conservative” and often voluntarily claim it. Most notably, such claims were made by many post-war Japanese prime ministers, including Yoshida Shigeru, Hatoyama Ichirō, Kishi Nobusuke, Ōhira Masayoshi and Nakasone Yasuhiro (Uchida 1989). To them, conservatism is not only a fundamental value system, but also an applicable statecraft. A post-war landmark political event in 1955, the merger of the Liberal Party (*Jiyūtō*, led by Yoshida Shigeru) and the Democratic Party (*Minshutō*, led by Hatoyama Ichirō) into the Liberal Democratic Party (*Jimintō,* LDP) was dubbed the “merger of conservative parties” by the Japanese media (Hayes 2009: 72-74). Takeuchi Yoshimi pointed out that compared to conservative (*hoshu*), the word reactionary (*handō*) is more emotionally invested. From a value-neutral perspective, “reactionary” must contain something negative, while “conservative” not necessarily so. Being conservative could be either good or bad (Takeuchi 1957: 63). For instance, one of the Japanese conservatives’ most important agendas is to promote traditional values and national identity, such as traditional lifestyle and aesthetics. One can hardly find fault in such kind of conservatism.

Nakano Kōichi admits the relative value-neutrality of the word conservative: “left” and “right” are essentially derogatory terms, only used with critical intention. Moreover, their specific subjects of reference vary in different times and circumstances. In the case of Japan, during the 1970s-1990s politicians labeled “right-wing” were normally those in favor of re-militarization, while after the 1990s the term mainly refers to the hardliners on the issue of their view of the Asia Pacific War.[[11]](#footnote-11) Put simply, Nakano emphasizes that the concept and connotation of conservatism changes with the time and political landscape. Uno Shigeki, another Japanese political scientist, while also recognizing the relativity in terms of time and space, focuses more on the coupling and rivalry of ideologies. Uno suggests that the rivalry between progressivism and conservatism constitutes the central axis of the Modern Time, and in general the former always holds the upper hand. Therefore, conservatism retains its significance only in response to the existence and prevalence of progressivism, not the other way around. Conservatism owes its existence to the enormous power and momentum of progressivism, playing the part of critic and opponent (Uno 2016: v). In other words, when progressivism loses its attraction, conservatism also loses its real cause and purpose, leading to an apparent “conservatization” (*hoshuka*), which is in fact an ideological disorientation (Nakano 2015; Kabashima 1996). This is also the point made by Nakajima, discussed in the next paragraph. Certainly, there are still academic disputes over the definition of conservatization. For instance, Nakano suggests that Japanese politics in the 1980s is in nature an incessant process of conservatization, while Ōtake Hideo and Kabashima argue that ideological differences represented by the left-right rivalry had lost its focal status in Japanese politics entering the 1980s, thus conservatization is not a proper definition for the political change witnessed in this period when Nakasone Yasuhiro rose to the prime ministership (Nakano 2015; Ōtake 1999; Kabashima and Steel 2010).

In recent years, more and more Japanese politicians have claimed to be conservative, but few of them command the essence of conservatism. “Hollowing out of Conservatism” (*hoshu no kūdōka*), a phrase coined by Nakajima Takeshi, is used to describe this trend. The threshold of conservatism has been significantly lowered due to the popularity and easy access of this word. As we discussed at the beginning of this chapter, conservatism can be used as an everyday concept. But those politicians who claim to be “conservatives” without conviction or even understanding of its political connotation are no more than political bandwagoners. Nakajima pointed out that “the current so-called conservatives failed to address the substantial issues of conservatism, and merely lingered on the anti-leftist stance” (Nakajima 2010: 7-8). In other words, the conservatism advocated by these bandwagon “conservatives” is not an ideological concept but a responsive one, pointedly in response to the pre-existing left-wing positions. According to Nakajima, “to visit the Yasukuni Shrine is conservative”, “to make attempts at revising Article 9 of the constituion is conservative”, “being tough on China and South Korea is conservative”, narratives like these are not conventional manifestation of real conservatism, but symbols of overstretching and eventual implosion (Nakajima 2010:7-8). There are plenty of academics who agree with Nakajima on this point, with Mikuriya Takashi and Yamazaki Kōraro being the most notable among them (Mikuriya 2004; Yamazaki 2014).

Admittedly, Nakajima and others made their interpretations based on the classic definition of political conservatism. However, in Japan’s case, such a version of conservatism could mean just being traditional. Giving due recognition to the distinctive character of the traditional Japanese conservatism, my study is more concerned with the so-called “neo-conservative” foreign policies of Japanese prime ministers after the 1980s. With this “neo” prefix, it is inevitably distinctive from traditional conservatism, in both form and substance. This is not only the basic precondition of this research, but also the ground to work on.

## 2.2 The Shaping and Development of Post-war Japanese Conservative Politics

### 2.2.1 The “*ho-kaku tairitsu*” and its Ending

During the Cold War years, the basic pattern of the Japanese political system was the *ho-kaku tairitsu* (conservative-progressive rivalry), competing for narrative space. Certainly, the factional rivalry within the conservative LDP, especially between the Conservative Mainstream (*hoshu honryū*) and Conservative Anti-mainstream (*hoshu bōryū*), also plays an important part and has become more essential to the system after the Cold War. The 1955 System took shape as the result of such rivalries. Under the 1955 System, the regrouped LDP remained the ruling party which led to the emergence of a conservative front, while the leftist-progressive Japan Socialist Party (JSP) maintained the status of the biggest opposition party, holding second-most seats in the Diet. In *Parties and Politics in Contemporary Japan* by Robert A. Scalapino and Masumi Junnosuke, the post-war Japanese conservative monopoly on political power is viewed as being achieved by following the model of a “one–and-a-half-party” prototype: one party as in the LDP’s constant rule, a half party as in the JSP’s constant yet effective opposition, thus achieving some sort of political balance (Scalapino and Masumi 1962). Ōtake Hideo pointed out that the contribution of the opposition, left-wing parties cannot be ignored despite the LDP’s constant rule. Japan enjoyed a relatively stable international and domestic environment during the Cold War, which enabled Japan to embark on an economic fast track, precisely because left-wing progressive parties such as the JSP and the Japanese Communist Party (JCP) as well as the New Clean Government Party (Kōmeitō, with support mainly from the Buddhist *Sōka Gakkai*) held the LDP in check (Ōtake 2007).

As a prominent figure among early-post-war conservatives, Yoshida Shigeru is famous for his “Yoshida Doctrine” policies which set Japan’s priority on the economy and sidelined military development, as discussed further below. In the spirit of his namesake policy and following the Conservative Mainstream, he was relatively restrained in developing Japan’s security policy during his tenures as prime minister, incurring criticism from Conservative Anti-mainstream politicians such as Nakasone Yasuhiro (Nakasone 2004: 49-52). But after leaving office, he revealed a more radical nature, claiming that it never occurred to him that the “Yoshida Doctrine” should become the permanent guidelines for Japan. He also spoke his mind on the importance of re-armament, even nuclear armament (Yoshida 1957: 27). What had stopped him from implementing such ideas when he was the prime minister? To a large extent, it was the general rejection of the JSP and the JCP in the Diet on the re-armament and constitutional revision agendas. In order to win elections, Yoshida had to cater to the left-wing parties to some degree. Hence the effectiveness of the “half” party (Nakajima 2006; Nakasone 2004:50).

There have been abundant studies on the conservative 1955 System (*1955 Nen Taisei*) carried out by Japanese political researchers, but most of them work on the Diet, the elections and the parties (Kitaoka 1995; Curtis 2000; Kabashima and Steel 2010). In comparison, foreign policy under the 1955 System has attracted little attention. This is exactly what this research is trying to contribute, i.e. how conservatism affected and is manifest in Japan’s foreign policy. The studies on Cold War Japanese foreign policy are often placed in the general context of post-war Japanese foreign policy (Samuels 2007; Shinoda 2013). In turn, it is reasonable that post-war Japanese foreign policy is often equated with conservative foreign policy. The post-war Japanese political system is overall conservative, as Masumi Junnosuke and Iokibe Makoto discussed in detail (Masumi 1985; Iokibe 1999).

Along with the spectacular economic development of Japan, the LDP enjoyed more and more of a consolidated ruling base, and longstanding left-wing parties, especially the JSP, went into gradual but decisive decline in the parliament struggle for seats. In the 1970s, the rise of centrist parties, represented by Kōmeitō and the Democratic Socialist Party (*Minshatō*), became prominent. Centrist parties (*chūdō seitō*) took the middle of the road on foreign policy. They criticized the pro-American policy of the LDP (especially the policies on the Vietnam War which followed the American lead), while in the meantime still endorsed the importance and uniqueness of the US–Japan relationship. Entering the 1980s and predominantly after the Nakasone Yasuhiro administration, centrist parties swung more and more to the conservative LDP side on party lines and policies, and the JSP suffered from declining support rates. Although there were occasional resurgences such as in the Upper House election of 1989 and the coalition government with LDP in 1994, JSP eventually lost its second standing in the Diet.[[12]](#footnote-12)

In 1993, the LDP lost its 38-year continuous reign, marking the end of the 1955 System and accompanied by the collapse of the JSP. Thus, the JCP was left as the sole progressive party in a traditional sense, and the “*ho-kaku tairitsu*” came to an end. Japanese politics entered an era of conservatization.

The first signs of conservatization in Japan started to appear here and there roughly during the 1980s, as seen in the public opinion polls conducted by the major news agencies. Admittedly, these polls were not directly addressing conservatism, but the political trend of public opinion was clearly revealed by the setting of topics and the results of the responses. For instance, in the poll conducted by *Asahi Shimbun* on 4 June, 1982, the support rate for the LDP climbed to 55 per cent, while the JSP, the JCP and the *Shaminren* continued to lose popularity. The centrist parties, such as the DSP and the Kōmeitō, also gained in support rate due to their closer and closer positions to the LDP’s, resulting in a substantial decline of left-wing parties (*Asahi Shimbun*, 4 June, 1982).[[13]](#footnote-13)

Roughly at the same time, Nakasone Yasuhiro became the standard bearer of neo-conservatism, leading its official debut on the Japanese political stage. The 1980s is definitely the watershed of post-war Japanese politics. Yoshino Kōsaku, from his cultural-anthropologist perspective, describes the 1980s as the zenith of Japan’s post-war economic miracle, from which Japanese cultural-nationalism re-emerged in the form of neo-conservatism. (Yoshino 1992:164-166). Researchers of international relations are prone to emphasize the influence of the changes in the international environment, such as the American and British conservative reforms, and the intensification of, then the détente and next the end of the Cold War (Midford 2011:62-67; Pyle 2007: 178-198; Samuels 2007: 56-59). Political scientists, on the other hand, identify the changes of Japan’s domestic political system (such as election system restructure and welfare reform) as the underlying causes (Pempel 1982; Kabashima and Steel 2010; Estevez-Abe 2008).

The collapse of the JSP meant that there would be no powerful opposition party to counterbalance the conservative LDP. But what links exist between conservatization and the birth of neo-conservatism? This is one of the major issues this thesis attempts to elucidate. As we will detail in later chapters, conservatization was the precondition for neo-conservatism. If the JSP had been able to maintain its vitality as the main opposition party, the Japanese political system would have retained the conservative-progressive rivalry as the major confrontation, thus retaining a political duality (Scheiner 2006: 41). And conservatives would have had to remain united to confront the opposition. In reality, the collapse of the JSP lost conservatives their rival, and the confrontational nature of a political party compelled certain factions of the LDP and other conservative parties to seek out new rivals from within. In essence, this brought about the birth and growth of neo-conservatism, although the concurrent international environment contributed as well (Hrebener 2000: 1-9).

The 1980s saw the political emergence and prevalence of neo-conservatism on a global scale, with British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, American President Ronald Reagan and Japanese Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro as its most prominent standard-bearers. Certainly, this thesis does not intend to conduct comparative research between conservatism and neo-conservatism, or focus on their differences. In this research, neo-conservatism is treated as a given fact in Japanese politics, which took form in the 1980s and continues to develop until today.[[14]](#footnote-14) An umbrella concept as it is, neo-conservatism presents decided differences in social policies, political ideology, value orientation and foreign policies compared to traditional conservatism.The Nakasone Yasuhiro brand of neo-conservatism could also be deemed as an echo of international neo-conservatism of the 1980s represented by Reaganism and Thatcherism. In short, only an overall conservative socio-political setting could make it possible for the neo-conservative branch to grow more attractive with some outside influence. After the Cold War, with ideological rivalry becoming much less significant, it was more pertinent for Japan to sort out how to carry out the responsibilities of a state, i.e. how to make an “international contribution”, and how to address historical issues such as the war responsibility as an aggressor in the past (Kitaoka 2009:1-19). Compared to traditional conservative politicians, neo-conservative politicians grew more and more extreme on the issues of international contribution and war responsibility. And a series of controversies ensued both internationally and domestically, such as Japan Self-Defence Forces (SDF) oversea dispatches, the Peacekeeping Operations Legislation (PKO), and Yasukuni Shrine worship. This will be discussed in detail in the following chapters.

### 2.2.2 The Forming of the Post-war Conservative Mainstream

Before addressing the question of the Conservative Mainstream, a brief introduction to the “Yoshida Doctrine”, which is closely connected to the Conservative Mainstream, is necessary. The “Yoshida Doctrine” is a representative theory in post-war Japan’s conservative foreign policy and one of the most important pillars to sustain Japan’s fast economic advance and national peace during the Cold War era. Therefore, an analysis of the “Yoshida Doctrine” and the later transgression against it is of crucial referential value to the study of Japan’s conservative foreign policy thinking and practices. The first issue to be clarified is that the “Yoshida Doctrine” cannot be attributed to Yoshida Shigeru alone. Ikeda Hayato and Satō Eisaku, who had both been “Yoshida School” politicians and later became prime ministers, made substantial contributions to the extension and development of the “Yoshida Doctrine” with their thinking and policies.[[15]](#footnote-15) The “Yoshida School” referred to the inner circle of Yoshida’s supporters and reflected the new bureaucratization of the LDP, for it included a number of former government officials who entered politics at this time (Dower 1979: 315).

Moreover, Yoshida himself did not coin the phrase using the word “doctrine” like Harry Truman did. According to Endō Kōichi’s research, the first person who used the expression “Yoshida Doctrine” is the security specialist, Nishihara Masashi, and the person who expanded on it with wide recognition is Nagai Yōnosuke, another well known scholar specializing in international relations (Endō 2008:4). In his 1985 publication *Gendai to Senryaku* (*Modernity and Strategy*), Nagai Yōnosuke articulated post-war Japan’s “Yoshida Doctrine” foreign policy, of which the core lines are the national priority on economic development, the low-profile in foreign relations and dependence on the US for national security to divert resources into economic revival (Nagai 1985).

Now, what is the Conservative Mainstream and what is its opposite faction: the Conservative Anti-mainstream? In my interview with House Member Nukaga (also the president of *Heisei Kenkyūkai*, a faction of the LDP), Nukaga offered a simple definition of the Conservative Mainstream: it is neither left-wing nor radical right-wing. Instead, it is centrist conservative politics, protecting Japan’s national interest with a very rational and realistic approach.[[16]](#footnote-16) Nakamura Masanori defined the Conservative Mainstream as the collective name of post-war Japanese conservative politicians who followed the “Yoshida Doctrine” and the party factions to which they belong. In a narrow sense it mainly consisted of prominent Yoshida School politicians such as Ikeda Hayato and Satō Eisaku, while in practical use Ōhira Masayoshi and Suzuki Zenkō were all members of the Conservative Mainstream camp. Miyazawa Kiichi, who himself claims to have inherited the post-war conservative line, can be counted as the last important figure of the Conservative Mainstream (Nakamura 2005:163). In contrast, the Conservative Anti-mainstream refers to the faction made up by politicians who were in disagreement with the “Yoshida Doctrine”, such as Hatoyama Ichirō and Kishi Nobusuke. Not by coincidence, the three subjects of the case studies in this thesis, namely Nakasone Yasuhiro, Koizumi Junichirō and Abe Shinzō, are all generally recognized as Conservative Anti-mainstream politicians, reflecting an intrinsic connection between the Conservative Anti-mainstream and neo-conservatism.

Nakamura’s definitions of the Conservative Mainstream and the Conservative Anti-mainstream are based on the accordance and rivalry between post-war Japanese politicians, while Ishikawa Masumi, a political journalist, approached the definition from the perspective of essential policy differences. Partly relying on Hori Shigeru, in his research Ishikawa proposed that “managing politics in the spirit of the new Constitution and abiding by the Treaty of San Francisco and the US-Japan Security Treaty are the foundational principles of the post-war new Japan. The essence of the Conservative Mainstream political consciousness is to respect the current Constitution and to follow the foreign policy line subordinate to the US. In contrast, the political consciousness of the Conservative Anti-mainstream is revision of these principles, or divergence from them” (Ishikawa 1994:64).

It is worth noting that Japan’s political map went through radical change after entering the 1980s. The Conservative Anti-mainstream led by Nakasone Yasuhiro with his constitutional revision and re-armament policies gained such momentum that it was set to replace the Conservative Mainstream in its “mainstream” status (Curtis 2000: 82). This is to be addressed in detail in the following sections, and in Chapter 3, but here a brief conclusion is that the narrative of the Conservative Mainstream vs. Conservative Anti-mainstream had become obsolete in Japanese politics after the rise of Nakasone Yasuhiro in the 1980s and the end of the Cold War in the 1990s. The former “anti-mainstream” became the new “mainstream”, practically without the creation of significant opposition (Nakamura 2005:164).

#### Table 2.1 The Comparison and Evolution of the Conservative Mainstream and Conservative Anti-Mainstream

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **the Conservative Mainstream** | **the Conservative Anti-Mainstream** |
| **Representative figures** | Yoshida Shigeru, Ikeda Hayato, Satō Eisaku, Ōhira Masayoshi, Miyazawa Kiichi | Hatoyama Ichirō, Kishi Nobusuke, Nakasone Yasuhiro, Koizumi Junichirō, Abe Shinzō |
| **Political Positions** | upholding Constitution of Japan  restraint on military buildup  abide by the Occupation policies for Japan | revision of Constitution  rearmament and development of military industry  skepticism and negation of the post-war US Occupation policies for Japan |
| **development tendency** | declined into anti-mainstream and oblivion | surge into mainstream |

*Source: author*

### 2.2.3 Pro-American Conservatism and anti-American Conservatism

The United States of America, being the dominant super power in the post-war world, wields profound influences on the political systems of many countries, their value system and foreign policies, no matter whether they are following or against the US, hence the dichotomy of pro-American vs. anti-American (Katzenstein and Keohane 2007: 9-38). Regarding the post-war special relationship between Japan and the United States, there are significant disputes in conservative political circles. Academically, the opposing conservative sides are named pro-American Conservatives and anti-American Conservatives. In their defining years, pro-American Conservatives were in the mainstream and had significant representative figures, while anti-American Conservatives remained mostly in opposition, with vocal figures mostly being political intellectuals and critics, seldom politicians themselves (Itō 2008:213).

Anti-American Conservatives argued that Japan’s security strategy followed a subordinate line attached to the US since the end of World War II, for which they bitterly blamed pro-American conservatives (Glosserman 2005: 35-36; Winkler 2011a: 105). Using the Gulf War of 1991 as an opportunity, the anti-American Conservatives sought a path towards an independent national security strategy and bolstering defence consciousness by various attempts to revise or circumvent Article 9. To anti-American Conservatives, a major hindrance to security independence comes from the US-Japan Security Treaty. Nishibe Susumu once remarked that “despite the commonsense that a nation should manage its own defence, the US-Japan Security Treaty put Japan in the position of a protégé” (Tahara, Nishibe and Kang 2004:13). Aside from this major grievance, anti-American Conservatives also claimed that the foreign policies of the LDP government were not based on practical national interests, but out of consideration of maintaining the US-Japan relationship---or more bluntly, submission to American pressure (*gaiatsu*). For example, this can be seen in Japan’s stance during the Vietnam War, the egregious amount of financial support contributed by Japan in the Gulf War, and so on, with the real purpose of serving the US instead of upholding world peace (Hook 1996). In conclusion, the anti-American Conservatives’ major position is that Japan should pursue its national interests actively and independently, instead of blindly following the US. For this purpose, these conservatives believe Japan is in need of an independent security strategy and corresponding military forces; hence the need to abolish or modify Article 9, which they see as being imposed by the Americans, and eventually restore Japan’s right of waging war. These are the common positions of anti-American Conservatives, with their ultimate political goal of achieving US-Japan equality (Winkler 2011a: 105-106).

Pro-American Conservatives represented the Conservative Mainstream, as well as the post-war Japanese political mainstream. Compared to the idealistic positions of anti-American Conservatives, their position seemed to suggest more strategic depth and insights. They are more willing to defend pro-American governmental behavior from a specific strategic angle (Itō 2008:215). For example, current Prime Minister Abe Shinzō once argued that “there are huge differences in history, culture and traditions between Japan and the US, a close alliance between the two countries might be naturally upsetting. But Japan’s stake in this alliance is life and death; therefore uninterrupted efforts are needed to maintain it” (Abe and Okazaki 2004:57). Pro-American Conservatives are clear in strategic logics: Japan, on her own, stands no chance against its East Asian and global threats, especially the perceived grave threats from China and North Korea. As Japan’s ally, the US poses an irreplaceable strategic deterrence against China and North Korea, and the American military bases in Japan enable Japan to deal with potential East Asian military confrontation with flexibility. In his notable work *Senryakutekishikō to wa Nanika* (*what is strategic thought*), former Japanese diplomat Okazaki Hisahiko pointed out that past experiences in both successes and failures taught Japan the necessity to maintain the alliance with the US, to provide assistance when the US is in need, and to fulfill this need Japan should expand its own military instead of simply hitchhiking the American ride (Okazaki 1983). Thus pro-American Conservatives also oppose Article 9 for its obstruction on overseas military deployment and the exercise of the right to collective defence (Glosserman 2005: 37; Samuels 2007: 124-127). In their attitudes towards Article 9, pro-American and anti-American Conservatives bear little difference, although their similar ends come from vastly different motivations.

In summary, pro-American Conservatives and anti-American conservatives are both important factions in the post-war Japanese political system, and both place emphasis on Japanese national security. Anti-American Conservatives believe that “real” conservatives should challenge the post-war American dominance of Japan and restore pre-war independent national and historical consciousness. In other words, anti-American conservatives harbour grievances against the post-war Japanese political system sustained by pro-American Conservatives, considering their conservatism incomplete (Glosserman 2005: 37-39). Pro-American Conservatives set national interests as a priority, stress national security, which necessitates the US-Japan alliance. Despite their differences, pro-American and anti-American Conservatives share the same recognition of historical continuity spanning from pre-war to post-war, and are both in favor of promoting defence awareness and the national identity of Japanese populace (Itō 2008:221).

#### Table 2.2 The Comparison and Evolution of pro-American Conservatives and anti-American Conservatives

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | pro-American Conservatives | anti-American Conservatives |
| Representative figures \* | Okazaki Hisahiko, Takubo Tadae, Itō Kenichi | Ishihara Shintarō, Nishibe Susumu, Watanabe Shōichi |
| Political positions | emphasis on US-Japan Alliance  subordination and deference to the US in foreign policy  re-armament, in order to boost Japan’s international contribution | independence on foreign policy  equality in US-Japan relations  re-armament, in order to regain Japan’s confidence as a political and military power |
| Status in Japanese politics | Mainstream | Anti-mainstream |

*Source: author*

*\* Basically all the prominent post-war Japanese conservative politicians are pro-American, so journalists and scholars are included in this table. One expecption is Ishihara Shintarō, who is a politician, a novelist and a political critic. As a politician he refrained from overt criticism of the U.S., but as a novelist and critic he is more sentimental and outspoken.*

The above sections have elucidated the features of the post-war Conservative Mainstream, anti-American and pro-American conservatives, each faction with their own distinctive political lines. Nagai Yōnosuke used a 4-quadrant coordinate system to differentiate four types of Japanese political lines in the post-war political spectrum. The clarity of this chart offers an indispensable reference in the study of Japanese foreign policies. For instance, the studies of Mike Mochizuki and Richard J. Samuels more or less reflect the influence of the Nagai Chart (Mochizuki 1983; Samuels 2007).

#### Figure 2.1 The Nagai Chart

|  |
| --- |
| Use of Force is Acceptable  Yes to Constitutional Reform  **Neoautonomist Normal nationalist**  Heirs to nativists Heirs to Big Japanists  Seeking autonomy through Strength Seeking prestige through strength    Close to US  Distance from US  **Pacifists Middle Power Internationalists**  Heirs to unarmed neutralists Heirs to Small Japanists  Seeking autonomy through prosperitySeeking prestige through prosperity  No Use of Force  No to Constitutional Reform |

*Source: Nagai1985; Mochizuki 1983; Samuels 2007:112, with additions by author*

In Figure 2.1, the perceptions and strategies of post-war Japanese politicians are divided into four types, using “attitudes to use of force”, “attitudes to constitutional revision” and “attitudes to the US” as referential variables. The third type (“Pacifists”) correspond to the positions of leftist parties (JSP and JCP), while the other three types are all within the post-war conservative political system, i.e. within the LDP. Among them, “Neoautonomists” correspond to anti-American Conservatives, who want to maintain distance from the US and aspire to strategic independence, with the use of force if necessary. They also want to reform the American-imposed Constitution. Mochizuki dubbed them “Japanese Gaullist” (Mochizuki 1983: 166). “Normal nationalists” stands for the pro-American Conservatives, who put emphasis on US-Japan relations and want to advance Japan’s prestige (instead of strategic independence) through international contribution, with the use of force if necessary. They also want constitutional revision, albeit on the premise of American endorsement. “Middle Power Internationalists” correspond to the “Yoshida Doctrine” followers (yet not precisely), who want to advance Japan’s prestige through prosperity, which is in essence the Mercantile Realism called so by Heginbotham and Samuels (Heginbotham and Samuels 1998). Similar to the “Yoshida Doctrine” followers, they do not sanction the use of force in this process. They are also moderate on the issue of constitutional revision.[[17]](#footnote-17)

### 2.2.4 The Rise of Neo-Conservatism in Japan

The rise of neo-conservatism in the 1980s has been briefly introduced in section 2.2.1. Since a probe into the nature of neo-conservatism or a comparison between neo-conservatism and conservatism are not central objectives of this thesis, this chapter only focuses on the differences in foreign policies in the case of Japanese neo-conservatism. To put it more succinctly, neo-conservative foreign policy has been replacing traditional conservative foreign policy as the mainstream in the post-Cold War Japanese political environment. Another *a priori* assumption is that Japanese politicians, political parties and social consciousness are generally trending towards the conservative, along with the prevalence of neo-conservatism (Kabashima and Takenaka 1996).

What is the objective that neo-conservatism pursues in Japanese foreign policy? Takahashi Toshiya proposed that Japanese neo-conservatism grew out of the discontent towards traditional conservatism: the foreign policy shaped by Yoshida Shigeru and his successors had lost its efficacy to serve the growth of Japanese political and economic might (Takahashi 2010:22-24). To change it, neo-conservatives want a substantial breakthrough in security policies, albeit in accordance with America’s global strategy.

And to achieve this desired breakthrough, a lot of rules set by traditional conservatives need to be nullified. Their foremost grievance is of course regarding the 1947 Peace Constitution, which renounced Japan’s rights of war and collective self-defence, abolished its regular Armed Forces and confined Japanese military power to a very limited extent. Next, neo-conservatives became increasingly dissatisfied with the low diplomatic profile maintained by traditional conservative administrations. They believe that Japan deserves an international status corresponding to its fast-growing economy of the 1980s, and this desire later turned into appeals for “international contribution” and “international cooperation”. In 1985, Nakasone Yasuhiro called on Japan to become an “international country” (*kokusai kokka*) and this choice of phrase instead of “international power” was only to avoid its geopolitical sensitivity (Pharr 1986:54-65). Thirdly, neo-conservatives demand a re-identification of the nation Japan with renewed national assertiveness and pride of citizenry, in order to break the shackles of the post-war establishment and rebuild a powerful Japan. Subsequently, these positions turned them away from the post-war Conservative Mainstream baseline, especially on the historical issues including war responsibilities (Berger 2012: 164-171).

The low-profile foreign policy of the “Yoshida Doctrine” reached its apex along with Japanese economic power in the 1980s. Ironically, its success rendered its low-profile no longer feasible in the changing international setting. Foreign criticism against Japan in the 1980s concentrated on the negative legacy of the “Yoshida Doctrine”: self-absorbed economic expansion under unilateral pacifism, and “free-riding” on international responsibilities (Hook 1996:55-58). Internationally, the diplomatic cross Japan had to bear was to deal with *gaiatsu* from Western developed countries, especially the US. Western countries blamed Japan for being an economic free-rider taking advantage of American protection and demanded that Japan make more “international contribution” (Schoppa 1993), which was conveniently borrowed by Japan as a diplomatic keyword in the 1980s.

The international situation faced by Japan did not improve after the end of the Cold War, which triggered the manifestation of various kinds of problems once concealed by the tension built into Cold War structures. These include Japan’s internal political and economic problems, as well as Japan’s outstanding problems with its Asian neighbors over the view of history and war responsibility (Pempel 1998; Yoshida 2006; Berger 2012). The problems on two fronts interacted with each other, and eventually accelerated Japan’s process of sliding into conservatization. Conservatives pushed constitutional revision and reclamation of the right to collective defence under the pretext of national security, urged the prime ministers’ visit to the Yasukuni Shrine (such as *Izoku-kai*, Japan War-Bereaved Families Association) in response to the accusation from Asian neighbors (Berger 2012:214-219; Wakamiya 1999:316-317). Overall, these propositions made their way into the policy-making process of the Japanese government.

## 2.3 Conservative Theories as Political Thinking: Focus on Japan

### 2.3.1 Complexity and Ambiguity: the Definition of Conservatism

In Japan, the word “*shisō*” (thought, or “thinking”, sometimes) holds unique influence and connotation. Maruyama Masao once observed that, from the Meiji to the early Shōwa era, if an intellectual were considered to have a “thought problem” (*shisō mondai*), he would inevitably be condemned as a danger to the “imperial polity” (*kokutai*) or simply “a communist red” (Maruyama 1957). “Thought problem” in modern Japan mainly had two meanings: first, a specific problematic thought, or more specifically, a “red” thought; second, thought with the potential to exert political or even practical impact (Maruyama 1996:112).[[18]](#footnote-18) After Japan’s defeat in World War II, the narrative space of Japanese thinkers was significantly expanded, so that even a communist intellectual could express himself (or herself) freely. Meanwhile, the lack of root-and-branch political reform by the GHQ Occupation left room for pre-war conservatism to revive. In Maruyama’s view, conservatism in Japan enjoys an uninterrupted status as the mainstream political thought, even in the early post-war years when conservative intellectuals and politicians exaggerated the “threat” of leftist politics (Maruyama 1996:136-137). The post-war Japanese conservative thinking discussed in this section unfolded in such a time and circumstance.

For academia and laymen alike, it has been quite convenient to label someone as “conservative”, or something as “conservatism”, no matter whether in academic studies, public opinion or individual expressions. The word “conservative” (*hoshuteki*) has been so popularized that it has become a day-to-day concept. Moreover, conservatism in Japan is never entrenched within a fixed value system, making possible a variety of conservative positions (Maruyama 1996:135). In the domain of post-war Japanese political thinking, conservatism has long been pitted against progressivism and generally enjoyed the upper hand; in the real political system the LDP as the conservative party has mostly remained in power while the JSP as the leading progressive party was stuck in long-term opposition. Narratives branded with “conservative” or “conservatism” permeated every corner of Japanese society, culture, politics and economy (Nakajima 2010:14). Yet, it is not easy to appreciate the full connotation of “conservatism”. Specifically, the following issues arise:

First, the concept of conservatism is constrained by time and space. People from different times or places are bound to have different perceptions of conservatism, which is in turn dependent on temporal and spatial sequences. Conceptions perceived as “progressive” 200 years ago may well be considered “conservative” today, without taking its complexity of spatial variations into account. Hashikawa Bunzō once observed that “impeccable as Karl Mannheim’s pattern analysis of conservative thinking is, it remains dubious to be applied to Japanese modern conservatism without filtering. In this sense, the ambiguity is unavoidable even if there was a clear definition of conservatism” (Hashikawa 1968:3).

Second, the concept of conservative is always relative. As a relative concept, the real meaning of conservative can hardly be appreciated without first understanding a great range of concepts related and connected to it. In the context of post-war Japanese political thinking, a frequently mentioned coupling of concepts is “*ho-kaku tairitsu*”. In Babb’s words, to define Japanese conservatism it is often necessary to put it against an opposing reference concept, such as socialism and liberalism (Babb 2013:356-7). Also, conservatism is often linked with nationalism, reactionary thoughts and totalitarianism, and is thus generally perceived as an ideology (Kabashima and Takenaka 2012:30-31; Eysenck 1954: 112; Huntington 1957; Anderson 2006). The interconnection and relativity of concepts continues to hinder a clear understanding of conservatism (Kabashima and Takenaka 2012:18-59). For instance, emperor worship in the political thinking of post-war Japan can both be viewed as a conservative resurgence and interpreted as a nationalistic feature (Bix 2000:576). The differentiation of these concepts depends on the specific context and the subject of analysis.

Third, the concept of conservatism is both metaphysical and practical. In other words, it is both abstract and specific, such duality being a focal point of this study. As political thinking studied by political philosophers, conservatism is foremost ideological, thus naturally metaphysical. However, it can also be used in a concrete and specific way, e.g. a conservative person, or a conservative society/country. We draw these denominations from individual or social behaviour which is the consequence of ideological extensions into society. In this sense, conservatism is also a phenomenon or a consequence, instead of merely being a concept.

### 2.3.2 The Pedigree of Post-war Conservative Thinking

In this section, I am not going to present a detailed introduction on the representative thinkers of post-war Japanese conservatism, nor attempt to sort Japanese conservative thinking into a chronological order. Instead, my emphasis is on categorization, i.e. to summarize the different strains of post-war Japanese conservative thinking from specific domains or issues, as well as to present subjects for the subsequent case studies.

A one-by-one chronological discourse on post-war Japanese conservative thinking is beyond both the intention and the reach of this study.[[19]](#footnote-19) Rather, here the pedigree of post-war Japanese conservative thinking is teased out through categorization of representative conservative demands and positions, as well as respective critiques. As demonstrated in the previous sections, the theoretical reach of conservatism is nothing but vast, with the differentiation between conservative/liberal and conservative/progressive permeating across the domains of politics, economy, culture, society and national security. Within the range of this study, the focus is set on the political, foreign relations and security positions of conservative thinking, particularly as manifested in the thought and actions of the prime ministers. Specifically, the following issues are taken up below: the emperor issues (Tennoism), war responsibility and view of history, as well as constitutional issues and subsequent security issues such as the right to collective self-defence (Tsurumi 1957:49).[[20]](#footnote-20)Although Japan’s relations and perceptions of its Asian neighbors (especially China and the two Koreas) are subject to examination as a major issue of conservative thinking by some researchers, in this thesis it is categorized within the war responsibility and history perception/security and defence issues, and so is not addressed in a separate section. This is not to deny the importance of Japan’s Asian view in the spectrum of its conservative thinking, but rather to highlight how the focus set in this thesis is on the war responsibility issue as a whole (Wakamiya 1999).

##### Tennoism (*tennōsei*)

From the Meiji Restoration onward, Tennoism, or the institution of the Emperor, has remained one of the central agendas of Japanese political thinking and real politics. The ideological dominance of Tennoism in pre-war Japan has been seen as an important reason for Japan’s slide into militarism (Ōkubo 1997:102-103; Colegrove 1941). Hence, what to do with Tennoism became one of the primary issues faced by the General Headquarters (GHQ) in the immediate post-war years. In a sense, Tennoism has always been around since antiquity; yet as an expression, “Tennoism” became widely accepted only after the defeat in World War II, with a subtle but definitely negative connotation (Ishida 1957: 89-90).

After its defeat in World War II, Japan entered the Occupation Period (1945-1952), during which the GHQ under American leadership conducted extensive reforms of Japanese economy, politics and social systems. One featured reform was the repeated purges of pre-war and wartime ultra-conservatives and fascist intellectuals (Dower 1999). In reality, however, the conservative intellectuals who had grown up in the pre-war era were not effectively exterminated politically. Despite the fact that some of them who had taken part in wartime militaristic policies (such as the Kyoto School philosophers Kōsaka Masaaki and Suzuki Shigedaka) were indeed spiritually traumatized, conservatism as a mode of political thinking was far from extinct in post-war Japan (Williams 2004; Ōhashi 2001).

There had been disagreement inside GHQ on how to deal with Emperor Hirohito and Tennoism itself. Japan was even prepared for abdication while making desperate appeals to keep Tennoism as Japan’s *Kokutai*. After deliberate consideration and compromises within GHQ and between Japanese and American interests, Emperor Hirohito and the emperor system were deemed necessary in maintaining post-war Japan’s social stability (Bix 2000; Takemae 2002). The 1947 Constitution of Japan retained the Japanese Emperor as a mere spiritual symbol of Japan, rendering the post-war emperor system to be only a shadow of the pre-war “*taikensōran*” Tennoism, yet the very survival of the emperor system, symbolic as it is, was the greatest victory of the conservatives (Large 1992: 132-160). Nevertheless, issues like the abolition of the emperor system and the war responsibility of Hirohito remained the focus of disputes between conservatives and progressives after the war.

Although the decision to exempt the emperor from prosecution was made by the US, the rationale behind it reflected the paramount prestige the emperor holds among the Japanese people. The Japanese veneration of the emperor is evident from contemporaneous public opinion polls: in 1948, a year after the Constitution of Japan had been enacted, a poll carried out by the Japanese government on new national holiday legislation asked “what are the pre-war holidays that you want to retain?” Japanese New Year (*Gantan*) came first with a support rate of 92.1 per cent; the Emperor’s Birthday (*Tenchōsetsu*) finished a close second (91.3%), ahead of Founding Memorial Day of Japan (*Kenkoku Kinenbi*) (91.0%), which is the day commemorating the enthronement of Japan’s first emperor (Koseki 2009: 349). The political consequence of the exemption is easy to see: if the emperor, as head of state, can avoid being held accountable for the crimes and responsibilities of the war, then normal Japanese have all the pretexts to insist that they did nothing wrong in the war, too. This is also the ultimate rationale with which later conservatives fiercely defend the emperor against any accusation of war responsibility (Minear 1971; Brackman 1987).

The proposed abolition of Tennoism was the topic of the most heated debate between conservatives and progressives in post-war Japan. The mainstream intellectual opinion had been condemnation and the proposed abolition of Tennoism; even though some intellectuals held back on calling for abolition, they still insisted on the abdication of Emperor Hirohito.[[21]](#footnote-21) In time the issue of abolishing Tennoism became of vital significance in both real politics and abstract political thinking. In April 1946, *Sekai* published *The Institution of Japan and the concept of Perpetual Royal Succession (Kenkoku no Jijō to Banseiikkei no Shisō)* by historian Tsuda Sōkichi, whose timing coincided with post-war Japan’s first general Diet election as well as the climax of conservative endeavours to preserve Tennoism (Tsuda 1946). The Tsuda article functioned as a powerful stimulant to the conservative movement. Tsuda Sōkichi had been previously considered a progressive historian whose writings about the ancient history of Tennoism were banned by the pre-war and wartime authorities. Nevertheless in 1946, merely the second year after the World War II defeat, he argued that “the emperor system has been symbiotic with Japanese people for more than 2000 years and reflects Japanese commitment to love and power, with such beauty and serenity worthy of eternity” (Tsuda 1946; Ruoff 2001:45). He wrote the first version of his essay in January 1946, before the initial drafting of the new constitution. Prior to the publication of his essay, the editors of *Sekai* wrote Tsuda a long letter in which they expressed their concern about his essay’s defence of the Imperial Household. They were afraid that Tsuda’ essay would play into the hands of conservatives who sought to maintain the *Kokutai* defined as imperial sovereignty. In response, Tsuda added a few pages at the end of his essay critical of the Meiji Imperial system (Ruoff 2001: 45). The editorial staff of Iwanami Shoten initially expected an attack on Tennoism from Tsuda, who to their surprise delivered a passionate praise. Eventually, Tsuda’s article was published with a number of mitigating editorial remarks in the form of sidenotes. In an immediate response to the Tsuda article, "The Logic and Psychology of Ultranationalism" (*Chō-kokkashugi no Ronri to Shinri*), an essay by Maruyama Masao appeared in the next issue of *Sekai*, lifting the author to prominent recognition (Oku 2007:72-3).

Another example was contemporary international law scholar Yokota Kisaburō, who opposed Tennoism, yet admitted its compatibility with democracy from the perspective of democratic legislation (Yokota 1946). Yokota’s proposition on Tennoism was in terms of the emperor as the symbol of the nation, while in reality the emperor was not completely disengaged from politics, especially during the Occupation. Long after his constitutional position was redefined, Emperor Hirohito continued to send messages to his ministers expressing, for example, the need for anti-communist measures. Hirohito had spent two decades on the throne before becoming the “symbol emperor” in 1947. Constitutions may change overnight, but imperial practices and habits do not necessarily transform so quickly (Ruoff 2001: 87; Toyoshita 1996).

In later years, although criticism of Tennoism such as the war responsibility of Emperor Hirohito did not disappear from academic discourse, generally there was not much debate on abolishing the emperor system or the abdication of the emperor (Gluck and Graubard 1999; Kawanishi 2013). The political atmosphere of the time (Japan and the US reached an agreement on the preservation of the emperor system with the emperor as a symbol of the nation) certainly helped; the post-war Japanese democratic politics also proved the viability of democracy under Tennoism. This is probably why Maruyama Masao more or less showed some respect in his reflection on Emperor Hirohito (Maruyama 1996; Karube 2008). On the other hand, conservative intellectuals became more and more active in paying tribute to Tennoism, eventually making “upholding Tennoism” an important hallmark of Japanese conservatism (Nakanishi and Fukuda 2005).

Takeyama Michio was another intellectual who was against pursuing the emperor’s war responsibility. In his 1955 book *Shōwa no Seishinshi* (the Spirit of Our Times), Takeyama contended that there had been fascists in Japan but Japan as a country did not succumb to fascism. This meant for him that the emperor as the head of state could not be considered a fascist. Takeyama also argued that Tennoism consisted of multiple entities surrounding the emperor, including parties, ministers, tycoons, bureaucrats and warlords, thus the emperor could not be personally held responsible for the war (Takeyama 1956). Umesao Tadao, his contemporary, adopted a perspective of ecological history and preached the superiority of Japanese Civilization. He suggested that ecological-historically the Japanese Civilization was not much different from the Western Civilization despite its geographical position in East Asia (Umesao 2003). Although not explicitly lauding Tennoism, Umesao created a “positive” image of the Japanese by blending Japanese natural and social characteristics with ecological-historical arguments. Ueyama Haruhira of the Kyoto School reviewed Umesao’s work immediately after its publication, pointing out that “starting from the defeat, the tide in academic and public opinion had taken a sharp turn from ‘positive Japan’ to ‘negative Japan’; but ten years into the post-war the momentum reversed from ‘negative Japan’ back to ‘positive Japan’, with Umesao Tadao as its harbinger.” (Ueyama 1964)

In such fashion, the conservative trend, which as seen above evaded the question of the emperor’s war responsibility and aimed to restore imperial glory, retook its ground in post-war Japanese political thinking. Yamada Kō coined the phrase “*Kamigami no Fukkatsu*” (Revival of The Gods) to address this early-post-war phenomenon (Yamada 1989:50-65). Controversies surrounding Tennoism and the Imperial Household had subsided for some years after Japan experienced the economic boom of the 1970s. But in the 1980s after Nakasone Yasuhiro became the prime minister with his obsession over Tennoism, as discussed in Chapter 3, Emperor Hirohito again resurged as the centre of the conservative’s fixation. When the emperor passed away in 1989, throughout Japan flags were lowered, stores and schools were closed, the whole society sank into a mourning halt (For details, see Bix 2000:685-687; Large 1992:199-201). It was not only the end of an era, but also the awakening of long-suppressed Japanese adoration of the Imperial Household. Many topics that had been taboo for decades now could be discussed both by conservatives and progressives without the fear of embarrassing the emperor personally, including such sensitive issues as the emperor’s (and Japan’s) responsibility for imperial expansionism and the wartime atrocities (Berger 2012).

Of late, the Japanese conservative narratives on the emperor and Tennoism stress that the emperor is the spiritual mainstay of Japanese people; that he is also the symbol of Japanese nationalism; that the historical issue of the emperor’s war responsibility must be dismissed; that the authenticity of the Tomita Memo must be questioned; and that the emperor should visit Yasukuni Shrine.[[22]](#footnote-22) On the nationalist theme in particular, the conservatives have tried to promote the emperor as Japan’s national symbol since the 1950s. The *Monbushō* (Ministry of Education) tried to persuade teachers to raise the *Hi no Maru* (traditional Japanese national flag) and sing the *Kimi ga Yo* (traditional Japanese national anthem). As a result, the Japanese government officially recognized the status of *Hi no Maru* and *Kimi ga Yo* in 1999. Leftists such as the Japanese Teacher’s Union (*Nikkyōso*) had opposed the use of these national symbols because they had been so closely connected to Japan’s pre-war imperial system and militaristic nationalism. Conservatives had sought to recognize these symbols precisely in order to inculcate greater national pride, and even to weaken post-war pacifism, thereby facilitating a more extensive Japanese security role (Itō 2001b).

In summary, although Japan’s defeat brought about a new constitution with the emperor as a symbol and the emperor’s official detachment from the real politics of Japan, as the head of state, the emperor still cannot be exempt from exploitation by the conservatives. In the meantime, Tennoism and the emperor have remained the crux of post-war Japanese ideological confrontation. Although Tennoism is not an issue directly connected with Japanese conservative foreign policy, the attitudes and positions of Japanese prime ministers towards Tennoism are highly correlated with their perception of war responsibilities and their inclination towards nationalism and statism. Thus observations from this perspective are necessary for the investigation of conservative foreign policy of the prime ministers.

##### War Responsibility and View of History

In a general sense, the Tennoism issue listed above also belongs to the category of war responsibility and view of history. It is identified and discussed separately due to its unique significance in post-war Japanese political thinking. War responsibility and view of history issues involved in this section refer to the non-repentance, responsibility-evading and excuse-seeking of post-war Japanese conservative intellectuals about Japan’s wartime aggression and war crimes, or from a contemporary angle, their revisionist tendencies regarding war history. Although Japan and Germany were similar as defeated countries in World War II, there are numerous reasons to believe that Japan has developed a very different historical narrative from that of the post-war Germany, one with a far more attenuated sense of guilt or responsibility (Berger 2012: 132). The war and Japanese occupation of conquered countries had been less destructive; the evidences of Japanese atrocities were less indisputable; there had been no genocidal plan for the destruction of an entire people; Japan’s motives for going to war were more complex and perhaps even more justifiable by contemporary standards than those of Nazi Germany; and finally, it is far more difficult to assign to individual leaders the responsibility for the decision to go to war (Okazaki 2003; Kitaoka 2005).

Despite the progressives’ repeated reflections on the war responsibility of intellectuals, conservative intellectuals obviously did not share this repentance, nor did they accept that Japan was liable for such grave responsibility in The Great East Asia War or The Pacific War (Tsurumi 1956; Yoshida 1992). Hence their various attempts to call the International Military Tribunal in the Far East (IMFTE, commonly known as the Tokyo Trial) into question (Ōnuma 2007). The coalition of conservative writers and publishers that had been active since the 1960s renewed their campaign against the progressives and in favour of a more positive view of Japanese history, especially regarding its war responsibility (Berger et al. 2007: 196).

One of the most representative works of the Japanese war responsibility denial is *Daitōa Sensō Kōteiron* (*The Great East Asia War as a Just War*), written by Hayashi Fusao and published in sixteen volumes from 1963 to 1965. In the treatise Hayashi deviated from the GHQ imposed narrative by rebranding The Pacific War as The Great East Asia War, as used before the end of the war, which in his view was an important phase of the century-long struggle for the independence and modernization of East Asian nations against western imperialism. Refraining from categorical justification of this war, Hayashi’s stance of partial rationalization casts enough impact on the official post-war view of history (Hayashi 2001).

In order to revise the official view of history, Takeyama Michio, Hayashi Kentarō and others founded a political group by the name of the “Japan Cultural Forum” (*Nihon Bunka Fōramu*) and published the group’s journal: *Jiyū (Freedom)*. Encouraged by the rapid development of the forum, Hayashi Kentarō and Fukuda Tsuneari organized the “Japanese Cultural Conference” (*Nihon Bunka Kaigi*), another academic association. Many Conservative intellectuals took part in both, including prominent figures like Hayashi Kentarō, Kōsaka Masataka, Inoki Masamichi, Mishima Yukio and Takeyama Michio (Yamada 1989:228-9). It is worth noting that among conservatives of the 1950s-1960s, writers, literature critics and novelists took a prominent leading role. Their attempt to propagate Japanese conservative thought through literature was defined as ‘cultural nationalism’ by Yoshino Kōsaku (Yoshino 1992). For Yoshino, culture is a notion with multiple dimensions. Especially when Japanese culture is the case, ideological elements like nationalism, nationality and national values are inevitable. In other words, conservative elements are deep-rooted in Japanese culture.

From the very start, the *Nihon Bunka Kaigi* and *Nihon Bunka Fōramu* were self-labelled conservative groups and took on the mission of positively appraising Japan, past and present: “from Negative Japan to Positive Japan”. They refuted the war responsibility and view of history issues raised by the leftist and progressive intellectuals and made counter-claims instead. Meanwhile, through their influential journals such as *Jiyū* and later on *Sho Kun!*, they tried to propagate their conservative thoughts among the populace and create an overall conservative atmosphere (Jōmaru 2011:21-62).

In the 1970s, the conservative views of history and war responsibilities were by and large limited to the sphere of public opinion and intellectuals. Entering the 1980s, along with the rise of neo-conservatism, the debate of view of history and war responsibilities started to take on a different distinction. The foremost change is the politicization of history issues, such as the history textbook incident and the Yasukuni Shrine visits during the Nakasone administration. Moreover, the debate has spread out of academic circles and into education, especially to the textbooks which is closed connected to the young generation (Hein and Selden eds., 2000). Such a group of conservatives can be rightfully named neo-conservatives.

One of the leaders of this group is Nishibe Susumu, who blames the Japanese government for the very acceptance of the Tokyo Trial verdict and advocates its repeal for the cleansing of the shame it brought on Japan. Nishibe’s claim was well publicized through conservative journals and TV commentaries, making him the conservative intellectual most critical of Japanese government and leaders (Samuels 2007: 121). During the whole Cold War period and, in a sense, until today, to the conservative intellectuals sharing Nishibe’s view, their primary task is to correct the detrimental effects of the “self-abusive view” (*jigyakushikan*) of Japanese history and to regain the noble confidence of Japan. In order to serve this cause, conservatives fought tooth and nail with any proposition to accept the Tokyo Trial outcome or to acknowledge war responsibility; they also made various academic attempts to reconstruct a “real” and “noble” Japan. This endeavour saw the emergence of many academic and private associations with “anti-self-abusive view of history” missions, such as “Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform” (*Atarashii Rekishi Kyōkasho wo Tsukuru Kai*) and “Cheer-up Japan Action Committee” (*Ganbare Nippon Zenkoku Kōdō Iinkai*).

In 2001, their versions of *Shin Rekishi Kyōkasho (New History Textbook)* and *Shin Komin Kyōkasho (New Civic Textbook)* were approved by the *Monbu Kagakushō* (Ministry of Education, Cultures, Sports, Science and Technology, MEXT) certification system and gained access to circulation as approved text for public schools. Despite multiple updates of new versions, the adoption of *New History Textbook* and *New Civic Textbook* by regional education committees and schools remained minimal (*Asahi Shimbun*, 5 September, 2015). Nevertheless, the mere birth of such revisionist textbooks was already a breakthrough against post-war Japan’s educational doctrine.[[23]](#footnote-23)

Aside from publishing “anti-self-abusive view of history” textbooks as head of Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform, another undertaking of Nishio Kanji was to restore books and literatures burnt in the GHQ Occupation. To date (29 November, 2016), nine volumes of Nishio’s restoration archives: *GHQ Funshō Tosho Kaihō* (*The Archives of Censorship in Trans-war Japan*) have been published, coordinated with more than 200 sessions of public promotion by Internet videos (Nishio 2008-2014). Although enjoying a certain degree of popularity, conservatives like Nishio Kanji do not share much affinity with the Japanese government due to their excessive criticism of government policies and their anti-American Conservative stance. Discourses involving real politics such as this are to be laid out in the next section.

##### Constitutional Revision

On 27 April, 2012, the then-opposition LDP formally publicized its “Constitutional Revision Draft”, which toned down narratives on pacifism while increasing the rhetoric on Tennoism, historical/cultural tradition and national superiority.[[24]](#footnote-24) Moreover, it replaced “renunciation of war” with “security and defence” and called for the establishment of “Defence Forces”. The demand for constitutional revision has never subsided since the day the post-war Constitution of Japan was established (For details, see Hook and McCormack 2001; Watanabe 1994). The 2012 LDP draft was just a total account of constitutional revision propositions of the past 60 plus years, which is both the manifestation of LDP party character and the direct result of the conservatization of Japanese society and academics. It is also worth noting that in September 2012, Abe became the president of the LDP and soon the prime minister of Japan. The proximity of time suggests that a great deal of Abe’s doctrines and positions are reflected in this draft, which is much more likely to leave its impact on real politics compared with the many constitutional revision drafts previously presented by the LDP (Hughes 2015: 40-43). Since Abe’s election in December 2012, the debate and contestation over constitutional revision sparked by this draft has remained in the centre of Japanese politics, and its fruition is only just being revealed (For details, see Chapter 5).

British sociologist Anthony Giddens once suggested that political radicals are usually considered left-leaning, due to their opposition to nostalgic conservatism (Giddens 1994). Yet in today’s world, the leftists have turned to be defensive and the rightists have become radical, with conservatives calling for reform in a number of domains. In Japan’s case, the post-war left-wing pacifists uphold and defend the Peace Constitution, while right-wing conservatives attempt to overhaul it, forging an ironical impression of “radical conservatives”. In the course of such action, Japanese conservatives seem to defy Giddens’ observation, especially in their attitudes on constitutional issues. But in terms of teleology, their constitutional revision proposals are exactly reminiscence of and express nostalgia for the old Imperial Japanese Constitution, evident from format to contents in the 2012 draft (Toyoshita and Koseki 2014:121-230). Thus, in nature, the sustained assault on the Constitution by conservatives is not revolutionary radicalism but authentic conservatism.

The parts of the Constitution changed in the LDP’s draft are exactly the parts which have haunted Japanese conservatives throughout the post-war years. Constitutional revision certainly is not their only position, but most of their positions can be articulated in their specific constitutional revision demands, such as Tennoism, security issues and historical perception. For Japanese neo-conservatives, the political effect of constitutional revision is multi-dimensional.

Even before the ending of World War II, the Allies led by the US started the planning of post-war occupation policies concerning Japan. One of the most important policies was to reform Japan’s Imperial Constitution. According to Robert Ward’s research, in the war-time the US produced a detailed and rational occupation plan for Japan, which was faithfully implemented by the GHQ in the immediate post-war period. In the plan, major propositions concerning constitutional revision included: a. maintenance of the imperial institution with curtailed authority; b. elimination of the privileges and practices that had enabled the military to control important spheres of policy making in Japan and discredit of the military by saddling it with the responsibility for both the war and the defeat; c. establishment of cabinet responsibility to the Diet; d. establishment of Diet control of the budget; e. introduction of a far broader and more effective Bill of Rights with particular attention to freedom of speech, assembly, and worship and judicial safeguards (Ward 1987: 19-20) .

The subsequent constitutional revision and legislative process was riddled with heated conflicts between the Americans, Japanese conservatives and Japanese liberals. Nevertheless, a brand new Constitution of Japan came into effect on 3 May, 1947 (Tanaka 1987). Despite the tenacious resistance by Japanese conservative on the aspects of Tennoism and human rights, this is a constitution reflecting the American values of liberty and democracy, of which most of the articles are subversions of the Meiji Imperial Constitution.

As is well known, the Constitution of Japan enacted on 3 May, 1947 is a result of the predominant involvement of GHQ. The majority of contemporary Japanese academics, especially the liberals, held a positive view of the American reconstruction and the consequent Constitution, yet not without voices of objection (for details, see Oguma 2002:153-174). For instance, Sasaki Sōichi, who had been a professor of Kyoto University and a journalist covering the post-war Ministry of Internal Affairs, expressed fierce opposition to any constitution under American pressure, despite his own advice to the emperor to reform the Imperial Constitution (Sasaki 1945). The left-wing parties like JCP also opposed a constitution imposed by the US In essence, back then both the Left and the Right were against “America” on constitutional issues, rather than on particular constitutional provisions such as Article 9.

Ōishi Yoshio, another constitutional scholar from Kyoto University, proposed constitutional revision adopting a completely conservative approach. Ōishi presented several key proposals regarding the Constitution of Japan: to change the American imposed Constitution to an “Imperial Charter Constitution” in order to emphasize the supremacy of the emperor; to implement constitutional explanations on history and tradition in order to normalize “*kokutai*”; to constitutionalize the Self-Defence Forces and to make Yasukuni Shrine a national institution (to cement its non-religious status). These propositions thereafter became the theoretical foundation of conservative constitutional researchers (Ōishi 1962). In recent years, a renewed trend of constitutional revision debate has swept through Japanese academia, media and politicians, yet the propositions presented by the reform advocates are still similar to those framed by Oishi (Aikyō 2006).

After a fervent wave of constitutional revision proposals in the early post-war years, neither academic/public opinion nor politicians retained constitutional revision as their priorities, primarily due to the shift of the post-war Japanese political environment (Hook and McCormack 2001:9). After Prime Minister Kishi Nobusuke forced through the revision of the US-Japan Security Treaty (*Anpo Jōyaku*) in 1960, Japan saw the emergence of large-scale anti-*Anpo* Movement, whose chaotic damage shock-educated succeeding conservative governments into focusing on the economic transformation of Japan (Pyle 2007:242-4). The change of focus onto the economy under the Ikeda Hayato adminstration accelerated the de-politicization trend of the Japanese populace, or in Maruyama Masao’s words: “political apathy” (Kabashima and Takenaka 2012:44).

The “Constitution Preservation Movement” (*goken undō*) which emerged among intellectuals was another indispensable factor. Chinese researcher Qiu Jing pointed out that the “Research Group on Constitutional Issues” (*Kenpō mondai Kenkyūkai*), which had been active from 1958 to 1976, played an important role in upholding the Constitution of Japan. Qiu also reveals that by the standard of the numbers of Constitution Amendment bills, there were 11 between 1950 and 1960, 19 between 1980 and 2000, but only 6 between 1960 and 1980, which is consistent with the active and inactive periods of the Research Group on Constitutional Issues (Qiu 2007:1). Many notable post-war progressive intellectuals took part in the activity of the Research Group on Constitutional Issues. For them, democracy became more precious than peace after the anti-*Anpo* struggle, thus diverting their battle front to the constitutional domain where democracy itself is at stake (Qiu 2007: 1-21).

To the conservative thinking thereafter, the essense of constitutional revision concentrates much on changing Article 9 of the Constitution of Japan. Article 9 states:

*Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes. In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.*

As well put by Sakai Tetsuya, post-war Japan has been basically trapped between the US-Japan Security Treaty and the Peace Constitution. Article 9 and the US-Japan Security Treaty have been the two central pillars of Japan’s security policy, which is sometimes called the Article 9-Security Treaty regime (Sakai 2007). The US-Japan Security Treaty put Japan under the wing of American military protection, thus enabling the devastated country to revive its economy; the idealistic Peace Constitution, with its Article 9, bound Japan with the obligation to be a “pacifist country”, thus thwarting any of its military ambition. Yet, it has been clear that contradictions existed between the two ideologies, whose “cultures” are almost diametrically opposed to each other (Tsuchiyama 2007:59). In short, Article 9 discourages Japan’s use of force for conflict resolution, whereas the Security Treaty encourages Japan to use it under certain conditions (Tsuchiyama 2007:59). As a result of Japan’s rapid growth in economic power and the ensuing desire to wield such power in the political and security fields, Japanese conservative intellectuals started to speculate about ways out of the constraint of Article 9, such as “international contribution” tactics on post-Cold-War international opportunities (Pyle 2007: 242).

For the conservatives who believe that Japan has been trapped by Article 9, only constitutional revision can remove the obstacle to more active diplomacy. They generally expect three-fold benefits of constitutional revision. First, revising Article 9 is a prerequisite for Japan to become an independent nation in a real sence. By making explicit the role of the armed forces in exercising the right of self-defence in the Constitution, Japan would achieve a genuine independence by ending its psychological and strategic reliance on the US. Next, articulating the right of collective self-defence in the Constitution would remove the ambiguity that has hampered any moves toward strengthening US-Japan security relations. This is an issue we will deal with in detail in Chapter 5. Eliminating such ambiguity would be the first step for Japan to become a truly equal partner to the US. Finally, asserting the right to engage in collective self-defence activities is seen as essential as it would also remove the legalistic constraint that has prevented the SDF from actively participating in peace-keeping operations, and open the door to participating in war (Itō 2001a: 325-326).

The most direct approach is the demand to revise Article 9, while other conservatives with less extreme positions proposed to re-interpret Article 9 without revising it to facilitate overseas development of Self-Defence Forces and a gradual reclaim of the collective self-defence right (Hook and McCormark 2001. Also see Chapter Five for changes under Prime Minister Abe). Nishibe Susumu, a representative figure of pro-constitutional-reform intellectuals, was not simply satisfied with constitutional revision speculations in his book *Watashi no Kaikenron: Nihonkoku Kenpō Kaiseishian (My Constitutional Revision Proposal)* published in 1991. He extended his overall criticism to post-war Japanese democratic society under American pressure, calling the American-imposed Constitution, American-style democracy and symbol Tennoism under American coercion into question (Nishibe 1991: 12-26)

One thing to notice here is the logical difference between debating positions inside the group of post-Cold-War conservative intellectuals, despite their common ground of constitutional revision. As introduced in Chapter 1, there are both anti-American Conservatives and pro-American Conservatives among Japanese conservative thinkers, with Nishibe Susumu obviously belonging to the former, and Kitaoka Shinichi and Nakanishi Terumasa the latter, who proposed modification of Article 9 in order to re-orient US-Japan relations and share the American defence burden. According to the pro-US conservatives, the US would welcome Japan’s constitutional revision and exercise of collective self-defence right (Armitage and Nye 2000; Armitage and Nye 2012).

In summary, despite the consensus among conservative intellectuals on constitutional revision, conservatives in different times harboured different impulses on specific approaches and aims, leaving the aforementioned “high tide” and “low tide” of constitutional revision movement. In the meantime, conservative intellectuals are far from uniform despite their basic common ground. Pro-American conservatives took a low-key stance of co-ordinated US-Japan relations in their proposal, while anti-American conservatives occupied the ideological high ground and made straightforward demands. These two different conservative positions of two factions wield different influences on Japanese government and policy. The details of these influences are discussed in the next section.

##### Security and Defence

The sustainability of Japan as a pacifist country has been extensively discussed in the extant literature. For instance, based on the cultural and paradigmatic elements of constructionist theories, Peter Katzenstein, Thomas Berger, Satō Yoichirō and Hirata Keiko proposed that the pacifist paradigm holds vital importance in the building of Japan’s national identity (Katzenstein 1996; Berger 1998; Satō and Hirata 2008). Nevertheless, the undeniable fact persists that most LDP governments have been consistently attempting to breach post-war taboos in the domain of security, seeking engagement and circumvention of various brakes set on Japan’s security policies by the pacifist paradigm. In this process, the conservative narrative has exerted a substantial impact on Japan’s pursuit of “state normalization” (Oros 2008; Samuels 2007). Theoretical analysis of these two opposite views is not in the planned range of this thesis; instead, the focus is on the concrete conservative policy propositions on Japan’s national security strategy.

Generally, the paradigm of post-war Japanese foreign relations can be viewed as a mixture of an idealism-vs.-realism paradigm in the international context and conservatism-vs.-progressivism paradigm in domestic politics. Certainly, the former paradigm cannot be simply re-interpreted to reflect the latter, which is defined in a different domain (Sakai 2013:281). In post-war Japan, many intellectuals have been labelled “idealist” or “realist” according to their various political positions, with a further alignment of “idealist” being progressive and “realist” being conservative assigned to them respectively. While in reality, this simplified alignment was not necessarily the case. Shimizu Ikutarō, as a typical left-leaning progressive, went through subtle shifts of positions after the traumatic defeat in the Anti-*Anpo* Movement. Without changing his anti-American stance, he started to advocate substantial rearmament with nuclear capacity (Shimizu 1980; Oguma 2003). He is but one of the examples that ideologically left-leaning intellectuals can well become conservatives, an example of the *tenkō* phenomenon.[[25]](#footnote-25) The conservative intellectuals from JCP also played an important role in early post-war debates on security and defence issues (Oguma 2002:175-208).

The Anti-*Anpo* Movement in 1960 was the turning point of conservative appeals on security and defence issues. Up until then and during the movement, conservatives focused on the criticism of the progressive positions, calling them vacuous, immature and impractical, and in turn offered an approach based on common sense, reality and tradition to Japanese and international politics. Conservative intellectuals such as Koizumi Shinzō and Tanaka Michitarō advocated not only Japan’s rearmament, but also the re-incorporation of national defence into public awareness (Oguma 2002:199).

The years after the Anti-*Anpo* Movement witnessed Japan’s rapid economic progress and ensuing rationalization of conservative concerns on security and defence. Realism in foreign policy thrived and conservative-realist political theorists favouring the “Yoshida Doctrine”, such as Kōsaka Masataka and Nagai Yōnosuke, started to take the centre stage in the public sphere (Takeda 2016: 173-174). Unlike the aforementioned conservative thinkers who concentrated on literature and philosophy, these two political researchers concerned themselves with real politics (especially security policies) and specialized in international politics and security issues. Due to their practicality, as thinkers they may seem not as influential as their forerunners; nevertheless, they took the lead in academic debates on Japanese foreign policy with their acute concern for real politics.[[26]](#footnote-26) Despite the self-claim of the realistic intellectuals such as Kōsaka Masataka to be conservatives, American political scientist Gerald L. Curtis deemed them otherwise: “Kōsaka Masataka and Satō Seizaburō are not conservative opinion leaders. They are just non-progressive and ideology-free intellectuals” (Curtis 2008:128).

Kōsaka Masataka is the son of Kōsaka Masaaki, a leading Kyoto School philosopher and well known conservative advocate. Although critical of his father’s words and deeds during the war, Kōsaka Masataka retained the family trait of conservative thinking (Ōtake 1999: 76). Right after returning to Japan in 1963 leaving Harvard, he published *Genjitsu Shugisha no Heiwaron* (On Pacifism by a Realist) in *Chūō Kōron*. In the essay Kōsaka criticized the post-war Japanese pacifism to date as idealistic and impractical and offered realistic pacifism based on the Security Treaty as an alternative (Kōsaka 1963). The intent of Kōsaka’s criticism was directly focused on the “Unarmed Neutrality” put forth by progressive intellectual Sakamoto Yoshikazu (Sakamoto 1959). Some researchers further suggest that Kōsaka’s criticism, apparently directed at Sakamoto, is in fact aimed at Maruyama Masao, the academic standard bearer of post-war Japanese pacifism (Nakanishi 2016: 204). In a series of follow-up publications, Kōsaka never failed to argue that an armed Japan, albeit small-scale and light-armed, would be important to the keeping of world peace. In this sense, Kōsaka was aligned with Yoshida Shigeru on his foreign relation doctrine.

In the 1960s and 1970s, debates about and probes into Japan’s security and defence issues never stopped, despite the general shift of policy focus onto economic development and social welfare (for details, see Ōtake 1999; Watanabe 1977). The far-right intellectuals repeatedly brought forth issues of rearmament and nuclear weapons, but the international Cold War situation allowed no room for the former, let alone the latter (Mochizuki 1983: 165).[[27]](#footnote-27) Thus the crux of the academic debate of the time was between the left-wing progressive intellectuals upholding unarmed neutrality and the pro-*Anpo* conservative intellectuals. Kōsaka, as a representative of the latter, started multiple debates with left-wing rivals, among whom Yamada Munemutsu, Katō Shūichi and Sakamoto Yoshikazu are the major opponents. Yamada Munemutsu, a renowned post-war left-wing thinker, in his 1965 book *Kiken no Shisōka* (Dangerous Thinkers) regarded certain types of conservative thinkers, including Takeyama Michio, Mishima Yukio, Fukuda Tsuneari, Kōsaka Masataka and Etō Jun as the negators of post-war Japanese democracy. Kōsaka suggested settling the intellectual differences through dialogues. For example, he appealed for a free-style dialogue between the Left and the Right in his 1965 essay *Ronsen e no Yōsei* (An Invitation to Debate)*.* But the rift between Japan’s Left and Right had been irreconcilable after the 1960s, rendering public dialogue impossible and Kōsaka’s appeal fruitless (Sakamoto 2011:192)[[28]](#footnote-28).

Along with the commencement of the new second-Cold War after the 1980s, Japan became more and more conspicuous with its role in the US global strategy. Japan’s pursuit of political power status started with its economic expansion and intensified after the Gulf War (1990-1991) (Tōgō 2005:74-8; Pharr 1986; Pyle 1987). To some extent, the pursuit *per se* might bear some legitimacy, but Japan’s way of going about it caused domestic controversy and regional wariness, especially Japan’s revisionist tendencies on war responsibility and view of history accompanying its pursuit of power. It is here worth noting that the realists after the 1980s, such as Kōsaka Masataka, Satō Seizaburō, Kitaoka Shinichi and Tanaka Akihiko, do not seem to share such revisionist tendencies, despite their usual alignment of positions with the conservative Japanese administrations. Their aspiration of Japan’s role on security issues is envisioned from a strategic angle, taking “international military contribution” as the promising path for Japan to be a “normal country”. Such strategic thinking is not necessarily attached to stereotypical views of war responsibility and history. Kitaoka Shinichi held the position of Japanese representative on a Sino-Japanese joint historical research panel in the first Abe administration.[[29]](#footnote-29) Without denying war responsibility, Kitaoka stressed Japan’s strategic thinking of international security involvement. He observed:

“For a long time, the perceptions of Japan’s foreign policy in public opinion, academic and political circles have always been one-dimensional structures such as liberalism/realism, Left/Right or eagle/dove, which are obviously all partial. I suggest a thought model (*Shikōhō*) with at least four quadrants to represent Japanese foreign policy, in which the vertical axis is “international contribution” ranging from passive to active; horizontal axis is history and war responsibility views ranging from negative to affirmative. Ideal Japanese foreign policy would be active on global issues, especially military contribution, as well as affirmative on war responsibility and sober on view of history.” (Kitaoka 2009:18).

#### Figure 2.2 The Ideal position of Japanese Foreign Policy

history and war responsibility

international contribution

negative

affirmative

active

passive

*source：Kitaoka 2009, edited by author*

Kitaoka’s composition of ideal Japanese foreign policy invoked much resonance among conservative intellectuals, but it is uncertain how much of conservative intellectual thinking could be understood and implemented by politicians (Hoshino 2013; Soeya 2013). Meanwhile, specific policy implementation is always confronted with multiple challenges, both domestically and internationally, which are analyzed in detail in the case study part of this thesis.

Aside from propositions from figures associated with the LDP governments, who cater to the government aspiration for security independence and right of collective self-defence, there are also voices coming from anti-American conservatives (such as Ishihara Shintarō, Nishibe Susumu, Kobayashi Yoshinori) with similar tones. Advocating the same means of boosting military strength, they are aiming at a different end. Pro-American conservatives (such as Nakasone, Koizumi, Abe) want to upgrade Japan’s defence within the framework of US-Japan Military Alliance, while anti-American conservatives do not accept the alliance as the best choice for Japan in the long run and propose that Japan should break out of American constraints and develop its own independent security strategy (for details, see Samuels 2007: 110-27).

An anti-American conservative, Nishibe Susumu pointed out that “the hypocrisy of a national security strategy that depends on the United States for extended nuclear deterrence while eschewing possession of nuclear weapons on moral grounds”. He insists that “unless Japan plans to become the fifty-first American state, it should assert its independence and go nuclear” (Nishibe 2003: 86-98; Samuels 2007: 121). Nishibe Susumu has been particularly dismissive of those pro-American conservatives who would stake Japan’s national security on the alliance with the US. He insists that they are “out of their mind” (*kurutteru*) to believe the US would come to Japan’s rescue in a full confrontation with rising China, a move in itself has the potential to escalate into a nuclear war (Nishibe 2005: 31).

The major difference between conservatives on security issues is whether to maintain a close alliance with the US. Anti-American conservatives lack political support and are severely underrepresented in post-war governments due to the viability and feasibility problems of their positions (Itō 2008: 213-323).

## 2.4 Comprehensive Journals (*sōgō zasshi*) and Post-war Japanese Conservatism

The ubiquity and diversity of the Japanese media is a noted characteristics of post-war Japanese journalism. Japanese intellectuals were active in various kinds of media, especially comprehensive journals (*sōgō zasshi*). The ideological conflict of post-war Japan manifested as the “Conservative-Progressive Rivalry” on the political level, with all the actors outside the political party system gaining voices after the conclusion of World War II. Among all the media, journals and newspapers were the most representative and actively involved with real politics (Oku 2007). The post-war journalism of Japan obtained the status of a “public sphere”, as German philosopher Habermas called it, which existed between the state and the society and in which citizens (intellectuals and public opinion leaders in Japan’s case) express their opinions free from the intervention of state and other external elements (Habermas 1962). Habermas’s theory of a public sphere put the freedom to discuss public affairs and to criticize political authority as a basic condition of post-war Japanese democracy.

In the early years of post-war Japan, there was the phenomenon of overwhelming criticism of the Japanese government in journalism, but this did not last long and was soon replaced by a complicated interaction between the intellectual sphere, the journalist sphere and the political sphere (Oku 2007: 225-226). To address the question of how intellectual thinkers influenced real politics, this study proposes that the media, especially journalism, played a crucial role in the process. From the vast range of the media and journalism, only the most influential comprehensive journals are chosen as examples to analyze the rise of post-war Japanese conservatism and its impact on the foreign policies of the Japanese government. The rationale behind this choice is that Japanese intellectuals of that time, conservative and progressive, both chose comprehensive journals as their primary channel to express their opinions and to attempt to influence government policies (Takeda 2016: 162-166).

The post-war resurgence of Japanese conservatism was closely connected to the prevalence of conservative comprehensive journals, such as *Kokoro*, *Jiyū* in the early post-war years, and *Seiron*, *Sho Kun!* of later, which often functioned as the vehicle between the intellectual sphere and the political sphere and facilitated the transformation from conservative intellectual ideas to concrete government policies. Due to *Sekai*’s reluctance if not outright refusal to publish conservative articles, conservative intellectuals were compelled to create their own journals. In Oku’s words, the conservative/right-wing journals in early post-war Japan all started by publishing articles rejected by *Sekai* (Oku 2007:23-25). In this section, the development of post-war Japanese comprehensive journals is reviewed; accounts and critiques are also offered on the political opinions expressed by political journalists, intellectuals and opinion leaders, as well as their impact on Japan’s real politics of the time.

### 2.4.1 The Post-war Political Thought and the Positions of Intellectuals

The purpose of my review of post-war comprehensive journals is to find the political positions of conservative intellectuals in the post-war public sphere. Although democracy has been established and the freedom of speech is well protected in post-war Japan, the comprehensive journals are nevertheless aligned with ideologies by their purposes and contents, making it easy to classify them into left, right and centrist types. Intellectuals’ ideological types are definable in the same manner, with their inclinations to contribute to the aligned journals, e.g. left-wing intellectuals normally contribute to *Sekai* and *Asahi Journal* (1959-1992)*,* while right-wing intellectuals to *Chūō Kōron* and *Bungei Shunjū*, and later to *Sho Kun!*, *Voice* and *Seiron.*Certainly, a simple label of “left” of “right” is just a static classification of the journals. In reality, the self-identifications and political stances of the journals evolve along with the progression of time. For instance, *Chūō Kōron* was once regarded as a typical centrist journal. But after the 1960s, its articles take a stance closer and closer towards that of the Japanese government, and the journal is deemed “conservatized” by the progressives. On the other hand, *Sekai* assumes a more open-minded attitude in recent years, more willing to accept centrist intellectuals. However, The Japanese public perception of the journals’ positions on the political spectrum remains quite rigid, despite these shifts.

According to Nezu Tomohiko’s statistical data, Kōsaka Masataka, a self-claimed conservative intellectual, authored numerous front page articles in *Chūō Kōron* but was never published in *Sekai*. Symmetrically, pacifist Sakamoto Yoshikazu who penned multiple front-pagers in *Sekai* never made an appearance in *Chūō Kōron* (Nezu 2013: 155)*.* Prolific contributors to *Sekai* in the 1960s-70s, including Sakamoto Yoshikazu, Hidaka Rokurō, Nambara Shigeru, Katō Shūichi and Fukuda Kanichi, are all ideologically left-leaning or progressive; while prolific contributors to *Chūō Kōron* in the same period such as Kōsaka Masataka, Nagai Yōnosuke, Kamiya Fuji, Umesao Tadao and Tanaka Michitarō are mostly political realists or right-wing conservatives.

There have been attempts at initiating conversations between these two camps of journals and their representative intellectuals, but all failed due to the huge rift between their respective political positions. One of the typical incidents was the effort made by Kasuya Kazuki, the chief editor of *Chūō Kōron,* to get Kōsaka Masataka and Sakamoto Yoshikazu into a constructive conversation. But Sakamoto eventually backed off the arrangement because Kasuya’s affiliation with *Chūō Kōron* proved too much of an obstacle to the project’s realisation (Kasuya 2006:131).

Mutual criticism prevailed in the absence of conversation. Right-wing intellectuals slight the left-wing ones as hopeless idealists, while the latter accuse the former of militarist revisionism. A notable feature of the dispute is that the left-wing intellectuals labeled *Chūō Kōron* and *Bungei Shunjū* as “establishment journals” (*taiseiha zasshi*), meaning that these conservative journals collaborate with conservative parties by providing the access to public opinion for party voices. Conservative intellectuals were accordingly labeled as “official scholars” (*goyo gakusha*) or “establishment intellectuals” (*taiseiha chishikijin*).

Admittedly, in practice the narratives of conservative intellectuals became important references for the conservative government to formulate and implement its policies, with or without deliberate intentions. The voice of conservative intellectuals on comprehensive journals inevitably guided public opinion, facilitating the reception of conservative policies among the Japanese public. Later on, conservative intellectuals more and more functioned as the “brain” of the Japanese government, using their influence as public opinion leaders to gain access to the government policy-making process. This is one of the major areas this thesis will investigate in Chapter 2 in order to shed light on the conservative foreign policy of post-war Japan.

This study puts great importance on the research platform of post-war Japanese comprehensive journals. In the following case-study chapters, more detailed research is conducted involving comprehensive journals (*Sekai*, *Chūō Kōron* and *Bungei Shunjū,*etc.). These include introductions to their real-political opinions, analyses of conservative intellectuals’ political positions and demands, as well as investigations on how left-wing intellectuals used comprehensive journals to criticize the conservative policies of the Japanese government. And finally, connections are made between the political thoughts of conservative intellectuals and the policies of conservative politicians (prime ministers), with the aim of probing into post-war government decision-making and the process of conservative foreign policy-making.

### 2.4.2 Sōgō zasshi and Post-war Japanese Pacifism: *Sekai*

Intellectuals articulating themselves in public sphere in post-war Japan were committed to their own political orientations, if not totally independent. In the early post-war years, the most influential political journal was *Sekai*, published by the Iwanami Shoten, which as of now still claims on its homepage that *Sekai* is the only “quality journal” in Japan.[[30]](#footnote-30) In a way, this claim is justified by its mere survival. Unlike *Chūō Kōron* and *Bungei Shunjū* which have been circulating since before the war, *Sekai* was among the total of 82 comprehensive journals created from the end of the war to 1946; while in 1956, *Sekai* was the sole survivor of these post-war upstarts (Ōkuma 1956:159).

Since its birth, *Sekai* has branded itself as the bastion of liberty, democracy and peace, deeply involved in Japan’s pacifist movement. One of its most notable features was the “*Heiwa Mondai Danwakai*” (Peace Issue Discussion Group), a group of leading intellectuals formed at the time with a prospect of influencing the policy choices of the Japanese government, particularly the security policy to be adopted after the end of the Occupation. The attempts that the Group made to influence the government’s policy by appealing to the masses were rooted in the members’ commitment to peace as a reflection on their wartime experiences (Hook 1996: 25-27; Williamson 2014: 165-182). *Sekai* provided a platform for the group and gradually became the stronghold of the members. On other subsequent milestone issues, such as the anti*-Anpo* movement in 1960 and the anti-Vietnam-War movement in the 1960s-1970s, *Sekai* stood its traditional pacifist ground by being consistently critical of the Japanese government, taking a stance against the revision of the security treaty under Prime Minister Kishi (Sakamoto 1959).

Elite intellectual support was crucial to the success of *Sekai* as the leading pacifist journal in post-war Japan. Prominent figures of the “Old Liberalists”, such as Watsuji Tetsurō, Abe Yoshishige and Yokoda Kizaburō, had committed their support since the very start of *Sekai*. When *Heiwa Mondai Danwakai* was formed, a younger generation of liberal intellectuals was added to the rank of the Old Liberalists, including Maruyama Masao, Shimizu Ikutarō, Hisano Osamu and Minami Horoshi. *Sekai’s* readers predominantly consisted of teachers, students and workers---those who look for guidance in (and perhaps confirmation of) the intellectuals’ thinking on international affairs (Yamagiwa 1955:254). The “Peace Conference” (*Kōwa Kaigi*) special edition (addressing the San Francisco Peace Conference) in October 1951 was a good example of *Sekai*’s popularity and influence at the time. It was reprinted five times and sold 150,000 copies, which is extremely rare for a journal (Satō 2014: 91). The drastic changes and chaotic nature of both the domestic and international situation faced by Japan in the 1950s and 60s were the deep background of *Sekai*’s phenomenal circulation. It basically became the official organ of Japan’s Pacifist Movement.

However, when time changes it also changes the thoughts and perception of its leading intellectuals. Among the founders and early supporters of *Sekai*, many came from *Doshinkai*, an intellectual research group formed before the end of the war. *Doshinkai* members maintained congenial relations with Iwanami Shoten on the efforts of expanding the influence of *Sekai*, but there were growing disputes between the two bodies on the purpose of the journal and the editorial standards. Eventually in July 1948, a number of *Doshinkai* members, including Watsuji Tetsuro and Tanaka Kōtarō (who later became a constitutional conservative and the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Japan), parted ways with *Sekai* and created their own journal *Kokoro* (Heart), which was in effect the ground-breaker of conservative/right-wing journals in the post-war Japan.

### 2.4.3 Sōgō zasshi and the Resurgence of Conservatism: *Chūō Kōron and Bungei Shunjū*

Despite the *Zeitgeist* of liberty, democracy and peace in early post-war Japan and the overwhelming liberal-leaning of comprehensive journals of the time, not everyone went along. There were royalist intellectuals, who fiercely defended the continuation of Tennoism; there were re-militarists, who only supported a proposed bilateral peace with the US and advocated re-armament against Japan’s neutralization (*chūritsuka*). Their views, including many constructive ones, were automatically deemed right-wing conservative narratives by liberal intellectuals and denied access to the left-wing journals like *Sekai*. The lack of outlet for these groups of intellectuals became their motive for creating their own journals or to regroup with existing alternative choices, such as *Chūō Kōron* and *Bungei Shunjū*.

Of course, the primary reason for the resurgence and later dominance of Japan’s conservative journals was the development of the domestic situation and international settings, especially Japan’s “economic miracle” in the 1960s-70s and the détente of the US-Soviet confrontation in the 1970s. Using the economic-miracle years as the mark, Oguma Eiji divided the post-war era of Japan into two distinctive periods, which are chronologically consistent with the two phases in the development of Japan’s comprehensive journals (Oguma 2002:547). Before the economic miracle, Japan was preoccupied with the all-out social debates of autocracy-vs.-democracy and war-vs.-peace, when left-wing journals dominated; afterwards, Japan enjoyed relative domestic and international stability and the focus of the society shifted to the economy alongside the “Overall Centrism of 100 Million” (*ichioku sōchūryū*). Political and security issue debates were taken over by the “realists”, when conservative journals like *Chūō Kōron* and *Bungei Shunjū* became more and more popular to the average reader. Compared to *Sekai* which upholds democratic idealism, *Chūō Kōron* and *Bungei Shunjū* are more inclined to deal with “reality” and deliver specific analyses on practical matters. In a way, the left-right rivalry in post-war Japan can be essentially interpreted as a rivalry between idealism and realism (Takeda 2016: 173-175; Oku 2007: 233-247).

Further in 1968, conservative intellectuals formed the “*Nihon Bunka Kaigi*”, the members of which became the core founders of *Sho Kun!*, a *Bungei Shunjū* affiliate journal born in 1969. The newspaper *Sankei Shimbun* created *Seiron,* its own journal, in 1973, and another conservative journal *Voice* was founded by the PHP Institute in 1977. By then, the left-right-rivalry structure of post-war Japan’s public sphere was consolidated, with *Sekai* and *Asahi Journal* (founded in 1959) on the left, and *Bungei Shunjū, Sho Kun!, Voice* and *Seiron* on the right.

## 2.5 The Convergence of Conservative Thinking and Real Politics

### 2.5.1 Academics and Politics

Since the birth of modern science, academic study has assumed a prominent position in social life. Although the principle of value-free science has been established since its articulation in Max Weber’s famous speech “Science as a Vocation” (Weber 2013)*,* the interconnection between academics and politics is still hard to ignore and the collision inevitable. Absolute value-free science seems nearly impossible to maintain and normally functions as a higher ethic standard (Weber 2013). With academic intellect accumulating and increasingly important as a political instrument, the convergence of academic thinking and real politics became an essential feature of modern political science (Foucault 1980[1972]:7).

Again it is Maruyama Masao who argued that the foremost responsibility of intellectuals is to provide rational explanations for the world around us, with the range of “world” spanning from the global world to everyday triviality (Maruyama 1996:116). For the academics in the field of social science and political philosophy, their solicitude and critique are powerful drivers behind the progress of politics. Takenaka Yoshihiko suggests a three-fold function of intellectuals as the medium between political power and the people. First, they act as a pathway of information transmission. Second, providing policy initiatives and assisting policy fine-tuning. Inspiration and revelation from academic studies could be directly incorporated into the political process when intellectuals function as the advisors of politicians. Third, exercising policy assessment and policy critiques. Positive or negative judgment of policies should not be passed only in political circle, but also from an intellectual perspective based on academic studies (Takenaka 1995:3-4).

Academic critiques held special significance in the context of post-war Japanese politics. In contrast with the pre-war militarist stranglehold on speech and the limitation on academic and social critiques, the defeat brought Japan unprecedented academic freedom and intellectual alternatives. Under an overall conservative post-war political system as we concluded in Section 2.2.1, left-wing intellectuals are mostly connected to politics with a critical stance, while right-wing intellectuals mainly contribute mild critiques and constructive suggestions, despite harboring discontents towards the government and its policies sometimes. The conservative intellectuals in particular, adopted a way of “approaching” government and providing intellectual support for real politics. Those who developed a compromising connection with conservative politics were criticized by Karl G. van Wolferen for being “establishment intellectuals”, i.e. they gave up the independent stance of being critics to become followers, or even servants, of conservative politics. In his lamentation that Japan offers no more independent intellectuals like Nakae Chōmin, Fukuzawa Yukichi, Yoshino Sakuzō and Maruyama Masao, van Wolferen also harshly criticized Japan’s liberal press and Marxists for their political impotence (Wolferen 1989:68-76).

Van Wolferen’s critiques reflected the stark reality of intellectual imbalance in Japanese politics: conservative intellectuals lost their independence as followers of the political establishment; left-wing intellectuals lost their vitality with their critical yet disengaged attitude. An important research interest of this thesis is the active participation of the conservative intellectuals in politics and their induction of conservative thinking into governance and policies. Thus, the prerequisite question to be answered is this: in what way does the conservative thinking converge with real politics in Japan? Based on work carried out so far, there are mainly three pathways through which the convergence takes place, as listed below.

### 2.5.2 The Ways Conservative Thinking Influences Policy-Making

As we know, post-war Japan’s political system has been overall conservative, with a perpetual majority of conservative politicians and an overwhelming share of governing time for a conservative party. In the extant literature, there have been numerous studies on the conservative prevalence in post-war Japanese politics, from various perspectives. Kent E. Calder, [Leonard J. Schoppa](http://www.jstor.org/action/doBasicSearch?hp=25&acc=on&wc=on&fc=off&so=rel&Query=au:%22Leonard+J.+Schoppa%22&si=1) and Miyashita Akitoshi place emphasis on external pressure, especially American influence, in the shaping of Japanese conservative policies, especially foreign policies (Calder 1988; Schoppa 1993; Miyashita 1999). Richard J. Samuels and Peter P. Cheng focused on the role of interest groups in the molding of such policies (Samuels 1994; Cheng 1990). Chalmers Johnson and C. S. Ahn concentrated on the clout of bureaucratic elites on policy-making (Johnson 1983; Ahn 1998), while Paul Midford revealed the sway of Japan’s public opinion on foreign and security policies (Midford 2011). What has been relatively scarce in these studies is the influence on politics from conservative thinking in intellectual terms – the focus of the present study. Thought, though not so conspicuously, is a powerful force in shaping behavior, and also indispensable in providing intellectual support for policy-making.[[31]](#footnote-31) There are of course various factors affecting the outcome of policy-making: external pressure, interest groups and bureaucratic politics all withstand. Yet the one factor being focused on in this study is the role and effect of conservative thinking, or the conservative intellectuals as individuals, in Japan’s policy-making. Before this question can be answered, it is necessary to elucidate the pathways through which conservative thinking influences government policy-making.

##### Direct Transition from Conservative Academics to Conservative Politicians

Despite the absence of a mature American-style “revolving door” system, the transition from academics to politicians in Japan is still viable. Certainly, compared to the US such cases are scarce due to various limitations, making scholarly politicians a rare occurrence in Japan. Generally, there are two ways a direct transition could take place. The first is by direct appointment by the prime minister, whose assertiveness would be necessary in such a case, as direct appointment of a civilian academic normally incurs objections from the party factions.

There are not many cases of direct appointment of cabinet member or senior bureaucrats from academia, yet the famous ones register. As early as in the Occupation, Yoshida Shigeru appointed Amano Teiyū, a philosopher from Kyoto University, to be his Minister of Education. Far from being influenced by Amano’s democratic tendency revealed in the wartime, Yoshida put him through enforcing *Kokumin Jissen Yōryō* (Citizen Practice Principles)*,* which is a guideline with an anti-democratic nature prescribing standards of school behaviour such as the raising of the national flag and the singing of the national anthem (Yamada 1989:53). Moreover, the Minister of Education Nagai Michio in the Miki Takeo Cabinet, the Foreign Minister Ōkita Saburō in the Ōhira Masayoshi Cabinet and the Minister of State Takenaka Heizō in the early Koizumi Cabinet are all cabinet ministers appointed directly from the academia.

Another transition path is the standard democratic process, i.e. through winning the Diet election and promotion from House Representative to cabinet minister or other important positions. Compared to direct appointment by the prime minister, this path is more orthodox and legitimate, and much less likely to be interfered with by other political powers, facilitating future independence in making decisions. Takenaka Heizō, despite prior direct appointment, joined the LDP and won his seat in the House of Councilor in 2004, then became Minister of Internal Affairs and Communications in 2005 in the Koizumi Cabinet. In the same fashion, political scientist Inoguchi Kuniko won her seat in the House and later became Minister of State in the 2005 Koizumi Cabinet. Of course, there is another type of transiting academics who are not only pursuing political office, but also taking on the election as a part of academic research experience. For instance, Saitō Jun, the winner of the 2002 House of Councilor Election in Yamagata Prefecture, later published *The Political Economy of the LDP Regime* based on his running experience and field investigation during the process, which eventually won him a doctorate at Yale University (Saitō 2010).

##### Conservative Intellectuals Providing Policy Advices as Political Advisors

Generally, a research institution providing policy plans and policy suggestions in various fields is called a think tank (McGann 2007: 5). The thriving of think tanks is closely connected to the development in the discipline of policy science. Semantically, “policy science” means the scientification of policy and policy-making, yet in essence, it works by forging science into policies. What think tanks do is to cover those two functions effectively and seamlessly. Sometimes, the phrase “think tank” may not necessarily refer to an institution: it can also be specific individuals and called the “brains” (political advisors) in Japanese politics, in such a case. Think tanks are involved in government policy-making in various ways. First, they can provide direct intellectual support and create policy initiatives. Second, they can influence the policy-making process and choices with publications and reports (formally commissioned or not). Third, acting as hubs between political, governmental, financial and civil spheres, think thanks also function as mediums and liaisons, smoothing and facilitating the policy-making, or even the legislative processes (McGann 2007: 12-7; Rich 2004: 11-3; Deham and Garnett 1998: 6-15).

With the subject of this thesis being how conservative thinking influences Japan’s foreign policy-making and the focus being the prime ministers as media, this research concentrates on the role of advisors played by individual conservatives and think tanks with conservative heads in the process. There are plenty of instances of intellectuals, especially conservative ones, taking the part of a “brain” for the prime ministers. Starting from the 1980s, every prime minister organized his own “consultant groups” (*kondankai*) under various titles, such as “private consulting body” (*shiteki shimonkikan*) or “expert panel” (*senmonka kaigi*) (Suzuki 1991: 16-18). Although in principle, a consultant group would require its members to take a neutral stance in order to assess government policy-making and policy-enforcing objectively, in reality the members of an organization set up personally by the prime minister generally share his value orientation and political positions.

There are more ways to be an advisor for the prime minister than simply being a member of his private consultant groups. Another popular way since the Nakasone Cabinet has been co-researching and co-authoring books or articles with the prime minister. For instances, notable publications co-authored by the prime minister and his advisors include: *Seiji to Tetusgaku* (Politics and Philosophy) co-authored by Nakasone and Umehara Takeshi, *Kyōdōkenkyū: Reisenigō* (Post-Cold-War: A Joint Research) by Nakasone Yasuhiro, Murakami Yasusuke, Nishibe Susumu and Satō Seizaburō, *Kono Kuniwo Mamoru Ketsui* (Determination to Protect This Country) co-authored by Abe Shinzō and Okazaki Hisahiko, among others (Nakasone and Umehara 1996; Abe and Okazaki 2004).

Close examination reveals that conservative intellectuals’ involvement in consultant groups and think tanks set up by politicians (mostly by prime ministers) are one of their most convenient, effective and common ways to converge conservative thinking with real politics. This is the basis in this study to launch further investigation of the post-war conservative influence on Japan’s foreign policy-making.

##### Social Penetration of Conservative Academic Study Leading to Policy Influence

The social influence of academic conservative thinking, as a measurement index, is hard to operationalize, as there is no definitive index for measuring social trends in thinking. Nevertheless, the impact of academic conservative thinking on Japanese society, especially on the populace at large, is hard to ignore. There is neither dedicated research nor specific case studies to verify this assumption, but the permeation of academic conservative narratives in the press, in publication and on the TV guarantees impact on the views and perceptions of the populace (Winkler 2011a: 93-110; Kaihara 2009:341). When the views and perceptions are swayed to a tipping point of consensus, a social trend of thinking is formed (Baba 2010:17-25). The hot spots of academic studies infiltrated most fields of public life after Japan’s economic take-off in the 1960s into the 1970s, nudging the collective Japanese consciousness towards the position of “Overall Centrism of 100 Million” (*ichioku sōchūryū*). Political economist Murakami Yasusuke later interpreted this social trend as *Shin Chūkan Taishū no Jidai* (an era of neo-centrist populace) (Murakami 1984).

A starting assumption of this study is that the academic conservative thinking propagated through the mass media has at least to some extent resulted in a change in social trends, which in turn has been reflected in elections and politics. Today under overall social conservatism, conservative politicians enjoy a permanent numerical superiority in the Diet elections. This fact has been verified by multiple investigations carried out by political scientists. For example, according to a survey jointly conducted by Kabashima Ikuo and Taniguchi Masaki, there was a clear majority of House Representatives elected in 2003 with conservative ideologies. When designing the questionnaire Kabashima and Taniguchi selected ten questions in different fields for the surveyed representatives, among which questions about foreign policy and security/defence issues include: should Japan strengthen its defence capability; should Japan further consolidate the *Anpo* system; should Japan deploy the SDF in Iraq to support its reconstruction, should Japan strike pre-emptively in the case when a possible foreign attack was anticipated; should Japan pursue standing-member status in U.N. Security Council to enhance its international contribution; should Japan offer suffrage to foreigners living in Japan, etc (Kabashima and Takenaka 2012:37-40).

The inclination to “grass-root conservatism”, which grows out of intrinsic Japanese conservative traditions, kept the majority of the post-war Japanese populace in a structure favouring both the Peace Constitution and the US-Japan military alliance, implementing both idealism and realism (Toyoshita and Koseki 2014: 195); even among political conservatives, grass-root conservatism does not lack followers. Thus another question in need of clarification is: did conservative academics lead the trend of Japanese society, or did the grass-root conservatism permeating Japanese society decidedly affected academic thinking? Or does it go both ways? Here the question is asked but the verification of possible answers is far from easy to achieve. One trend worth noting is that revisionists among grass-root conservatives gained momentum after the 1980s and became the mainstream in Japan’s political life, quite different from their predecessors in the 1960s and 1970s, whose impacts on politics were limited despite their constant proposition of constitutional revision or negation of the Tokyo Trial (Ōtake 1994: 27).

The revisionist process was carried out by the Japanese government after the Nakasone Yasuhiro administration. Early in Nakasone’s term, the academia had already defined his policies as representing “neo-conservatism”, due to the distinctive heterogeneity of his conservatism (Ōtake 1994; Muramatsu 1987). Meanwhile, the Anti-American conservatives, the war responsibility deniers and the re-militarization advocates became more and more active in influencing public opinion, and “Internet right-wing nationalist” (*netto uyo*) emerged as public sphere storm troopers for Japanese conservatism, with the rise of the World Wide Web. Public opinion outlets, such as major newspapers and NHK polls, are increasingly labeled by academics as conservative, progressive, Left, Right and nationalist (Midford 2011:9-29; Hook 1996; Rose 2006: 131-154). These phenomena bespeak a relationship of mutual influence between the academia and public opinion.

Certainly, the source of the ideological inclination of politicians is harder to determine. The social environment and social trends are of course at work, as are politicians’ personal experiences, especially in their early study and defining years (Grove 2007; Walker and Schafer 2006). Another inevitable factor is the direct or indirect impact from other conservatives. Thus, the personality of Japanese politicians (mainly prime ministers) is another focal point to investigate in this study, as well as their connections to other conservatives.

The effect of public opinion on politicians is rather variable, depending on time, occasion and specific circumstances (Midford 2011: 20-26; Grove 2007: 15-16). Public attitudes determine public opinion. But when and how does measurable public opinion affect policy outcomes, and when does measurable opinion not matter? Midford uses the following eight hypotheses to identify conditions under which public opinion will influence policy outcomes in democracies generally and in the Japanese democratic context in particular: the presence of large and stable public opinion majorities, the presence of political competition, united opposition in the legislature when the next election is near, recent examples of retrospective voting by the public, divisions in the ruling side, concerns about whether supporting an unpopular measure will harm other policy priorities, when a new policy is proposed or an old one has perceptible costs, and when there is a consensus. As a consequence, Midford found that policies are crafted to avoid provoking the opposition of a stable opinion majority (Midford 2011: 20-27). That means Japanese politicians are prone to cater to a stable opinion majority and make foreign policies accordingly. In Japan’s current era of overall conservatism, the populace proved more receptive to conservative thought than progressivism or pacifism, resulting in more conservative policies from the government.

On the other hand, manufacturing, managing and manipulating public opinion, measures usually only associated with totalitarian countries, are common practices in Japan. For instance, in his research on the Japanese Gulf War policy-making process, Sasaki Yoshitaka explained in detail how the Japanese government manipulated and guided public opinion (Sasaki 1992). In the following three case studies of this thesis, public opinion becomes an important aspect to be examined, linking the conservative thinking and Japan’s foreign policy. For this study, public opinion is both a research medium and an outcome response.[[32]](#footnote-32)

### 2.5.3 The Leadership Factor in Foreign Policy-making

Despite the trivialization of the individual’s impact on foreign policy by traditional realists, any rigorous theoretical study of foreign policy cannot unfold without considering the role of the leader (Waltz 1996:54-57). Researchers like Judith Goldstein and Robert Keohane noticed the influence of perception on foreign policy (Goldstein and Keohane 1993), but they still latched onto the institutional construction and collective perceptions and convictions, instead of focusing on the mechanism in which individual perception characterizes foreign policies.

This study emphasizes the significance of individual or elite groups in foreign policy-making (Hermann 2001). Or, more specifically, it focuses on how conservative Japanese politicians accepted their political conceptions and convictions and how they apply them in policy-making practices. Political-psychological research is carried out in this study to investigate the leaders’ personalities and their connection to social and psychological milieu in their early years.

As early as in the 1950s, Harold and Margaret Sprout, pioneers of international relations research from a political psychological perspective, indicate the vital influence of milieu on the formation of leaders’ conceptions. They point out that one is directed by one’s values as well as other psychological inclinations to pay selective attention to the milieu. It is also important to try to explain the selected milieu in accordance with an individual’s memories and subconscious experience (Sprout and Sprout 1965). This subjectively perceived milieu is called by them the “psychological milieu” (Sprout and Sprout 1965: 224), much different from the natural or operational milieu. To a decision-maker, objective reality is not important. What matters most is the perceived reality. Therefore, a leader’s personality and value orientation hold subtle but definitive influence on foreign policy-making.

In his meta-research on the international political psychology literature, Qingmin Zhang indicates that there are at least three factors influencing how a leader’s personality is formed (Zhang 2008:71-101, also see Hermann 2001; Sprout and Sprout 1965). The first factor is interest, which is always the best educator. Interest also decides the degree of a leaders’ concentration on foreign affairs; the method of information processing in decision-making is in turn decided by the sensitivity to the external environment. For instance, Nakasone Yasuhiro volunteered for the position of Director General of the Defence Agency in 1970, reflecting his intense interest in Japan’s security issues (*Asahi Shimbun* 31 August, 1969). Exactly in this position he started to associate with conservative realists, many of whom later became his advisors during his tenure of prime minister, as detailed in Chapter 3.

The second factor is experience and education. Whether a leader has undertaken foreign affairs responsibilities previously and his education in his early years exert a direct impact on his later foreign policies. Nakasone Yasuhiro’s experience of military service in the Imperial Navy during World War II and his education in the Faculty of Law, The University of Tokyo under the guidance of political science professor Yabe Teiji exerted huge influence on both his personality and his policies (Nakasone 2004:16-29). Another example is Abe Shinzō’s youth, radiated by the aura of his grandfather Kishi Nobusuke, whose conservative tendency inevitably played a big part in the shaping of Abe’s personal views. The influence was revealed to some extent in his 2006 book *Utsukushii Kuni e* (Toward a Beautiful Nation)(Abe 2006).

The third factor is environment, which could both mean the international/ domestic political environment and refer to the leader’s surroundings, i.e. the values and beliefs of his supporting team. It seemed that the repeated visits to Yasukuni shrine in Abe Shinzō’s two terms occurred as a result of the suggestion from his advisor Okazaki Hisahiko (Okazaki and Nakanishi 2007:13-23).

Max Weber made a prominent contribution to the study of the personality and psychology of political leaders. In his discussion of authority, Weber offers clear definition of and differentiation between charismatic authority, traditional authority and rational-legal authority (Weber 1947). Many subsequent studies of leaders’ personality draw on Weber’s research, such as Zhang’s classification of leaders’ personality into authoritarian personality, charismatic personality, and Machiavellian personality (Zhang 2008: 75-77). Below is an interpretation of certain post-war Japanese politicians and political facts in accordance to Zhang’s three types.

Authoritarian personality is characterized by traditionalism, obedience or submission to authority, aversion to compromise, tendency to faith and dogma, infatuation with power and hardline policies. Post-war Japan went through top-down democratization enforced by the GHQ, with a resultant political setting unlikely to facilitate authoritarian personalities ascending to political leadership. Nevertheless, such traits are still evident in certain post-war Japanese political leaders. For instance, in his research on Yoshida Shigeru, Dower repeatedly points out Yoshida’s authoritarian and autocratic tendencies (Dower 1979: 277).

The modern secular usage of charismatic personality originated with Weber (Weber 1947). A leader with such personality comes first as a person with compelling attractiveness or charm that can inspire devotion in others or even the masses. Charismatic leaders often use this charm to their own advantage, or even attempt to legitimize personal appeals in legal and institutional terms. The three Japanese leaders studied as cases in this thesis are all charismatic, more or less. Among them, Koizumi Junichirō’s deft manipulation of populism and his “theatric politics” (*Gekijō Seiji*) won him immense popularity, an ample proof of his charisma (Ōtake 2006). Its effect on foreign policy-making is also examined in the case-study part.

Machiavellian personality has been extensively studied in both political and psychological circles, with its implication well recognized. Friedrich Meinecke refers to leaders with such personality as Machiavellists (Meinecke 1997). Few of the post-war Japanese prime ministers can be attributed to the Machiavellian personality, yet there are still researchers making allusion to them using the term “Machiavelli’s Children”. In Richard J. Samuels’ comparative study of Japanese and Italian leaders, Yoshida Shigeru, Kishi Nobusuke, Ozawa Ichirō and Ishihara Shintarō are considered Machiavelli’s Children. None of the three prime ministers used as cases in this thesis is assigned with this designation (Samuels 2003).

From a political-psychological perspective, we can gain a rough understanding of the role of the leaders in foreign policy-making and the mechanisms by which they function. Combined with the convergence paths of conservative thinking and real politics discussed above, with the focal point being how conservatism as political thought interacts with Japanese leaders, affects their thoughts and eventually influences their foreign policy-making, my research intention can be outlined by this simplified diagram:

#### Figure 2.3 Japanese Foreign Policy-Making Process

**input output**

**Conservative political thinking ---->Japanese leaders ----> Conservative foreign policies**

*Source: author*

Conservative political thinking, Japanese leaders and Japanese foreign policies, as the three major dimensions, constitute the core structure of this study. The first layer of study is on the political thinking *input* of Japanese leaders, i.e. how conservative political thinking affects Japanese leaders. The second layer is on the foreign policy *output*of Japanese leaders, i.e. how foreign policies made by these leaders embody conservative political thinking. Leaders, the obvious medium in between, naturally become the focus of study, i.e. in what forms the three prime ministers at the heart of this study accept conservative political thinking and how the said conservative political thinking has been applied in foreign policy-making. In the research process, the major concern is whether particular elements of conservative political thinking are adequately embodied in the making of certain foreign policies by certain Japanese leaders assumed to be under conservative influence. If positive, then the said leader can be categorized as a conservative politician in both theoretical and practical senses. If negative, then insufficient influence of conservative political thinking on the said leader should be considered, as well as other factors affecting foreign policy-making, such as mainstream public opinion, Japan’s constitutional framework, the international situation and the structure of the political system. These points are all expanded upon in the following case studies.

## Conclusion

This chapter discussed issues including the following key points. As a concept, how conservatism has been perceived and described in Japan, or what are the conservative characteristics in a Japanese sense. The basic configuration and brief history of post-war Japanese politics are teased out, using opposite concepts such as the Conservative Mainstream/Conservative Anti-mainstream and pro-American Conservatives/ anti-American Conservatives. Addressing the important influence of the public sphere on conservative thinking, *sōgō zasshi* are discussed concerning their roles and impacts in the shaping of post-war conservative thinking. The analysis on comprehensive journals is also an important path to be adopted in the case study of this thesis.

One important subject of this chapter is to establish the path through which Japanese conservatism influences Japanese foreign policy, or specifically, how intellectuals and political advisors cast their influence on the policy-making of political leaders, and how the policy-making process and outcome reflect the impression of political thought. Certainly, this chapter alone cannot address all presented questions, especially the behavioural analyses of the political leaders (i.e. the prime ministers in the context of this thesis) who act as the crucial intermediates between conservative thought and foreign policy practice. As discussed in Chapter 1, a political leader is both a dependent variable (when acting as the recipient of the intellectual influence) and an independent variable, holding his distinctive political thought and policy-making dynamics. Therefore, it is essential to focus on political leaders, in order to investigate and make connections between conservative thought and foreign policy practice. Next, Chapter 3, 4 and 5 conduct analytical case studies of Prime Ministers Nakasone Yasuhiro, Koizumi Junichirō and Abe Shinzō.

# Chapter 3 The Conservative Thought and Foreign Policies of Nakasone Yasuhiro

## 3.1 Introduction

Japanese critic Matsumoto Kenichi once pondered that thought, in an ultimate sense, is not just some theory or ethics, but a way of existence, or ethos (Matsumoto 2000: 31). In other words, a metaphysical subject must be connected to matters of practical behaviour, or it can only stop short as daydreaming. Following this argument, “thought” is always supposed to go hand in hand with ideologies, carrying expectations of where the society is going and how it is supposed to arrive. Without such social objectives thought is hardly tenable (Yoon 2008). Conservative thought is no exception to this general rule: it has to deliver specific expectations for the development of the country and society. On the basis of the detailed exposition of conservative thought in post-war Japan in Chapter 2, this chapter moves on to an analysis of Nakasone Yasuhiro’s conservative thought and practice. In the context of post-war Japanese conservatism, a prime minister, as the head of the Japanese government, is in the best position to put conservative thought into practice, so as to link ideology to behaviour.

But this does not mean that actions will follow in full accordance with expressed thought (in reality, full accordance is very rare). In the cases of Japanese politics, it is a common occurrence that once in power, the actions of conservative politicians drastically differ from their rhetoric beforehand. One of the explanations of the evident fault-line between political thought and action to achieve objectives is attributable to the pragmatism inherent in conservative thought. As Hayek pointed out on the nature of conservatism, conservatives are in essence opportunists who act without principles or tenets. This is the reason many of them are political chameleons (Hayek 2011: 524). Compared to conservative intellectuals, conservative politicians are more prone to such opportunism, for changing personal position is often a practical requirement to attain certain political aims.

There has been no shortage of criticism of Nakasone in Japan’s political science research circles. One focus of such criticism is on his political opportunism, namely *Kazamidori* (weathervane, an instrument for showing the direction of the wind). This nickname was coined for the first time in the 1960s. At that time, according to Watanabe Osamu, Nakasone criticized Prime Minister Satō Eisaku and his government for their political corruption. After the cabinet reshuffle, however, he changed his mind and accepted a post as a minister in the cabinet (Watanabe 1993: 4). Upon Satō’s exit from the prime minister’s office, public opinion universally believed that Nakasone would support Fukuda Takeo as the successor, while Nakasone turned his support to Tanaka Kakuei, and as a reward, reaped his appointment as the Minister of International Trade and Industry (MITI). Chasing political ambition came as no surprise in his career, with occasional moves directly against his political belief.

Nakasone himself did not accept the criticism of his opportunism. He considered it political pragmatism, which is also an important trait of conservatism. Nakasone specifically retorted to the charge of being a “weathervane” with these words: “but knowing which way the wind is blowing is the first step in steering a ship of war. The body moves with the wind but the footing is steady. That is what a weathervane is. Who serves the national interest better, the rigid, obstinate politician and his politics caught up in ideology and moral justification, unable to shift with changing conditions, or the one who is suitable and flexible?” (Nakasone 1999:53). In an interview in 1996, Nakasone revealed that such an interpretation of opportunism originated from his experience in the Imperial Navy: “to sail with every shift of the wind” (Nakasone 1996: 100).

Undoubtedly, Nakasone is one of the most notable prime ministers of post-war Japan, whose length of tenure, insights into Japanese politics and even his longevity all contributed to his greatness in Japanese political history (Hood 2001: 1). In general, it is very hard to analyze the thought of one person, especially in the cases of politicians and intellectuals, because one’s thought always evolves along with personal growth and changes in the environment. For someone constantly seeking intellectual improvement, his or her thought can only be analyzed by following the path taken in life, interpreting the behaviour adopted at different stages (Saitō 1983: 142). Nakasone’s life, even after he became a politician, always played to a theme of self-improvement and always closely followed the trend of the time. Through these efforts, Nakasone’s thought maintained a dynamic equilibrium, constantly discarding and incorporating various components. There have been detailed introductions and critiques of his life in both the academic and media spheres. Nakasone himself is a prolific author (especially after leaving the office of the prime minister), having published a series of biography, memoirs and discourses of post-war Japanese politics and foreign policy (see Appendix 2 for details). Among these writings there are plenty of incisive remarks on contemporary politics. The remarks on his successors---including Koizumi Junichirō and Abe Shinzō who are both case study subjects of this thesis---are particularly to the point. Not only are these writings crucial sources for the study of Nakasone himself and his conservative thinking, but also of great referential value to the studies of Koizumi Junichirō and Abe Shinzō, as well as the spectrum of post-war Japanese conservative thinking extended from this main thread.

“If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of Giants”, the famous quote of Isaac Newton (Newton [1676]1959: 416), can also be applied to the formation of human thought. It is quite improbable for any human thought to be completely original. Instead, most views of the society, the country and the world are derived or developed from the pre-existing thought of one’s predecessors. Such is the case for Nakasone Yasuhiro, who drew his thought from various origins, including the environment of his youth, his education and a myriad of characters he was in contact with during his political and earlier career. Despite their complicated origins, Nakasone is undoubtedly the one who has the clearest understanding of his own thought among all post-war Japanese prime ministers (Saitō 1983: 143). However, how much of his thought had come to be implemented in his real politics is another question. The transformation of thought into practice in real politics requires not only conviction, but also resourcefulness, ability, public support and intellectual support. The deviation of Nakasone’s political actions away from his thought is another topic to be addressed in this chapter.

Among Nakasone’s abundant publications, there are his records and recollections of his early life experiences, reflections on his political career as well as insightful observations on the international situation, all of which provide solid material for this study. As observed by Japanese political scientist Watanabe Osamu, “Nakasone has always expressed his political thought openly, which is very rare among Japanese politicians. In contrast with Britain, where many politicians speak about themselves and publish autobiographies, in Japan politicians usually do not want to review their political careers publicly. Nakasone, however, since very early on, has been fond of talking about himself and has published several books about his political thought and his political career” (Watanabe 1993: 3).

Nevertheless, certain difficulty must be dealt with in this research: Among the enormous collection of Nakasone’s publication, how can we single out the most relevant materials? Is it possible in this study to develop an original method of screening materials? Undoubtedly, the top priority in this study is Nakasone’s own writing. However, it is worth noting that when writing a memoir or autobiography, any politician would make assumptions about the potential readers, attempt as much self-glorification as possible, and minimize issues that are detrimental to him or may possibly stain his reputation. This is a universal problem in contemporary history research,[[33]](#footnote-33) especially in the domain of oral history, rather than being Nakasone’s personal idiosyncrasy, who ironically emphasized that politicians should put themselves under the scrutiny and judgment of history (Nakasone 2005).

Therefore, besides using Nakasone’s own writings on a critical basis, this study also attempts to bring the peripheral (of contemporary politicians, the press and intellectuals) narratives centring on him into perspective; at the same time official records and critiques in comprehensive journals (*sōgō zasshi*) are exploited as supplementary material. This plurality of perspectives and approaches is designed to achieve as far as possible an objective and neutral assessment of Nakasone. In addition, the discourse in this chapter is not a thorough narrative in a biographical style, but rather a selected collection of focuses centring on the dissertation topic of Japanese conservatism and foreign policy, including the origin of Nakasone’s political thinking, the influence of his political advisors and his vision and actions in implementing foreign policy.

## 3.2 The Formation of Nakasone’s Conservative Political Thinking

### 3.2.1 Nakasone’s Early Education and Yabe Teiji

No omen of a future statesman can be found in the records of Nakasone Yasuhiro’s teenage life, nor were there particularly extraordinary experiences. He was born and raised in a family involved in the timber trade business in Gunma Prefecture. Wealthy but rural, his teenage family life seems to have exerted little defining impact on the trajectory of his later life. The contents of his memoir about this period of life are mainly about local tradition and ethos, as well as his early and constant exposure to nature and its life-long influence on him. In his primary school years, one significant remark on him was made by a teacher: “This is a good child. He will grow up to be like Saigō Takamori.” (Nakasone 1999:6) [[34]](#footnote-34) Later in secondary school, however, Nakasone revealed himself as a hardworking student and his science teacher told him that “you are patient, you should become a researcher” (Nakasone 1999: 8).

It can be argued that Nakasone as a teenager had not revealed any specific aspiration or ambition, let alone a vision of becoming a statesman aiming to save Japan. The defining period for the development of his thought and personality started from his entrance into the Faculty of Law, Tokyo Imperial University and culminated during his service in the Imperial Japanese Navy after graduation. Later in his interlocutions with intellectuals such as Nakashima Takuma and Hattori Ryūji, Nakasone mentioned his foreign policy consciousness and international perception in his teenage years, but a close scrutiny of his memoir produced little evidence for these claims (Nakasone 2012: 29-40). Nevertheless, young Nakasone was an insatiable reader, particularly of philosophical texts, which laid the foundation for his later development of conservative thinking (Nakasone 1999: 16). Throughout his political career, he never failed to include a philosophical perspective in his ruminations on political issues. This is one of the reasons why Nakasone identified with Umehara Takeshi in a philosophical sense, to the point of being considered a member of the “Neo-Kyoto School” (Nakasone and Umehara 1996: 69-71).

There might be subtle factors that originated from his teenage experience and exerted influence on his later life, but events of real significance occurred in his university years. In 1938, Nakasone was admitted into the Faculty of Law, majoring in politics. As is well known, the Faculty of Law, Tokyo Imperial University has been the primary academic producer of Japanese bureaucrats and politicians, with its alumni virtually monopolizing the important bureaucratic positions of Japan (Johnson 1982). The initial ambition of Nakasone had been to enjoy a civil service career after graduation, which was supposed to be stable and well-paid. It was also the long-harboured expectation of his parents (Saitō 1983:28). Indeed, he faithfully followed this path towards becoming a government bureaucrat in his university years.

On various occasions, Nakasone frankly admitted that Yabe Teiji, a professor in the Faculty of Law, was the person who exerted the most profound influence on his view of life and values (Nakasone 1992: 36). Certainly, the Faculty of Law of the time was a trove of eminent scholars. History of European Politics taught by Oka Yoshitake, History of Political Science by Nambara Shigeru and History of Diplomacy by Kamikawa Hikomatsu were all Nakasone’s favorite courses. However, among all the professors, it is Yabe’s teaching that inspired Nakasone most. Later Nakasone praised Yabe’s teaching as “the perfect integration of Japanese tradition and modern Western political theories” (Hattori 2015: 11).

A professor of political science, Yabe Teiji was distinguished by his deep understanding of the contemporary international situation and politics, and was considered a professor with a critical spirit by Nakasone, while in fact Yabe was well incorporated into the *Taisei Yokusankai* (Imperial Rule Assistance Association), establishment of that time (Maki 1988: 116). Yabe made various attempts to fuse modern Western political science into Japanese traditional politics. One of his propositions is to apply the *Gemeinschaft* theory of German socialist Ferdinand Tönnies to the Japanese wartime practice of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, which gained him credit to become one of the most important “brains” of then-Prime Minister Konoe Fumimaro (Nishimura 2014: 44). Certainly, later Yabe criticized Konoe’s *Taisei Yokusankai* as a totalitarian organization, because Konoe’s policies in reality totally digressed from what Yabe had conceived. Based on Nakasone’s recollection in his memoir, he failed to understand that his professor had been giving counsel to the government, nor was he aware that Yabe and Konoe were so closely entangled (Nakasone 2012: 45). Yabe’s enthusiasm for the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere eventually tainted his reputation and his professorship in Tokyo Imperial University was terminated immediately after Japan’s defeat. Nakasone didn’t defend his mentor on these accounts. Nevertheless, he did argue that Konoe Fumimaro and his ilk had misunderstood or twisted Yabe’s *Gemeinschaft* proposition, and he repeatedly advocated that Japanese conservatism should value and make good use of such *Gemeinschaft* thinking (Nakasone 2012:46-47).

To a certain degree, Yabe’s conception of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere based on *Gemeinschaft* theory contributed to the formation of Nakasone’s conservative thinking. For instance, in his 1996 interlocution with Satō Seizaburō and Itō Takashi, Nakasone delivered the following interpretation of conservatism: “Common history, tradition and culture, approximately common language, these elements forged a consciousness of common lives, which is a community of shared destiny, a so-called national *Gemeinschaft*. The kind of liberal democracy based on such national *Gemeinschaft* is exactly my kind of conservatism. Conservatism can only be right when built on common culture, tradition and view of history” (Nakasone 1996: 26-27). Nakasone’s propositions on Tennoism and related issues of Japanese tradition and history, such as *Hi no Maru* and *Kimi ga Yo*, can all be traced back to his *Gemeinschaft* ideas. Hence the crucial significance of Yabe Teiji in the formation of Nakasone’s conservative thought.

Certainly, Yabe Teiji’s influence on Nakasone is not limited to the metaphysical domain of philosophy and values. On practical matters, Yabe also provided important advice and directions to Nakasone, directly affecting his career as a politician. Shortly after Japan’s defeat, Yabe Teiji, Abe Toshishige and other intellectuals founded the *Tōenkai* (Peach Orchard Club), a private study group of academic elites who in their regular meetings discussed real political matters, such as how to prevent the infiltration of communism and how to interpret the labour movement (Hattori 2015: 26). Although access to the group was controlled and numbers very limited, Nakasone Yasuhiro was one of the members, as with some other students of Yabe’s. In *Tōenkai*, he not only continued to learn about politics and conservatism from his mentor, but also developed an agenda of serving his own political career by associating with established academic figures, such as Yabe and Abe. Yabe was well aware of this and expressed moderate criticism in his personal journal (Yabe 1974: 136).

Nakasone made an official run for the House of Representatives in 1947 and won a seat for the Gunma electoral district. When asked why he chose to be a politician, Nakasone brought up Yabe Teiji as his source of inspiration. *Seinen no Risō (*Aspiration of a Young Man), his first publication in 1947 written for the purpose of campaigning, was prefaced by none other than Yabe Teiji. Yabe lauded Nakasone’s choice of a political career over the civil service as “heroism with elation and resolution” (*kakan ni jissensuru takumashii kōkan*), which was considered by Nakasone both a great compliment and a mighty spur to his political career (Nakasone 1996:90). Moreover, according to Yabe’s personal journal, he went to Gunma Prefecture, which is Nakasone’s electoral district, to campaign for him in person (Yabe 1974: 138).

The mentor-disciple relationship was built in the Faculty of Law during wartime and developed in the group study of *Tōenkai*; it cast a long shadow upon Nakasone’s later political career and thinking (Nakasone 1999:63). After becoming a politician, Nakasone could no longer afford the time to participate in Yabe’s academic activities, but his conservative thinking and political positions continued to reflect the deep impression ingrained on him by his mentor. And the two of them both openly acknowledged this fact (Nakasone 1999:63-64; Yabe 1974:45).

### 3.2.2 Experience and Legacies as a Member of the Imperial Japanese Navy

Upon graduation from the Faculty of Law in 1941, Nakasone directly went into the civil service at the Ministry of Interior (*Naimushō*). At the time, the Imperial Navy was implementing a short-term active duty program in order to recruit government personnel into the Navy as officers. Nakasone seized this opportunity and became an Accounting Lieutenant (a non-combatant officer in charge of financial accounting) in the Navy. It is worth noting that Nakasone never mentioned his motive in joining the Navy in any of his many auto-biographies and memoirs. Later, in an interview with Nakashima Takuma and Hattori Ryūji, he finally gave his response to this question in 2012. From his point of view, joining the Imperial Navy did not represent a bellicose posture, nor was it noble patriotism on his part. He had not developed the intense conscience of national salvation and revival until Japan’s defeat in 1945. As to why he chose to join the Navy in the first place right after entering the civil service, Nakasone answered:

“My birthday is 27 May which happens to be the Memorial Day of the Imperial Navy. But this coincidence is neither my reason to choose the Navy. I believed that the Navy was a better place to strengthen one’s will power, compared to the Army. And it also provides a wider horizon. Another important factor was that if I was to join the Army, I had to start over from being a private, which would be a lengthy and excruciating process. While if I chose the Navy, once I was admitted into the Naval Accounting School I would at least qualify as an Accounting Lieutenant, which is a petty officer and entitled to receive corresponding education.” (Nakasone 2012: 48)

From this answer, it can be gathered that Nakasone’s choice of the Navy over the Army was based on considerations of the betterment of his own mental ability and the range of vision, and more importantly, on calculations of material and career remuneration. An opposite case in point is Maruyama Masao, then an assistant professor in Tokyo Imperial University, who was recruited by the Imperial Army in the wartime and had a much harder military experience, compared to Nakasone’s (Karube 2008). However, Nakasone’s answer only explained his reasons for choosing the Navy over the Army, while effectively dodging the question of why he joined military service in the first place. Of course, there is a convincing explanation that provided the total-war background of the time, all able-bodied young men, including university students or even teachers, were under great social obligation and peer pressure to join the military service, of one kind or another (Suzuki 2012).

In reality, the four years spent in the navy rewarded him with little material improvement or real combat experience. Nakasone returned to the Ministry of Interior to resume his career as a civil servant after Japan’s defeat and the disintegration of the Imperial Forces. However, the experience of Navy service brought many benefits to Nakasone’s political career, of which two are worth special attention.

First is the shaping of Nakasone’s conservative thought. As a university graduate and elite, he began to develop first-hand insights of military matters and a deep understanding of the importance of national security during this period. After his entrance into politics, Nakasone held extensive and diversified interests in various matters, from Tennoism to technological progress, from peaceful use of nuclear energy to Japanese education, but the one issue on which he never lost focus and achieved extraordinary breakthroughs has been constitutional revision (Hattori 2015:300). Nakasone’s discontent with the Peace Constitution is mostly because of Article 9, which in his view undermines Japanese national security. Seasoned in the Imperial Japanese Navy, which had a long tradition of autonomy and independent thinking, Nakasone developed a keen interest in the constitutional and security issue earlier than most of his contemporaries (Nakasone 2012: 75-76; Nakasone 2004:9). According to his recollection, at that time most enthusiasts of autonomous national defence were former military servicemen of the Old Navy (Nakasone 2012: 75-78).

Second, the building of Nakasone’s network of connections from his days in the navy was important in shaping his political thought. It played a crucial part in his launching and pursuit of a political career. When he decided to give up the civil service and run for political office, he wrote these words to his father: “The best way that a soldier who came home can repay the spirits of those who died in the war is to stand in the front line of politics and follow the road of suffering and uncertainty that will rebuild Japan. I am confident. There is a time for fighting and now is that time” (Nakasone 1999: 62). In the last sentence of this quotation Nakasone used a military term “*senki*” (roughly “opportunity of engagement”) in place of the usual choice of “time”. On various occasions in his later life, he frequently used naval or combat-related metaphors, to the point of forming a unique rhetorical style of his own (Nakasone 1999:53).

The declaration of “choosing a political path for the spirits of the fallen comrades-in-arms”, did effect the gathering of his surviving comrades-in-arms around his election campaign and subsequent political career. Despite having been only petty officers in wartime, many of these ex-Navy servicemen became successful and active in political and business spheres, forming an extensive network of connections and a strong base for Nakasone’s political career. In Nakasone’s view, the Imperial Navy was defeated and extinguished but its spirit (*kaigun tamashi*) survived among the post-war leaders in all spheres. From the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s, fully half of the administrative vice-ministers (*jimu jikan*) were graduates of the two-year active service program (*ninen geneki*, the one Nakasone participated). During Nakasone’s administration, his aims were administrative reform and the internationalization of Japan. Nakasone recalls, “I pushed these policies in a fairly bold manner and the officials in each ministry who were former two-year active service personnel gave me their support. It was colleagues such as these, who embodied the naval spirit, who became the driving force of bodies like the Provisional Commission for Administrative Reform and the Tax Commission during my cabinets in the mid-to-late eighties. I pride myself that it will be some time before another prime minister is blessed with political allies such as these” (Nakasone 1999: 26).

### 3.2.3 Nakasone as a Politician and his Network

The successful run for the House of Representatives in 1947 marked Nakasone’s transformation from a bureaucrat to a politician. Unlike traditional Japanese politicians, he became a Member of the House of Representatives at the age of 28 (which is extraordinarily young for the office). Coupled with his identity as an ex-officer in the Navy, he went by the name of “*Seinen Shōkō*” (the Junior Officer) among members of the House of Representatives. His motive of running for political office was certainly the reflection of his values and aspirations, but more essentially, it is about his patriotic devotion during his days in the Navy to Japan as a nation and his discontent with the GHQ Occupation (Hattori 2015: 32-33; Nakasone 2012:45-48; Saitō 1983:33-39).

Nakasone had an essential aversion to politicians of the bureaucratic type and he proclaimed himself to be a party-oriented politician, despite his own brief career as a bureaucrat. Hence prime ministers with bureaucratic background, such as Yoshida Shigeru, Ikeda Hayato and Satō Eisaku are not appreciated by Nakasone, while party-oriented politicians, such as Hatoyama Ichirō, Kishi Nobusuke and Kōno Ichirō who had a pre-war or wartime political background, and Ishibashi Tanzan, who was once a journalist, were more to Nakasone’s taste.[[35]](#footnote-35) Unsurprisingly, Yoshida and his followers formed the post-war political faction of the Conservative Mainstream, whereas Hatoyama and his followers became Conservative Anti-mainstream as a counter. It was the anti-mainstream factions with which Nakasone identified. With this clear anti-mainstream alignment it is not difficult to understand why Nakasone took radical stances as soon as he became a politician, such as applying himself to promoting constitutional revision, pushing for the termination of the American occupation and advocating the rearmament of Japan.

But as a politician Nakasone also had a deep understanding of Japanese factional politics (Lee 1995:203). His self-identity with the Conservative Anti-mainstream and personal distaste of prime ministers from a bureaucratic background did not stop him from assuming positions in their administrations, for instance his appointment as Director General of the Defence Agency in the Satō administration (Nakasone 2012: 563). In the years dominated by the Conservative Mainstream, Nakasone fulfilled little of his political aspirations. He and the political faction he belonged to lacked much voice or clout in Japanese party politics until the Tanaka Kakuei administration (1972), which also marked Nakasone’s personal political ascendance.

Even when being a member of the House of Representatives with limited political relevance, Nakasone had not allowed himself to relax his ambition. Aside from fulfilling the regular duties in the Diet committees and party duties in the LDP, Nakasone spent huge amounts of time in self-improvement, preparing for his pursuit of the prime minister’s office.

In 1957, Nakasone Yasuhiro, Watanabe Tsuneo and Fukumoto Kunio formed a study group which focused on the scientific analysis of politics and was eventually named *Seijikagaku Kenkyūkai* (Scientific Politics Research Group). *Seijikagaku Kenkyūkai*, a later political faction founded by Nakasone, had its origin in the namesake study group (Watanabe 2007:193-194; Nakasone 1999:169). These activities reflected Nakasone’s concern about academic study and political theories, which contributed greatly to his political acumen and prowess. In 1962, Nakasone and Watanabe even co-translated *Politics U.S.A: A Political Guide to the Winning of Public Office*, a book authored by American journalist and political advisor James Cannon (Cannon 1960). This revealed Nakasone’s early and deep understanding of the importance of political advisors to a politician.

When in office as Japan’s prime minister, Nakasone had phone calls with Watanabe, then editor in chief of *Yomiuri Shimbun*, almost on a daily basis. As the result of this close coordination, the editorials of *Yomiuri Shimbun* almost never went against the Nakasone administration’s policies. The nature of this lockstep was more of Nakasone’s acceptance of *Yomiuri Shimbun* opinions, rather than the newspaper’s submission to the prime minister (Watanabe 2007: 401-402). Nevertheless, Watanabe Tsuneo and the *Yomiuri Shimbun* under his control did not wield enough power to sway the Nakasone administration’s foreign policy. According to Watanabe’s memoir, he had Nakasone’s ears on the matter of domestic policies (especially on finance, administrative reform and staffing), but on foreign policy Nakasone had his own ideas and another crew of advisors, including Akazawa Shōichi, Nakagawa Yukitsugu, Yotsumoto Yoshitaka and Yasuoka Masahiro (Watanabe 2007: 414-418). Since the focus of this study is specifically on Japan’s conservative foreign policies, the positions of these figures and other relevant intellectuals in academic and media circles deserve more attention.

## 3.3 Nakasone as a Politician: before becoming Prime Minister

### 3.3.1 Constitutional Revision

Basically, Nakasone Yasuhiro was critical of the Constitution which in his view does not reflect ‘the history, tradition, and culture of the Japanese people,’ in other words, not being ‘Japanese’ (*nihonteki*) (Nakasone 1996:218). As a young politician, in 1955, he authored a draft of a revised constitution and worked assiduously to spread the revision movement. In April 1956, he organized a ‘Song Festival for Constitutional Revision’ at the Takarazuka Theatre in Tokyo, where the famous Takarazuka all-women acting and dancing troupes perform. The concert, which sold out, included a rendition of the ‘Constitution Reform Song,’ his own composition. It was later released as the B-side of ‘*Songs for National Independence*’ (Hook and McCormack 2001: 14; Nakasone 1999: 140)

Being one of the first batch of post-war politicians preaching constitutional revision, Nakasone submitted a petition to the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers, General Douglas MacArthur, which suggested that America should end the occupation as soon as possible. Its central argument is that the independence and freedom of Japan need to be cultivated, implying the necessity of constitutional revision.[[36]](#footnote-36) Nakasone’s practical part in the constitutional revision movement started in 1954, when he wrote to Tokutomi Sōhō, the aforementioned conservative thinker, declaring that “in the new year, we are going to launch the Constitutional Re-draft Movement for a New Japan (*Shin-Nippon Kokumin Kenpō Sōtei Kōdō*). We are counting on your invaluable direction as well as the divine blessing” (Nakasone 1996: 217).

When the *Kenpō Chōsakai* (Constitutional Research Board) was set up by the Kishi Cabinet (1956), Nakasone immediately became a member and participated in its deliberations until it made its final report in 1964 (Nakasone 1999: 140). When the Board was founded, Nakasone had initially considered recommending Yabe Teiji, his mentor, to be the chairman. Yabe, with an academic focus on political science, deferred to Takayanagi Kenzō, who was senior to him, on the grounds that Takayanagi specialized in jurisprudence so would be a more appropriate choice (Nakasone 1996: 217). Yabe also recommended Kamiwada Yoshihiko to serve as Nakasone’s secretary to support his involvement in constitutional revision. These connections suggest that Nakasone and Yabe shared common ground on the issue of constitutional revision, though there is no concrete evidence suggesting that Nakasone’s commitment was inspired by Yabe.

However, the final report of the *Kenpō Chōsakai* was presented in 1964, when the populace of a Japan in rapid economic development had already lost much enthusiasm for politics or constitutional debate and had moved on to the economy. As Stockwin notes, the political mood had changed, and economic goals had taken precedence over such political issues as constitutional revision. And the board’s proposals, which in any case were not unanimous, were quietly ignored (Stockwin 1999: 163). In the 1980s, especially in the Nakasone Cabinet, with conservatism of a somewhat nationalistic stamp emerging again, interest in constitutional revision revived to some extent, but no concrete action was taken to revise (as distinct from attempting to re-interpret) the Constitution (*Kokkai Kaigiroku*, 8 December,1982).

The loss of appetite for constitutional revision did not apply to Nakasone. In the later stage (the 1960s-1970s), his concerns became no longer limited to Article 9 which effectively demilitarized Japan. His new proposition was to change the electoral process of Japan’s prime minister, advocating “direct election of the prime minister” (*shushō kōsenron*).[[37]](#footnote-37) In the *Kenpō Chōsakai* Report of 1964, Nakasone resorted to philosophical reasoning that the primary political leader of a nation, whose actions result in a profound impact on the fate of the whole populace, ought to be directly elected by the “hands of all citizens” (Nakasone 1996: 220). Later when he actually became the prime minister, his constant pursuit of “presidential leadership” was in essence the continuation of his “direct election of the prime minister” proposition. In his conservative political thought, this is one of the traits distinguishing him from other contemporary leaders (Reed 2011:21). On the constitutional revision issue, Nakasone’s shift of interest from Article 9 to the election process for the leader of the country was a response to the general political apathy of Japanese people at the time (Nakasone 1996: 220-224).

Regardless of the focus, Nakasone never gave up on constitutional revision, although it was not carried out during his tenure as prime minister, owing to various constraints. Yet even after leaving office, he still spared no effort to preach the necessity of revising the Constitution (Nakasone 2002). There are two major arguments in his rationale. First, the 1947 Constitution was imposed on Japan by Americans “at gunpoint”, therefore the Constitution is not really a “Japanese constitution” (Nakasone 1978:251). Due to the emotional, even somewhat xenophobic nature of this argument, in the later years Nakasone gradually toned it down as the memory of old scores thinned out on all parts. Second, although the1947 Constitution established some universal values, such as democracy and liberty, it to a large extent failed to address Japanese uniqueness. It bore little respect for Japanese tradition or the “Japanese spirit of universal love”, and it twisted Tennoism (Hattori 2015:300). In other words, the 1947 Constitution may be a constitution with universal validity, but it is not appropriately tailored for Japan. Throughout his political career, Nakasone held on to this argument as a principle, which became essential to his conservative thought.

### 3.3.2 National Security

Nakasone’s concern over Japan’s security and defence was not only drawn from his wartime experience as a naval officer, but is a natural derivation of his conservative thought. In Nakasone’s view, the legitimacy and strength of a country’s defence force are not merely practical issues; more importantly, they are of great spiritual significance (Nakasone 1999:81). In Japan’s case, the patriotism of the Japanese people and the revival of Japan’s national confidence are at stake. Following this narrative, Nakasone appealed for Japan’s rearmament in his 1951 petition to General MacArthur, claiming this matter crucial to Japanese patriotism and national pride. His argument was more straightforward in his conversation with Ashida Hitoshi[[38]](#footnote-38) in 1950: “The individual citizen’s will and pride are the basis for any country’s defence. Don’t you agree that whatever alliance may be made with the US, Japan must re-arm itself adequately, have the U. S. occupation troops withdrawn as soon as possible and reduce the number of U. S. military bases? Otherwise Japan will continue to be occupied by foreign troops indefinitely, and will remain in a subordinate position” (Nakasone 1999: 86). Nakasone’s opposition to the American occupation came from his vision of an independent Japan, to which a necessary precondition is Japan’s autonomous national defence. Certainly, his anti-American position did not last long. Soon he gave it up and switched to a realistic stance on the matter, and Japan of the 1980s under his leadership maintained a strong relationship with the US.

After becoming a Member of the House of Representatives, Nakasone proposed numerous bills regarding security and defence, of which many were passed and became government policies, some of which still wielding influences today. For instance, Japanese Defence Agency and Self-Defence Forces were founded in 1954, after a bitter negotiation between the Liberal Party (*Jiyūtō*, 1950-1955), the Japan Liberal Party (*Nihon Jiyūtō*, 1953-1954) and the Reform Party (*Kaishintō*, 1952-1954).[[39]](#footnote-39) The Reform Party, in order to challenge Yoshida Shigeru and his ruling Liberal Party, fiercely attacked his defence policy and suggested independent national defence as an alternative. Being a core member of the Reform Party at the time, Nakasone took a crucial role in the shaping of the party platform and policy positions (Nakasone 1999: 89-90).

Regarding the issue of US-Japan Security Treaty, Nakasone agreed with Kishi Nobusuke, who suggested that Japan should pursue security autonomy on the basis of a strong US-Japan partnership. In his term of Director General of the Defence Agency, Nakasone issued post-war Japan’s first *Defence White Paper* (*Bōeihakusho*), which was further proof of his personal enthusiasm on the defence matters.

Despite his relentless advocacy for Japan’s autonomous defence, Nakasone is not in favour of too much power in the hands of the military. He insisted that the Self-Defence Forces should remain under the control of civilian officials, functioning as part of a democratic institution. In 1970 when Nakasone was Director General of the Defence Agency in the Satō Cabinet, the LDP “defence tribe” (*Bōeizoku*) repeatedly recommended raising the status of the Defence Agency to a full Ministry of Defence. Successive Directors General had also committed their efforts to realize this goal, but Nakasone rejected it out of hand. According to Nakasone, “I did so because I believed that the priority for defence policy was to set up a standing committee on security in the Diet and only then to go on to deal with the question of a Ministry of Defence” (Nakasone 1999: 161). This is a typical example of Nakasone’s staunch principle of “civilian control”: in a democratic state, it is imperative for the civil branch of government to hold on to the initiative on defence matters, and the first priority is to take matters into the hands of the legislature, which normally excludes active military personnel. This line of thought was also presented in the *Defence White Paper* he issued in 1970. In the opening statement Nakasone remarked on the importance of civilian control (*Defence Agency* 1970: 1). The very publication of the *Defence White Paper* is also a promotion of this principle, for it publicly presented Japan’s defence concerns and problems, with the aim of sharing information with the populace and reducing military opaqueness which could potentially lead to mutiny or a *coup d’état*, of which Japan had been no stranger (*Defence Agency* 1970). Nakasone’s balanced touch between Japan’s defence autonomy and civilian control of the military had been revealed as early as in his first days of being an elected member of the House of Representatives, when he wrote to John Foster Dulles, American Secretary of State at the time. In his letter presented to Dulles on 26 January 1951, he wrote: “The funding for Japan’s rearmament should better be provided by the Japanese people themselves. Certainly to ensure Japanese living standards, we need American aid. And we also need American state-of-art military equipment to protect our country, for now. But I do hope that America would allow Japan to develop its own defence industry as a supplement. Research facilities in turn needed to be set up for autonomous armament production, therefore the purge of former military personnel needs to be lifted. We can use them as researchers and technicians, under the complete control of civilian officials. Democratic principles are perfectly upheld in this arrangement” (Nakasone 1996: 141).

Although Nakasone consistently preaches that Japan should strengthen its defence, he has been quite reserved on the sensitive matter of nuclear armament. Two factors may have contributed to his low-profile stance on nuclear weapons (Nakasone 2012:213). First, nuclear weapons are a taboo to the majority of post-war Japanese people, which is the direct result of the nuclear attacks of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945. Second, Nakasone has been actively pushing the peaceful use of nuclear energy in Japan (Nakasone 1999: 104-105), which underlines Japan’s right to use nuclear power for civilian and peaceful purposes, at the same time impling an aversion to its use for military purpose. In 1970, as the Director General of the Japan Defence Agency Nakasone proposed the concept of a “Non-nuclear Middle Power”, trying to clarify his stance on the issue of nuclear armament, when he was generally labeled as a nationalist (Nakasone 2012:212-215; Soeya 2005: 134-146).

Nakasone’s response to a dramatic incident served as a testament to his principle of civilian control. On 25 November 1970, Mishima Yukio, the famous novelist, broke into the Self-Defence Forces’ garrison at Ichigaya, Tokyo, along with four members of *Tate no Kai* (the right-wing Shield Society). They occupied the office of the commandant (*kansatsukan*) and injured a number of SDF personnel in a failed attempt to coerce a mutiny. Eventually Mishima and another accomplice committed *seppuku* (Japanese-style ritual suicide). This highly sensational farce/tragedy became known as “the Mishima Incident” (Stokes 1974). Nakasone had been long-time friends with Mishima and held a very high opinion of his literature and personality. Nevertheless when hearing what happened, Nakasone commented: “Disrupting law and order, and injuring people, are actions which deviate from the proper course and we must denounce, absolutely, the conduct which breaks down democratic order in such a way” (Nakasone 1999: 165).

Meanwhile, Nakasone also had Inoki Masamichi, the president of the National Defence Academy of Japan (*Bōei Daigakkō*), who was also Nakasone’s political advisor, make a personal statement refuting Mishima’s manifesto. It reads: “using the Self-Defence Forces arbitrarily for a specific political purpose would be turning them into a private army. However pure the motives, and no matter that the actions put the perpetrator’s own fate on the line, such a destructive philosophy must be firmly rejected” (Nakasone 1999: 165; Inoki 1985: 366).

In fact, Nakasone shared a lot of political positions with Mishima Yukio. The Mishima Incident happened as a desperate attempt to force constitutional revision by inciting a mutiny, which is no different from Nakasone’s own constitutional revision proposal in the pure sense of purpose. But their means hold drastic differences, when Nakasone operated in a democratic frame and Mishima resorted to violent military adventurism. Currently, the Abe Cabinet proposes “proactive contribution to peace” (*sekkyokuteki heiwashugi*) and constitutional revision, which is similar to Nakasone’s line, as discussed in Chapter 5. But in terms of means, Nakasone regarded Abe’s action as political brinksmanship in deviation from the democratic process. Nakasone’s critiques of the Abe Cabinet are discussed in detail in the following chapters.

### 3.3.3 Tennoism

As a Japanese conservative, Nakasone is no exception to the general stance of supporting Tennoism. Yet on the specifics of how modern Tennoism is supposed to survive, not all conservatives reached a general consensus. As discussed in Chapter 4, Koizumi Junichirō proposed the idea of a female emperor when he was the prime minister, and Nakasone himself once called for the abdication of the emperor (Hirohito then) in the early days of his political career (Nakasone 2004:36-37). While the problem of Tennoism is not a central concern of this thesis, Nakasone’s view of and attitude towards Tennoism are discussed in this section, due to the close connections between Tennoism and conservative foreign policy, especially the view of history in his conservative thought.

In a Diet assembly in 1952, Nakasone Yasuhiro shocked Yoshida Shigeru, the prime minister of the time, by bringing forth the issue of the emperor’s abdication. He pointed out:

“The people of Japan recognize that the current emperor has been a consistent advocate of peace and that he bears no formal responsibility for the war. However, it is possible that the emperor, who now has been released from the sacred divinity of the third clause of the old constitution, … to become a human, may like the rest of us mortals feel human suffering about the war. If the human suffering of the emperor cannot be relieved because of outside restraints, then it must be said that undoing those restraints is right for the new emperor system. What outside restraints might there be? One is the moral responsibility to the allied nations to stay in place in order to stabilize Japan and carry out our international duty. Another is the responsibility to the people of Japan to stay on the throne to limit the tragedy and confusion that resulted from war and post-war circumstances and to promote orderly regeneration and stability in the peoples’ lives. Ultimately this is something the emperor must decide for himself and not in any way something we should be debating. However, I think it is perhaps necessary to say that, judging the matter on the basis of the international and domestic conditions that exist now, then should the emperor so wish, his suffering will be removed.” (Nakasone 1999: 98)

Following this line of logic, Nakasone grilled Yoshida with the question as to whether the emperor expressed the wish to abdicate (*Kokkai Kaigiroku*, Shūgiin Yosaniinkai, 31 January, 1952). Nakasone stressed that the decision must be based on the emperor’s own discretion. Stay or go, if his hands were forced by external pressure, it is not in accordance with the post-war principles of democracy and symbolic Tennoism. Nakasone’s proposal of abdication as a possibility is essentially an emotional posture, rather than the deliberate acceptance of responsibility for the war, for his concerns were about the emperor’s psychological stress of remaining on the throne or his emotional burden to the victims perished in the war (Nakasone 2004:37). At the time he was criticized as being no different from left-wing progressives, but in his later memoirs Nakasone made his case by pointing out the basic difference between Nambara Shigeru’s proposal and his own. After all, after Yoshida gave a definite answer that the emperor gave no consideration to abdication, Nakasone made no attempt to probe further into this question.

Nakasone gained more chances to approach Emperor Hirohito and formed a new understanding after he became a minister in the Cabinet, especially as the prime minister, when he frequently presented debriefing to the emperor about state affairs. By then, he admitted that his 1952 proposal of abdication was a mistake (Nakasone 2004:38). It is worth noting that his opinion of Emperor Hirohito is quite distinct from his opinion of Tennoism as an institution. Regarding the emperor, Nakasone expressed in his autobiography that he felt ashamed about his 1952 proposal, and that was before he understood the emperor’s huge contribution to the independence and revival of post-war Japan (Nakasone 1996: 57). In his renewed view, the late emperor embodied the essence of imperial statecraft and he was one of the greatest emperors in Japanese history (Nakasone 1999: 228). As to Tennoism, Nakasone made a clear distinction between pre-war and post-war Tennoism. He contended that to prescribe the emperor as a symbolic head of state is in accordance with Japan’s history and reality, for in Japanese history, the nature of the emperors has been more like a symbol representing all Japanese people than a figure of real political power (Nakasone 2004: 89-90). And based on this argument, Nakasone opposed the idea that Emperor Hirohito should be held responsible for the war. In his view, “the emperor had no veto power according to the Meiji Imperial Constitution. Once an agendum [in this case may refer to the invasion of China or the war with the US] was passed in the Cabinet unanimously, the emperor had no choice but to follow through. In contrast, at the end of the war when Japan was on the verge of defeat, the Cabinet was split on whether to continue fighting and turned to the emperor for arbitration. Hence the Imperial Rescript on the Termination of the War” (Nakasone 1996: 53). The issue of the emperor’s responsibility for the war remains a controversial topic and subject to extensive studies by historians (Bix 2000; Large 2013). Nakasone’s defence of the emperor may come naturally from a conservative politician, but it was based solely on the contention that the emperor of Japan is essentially symbolic. In Nakasone’s later political activities, such as constitutional revision, although he frequently gave increased salience to patriotism and the place of Imperial history, his recognition of the emperor as a mere symbol never changed.

### 3.3.4 View of History

In the following sections (covering the Nakasone Cabinet period), I offer a detailed discussion about his view of history. This section only deals with Nakasone’s view of history before he became the prime minister, concerning Japan’s World War II involvement. The topic of this section is connected to the Tennoism issue covered in the previous section and can be counted as a continuation of it. It is essential to the understanding of Nakasone’s conservative thought.

Overall, Nakasone exhibited contradictory views of history as a politician. Certainly, such ambivalence is often deliberately employed by Japanese conservatives. Nakasone is the first post-war Japanese prime minister to pay a visit to the Yasukuni Shrine when holding high office (on Japanese memorial day for ending the War), at the same time the first Japanese prime minister to admit that Japan committed a war of aggression in World War II (*Kokkai Kaigiroku*, Shūgiin Yosaniinkai, 29 October, 1985). These two apparently contradictory stances, especially in the eyes of the Chinese and Two Koreans, seemed perfectly compatible to Nakasone. His successors, Koizumi Junichirō and Abe Shinzō, also have a similar pattern of conflicting stances, which seems to be a common feature of the three, as discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

Nakasone was not the only member of his family who actively took part in the war. At the final stage of the war, Nakasone Ryōsuke, his younger brother and a Navy pilot, was killed in the Suzuka Mountain in Mie Prefecture when flying a warplane escaping from the American strategic bombing. After the war his remains were buried in the Chidorigafuchi Cemetery, but eventually his spirit tablet was relocated to the Yasukuni Shrine for commemoration, along with those of other fallen soldiers. In Nakasone Yasuhiro’s own words, his emotional burden for the death of his brother was only relieved after the relocation (Nakasone 1999: 50). This is one of the clues to understanding the importance of the Yasukuni Shrine and the spirits worshiped there, in the eyes of Nakasone.

Nakasone admitted that Japan’s war was a wrong war and a war of aggression, but he never condemned the soldiers who gave their lives for the country in that war. In the immediate post-war years, he was very active in advocating generous pensions for the war-bereaved families and veterans. In the aforementioned petition to General MacArthur, he argued that wrong as the war was, the fallen soldiers, the survivors and the war-maimed should not be held accountable for it (Nakasone 1999:82). Nakasone’s perspective is based on a type of patriotism stressing the universal sympathy of individuals, which could be easily extended to the war victims (e.g. the Chinese, the Koreans, the Filipinos), which he expressively did. This is the key element to understand Nakasone’s two sides of view of history: visits to the Yasukuni Shrine and denial of the Tokyo Tribunal verdict on the one hand, condemnation of the war and repentance to the foreign victims on the other (Yui 1995: 39). Later in his conversation with Henry Kissinger, Nakasone said: “I often remind Japanese people and politicians that the victim nations of the Pacific War will not forget about it even after a hundred years, especially the first and second generations who survived the war. They may or may not talk about it, but their consciousness will never find peace with Japan. A former South Korean president once shared an adage with me: the one who hits often forgets, the one who was hit remembers forever. The Japanese are a people who often suffer from amnesia, so our leaders bear the responsibility to remember for them” (*Yomiuri Shimbun* 1990: 141).

## 3.4 Nakasone as a Prime Minister

### 3.4.1 Introduction

In general, the measurement of the conservativeness/progressiveness of a country hinges on one index: To what extent the state (or the government) is involved in the country’s social and economic life (Downs 1957). Conservatives believe that over-involvement of the state (e.g. welfare state) tend to bloat the public sector and reduce private spaces and resources, hamper the market economy and smother personal initiatives, and ultimately leads to collective and individual deprivation. While progressives believe that the free-for-all market competition only aggravates economic and social inequality, which encroaches on the basic rights (such as the rights to education and employment) of many people, and can only be counterbalanced by the measured involvement of the state (Hirschman 1991). A simple way to name this debate is “small government vs. big government”. The 1980s witnessed Japan’s reform, which is generally seen as a transition from big government to small government, thus can be marked as the start of the neo-conservative dominance (Ōtake 1994:241). Globally, the 1980s was also considered the time of “the rise of neo-conservatism”. Ronald Reagan was elected the president of the US in 1980 and pushed a series of anti-welfare-state reforms. Margaret Thatcher, the British prime minister elected in 1979, also carried out conservative reforms “to rebuild a strong U.K.”. Nakasone came into office a little later in 1982, but showed no less enthusiasm for conservative reforms. The reforms in his terms included privatization of state-owned enterprises, administrative reforms and welfare policy adjustment, which are collectively named “neo-liberalism reforms” by Ōtake Hideo (Ōtake 1987). [[40]](#footnote-40)

The Nakasone neo-conservative reforms were not confined to the economic sphere. The spill-over effect of economic reforms extended to politics, culture, value system, security domain and foreign policy, with few of the aspects of Japanese society spared. In Kabashima Ikuo’s words, “the autonomy of Japan’s security policy and attempts to strengthen defence forces are the focal points of the Nakasone Cabinet in its confrontation in the 1980s” (Kabashima 2004:94).

The traditional conservatism of post-war Japan can be said to be “economic centrism” (*keizai chūshin shugi*), which is also the line of national development prescribed by the Conservative Mainstream (“Yoshida Doctrine”). What is “new” about Nakasone’s neo-conservatism is its deviation from this tradition. The ideology and policy of Japanese neo-conservatism came to fruition in Nakasone’s term in the 1980s, but it had been brewing through the 1970s, especially in Prime Minister Ōhira Masayoshi’s term (Li 2012: 205). Parting ways from the Yoshida Line upheld by the Conservative Mainstream, the core of neo-conservative thought is to “unmark” Japan as a defeated country and build a “post-post-war” state system. In order to achieve these goals, Japan needs to make or amend corresponding legislation (such as constitutional revision, for which Nakasone strived through decades, and the Basic Law of Education revision), adjust domestic policies and foreign/security strategy, and rebuild military forces with corresponding governmental institutions (Pyle 1987). Such thoughts were implemented in Nakasone’s term as the prime minister, but they are formed much earlier and can be traced back to Nakasone’s university years, at least. At the same time, Nakasone’s thought seldom remained static. There are obvious differences between his expressed thoughts and policies in and out of the prime minister’s office. One of the objectives of this chapter is to find the causes which led to his changes.

### 3.4.2 Nakasone’s Political Slogan: Comprehensive Settlement of the Post-War Accounts (*Sengo Seiji no Sōkessan*)

In 1985, Nakasone Yasuhiro delivered a speech under the title of “The Identity of a New Japan” at the Karuizawa Seminar held by the LDP. The speech still focused on the Comprehensive Settlement of the Post-War Accounts (*Sengo Seiji no Sōkessan*), with a deeper and wider reach in its content. In 1985, the 40th anniversary of the End of World War II, the catchwords of Comprehensive Settlement of the Post-War Accounts wielded a large degree of impact. Administrative reforms, such as privatization of the state-owned railways, made their appearances in the speech, but the more significant and controversial parts are foreign policy and security issues (Sekai Heiwa Kenkyūsho 1995:370-86). For instance, while reflecting upon his personal inner struggle about the “1 percent of GNP” upper limit of the defence budget, Nakasone proposed to breach it, claiming it did not invalidate article 9 of the constitution (Hattori 2015:267). On the issue of the Yasukuni Shrine visit, arguing the universal justification of honoring soldiers who fell for their country, and asserting the compatibility with the Principle of Separation of Church and State (*seikyō bunri*), Nakasone called for an official Yasukuni Shrine visit，bringing the end to this unsettled question which perplexed the post-war Japanese for decades.

In his own reflection, Nakasone acknowledged the achievement of his predecessors: some made breakthrough in the Japan-Soviet relations, some reconciled with China, and some strengthened the US-Japan Security Treaty (Nakasone 2004:47-106). Among these prominent peers, Nakasone attributed to himself the presentation of the Comprehensive Settlement of the Post-War Accounts, and the New Japanese Identity established upon it. There are various ways to build an identity, while Nakasone decided the way for Japan rests on the revival of Japanese traditional culture. He compared Japan to countries with a long history all but interrupted by cultural ruptures. He claimed Japan to be a “natural community” (*shizenteki kyōdōtai*) rather than a communistic “contract state” (*keiyaku kokka*), so Japan will remain Japan no matter what. He also proposed that the ideal path for Japan to build an identity is to “discard humiliation and pursue glory” (Sekai Heiwa Kenkyūsho 1995: 384). As to the specific instruments for Japan to build an identity, Nakasone mentioned the founding of the International Research Centre for Japanese Studies (*Kokusai Nihonbunka Kenkyū Sentā,* IRCJS) (Nakasone and Umehara 1996:120). He enumerated Japanese accomplishments such as rapid economic development, average life-span improvement and low crime rates, attributed them to Japanese national superiority, and suggested a connection to Japanese history, tradition and culture. Among all the reasons to found this research centre, Nakasone put a special emphasis on the Japanese emperor and Japanese mythology, citing their spiritual appeal to Japanese people (Sekai Heiwa Kenkyūsho 1995: 385).

The unstated goal of the Comprehensive Settlement of the Post-War Accounts is to pursue Japan’s international power status. Although Nakasone did not use phrases like “political great power” (*seiji taikoku*) or “military great power” (*gunji taikoku*) at the time, the intention was ostensible. Even his ongoing domestic administrative reforms carried the implicit goal of fiscal expansion, which in turn aimed at an increase in the defence budget and foreign aid. In his article in conservative journal *Seiron* in 1983, Nakasone made it clear that “for Japan to make an active international contribution, a necessary approach is to provide sufficient budget through administrative reforms” (Nakasone 1983: 35). Although the strengthening of Japan’s defence was not explicitly included in his interpretation of “international contribution” (*kokusai koken*), there is no doubt that it covers defence force build-up and contributions to American strategy (Watanabe 1994: 304).

There are many breakthroughs in Nakasone’s term as Prime Minister, such as his consolidation of the US-Japan Alliance and the exemption of US-Japan military cooperation from Japan’s Three Principles of Arms Export (Oros 2008:113-116; Takamine 2009). In addition, Nakasone replaced the National Defence Council (*Kokubō Kaigi*) with the Security Council *(Anzen Hoshō Kaigi*), empowering the prime minister and the Cabinet in control of security policy and response to security crises. Before the replacement of the National Defence Council, Nakasone attempted to pass the Anti-Espionage Law in the Diet, which was eventually voted down (while the Abe Cabinet managed to pass the Specially Designated Secrets Protection Act (the State Secrecy Law, SDS) in 6 November, 2013, which is discussed in Chapter 5). Among all his breakthroughs in the field of security, the most influential, as well as the most valued by himself, is the breach of the “1 percent of GNP” upper limit of Japan’s defence budget. In this chapter we take this issue up as a typical case to analyze Nakasone’s thought and behaviour in the field of security.

The “1 percent of GNP” limit of the defence budget was imposed by the Miki Takeo Cabinet in 1976, in the form of a consensual resolution by the Cabinet (Hattori 2015:267). Although it is not a parliamentary resolution like the Three Non-nuclear Principles, it was widely accepted by the Japanese society and the political sphere as being in accordance with the post-war Peace Constitution and pacifist ideology (Pyle 2007:254). The polling results of major Japanese newspapers suggest that the majority of Japanese people regarded the 1 per cent defence spending limit as appropriate，and some even supported further reduction. A series of *Yomiuri* *Shimbun* polls between 1981 and 1984 suggest that 40–50 per cent of those polled regarded 1 per cent spending on the SDF as appropriate, with an increase from 41 per cent in August 1981 to 52 per cent in December 1984. Around one-fifth of responders regarded 1 per cent as too much. The combined total of the supporters of the 1 per cent *status quo* and the supporters of further-reduced spending increased from 57 to 73 per cent between 1981 and 1984. Likewise, a high degree of support for the *status quo* or for a reduction in spending is evident in other polls: *Mainichi* polls show 71 per cent in November 1983 and 78 per cent in April 1985, and NHK polls show 55 per cent in March 1982 and 63 per cent in February 1985 expressing such opinions. Despite the differences between these surveys, opposition to an increase in military spending was clearly on the upswing (Hook 1996: 105-106). For the LDP or any other party, this principle was a tough hurdle, not easy to overcome (Kaminishi 1986). Nakasone realized that to achieve a breakthrough, it is essential to change the public perception of this issue first. So his strategy is to use academic research as justification (Kaminishi 1986:191).

Back in the Ōhira administration, there were two factions of opposing opinions in regard to defence policy (Ōyama 2015: 1-16). The Foreign Economic Policy Research Group headed by Ōkita Saburō suggested to build Japan’s foreign policy around the centre of economic aid and to refrain from expanding defence forces, in order to offset the suspicion of neighbouring countries. The Comprehensive National Security Study Group (*Sōgō Anzenhoshō Kenkyū Gurūpu*) represented by Inoki Masamichi, advocated a build-up of Japanese defence forces to “fulfill Japan’s responsibility as a member of the West” (Ōyama 2015: 3). Nakasone was more aligned with the latter. In 1983, Nakasone founded the Peace Research Association (*Heiwa Mondai Kenkyūkai*), which was chaired by no other than Kōsaka Masataka, professor at Kyoto University, a prominent figure in the former Comprehensive National Security Study Group. From then on, the debate on Japan’s international contribution has essentially focused on the theme of economic aid vs. military engagement (Hughes 2005: 58-59). This dispute continues until today, with the most heated debates taking place during the Nakasone administration and the Gulf War (Ōyama 2015: 1-16).

In the initial stages of his administration, Nakasone delivered some rhetoric with a militarist tone, such as “US-Japan community of destiny” and “Japan is America’s unsinkable aircraft carrier” (speech at the US-Japan summit in Jan. 1983, *Asahi Shimbun*, 20 January, 1983), which incurred widespread domestic criticism. Feeling the pressure, Nakasone rebalanced his priority of domestic and foreign policies and poured the bulk of his efforts into reforms back home (Uchida 1989: 7). But this shift did not mean that he lost his focus on Japan’s defence and security, for which he had been a champion since 1947 when he started his political career. In the US-Japan joint initiative of defence of the Sea Lines of Communication for Japan, he stated that Japan would aim for complete and full control of its straits controlling the Sea of Japan “so that there should be no passage for Soviet submarines and other naval activities in time of emergency.” (Pyle 2007: 272). Warming to his topic, he asserted that Japan should act like “a big aircraft carrier” (*ōkina kubokan*)--his interpreter, sharing the hyperbole of the moment, used the colourful phrase “an unsinkable aircraft carrier” (*fushin kūbo*)---to prevent the penetration of Soviet Backfire bombers into Japanese airspace (Pyle 2007: 272). Moreover, Nakasone made various breakthroughs in the field of defence and security, such as expressing an interest in co-operating in the Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI) and exempting US-Japan military cooperation from the Three Principles of Arms Export (Uchida 1989: 7).

With all these preparations, it was still no easy task. Nakasone hoped that *Heiwamondai Kenkyūkai* could put forward their research report at the end of 1984 so as to make an official attempt at revising the 1 percent GNP limit in the 1985 fiscal year budget, but opposing opinions on this matter raged inside the think tank (Kaminishi 1986: 191). The report issued by Kōsaka Masataka presented two choices: either maintain compliance with the 1 percent GNP limit or re-establish a new constraining frame, which cannot deviate from the previous frame by too large a margin. Certainly, these suggestions are not what Nakasone expected, so he included his own opinion into the report (Kaminishi 1986: 192). The final conclusion is that the Defence Plan Outline needs to be revised, and the 1 percent GNP limit is no longer viable due to the slowing-down of Japanese economic growth (*Heiwa Mondai Kenkyūkai* 1985: 11).

### 3.4.3 *Shimon Seiji* and Nakasone’s Political Advisors

A notable feature of the Nakasone Cabinet period is his “Consultant Politics” (*shimon seiji*). Among all post-war prime ministers up to Nakasone, there is no match for Nakasone in the deftness of using political advisors and the versatility of setting up consultant services (Maki 1988:140). The practice of consultant politics is characteristic in Japanese political tradition (Schwartz 1998). Official consultant institutions and private consultant services existed in the pre-war period, and took an active part in government affairs (Kaminishi 1985). As a symbol of post-war democratic politics, consultant politics are more and more employed in the decision-making process of the Japanese government (Schwartz 1998).

Nakasone often intentionally draws scholars into his circle, aiming at intellectual support for his policies. Most of these scholars initially were not in his contact network, but came from policy consultant groups established during the term of Prime Minister Ōhira Masayoshi, who is considered the most intellectual prime minister of early post-war Japan (Kaminishi 1985: 39) with the disposition of an academic scholar himself. He often hosted salons for intellectuals in his own house, exhibiting an utmost respect for knowledge (Fukunaga 2008). Ōhira’s biggest contribution to consultant politics is that he founded nine large-scale policy research groups, including the Integrated Research Group of Security and Defence, the Pacific Rim Relations Research Group, the Foreign Economic Policy Research Group, among others. Altogether there are 176 scholars gathered within these research groups, the most prominent ones including Inoki Masamichi, Kōsaka Masataka, Satō Seisaburō, Koyama Kenichi and Iida Tsuneo (Fukunaga 2008).

According to Kōyama Kenichi’s memoir, after the death of Ōhira Masayoshi (12 June, 1980), the reports of each research groups were presented to the middle-generation politicians such as Abe Shintarō, Miyazawa Kiichi and Takeshita Noboru, who were generally not impressed. But Nakasone showed a strong interest, unexpectedly (quoted in Maki 1988: 98). Subsequently, the cream of these research groups became important political advisors for the Nakasone Cabinet, providing intellectual support for his long-term rule.

However, Nakasone’s practices of consultant politics differ from past cases in two respects (Uchida 1989: 130). First, he strongly preferred private consultants over the “review boards” made up of those with official background. Second, most of his political consultants share his ideological and political views, and their advice on policies normally contains no big difference from Nakasone’s initial proposals, thus smoothing them through the next stage of official review.

In August 1984, in line with Nakasone’s suggestion, the Chief Cabinet Secretary set up the Yasukuni Shrine Official Visit Discussion Group (*Yasukuni Jinja Kōshiki Sanpai Mondai Kondankai*). In its report issued in August 1984, the group suggested that “official visit is viable if conducted under principle of separation of church and state.” (Sekai Heiwa Kenkyūsho 1995:338). Six days after the report was issued, Nakasone made the first official visit to the Yasukuni Shrine by a post-war prime minister.

Nakasone’s preference for consultant politics and political advisors is also closely connected to his political thought. Post-war Japan earned the name of “bureaucratic state”, i.e. bureaucrats play a crucial role in policy-making and on most important issues the decision-making process is that departmental bureaucrats make the decision first, leaders confirm them afterwards (Katō 1997). This was the basic pattern of post-war Japanese politics. Nakasone maintained a strong aversion to this bottom-up political pattern. The “direct election of prime minister” advocated by Nakasone in the opening years of his political life was an early attempt to challenge this pattern, and his ideal of “presidential prime minister” is also a pursuit of top-down decision-making (Machidori 2012: 86-87). The top-down pattern requires the prime minister to concentrate intellectual support and hold this resource in his own hands, in order to take the initiative in policy and decision making. Nakasone’s political philosophy inevitably collided with the bureaucrats and some institutions within the LDP. For instance, the foreign economic policy of the Nakasone Cabinet contained reforms on some sensitive issues, such as exchange rate, deregulation and open market. These decisions were based on the Maekawa Report, a policy research report produced by a private consultant institution.[[41]](#footnote-41) The feasibility of this report and related economic issues did not go through internal discussions in the LDP, which created hostility from certain powerful LDP politicians, such as Miyazawa Kiichi and Nikaidō Susumu (Maki 1987:120-123).

Nakasone accumulated extensive connections in his study and communication with political, governmental, academic and journalistic figures during his period prior to high office (1950-1970), but the “consultant politics” in his term of prime minister is hardly original. It is more like an adoption and development of tactics used by his predecessors. Nakasone himself and some other researchers claimed that his prowess in consultant politics is unmatched in Japanese political history, but close examination proves otherwise.

The risks of such large-scale consultant politics for the prime minister are also not negligible. The pre-war Shōwa Research Association (*Shōwa Kenkyūkai*) was founded under the proposal of then-Prime Minister Konoe Fumimaro. Konoe made this move to strengthen himself with intellectual support and offset the intervention from the military and bureaucrats, but eventually ended up with a violent coup by the military. The aforementioned Yabe Teiji, Nakasone’s university mentor, was also an important political advisor in the Konoe system, and suggested that politicians should approach the intellectual, economic and cultural community in order to deal with the innate problems of bureaucratic politics (Yabe 1958:18). In Nakasone’s consultant politics, his political advisors roughly shared similar political views to himself and functioned as tools for the justification of his policies. Without too much policy intervention, tragedies like the Shōwa Research Association are not likely to reoccur (Maki 1988: 117).

Certainly, not all political advisors share Nakasone’s views on policy; there were different voices. Japanese philosopher Umehara Takeshi, the front figure of the Neo-Kyoto School, should be understood as Nakasone’s partner sharing intellectual communication rather than his political advisor. They both have keen interest in Japanese history, culture and philosophy, and both committed themselves to the global promotion of Japanese Studies (*Nihongaku*) (Nakasone and Umehara 1996). Umehara was also criticized for becoming part of Nakasone’s entourage, providing theoretical support for his neo-statism policy. Ian Buruma, a famous writer and historian, in his *New York Times* article compared Nakasone to Hitler and Umehara to Alfred Rosenberg, viewing IRCJS as the propaganda organ of Japanese neo-statism (Buruma 1987; Umehara 1987: 242-257; Umehara 1995: 715). In reality, Nakasone and Umehara have many differences in ideas and on policies, especially on the Yasukuni Shrine visit issue and constitutional revision, of which the two hold opposite views (Nakasone and Umehara 1996: 11-12). [[42]](#footnote-42)

### 3.4.4 Nakasone’s Manipulation of Public Opinion and Populism

The relation between conservatism and public opinion is always a noteworthy topic. Some researchers treat public opinion as an independent variable, holding that political leaders’ attitude towards public opinion is detached from their ideologies; out of practical necessities, leaders manipulate public opinion to serve their political objectives (Lippman 2013). Certain other researchers suggest further differentiation: conservative politicians have a tendency to try to control and manipulate public opinion, while liberal politicians are more likely to avoid confrontation and interference with it (Midford 2011). The research in this thesis is more aligned with the latter in regard to this point, i.e. conservative politicians are more inclined than liberal politicians to try to manipulate public opinion. This section takes the case of Nakasone and discusses his approach and tactics in dealing with the media.

One of the characteristics of the Nakasone Cabinet is the prime minister’s acute awareness of public opinion (Ōsaka 2014: 155-68). The discussion of public opinion here only covers two issues: first, the public evaluation of Nakasone Yasuhiro as a prime minister and his Cabinet, represented by Cabinet approval rates; second, Nakasone’s response to public opinion. The faction led by Nakasone was only ranked fourth place within the LDP faction system, but his term as prime minister lasted as long as five years. Except for relatively low figures in the first year, he basically maintained high approval rates throughout his tenure. This not only reflects his personality, but also his deft manipulation of public opinion (Yoshida 2008:90). Nakasone kept personal relations with many media figures. His friendship with Watanabe Tsuneo (then chief editor of *Yomiuri Shimbun*) and Miura Kineji (former executive director of Asahi TV) went far beyond media business and held significant influence on Nakasone’s political career. As a result of this close coordination, the editorials of *Yomiuri Shimbun* almost never went against the Nakasone Cabinet’s policies.

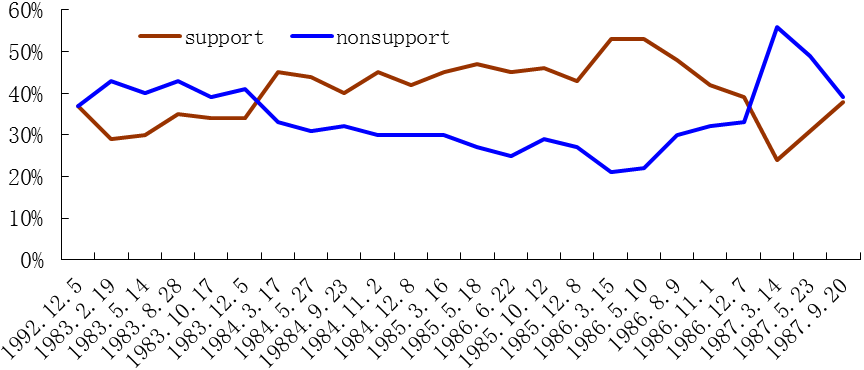
In general, Nakasone is a politician with ability to manipulate public opinion and use it to create political momentum (Hattori 2015:199-200). Up until the Koizumi Cabinet, Nakasone was always regarded as a key representative of post-war Japanese populism by Japanese media and academic study. Iwami Takao, a reporter of the *Mainichi Shimbun*, half-joked and half-criticized that Nakasone is the first “TV prime minister” (*terebi saishō*) of Japan (Iwami 1986:140). Political scientist Takabata Michitoshi pointed out that Nakasone is indeed the first populist prime minister of post-war Japan, “while it’s better to say he is always calculating on public support, rather than that he is actually supported by the public” (Takabata et al. 1985: 17).

In his inaugural press conference, Nakasone declared that he “hope[d] to forge a new pattern of politics that connects the prime minister to the grassroots, with the help of the media” (Iwami 1986: 141). Nakasone was the first LDP leader to develop a television image, providing himself with a resource to transcend the constraints of the factionalist politics of the 1955 System (Curtis 1988: 105; Krauss 1996: 262). He often took part in the TV shows of Japan’s major TV channels, publicizing his political views and pushing his domestic and foreign policy reforms. At the same time, he is a master of performance, especially on the international front (Ōsaka 2014: 158). During the 1983 Summit Meeting of the G-Seven in Wilhelmsburg, Germany, the photo of him standing between Reagan and Thatcher was widely publicized by the Japanese media. This helped to create an image of a Japanese leader dealing with American and British leaders on equal terms, and confirmed the much-lauded "*Ron-Yasu*" friendship (Ōsaka 2014: 158).

In addition, direct interference in media reporting as Japan’s prime minister is also one of his approaches. Former NHK president Shima Keiji recalled in his memoir that Nakasone had appointments with NHK key people on a regular basis during his term and expressed criticism on what he viewed as biased report in these meetings (Shima 1995). In 1983 when the LDP lost the House of Representatives election, Nakasone attributed the defeat to biased reporting, claiming the LDP “lost to the media rather than to other parties” (Ōsaka 2014:159). Later he went so far in pressuring the media as to leak messages about tax privilege cancelation against media business and advertisement tax-hike.

In his first year in office (1982-1983), his approval rating was lukewarm at best, due to his over-attention to foreign relations and a series of hawkish remarks.

#### Figure 3.1 The Support Rate of the Nakasone Cabinet



*Source: Asahi Shimbun, dates as noted above.*

Besides, the Nakasone Cabinet entered office with the support of the Tanaka Kakuei faction, so the public had serious doubts about his administration’s independence and viability (Curtis 2000:82). Nakasone became acutely aware of these criticisms. In response, he reshuffled the Cabinet, methodically reducing the influence of the Tanaka faction. He also toned down his extremist remarks, refurbished his political image and balanced domestic/foreign attentions, catering to the overall pacifist atmosphere of the time (Krauss and Pekkanen 2011:221). According to Gotōda Masaharu (then Chief Cabinet Secretary of the Nakasone Cabinet), Nakasone eventually boosted his approval rate by adjusting his policy and speech in real-time response to the polling data of major newspapers (quoted in Ōsaka 2014: 162).

#### Figure 3.2 Numbers of Articles Published concerning Nakasone (and his Cabinet) in Comprehensive Journals

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Year | *Sekai* | *Chūō Kōron* | *Bungei Shunjū* |
| 1983 | 17 | 33 | 8 |
| 1984 | 12 | 7 | 5 |
| 1985 | 6 | 4 | 3 |
| 1986 | 11 | 18 | 17 |
| 1987 | 24 | 14 | 8 |
| Total | 70 | 76 | 41 |

*Source: CiNii (Scholarly and Academic Information Navigator) Database,* [*http://ci.nii.ac.jp/en*](http://ci.nii.ac.jp/en)*. (Accessed 19 July, 2016)*

*\* Nakasone Yasuhiro was in prime minister’s office during 27/11/1982-6/11/1987. So the range of issues of comprehensive journals is set to 1983-1987.*

As previously discussed in Chapter 1, *Sekai*, *Chūō Kōron* and *Bungei Shunjū* are the three most influential comprehensive journals in Post-war Japan, with left-leaning, centralist and right-leaning political stances respectively. The statistics of published articles and their contents suggest two distinctive patterns: First, the journals were most concerned with Nakasone when he just entered the office of prime minister and when he was about to leave (1983; 1986-1987) as can be inferred from the number of articles they published, while they were less interested in the middle stage of Nakasone’s term (1984-1985), with fewer related articles published. 1985 is the fortieth anniversary of the end of World War II and also the year when Nakasone paid most attention to the Comprehensive Settlement of the Post-War Accounts. He also made his first official visit to the Yasukuni Shrine as the prime minister in August of this year, causing much controversy. According to the author’s account, most of the articles published by the three major journals around the time of Nakasone’s visit to the Yasukuni Shrine concentrated on the matter.

The second pattern is the difference in intensity of the three journals’ critiques. As a progressive journal, *Sekai* consistently held a critical attitude towards post-war Japan’s conservative politics, and its attacks on the Nakasone Cabinet are no exception. *Sekai*’s criticism focused on the foreign policy, condemning Japan’s multiple breaches of Japan’s defence and security framework, raising view-of-history issues, such as the Yasukuni Shrine visit which in their opinion dragged Japan into squabbles with its Asian neighbours (e. g. Yamamoto 1985; Mori 1983; Shindō 1986).

*Chūō Kōron,* although also critical of Nakasone, generally assumed a more dispassionate approach, spreading its complaint across external and internal matters without a particularly bitter focus (e.g. Tagawa 1982; Somura 1983; Uchida 1989). In contrast, *Bungei Shunjū* maintained aloofness by publishing few articles in regard to the Nakasone Cabinet, doing a perfunctory job of criticism. The scarcity of criticism from *Bungei Shunjū* reflected the typical enabler mentality of right-leaning journals in their dealing with the Nakasone Cabinet (e.g. Akasaka 1983; Nishio 1984).

## Conclusion

The conservative thoughts and policies of Nakasone have been analysed in this chapter. Highlighted are several important early turning-points of his career, such as his military service in the Imperial Navy and his transformation from a bureaucrat to a politician. These early experiences contributed greatly to the forging of his perception of the Japanese nation and his political thought. After becoming a politician, Nakasone did not stop self-improving or exploring new horizons as most Japanese politicians failed to do. He actively expanded his social connections, pursued the art of statecraft, and created a series of study groups with many Japanese intellectuals who shared his political beliefs. These preparations built a solid intellectual foundation for his vigorous reforms later as the prime minister.

Certainly, Nakasone’s own political thinking is often in transition. Some of his long-held and much-publicized propositions (such as constitutional revision and direct election of prime minister) were not implemented when he was in office, due to various reasons. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that among all the prime ministers of post-war Japan, Nakasone Yasuhiro is the first one who can articulate his beliefs with great clarity and strive to carry them out with utmost efforts, in Saitō Eisaburō’s words. His degree of success in putting thought to the test of reality was only limited by his personal power and resources (Saitō 1983: 143). The five years of Nakasone’s term as the prime minister (1982-1987) are the most promising years for him to implement his political thought.

This study suggests that in terms of foreign relations and security policies, Nakasone made the most lasting impact with his consolidation of the US-Japan alliance and his improvement of relations with East Asian countries. Nakasone made a state visit to the US in the first days of his prime ministership, and subsequently developed a friendship with US President Ronald Reagan on a first-name basis (*Ron-Yasu*). He also established solid personal relationship with South Korean President Chun Doo-hwan and Chinese leader Hu Yaobang. Nevertheless, his handling of foreign relations still left problems, in light of his visit to the Yasukuni Shrine and consequent outcries from East Asian countries, which sowed the seed of mistrust between Japan and its East Asian neighbours. Overall, Nakasone’s decision to visit the Yasukuni Shrine was based on the consideration of the balance between international and domestic sentiments (internally, the Nakasone government was heavily pressured and relentlessly lobbied by the Japan War-Bereaved Families Association (*Izoku-kai*) (Smith 2015:80). So in this study the Yasukuni Shrine visit is counted neither a success nor a failure of Nakasone’s foreign policy, just a controversial event. The symbolic breach of the 1 per cent GNP defence spending limit (1.004 per cent, to be exact) proved to be offensive to the left and perfunctory to the right at the same time. This, and certain hawkish sensationalism (such as calling Japan “America’s unsinkable aircraft carrier”) are the reasons why Japanese public opinion turned against him (Kabashima 2004:126), and where he lost major points in foreign policy. Besides, Nakasone’s propositions of constitutional revision and direct election of the prime minister failed to materialize not only because his political power was limited, but also owing to the *Zeitgeist* of the 1980’s Japan. In Thomas Berger’s words, it was the time when anti-militarism still prevailed in Japan (Berger 1998:111).

#### Figure 3.3 Assessment of the Foreign and Security/Defence Policies of Nakasone Cabinet

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **successes** | consolidation of US-Japan alliance  improvement of relations with East Asian countries |
| **controversies** | official visit to the Yasukuni Shrine  history textbook incident  1 per cent defence spending debate |
| **failures and non-action** | failure to pass the Anti-Espionage Act  hawkish gaffes and postures on security and defence policy  non-action of constitutional revision |

*source：Author, building on Kabashima 2004:126*

Another reason for Nakasone’s success is his proficiency of political maneuvering. With his resourcefulness in consultant politics *(shimon seiji*, i.e. the political involvement of think tanks, “brains”, political advisors and discussion groups), he proved able to promote his own political thinking through intellectuals and experts. Although these private consultant organizations do not possess official authority, during the time of Nakasone’s office the majority of the reports produced by them were approved by the Ministry and Agency-level Councils, which are official institutions. Thus a direct connection is established between the prime minister’s personal consultant bodies and governmental policy-making (Kaminishi 1985:144-154). Certainly, the political advisors recruited by Nakasone are all close to him in political beliefs, making it easier for him to push his policies through them. This is a key feature of Nakasone’s successful scheme to advance his conservative foreign policy.

Nakasone also put an extraordinary emphasis on public opinion. As accounted in this chapter, he maintained deep-rooted personal relations with media professionals in key media positions, and he perfectly understood the importance of public performance via the media. One of his constant routes to advance his political propositions or interests is to use the media to promote his own goals. At the same time, he often chose to step back from issues deeply unpopular with the public. For instance, his inaction on constitutional revision, which he had repeatedly proposed before becoming the prime minister, is ultimately due to the lack of majority support in the public opinion polls (Hook and McCormack 2005: 44). Just as Kabashima explained, the political survival as the prime minister always takes precedence over the adherence to his true beliefs (Kabashima 2004:126).

Although Japan under Nakasone’s leadership was already approaching conservatization, the public voices against defence spending increase and constitutional revision were still too strong to defy. Under such constraint of public opinions, Nakasone was unable to implement his political thought in full accordance with his ideology. In a democracy, no matter of what ideological stripes a politician is, his political practice is bound to be influenced and constrained by the expressed will of the people. Even for a statesman like Nakasone, his tenure as the prime minister would not have been safe if he had failed to heed the direction of public opinion. From this perspective, Nakasone Yasuhiro, who held “Comprehensive Settlement of the Post-War Accounts” as his core political vision, eventually left matters unsettled (Kabashima 2004: 126-127).

As Nakano Kōichi put it, the era of the Nakasone Cabinet is the link between the past and the future of Japanese politics. It is linked to the past in that he did not completely shake off the old regime established by the post-war Conservative Mainstream, only made various, local breakthroughs on the basis of historical legacy. Nevertheless, these breakthroughs laid the foundation for the subsequent neo-conservative surge, and evolved into a substantial movement or even regime change after the end of the Cold War, in the Koizumi and Abe eras.[[43]](#footnote-43) In this sense, Nakasone’s neo-conservatism played the role as a crucial pivot in the ideological succession of post-war Japan.

# Chapter 4 Koizumi Junichirō’s Conservative Thought and Foreign Policy

## 4.1 Introduction

Unlike Nakasone Yasuhiro, Koizumi Junichirō seldom put his thinking into ink in his long tenure of five years as prime minister, on a par with Nakasone’s. Nor are there many records of his which could be compiled into biographical materials or memoir. Certainly, it is impossible for a statesman to leave no written record in his long career, especially for someone widely recognized as a populist politician. Before reaching the prime minister's office, Koizumi published a number of books articulating his policy positions (See Appendix 3). Still it is hard to read his political thinking simply based on these works, since they are generally specific-policy oriented. For instance, his critical work aimed at the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications (MOPT) and its bureaucrats concentrated on practical problems and corrective suggestions, making it quite unlikely to distill abstract political thinking from it, conservative or otherwise (Koizumi and Kajiwara 1994; Koizumi 1996).

Politicians as well as journalists close to Koizumi constantly claimed that they “have no idea what's going on in his head.”[[44]](#footnote-44) This may partly explain why Koizumi has not left any serious publications. Koizumi kept minimal contact with governmental bureaucrats, played only a limited part in the Policy Research Council (*Seichōkai*) of the LDP, and seldom communicated with business leaders. He had served as the Minister of Post and Telecommunications in the Miyazawa Kiichi Cabinet and the Minister of Health and Welfare in the Takeshita Noboru Cabinet, but made few headlines in either positions. Unconventional and aloof, Koizumi is a rare occurrence in Japanese politics, leaving scarce evidences for researchers investigating his personal thoughts and beliefs (Ōtake 2003: 97; Sataka 2001). Thus to a large extent, the study of his political thought and foreign policies will have to rely on inference, second-hand materials, and interviews.

In the extant literature on Koizumi Junichirō, there are a series of notable academic works on his domestic and foreign policies, with his political thinking discussed (Hook 2011; Smith 2015; Uchiyama 2010; Shinoda 2013; Kabashima and Steel 2010; Ōtake 2003; Ōtake 2006). The study in this chapter chooses to probe into his political thinking and views as well as his decision-making behaviour, mainly based on indirect literature and investigative interviews. Although Koizumi himself is not really vocal or reflective on his political thought and foreign policy, the academic and journalistic literature on Koizumi study is still vast in the forms of biographies by political reporters, memoirs of his close associates and media compilation of his speeches. Compared to the Nakasone case study of the previous chapter, the study of Koizumi is more reliant on the approach of using indirect materials rather than the personal writings of the prime minister. In addition, field investigation has been conducted in order obtain a more complete picture of Koizumi’s political thought, personality and foreign policies.

The study of Koizumi in this thesis attempts to solve these puzzles: What are the elements of Koizumi’s conservative thought, being the prime minister of Japan where neo-conservatism is already prevalent (since the 1980s)? What is distinctive about his brand of conservatism? Are his positions on foreign relations, defence and security, Yasukuni Shrine visit and constitutional revision in accordance with other conservatives? How did his political thought come into being? How did his personality affect his policy-making behaviour? What role did his political advisors play in the policy-making process? A comprehensive three-way comparison between Nakasone Yasuhiro, Koizumi Junichirō and Abe Shinzō is made in the final part of this thesis, while this chapter includes salient comparisons when suitable occasions arise.

## 4.2 Master of Populism

Sataka Makoto, a Japanese journalist, once suggested two basic criteria for the assessment of Japanese politicians: clean/dirty and dove/hawk (Sataka 2001: 3). In his view, Koizumi Junichirō is a “clean hawk.” A “clean” politician means one who is not deeply involved in power-money deals and not maintaining shady connections with particular plutocrats. “Dirty” politicians, on the other hand, are involved in rent-seeking and often surface in political scandals. In Koizumi’s case, his avowed challenge against the “factional politics” of the LDP and his carefully maintained distance from the business sphere helped in building his image of being clean, which is one of the key elements in winning the prime minister’s office for him. Since the start of the 1990s, Japanese voters have become increasingly weary of the money politics of the LDP, thus being clean holds great appeal to the general electorate (Ōtake 2003: 78). The public opinion of this time seemed to put excessive importance on clean/dirty, to the point of producing a popular “Koizumi Craze” (Lam 2002:68). Dove/hawk, the other criterion, is a conventional ideological paradigm, nevertheless quite distinctive in the sense of working in combination with clean/dirty. Post-war Japan is never in short supply of hawkish politicians, with Nakasone Yasuhiro, the subject of the last chapter, being a typical case. In the spectrum of post-war Japanese politics, Koizumi also qualifies as a hawk, whose visits to Yasukuni Shrine and attempts at constitutional revision bear the same neo-conservative traits as Nakasone. However, his provocative hawkishness was overshadowed by the image of him being ‘clean,’ apparently making Koizumi a more effective and less vulnerable hawk compared to most of his kind.

Is the real Koizumi Junichirō the “clean hawk” he appeared to be? The fact that he is also a populist, a “theatre politician” (*gekijōgata seijika*) very good at performing, begs the question (Gotō 2014). Is the clean-hawk image an honest expression of his true self, or just a political performance out of necessity? I believe these two criteria need to be differentiated. In Japanese politics (especially after the Tanaka Kakuei administration, when power-money scandals incessantly plagued high-office politicians), clean/dirty has become a pervasive political ecology, which neither justifies nor requires much performance (Nyblade and Reed 2008; Iga and Auerbach 1977; Kaifu 2010). On the other hand, the dove/hawk posture does require a certain element of performance, particularly in Koizumi’s case. The Sataka classification of Koizumi mentioned above seems to be too hasty a judgment. As a counter-argument, political scientist Mikuriya Takashi proposed that none of the hawkish provocations, including the constitutional revision debate, the imperial succession problem and the visits to the Yasukuni Shrine, came from Koizumi’s true intentions. Or in Mikuriya’s own words: “Koizumi does not possess definitive opinions or positions, let alone profound political thought” (Mikuriya 2006: 24). In general, Koizumi gives an impression of scrambling to adopt particular political positions in a makeshift way. In Mikuriya’s view, Koizumi is a ‘closet nihilist’ compared to real doves or hawks, certainly not a true conservative (Mikuriya 2006: 24). Shinoda Tomohito, professor of International University of Japan, expressed similar observation to Mikuriya’s in an interview with the author.[[45]](#footnote-45) He deems Koizumi hardly a conservative, on the grounds that he revealed no definitive ideological direction in his domestic politics as well as foreign policy. His agenda of constitutional revision and his view on Tennoism were also limited to mere discussions, devoid of the essential characteristic of a true conservative.[[46]](#footnote-46)

Kabashima and Steel, as well as Ōtake, argue that Koizumi was essentially just putting on hawkish acts without real intentions of radical change in defence and security strategy (Kabashima and Steel 2010: 94-100; Ōtake 2003:91-93). Koizumi’s words and deeds before becoming prime minister revealed no hawkish tendency on foreign and defence matters. During the Gulf War of the early 1990s, he even expressed a critical stance against the overseas deployment of the Self-Defence Forces (SDF) at the Policy Research Council of the LDP (Ōtake 2003: 92). Later in 1995, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs made a push for Japan’s permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). In response, a group of House members of the LDP, the JSP and the Pioneer Party (*Sakigake*) formed the “UNSC Permanent Membership Deliberation Committee” (*Kokuren Jōninrijikokuhairi wo Kangaeru kai*), whose explicit purpose was to prevent Japan’s aim of UNSC Permanent Membership, and whose chair is none other than Koizumi Junichirō (*Asahi Shimbun*, 10 August, 1994). After Koizumi was elected as prime minister, Yamasaki Taku, then Secretary-General of the LDP, suggested an upgrade of the Defence Agency into a full Ministry of Defence. Koizumi countered; he did not want his administration to be taken as an “overly hawkish regime” (*amari takaha seiken ni miraretakunai*) (Ōtake 2003: 92). Ironically, Japan’s most active pursuit of UNSC permanent membership occurred during Koizumi’s term as prime minister, as did the first official overseas deployment of the SDF to Iraq and Afghanistan (UN peacekeeping missions excluded) (Shinoda 2007: Chapter 4 and Chapter 6). These issues are to be analysed in detail in the following sections, drawing out an assessment of Koizumi on the dove/hawk and conservative/radical gradient. The volatile nature of Koizumi’s political stance requires that the pattern and logic of his political behaviour is interpreted under a suitable analytical frame. In this chapter, the frame of populism and its connection with conservatism (if any) is introduced to serve this purpose.

To understand Koizumi Junichirō’s political tactics, a basic appreciation of the post-Cold-War Japanese political environment is needed. Throughout the 1990s, mistrust of politicians (especially the ruling party and the bureaucrats) had been deep and pervasive in Japan, becoming the mainstream trend of social consciousness (Ōtake 2003:1). Occasionally, certain politicians would ride against the tide of mistrust and kindle public over-expectations, but the popular fad would fade quickly, entering the next circle (a case in point being Prime Minister Hosokawa Morihiro of the Japan New Party in 1993, see Curtis 2000: 123-5). Public mistrust of politicians has been a common phenomenon in developed Western countries since the 1960s, while Japan was particularly plagued in the 1990s (Nye, Zelikow and King 1997; Ōtake 2003：1). However, when other politicians ended with failure, Koizumi distinguished himself with five consecutive years in the prime minister’s office. This success is largely attributable to his political tactics, for which a suitable explanatory frame is populism (Kabashima and Steel 2007).

Assuming that Koizumi is indeed a populist, what are his own political thoughts and positions? Is he just following the whim of the crowd or actively instigating? In his campaign for the President of the LDP, many of his proposed reforms specifically deal with issues about which Japanese people complained most, such as the Prime Minister headquarters as the centre of power, the weakening of bureaucratic control of policy-making, the condemnation of factional politics and postal service privatization, and so forth. To some degree, Koizumi was indeed trying to follow the will of the people (Krauss and Pekkanen 2011:131). Kabashima and Steel point out that, since the 1990s, Japanese governments have become more responsive to shifts in public opinion and public demands, since cabinets could no longer simply follow their own judgments in deciding what was best for the country as had been the case during the years of LDP one-party dominance (Kabashima and Steel 2009: 6). Certainly, the analysis above is based on Koizumi’s domestic policies. Is Koizumi equally theatrical in the field of foreign policy? What are his personal positions in foreign affairs? What foreign policies did he propose in reality and what is the behavioural logic behind them? Little attention has been paid to these questions in the extant literature. It is also worth noting that although Koizumi is generally considered a conservative politician by default, the academic and journalistic critiques of him tend to concentrate on his populist side and neglect his conservative side. One possible explanation for this lopsided attention is that Koizumi’s populist *modus operandi* attracted so much interest that his conservatism was overshadowed.

At this point a clarification needs to be made on populism and conservatism. They are not comparable conceptions and do not belong to the same spectrum. Populism is essentially a political means to an end, while conservatism is an ideology and a set of political doctrines. Progressives or liberals could also adopt the populist path to their political objectives (regime change or election to public office), just like their conservative counterparts (Weyland 1999; Bicha 1973). Since populism played a crucial role in Koizumi’s quest to achieve his political objectives, due analysis is assigned to this topic in this chapter; but the study of Koizumi in this thesis remains focused on his conservative thinking and conservative foreign policies.

Political scientist Uchiyama Yū identified two general features of Koizumi’s political tactics: First, to procure popular support, he uses brief, slogan-style language and instigates good-vs-evil political confrontation, basically dramatizing politics (Uchiyama 2010:3). This tactic appeals to people’s pathos rather than their logos, manifesting the basic connotation of populism. Second, he implemented a top-down policy-making process by suppression of opposing voices within the party and the government. “PM Leadership” (*kantei shudō*) and “Prime Minister Dominance” (*shushō shihai*), two catchphrases of the Koizumi Era, best reflected his operational principles as a politician. Koizumi’s strong position grew out of is great confidence in his support rate among the public, which in turn gained its advantage through populism (see, Figure 4.1 Koizumi Cabinet Support Rating).

As a political term, populism can be traced back to two origins. One is the American commodity farmer movement with radical economic agendas such as the US People’s Party of the late 19th century; the other is the distinctive political practices in Latin American countries during the 1930s -1950s, when charismatic political leaders relied on popular support to seize power and maintain authoritative governance, hence the name of “populism” (Ōtake 2003: 111; Collier and Collier 2002). The populism discussed in this thesis is of the latter type. Many academic researchers hold critical opinions on populism, deeming it a political orientation of opportunism, utilitarianism and demagogy (Weyland 2001). In the conventional Japanese context, “populism” means a political leader’s abandonment of so-called “governance responsibility” (*tōchi sekinin*) and deference to the popular opinion.

## 4.3 Koizumi Junichirō’s Political Thinking and its Formation

### 4.3.1 The Koizumi Family Legacy

According to a political critic who followed Koizumi Junichirō’s career and maintained close personal ties with him, three cornerstones help us to fully understand the prime minister’s political thought: First, Koizumi Junichirō is a hereditary politician. Both his grandfather (Koizumi Matajirō) and father (Koizumi Junya, served as Matajirō’s secretary and later married into the Koizumi family) served as cabinet ministers, casting an inevitable shadow of legacy and influence on their scion. Second, he was born in the city of Yokosuka where Yokosuka Naval Port is situated. On par with Okinawa, Yokosuka harbours one of the most important military bases in the US-Japan Military Alliance. In addition, his father’s role as the director general of the Japan Defence Agency certainly bequeathed him an inclination to be concerned about the defence matters of Koizumi Junichirō’s politics. Third, he stepped into the Japanese political arena right at the time when the so-called “*Kaku-Fuku War*”, the political rivalry between Tanaka Kakuei and Fukuda Takeo, reached its climax. On foreign policy, Tanaka championed the rapprochement with China while Fukuda was more attached to Japan’s relationship with Taiwan; on domestic politics, Tanaka implemented a positive fiscal policy in his term as minister of finance but Fukuda Takeo advocated fiscal constraint, which left a heavy impression on the subsequent structural reform and postal privatization of Koizumi’s. To a certain degree, Fukuda acted as Koizumi’s mentor and his conservative ideology found its way into Koizumi’s own political thinking (Blondel and Thiébault 2010: 213; Asakawa 2001: 65-66). In the following section, these elements of family background and growing experience are to be examined in detail to reveal their influences on Koizumi’s political thought, and to summarize his representative political positions at the same time.

In contrast with Nakasone the self-made politician, Koizumi was born into a prominent family of politicians in Yokosuka, Kanagawa prefecture on 8 January 1942, and experienced a very different education and path of life. His grandfather, Koizumi Matajirō, served as the Minister of Posts and Telecommunications under pre-war Prime Minister Hamaguchi Yukio and was an early advocate of postal and telecommunication privatization. Junichirō made his first mark in Japanese politics in the same Cabinet position by advocating the same reform: the difference is that Koizumi Junichirō actually carried it through during his tenure as prime minister, consumating his grandfather’s legacy (Ōshita 2015:71-73; Umeda 2001: 62). His father, Koizumi Junya, was director general of the Japan Defence Agency under Prime Minister Ikeda Hayato. When the US-Japan Security Treaty was revised by Prime Minister Kishi Nobusuke’s administration, Koizumi Junya delivered a powerful pro-amendment speech in the Diet as the chair of the LDP Foreign Policy Research Council and Kishi’s close ally, winning himself the nickname “the *Anpo* man” (*anpō otoko*) (Umeda 2001:105). This suggests Koizumi Junichirō’s political thinking was influenced by his family legacy and environment.

The influence of his grandfather and father went deeper than his political agenda. Koizumi Matajirō was more or less a born-too-late samurai-style figure (Umeda 2001:55). He aspired to a military career as a youth, and later became a politician, went all his combatant way in every election campaign, hence he was nicknamed the "wild man" (*wairudo man*).

Despite being seen as a heretic by contemporary Japanese politicians, he was very popular among his constituency (Umeda 2001:56). In term of heresy, Koizumi Junichirō is more or less his grandfather’s grandson. As was mentioned in the previous section, it is quite hard to grasp fully Koizumi Junichirō’s personality, since most references come from indirect sources. Among various researchers, Ōtake Hideo considered Koizumi Junichirō to be a typical Meiji-style politician (*meijiteki seijika*). Ōtake’s attribution is not only based on his terseness, aloofness and incorruptibility, but more essentially on his classical spirit of “chivalry” (*ninkyō seishin*) (Ōtake 2003:97-98). Koizumi Junichirō reads historical novels, enjoys traditional *Noh* music such as *kabuki* performance, and admires the Meiji Restoration Patriots. The most important inheritance from Matajirō some researchers believe, is a spirit of defiance (*hankotsu-seishin*) (Umeda 2001:15; Asakawa 2001:103-13). Certainly, while these are all influences on the spiritual level, it cannot yet be inferred that his conservatism came from his grandfather.

Other than character and spiritual influences from his grandfather, the legacy from his father is mostly social skills and political tactics (Asakawa 2001:113; Ōshita 2015:78-82). For instance, by Koizumi Junichirō’s own confession, his oratory style came directly from his father, whom he considers unmatched as a political speechmaker in post-war Japan (Ōshita 2015:88). There is insufficient evidence to suggest that Koizumi Junichirō also inherited his political thought from his father. Nevertheless, Koizumi Junya’s experience as the director general of the Japan Defence Agency certainly made an impact on his son. In 1965, the “Three Arrow Study” (*mitsuya kenkyū*) [[47]](#footnote-47) secretly conducted by the Defence Agency military staff was publicly exposed, and Junya was forced to resign from the position of director general in the fallout. Although the Three Arrow Study had commenced as early as 1963, long before Junya came to the office, he was still held accountable for knowledge and implicit support of the project (Samuels 2007:50; Matsueda and Moore 1967). Four decades later in 2004, with little resistance, Prime Minister Koizumi Junichirō saw a series of legislation passed, which are all defence-and-security related and collectively called the “Contingency Legislation” (*Yūji Hōsei*). The core measures of the Contingency Legislation can be said to have developed from the prototype known as the Three Arrow Study (Fujiwara 2005:67). Although Koizumi Junichirō never confirmed or denied the connection between his push of the Contingency Acts and his father’s role in the Three Arrow Study incident, to the public eyes this is clearly just another Koizumi legacy. Moreover, Koizumi Nobuko, Junichirō’s older sister who was serving as the minister’s secretary when Koizumi Junya was implicated in the Three Arrow Study Incident, never quite got over her father’s forced exit until the passing of the Contingency Acts, which she believed vindicated the Three Arrow Study and purged the public prejudice against the Koizumi family (*Shukan Kinyōbi,* 9 July, 2004).

Despite these links to Matajirō the grandfather and Junya the father, this does not mean we need to investigate in greater detail their ideological alignment with Junichirō: the subject of this study is not the Koizumi family, so the analyses on Matajirō and Junya need go no further. Still, the question remains: what ‘political gene,’ conservative or progressive, runs in the Koizumi family? Are they doves or hawks on defence and security matters? Both Koizumi Junichirō’s hawkish and his dove-like acts are pointed out in the extant literature (Sataka 2001; Asakawa 2001:66; Miford 2011:8). This suggest further investigation of the Koizumi family politics would be appropriate to improve the clarity of our understanding of Koizumi Junichirō’s political thought. The roles played by Koizumi Matajirō and Junya in the pre-war and mid-war Imperial Rule Assistance Movement (*yokusan katsudō*) make it clear that they were actively prosecuting the war, hence they were purged from public office by the GHQ after the war (Fujiwara 2005: 40). Later Junya joined the Kishi faction of the LDP when running for the Diet and played a key role in Kishi’s *Anpo* amendment push (Umeda 2001:103-4). Near his death, Junya demanded Junichirō to run for the Diet and join the Fukuda Takeo faction (Ōshita 2015:88-90). The continuity of conservative thought in the Koizumi family is evident in this link between father and son.

In post-war Japanese politics, Koizumi Junya belonged to the Kishi faction. Under his father’s guidance Koizumi Junichirō became Fukuda Takeo’s secretary and identified with the Fukuda faction, which splintered from the Kishi faction and maintained great continuity of political positions. The Kishi and Fukuda factions are both pillars of the post-war Japanese Conservative Anti-mainstream; both advocate Constitutional revision and strengthening of Japan’s defence; both are considered ideologically right-wing hawks (Krauss and Pekkanen 2011). Rather than coincidence, it is a family legacy that Koizumi Junichirō holds a similar conservative position to his grandfather and father’s, though this was not necessarily evident. Further exploration of Koizumi Junichirō’s political thought needs to be conducted based on his words and deeds, as well as specific policies.

### 4.3.2 Koizumi Junichirō before Prime Minister’s Office: Political Thoughts and Positions

Not too much interest was shown in politics by Koizumi Junichirō as a young man, despite the prominence of his family in Japanese politics (Ōshita 2015:81). He entered Keio University in 1962, where he studied economics, hoping to become a white-collar professional after graduation. Initially averting a political career and feeling uncomfortable picturing himself as a politician, he gradually readjusted himself to the family legacy. In the process of helping his father’s campaign, he started to understand Junya’s mind and to appreciate both the hardship and the sense of destiny of a politician (Sataka 2001:51). In another account provided by Asakawa Hirotada who was close to Koizumi Junichirō, he had been unwilling to follow a political career in his high school years, having witnessed his father’s busy life as a politician, and wanted to become a diplomat instead (Asakawa 2001: 133). The sudden death of his father had a huge impact on Koizumi’s mind as well as his career choice, and the tradition of hereditary political family of the time began to influence his thinking (Ōshita 2015:81). More and more people around the family moved their focus away from his father onto him, starting to have great expectations of him as a politician. Roughly in the second year of university, he officially decided to stand for his father’s electoral district with the hope of becoming a politician (Ōshita 2015:81).

In fact, according to the literature covered up to date, Koizumi seemed to reveal no specific political position before the start of his political career, making it difficult to ascertain his political thoughts of this period.[[48]](#footnote-48) A clue worth noting is that he made Constitutional revision one of his campaign slogans as soon as he entered the political arena, and it recurred in the different stages of his career (Berkofsky 2012:141; Hardacre 2011:201). Several issues, including foreign relations, security and defence, Yasukuni Shrine visits and Constitutional revision, were at the centre of controversy in his term as prime minister. The following section attempts to unearth Koizumi’s original positions on these issues before he became the prime minister.

Before Koizumi became the prime minister, public opinion as as well as certain politicians expressed concern that since he had not held any cabinet position previously with foreign or defence responsibilities, his ability to handle these matters was untested (*Asahi Shimbun*, 23 July, 2001; Asakawa 2001:79). Besides, he had made few public remarks on foreign and defence issues and he himself admitted that he had little exposure to matters of foreign relation (*Asahi Shimbun*, 12 July, 2001). However, at the same time as admitting inexperience, Koizumi also promised straightforwardness in international communication and principles in foreign relations, that he would make a stand when Japan’s principles are at stake, no matter facing allies such as the US or neighbours such as China (Asakawa 2001: 79-80). In his own repeated words, foreign policy is the field where national interests are most thoroughly embodied; therefore a staunch attitude must be adopted instead of deference and hesitation (*Asahi Shimbun*, 7 May, 2001).

For instance, Koizumi does not believe that Japan must necessarily follow US policy, despite the fact that the US-Japan tie is the single most important bilateral foreign relation to Japan. Iijima Isao, Koizumi’s secretary, recounted one of Koizumi’s encounters with James Danforth Quayle, the vice president of the George H. W. Bush Administration, before he became the prime minister (Iijima 2001:70). In his visit to Japan, Quayle had a meeting with five Japanese politicians including Yamasaki Taku, Katō Kōichi and Koizumi, and expressed a wish that Japan substantially increase the budget for American military bases in Japan. All other four politicians promised to seriously consider the request, except Koizumi, who simply said ‘no’. Koizumi explained that “Japan is not worried that American troops would leave Japan. If it actually happened, Japanese people would have the chance to rediscover Japan’s defence capacity and to reconsider the necessity of the US-Japan Security Treaty. It might encourage Japan towards independent defence, from which the real spirit of national independence would be born.” (As quoted in Iijima 2001: 70-73). This incident reveals a certain degree of Koizumi’s discontent towards America. The explanation is twofold: the American military base in his birthplace of Yokosuka may have affronted his national pride, and he might be simply following the Japan-can-say-no environment of the early 1990s (Asakawa 2001; Ishihara 1991; Eldridge and Midford 2008; Midford 2011).

The media characterized Koizumi as in favour of revising the Constitution, but he is actually quite ambiguous on this subject (Mikuriya 2001:86-9; Watanabe 2005). The LDP put constitutional revision in its manifesto on the very day the party was established, so undoubtedly every LDP politician favours revision if he abides by the party line, with only differences in degrees and tactics. On the spectrum of attitudes towards the Constitution, Koizumi is neither a radical reformer nor a staunch defender. He can be classified as a moderate reformer (Winkler 2011b:19).

Koizumi did express the intent of visiting the Yasukuni Shrine before he ran for prime minister. He visited Yasukuni in 1989 and 1997 as the Minister of Health and Welfare, without confirming the nature of the visit to be official or personal (Mochizuki 2010:44). Mochizuki interprets his visits as simply following the trend of LDP at the time, rather than any evidence that Koizumi has ideological affinity towards the Yasukuni Shrine (Mochizuki 2010:44). But in his election campaign for prime minister, he openly vowed to visit the Yasukuni Shrine on every 15 August if he won (*Asahi Shimbun*, 7 April, 2001). And he delivered the promise by paying six visits in his term of five years, worsening Japan’s East Asian foreign relations, especially with China (Smith 2015:92-96; Cheung 2016). Despite his actions, it is hard to find any intersection between his political thought and the political connotation of Yasukuni Shrine. So why did he visit annually as the prime minister in spite of the diplomatic tension his visits raised (Tamamoto 2001)? We have already seen above that Koizumi’s words and deeds before and during his term as prime minister are largely inconsistent. In the following section this thesis will investigate what factor(s) caused his change in political behaviour and positions (if so), and in what ways Koizumi put them into practice (if so). In this study, the limited research on pre-prime-minister Koizumi is insufficient to grasp his nature as a conservative politician, due to the scarcity of clues about his political thinking in the research material of this period. For this reason, next we turn our attention to the five years of his prime ministership.

## 4.4 The *Henjin* Politician and his Foreign Policy

### 4.4.1 The Designation of Koizumi Junichirō’s Political Thought

Tanaka Makiko, daughter of Tanaka Kakuei, once described Koizumi Junichirō with the Japanese phrase *henjin* (weirdo). Personal eccentricities aside (such as the lone-wolf character and extreme brevity of speaking), more significant peculiarities are demonstrated in his political behaviour and policy patterns. For instance, as the president of the LDP, he repeatedly called for “breaking up the LDP” (*Jimintō o bukkowasu*); he had no qualms in dissolving the Diet and resorting to a snap election, just to push his favorite project of Postal Service privatization; he appointed an unprecedented number of women and outsider-scholars to be ministers in his Cabinet, facilitating his policy implementation, and he grabbed the power of foreign policy final decision-making from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, making it officially the responsibility of the prime minister’s residence (*Kantei*) and setting another precedence (Shinoda 2007; Uchiyama 2011). Being one of a kind certainly constitutes part of Koizumi’s unusual charisma (Kliman 2006:132; Nye 2008:55-6), but it also won him the byname of a *henjin,* a label not shared by any other post-war Japanese prime minister.

Certainly, character alone cannot explain Koizumi’s rapid ascendence to, and steady hold of, the prime ministership. The Japanese political system, electoral mechanism and the change in social trends all played their parts in the birth and consolidation of the Koizumi regime. Kabashima and Steel as well as Pyle presented an analysis on the viability of the Koizumi regime from the systemic and institutional perspectives (Kabashima and Steel 2010; Pyle 2007), while Shinoda named Hashimoto Ryūtarō, his arch-rival, to be the unwitting facilitator of Koizumi’s eventual ascension (Shinoda 2013:65). Krauss and Pekkanen pointed out that Koizumi appears to be an “aberration” among the post-war prime ministers in his political leadership style (Krauss and Pekkanen 2011:239). Nevertheless, his style was based on using the fundamental structural changes that had taken place in the electorate, the LDP, and the government that had increased the potential for a stronger, more centralized political leadership (Krauss and Pekkanen 2011:239). Mishima also suggests that the longevity of the Koizumi regime may not have resulted from his individual qualities, but instead from the structural shifts of the LDP (Mishima 2007: 727-748). Nevertheless, counter-argument can be drawn from the fact that none of the LDP prime ministers after Koizumi lasted long (Abe Shinzō, the current incumbent, notwithstanding). Individual factors, such as Koizumi’s personal character and way of thinking, as well as the *modus operandi* of the political team around him, certainly warrant more scrutiny.

Regarding the public interest in Koizumi’s personality, Koizumi himself seemed to be unperturbed. In his speech at the foundation anniversary of Keio University, his alma mater, Koizumi referred to his being called a *henjin* as follows: “Many called me a *henjin*, but is it so bad as it sounds? Is it true that Japanese people find the LDP to be weirder and weirder, and in desperate need of change? If I have to own this title, I wish it could be a *henjin* of *henkaku* (In Japanese *henkaku* means reform, not only shares the same consonant with *henjin* but also shares the same first written character, hence the pun). I don’t mind at all to be such a *henjin*, for it will take some really extraordinary politicians to reform the LDP. The English words *strange* or *eccentric,* being the conventional English translation of *henjin*, may have led to misunderstandings in the western media. For a perfect translation of *henjin* I consulted some expert foreign journalist, who recommended the word *extraordinary,* which I strongly favour. With the meaning of transcending the ordinary, how is *henjin* a bad name? So every time I hear myself being called a *henjin*, I consider it a personal commendation and encouragement.” (Ōshita 2015:121; Koizumi 2006:21-22)

Then, exactly what is so extraordinary about Koizumi Junichirō and his politics? As the prime minister of Japan, what distinguished him from his predecessors? In this section, three aspects are to be investigated to answer these questions, including media and public opinion tactics, the use of public advisors and the institutional power shift. But another question, the ideological designation of Koizumi Junichirō, needs to be addressed first to clarify further: Is Koizumi a political conservative? The extant literature almost invariably marks Koizumi as a conservative or neo-conservative, following the intrinsic logic that since the ruling LDP is a conservative party, the political leaders it offers are undoubtedly conservatives (Catalinac 2016; Nakano 2015; Watanabe 2005). Such inductive reasoning sounds convincing, but anomalies do occur occasionally, in the cases of some LDP politicians (including prime ministers) being regarded as liberals. For instance, Ōhira Masayoshi, the Japanese prime minister from 1978 to 1980, is such a case, as illustrated by academic studies being divided between conservative and liberal designations (Fukunaga 2008; Pyle 1996:68-71). Based on the differential analysis on conservatism and progressivism in Chapter 1 of this thesis, my argument is that Koizumi is no doubt a conservative, if set in the wider political context of conservative/progressive dualism of Japan. Nevertheless, there are some significant differences between the nature and extent of his conservativism and the conventional perception of conservatism.

In the general sense of conservative politics (especially when considering the neo-liberal economic reforms such as those carried out by Nakasone, Reagan and Thatcher), Koizumi Junichirō is undoubtedly a representative figure of the global neo-conservative strain (Watanabe 2005). Again, Koizumi’s official position and action on telling issues, such as Constitutional revision, Yasukuni Shrine visits and SDF overseas deployment, are typically conservative. On international alignment, Koizumi shares certain commonalities with American neo-conservatives (Uchiyama 2010; Segers 2008; Midford 2011; Hook and McCormack 2001). And especially in the eyes of the public and academic opinions of neighbouring Asian countries, Koizumi is a neo-conservative with entrenched right-wing opinions and a hawkish attitude. Japan’s domestic left-wing critics more or less hold similar opinions (Nakano 2015; Watanabe 2005; Mikuriya 2006). Nakano Kōichi of Sophia University suggested that Koizumi’s definitive political position can be traced from his policies. Nakano’s argument is focused on Koizumi’s conservative economic reforms, in which Koizumi’s orientation remains consistent. However, it is still questionable how much of his domestic politics and foreign policy is derived from his own conservative thought, although a large part of them were welcome by LDP politicians or conservative electorate.[[49]](#footnote-49)

However, Nishio Kanji, for one, does not accept such a characterization, declaring that most of Koizumi’s political thinking is left-wing in nature (Nishio 2005:40). He argues that, if Koizumi’s political tactics are shared by successive administrations, then Japanese politics would perhaps evolve into a new system with a left-wing nature (Nishio 2005:40). Right-wing conservatives’ grievance against Koizumi focuses on his position on imperial succession (Winkler 2011b:20). Koizumi advocated the idea of a female on the throne (*Asahi Shimbun*, 15 May, 2001), which in the eyes of traditional conservatives is no different from the abolition of Tennoism and perfectly in line with left-wing narratives (Nishio 2005; Yagi 2004; Sakurai 2006; Nakanishi and Fukuda 2005). Another reason for some conservatives not to take Koizumi as one of their own is that he allegedly discarded many cherished Japanese traditions, political as well as social. For instance, he was instrumental in ousting Nakasone Yasuhiro from the House of Representatives in disregard of Japanese traditional respect for seniority; he often ignores the long-standing implicit rules in Japanese politics such as protégé relationship; he even changed the subtle ways of socializing and communication in Japanese tradition, by resorting to blunt phrases to express his political thought (Nishio 2005: 60; Nakasone 2005).

Certain other researchers also propose that Koizumi is not a conservative, but unlike the ideological critiques from right-wing conservatives such as Nishio, Yagi and Sakurai, their arguments are based on the realistic approach of Koizumi’s foreign policy. For instance, Nakanishi Hiroshi denies Koizumi is a conservative, if conservatism is defined in a cultural and traditional sense; even his visits to Yasukuni Shrine are interpreted as campaign strategy rather than political ideology. Nevertheless, if the aspect of realism in the definition of conservatism is taken into account, one can find Koizumi a *bona fide* realistic conservative. The reality in which Japan resides dictated that Koizumi follows conservative foreign policy; his personal values and conviction matters little in this scenario. A case in point is the SDF’s deployment in Iraq.[[50]](#footnote-50)

Koizumi himself would not claim to be a conservative if conservatism is merely equal to a refusal to change. The essence of his politics is a reform without forbidden zones. He promised to “break up the LDP”; his redefinition and embrace of *henjin* bespoke his strong inclination towards innovation. Iijima Isao, his secretary and primary political advisor, pointed out that “Prime Minister Koizumi is rightfully classified as a conservative politician since he is from the LDP, but to be conservative does not always mean to stick to the old ways. It is just because he is a true conservative that he understands the necessity to carry out radical reforms, in order to rejuvenate the conservative front.” (Iijima 2006: 19). In addition, some researchers suggest that Koizumi is hard to designate to be conservative or progressive, if observed from the angle of specific policies rather than ideology. For instance, in the field of foreign policy, he did actively push the agenda of SDF overseas deployment, but he is also the most vocal Japanese prime minister in reconfirming Japan’s stance of pacifism in public; he paid visit to the Yasukuni Shrine every year during his term, which incurred heated protests from China and South Korea, but he is also the first post-war Japanese prime minister to visit the Museum of the War of the Chinese People’s Resistance Against Japanese Aggression in Beijing, as well as the Seodaemun Prison History Hall in Seoul (Wakamiya 1999). If his activeness in defence matters and the Yasukuni Shrine ---Japan’s foreign relation pressure point---can be interpreted as conservative, his attitude of repentance for historical aggression and his upholding of pacifism can also be called liberal, or progressive.

### 4.4.2 Koizumi Junichirō’s Political Tactics

##### 4.4.2.1 Political Advisors and Institutional Changes

Unlike most LDP prime ministers, Koizumi’s rise in the party, which eventually led to the prime minister’s office, was not based on the endorsement of faction leaders and prominent politicians, but mostly carried by the votes of rank-and-file party members. In the case of the LDP (as well as most Japanese political parties) which at the time was normally dominated by factional dynamics (Krauss and Pekkanen 2011), Koizumi’s mandate is far from consolidated.[[51]](#footnote-51) In order to achieve long-term leadership, he had to innovate on his political tactics to make up for the shortage of factional support, distinguishing himself from other choices of a more conventional nature. According to Asakawa, Koizumi’s proposal of domestic reforms and foreign policy course-change provoked enormous aversion and resistance within the LDP (Asakawa 2001:61). Fully aware of the danger once the reform agenda came to the surface, Koizumi made elaborate preparations in the form of political negotiation and public communication. During this preparatory process, instead of seeking out the support of faction leaders within the LDP (it would be quite futile anyway), Koizumi constantly called for assemblies of intellectual elites (mainly academics) pertinent to the specific issue, and organized them into Discussion Groups (*Kondankai*) or Consultative bodies (*Shimon Kikan*).[[52]](#footnote-52) Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro had adopted a similar approach to organize and institutionalize his own political advisors, but the intention and purpose are quite different between the two. By such practices, Nakasone intended to borrow some degree of legitimacy from intellectual elites, while Koizumi tried to tap into their public influence, subsequently steer public opinion. In essence, the difference is elitism versus populism. Koizumi’s focus on public opinion is a response to the friction he faced inside the LDP. In most cases, even the powerful factional moguls of the LDP would have to defer when confronted with overwhelming popular support (Asakawa 2001:61).

As a leader, Koizumi is of the more receptive type at listening to advice (Kabashima and Steel 2010: 105-112; Shinoda 2013: 79-83), but not without limits or principle. In his memoir he recalled: “when a decision is to be made, I would firstly listen to opinions as diversified as possible, but in the end, I still deliberate alone and make up my mind. The pros and cons presented by different advices are normally both persuasive, when I have to disregard friendship or personal preference to make a decision, the moment of truth could be very agonizing. Nevertheless, I always follow my own path” (Koizumi 2006: 23). In other words, despite the extensive political advisors he enlisted, Koizumi held on tight to the power of having the final word. This narrative seems to fit well with his lone-wolf personality and charismatic leadership, while its veracity is to be examined in the following sections.

Gathered around Koizumi there was a group of active and influential political advisors, of which the aforementioned Iijima Isao is a perfect example. He had become Koizumi’s political secretary since 1972 when Koizumi was running for membership of the House, and earned the reputation of the closest in thinking to Koizumi. During his long time service, he constantly went through training in “Koizumi thinking” and thus acquired an understanding of Koizumi’s standards of judgement. According to his own account, it is normally impossible for political supporters to receive a definitive answer from a politician without face-to-face meetings, but things were different in the Koizumi Office: to meet Iijima and secure a guarantee from him is as good as Koizumi’s personal consent (Ōshita 2015: 116). This degree of delegation and trust cannot be achieved without Iijima’s deep understanding of Koizumi’s way of thinking, as well as conformity of positions. Regarding such kind of synchronization, one could raise a question: in the end who is under whose influence? Apparently Koizumi is the one holding the reins, and Iijima largely defers to him; but there is no denying that influence goes both ways, albeit the latter’s influence is more subtle (Ōshita 2015: 116).

Tahara Sōichirō, a prominent Japanese political commentator, once ventured that the key to Koizumi’s political success is his three “epic weapons” (*sanshu no shinki*) (Tahara and Iijima 2007:12-14) in personnel arrangement. The first weapon is Takenaka Heizō, to whom Koizumi entrusted all economic and fiscal responsibilities; the second is the existence of Kamei Shizuka, who played the part of Koizumi’s political enemy, somewhat reluctantly; the third weapon is of course chief secretary Iijima Isao.

Formerly a Professor of economics in Keio University, Takenaka Heizō was directly appointed to be Minister of State for Economic and Fiscal Policy by Koizumi, at the very beginning of his Cabinet. By so doing, Takenaka alone took charge of Japan’s economic reform agenda and became Koizumi’s primary advisor on economic and fiscal matters (Shinoda 2013:83-94). The deft use of appointing ministers of state is a feature of Koizumi’s political tactics worth special noting. In the Japanese context, a “minister of state” means a minister who does not head a particular ministry, equivalent to the British concept of “minister without portfolio” (Uchiyama 2010:132). The ministers of state in the Koizumi Cabinet normally came from a non-political background, such as university professors Takenaka Heizō and Inoguchi Kuniko, who was appointed Minister of State for Gender Equality and Social Affairs. In theory, the prime minister holds the power to appoint or reassign all Cabinet ministers, but in practice the ministers of particular ministries (especially critical ministries like the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Finance) prove hard to manoeuvre. A normal minister is not only a subordinate in the Cabinet, but also the leader of his ministry as a bureaucratic institution, thus compromised by the interests of this particular bureaucratic group in decision-making. The conflict of interests between national wellbeing and bureaucratic groups become a common occurrence in such arrangement, often detrimental to the forming and implementation of national policy (Ueda 2002:134; Shinoda 2007:23-25)). The ministers of state are immune to this problem, because without fixed affiliation to a ministry, they are directly responsible to the prime minister and only answer to him, free from the complication of bureaucratic interests (Iijima 2007:23-24).

Koizumi’s political ingenuity in dealing with ministries is not only reflected in such personnel arrangements, but also evident in his efforts at power centralization, namely the reinforcement of “the Kantei initiative”” (*Kantei shudō*) (Shimizu 2005). During Koizumi’s term, all ministries were severely weakened in power, while the supremacy of the prime minister and *Kantei* in policy-making was consolidated (Shinoda 2013:79-83).

Some political journalist offered another version of “the three crucial persons” who are instrumental in Koizumi’s success in his campaign for a long-term in office: Tanaka Makiko, Iijima Isao and Koizumi Nobuko, the prime minister’s sister (Sano 2004: 214). Since the former two have been mentioned in prior parts and will be revisited, here we only address Koizumi Nobuko and her influence on Koizumi Junichirō’s thinking and decision-making. On this matter a clarification is necessary. Although the majority of Japanese researchers and journalists believe that Nobuko played an enormous part in Koizumi Junichirō’s political career as well as personal life, she almost never gave a public response (Sano 2004: 215). She appears to be a very private person and generally avoids public appearances and interviews. Sano Shinichi, a political journalist, once attempted to pick up the subject of Nobuko’s influence on the prime minister with Iijima Isao and other insiders, only to face persistent refusal (Sano 2004:130-131). The following discussion on Nobuko is mostly based on third-party sources, such as Oka and Sano (Oka 2011: 105-106; Sano 2014).

Koizumi Nobuko served as the minister’s secretary back when her father Koizumi Junya was still the Director General of the Japan Defence Agency, being Japan’s first woman in this role (Sano 2004:131) Compared to Junichirō, Nobuko displayed more interest in a political career in her youth. Unmarried for life, Nobuko went on to devote all her time and energy to the aiding of her brother’s political career. If Iijima Isao is the apparent primary advisor beside Koizumi Junichirō, then Nobuko is the invisible one. The brother and sister share an unsociable character, plus the fact that Junichirō never had many confidants, resulting in Junichirō’s strong inclination to take important matters to his sister alone (*Asahi Shimbun*, 26 April, 2002; Sano 2004:131). Many unexpected courses of action taken by him in his term such as his visit to the Yasukuni Shrine and the two surprise visits to North Korea, were probably decided behind closed doors, between brother and sister. Some critical researchers and journalists gave extreme interpretation to their relationship. For instance, Nishio held that Koizumi Junichirō is indeed a politician without much opinions, not to mention distinctive political thinking, and he is only lucky that he is propped by a strong-willed sister, who made and carried his career in obscurity. Certainly, all such critics admitted that they cannot produce any credible source, that everything is just speculation (Nishio 2005:242).

##### 4.4.2.2 Media and Public Opinion

Public opinion has been the weathervane of post-war Japanese politics and foreign policy (Midford 2011: 3; Taniguchi 2007). More than that, it exerts its own influence on leaders’ political lines and policies, and in reverse, leaders also use the media and manipulate public opinion into doing their own bidding (Midford 2011: 83). In academic research, intense debate is going on concerning whether public opinion is an independent variable or a dependent variable. In Japan’s case, the debate becomes more intricate under the influence of factors like political tradition (Shinoda 2007; Midford 2011; Umemoto 1985; Bobrow 1989). To a certain degree, my study assumes that the media is basically an independent variable, although under the possible influence of politician’s public opinion strategies. My basic position acknowledges the great power of public opinion, and to admit the viability of public opinion manipulation. In Chapter 3, the study of Nakasone’s media strategy emphasized the side of his manipulation of public opinion; in this section concerning Koizumi’s media strategy, the dynamics of both directions are to be investigated in detail.

In Chapter 3, the study of Nakasone revealed his mastery in recruiting and using intellectuals as political advisors. Similarly, in this chapter my argument is that Koizumi’s media and public opinion strategy reached another peak. As evidences to his achievement, Japanese academics and media bestowed colourful by-names on Koizumi’s media strategies and tactics: Theatrical Politics (*gekijō seiji*), Wide-Show Politics (*waidō shō*), Koizumi Whirlwind (*Koizumi senpū*), Koizumi Boom (*Koizumi būmu*), Political Populism, etc. (Ōtake 2003; Ōtake 2006; Uchiyama 2010; Shinoda 2007; Midford 2011; Taniguchi 2007; Mikuriya 2006; Gotō 2014; Kabashima and Steel 2007). An undeniable fact is that after the Cold War, Japanese public opinion as an independent variable became more inclined to conservatism and nationalism. Matthews observed that “Japanese public opinion is becoming increasingly nationalistic and this is driving the country to play a more active military role overseas.” (Matthews 2003)

Koizumi expressed his own understanding of the relationship between public opinion and political elites by claiming to lead rather than to follow public opinion, demonstrating a guardian view of representation (Midford 2011:12). Public opinion, in his view, would inevitably endorse his polices. “People who were once against the US-Japan Security Treaty and UN peace-keeping operations are now in favour of them. The deployment in Iraq will be just the same” (*Asahi Shimbun*, 20 January, 2004). Koizumi’s confidence on one hand reflects the tectonic shift in the post-Cold-War Japanese public opinion; on the other hand, it bespeaks Koizumi’s extent of success in manipulating it.

Certainly, there is a reason of necessity for Koizumi’s active harness of media and public opinion: he needed to appeal directly to the rank-and-file members, since he lacked a support base in the upper echelons of the LDP. In the 2001 election for the LDP president, Koizumi was facing the strong competition from Hashimoto Ryūtarō, who was the leader of the biggest faction (Hashimoto Faction, *Heisei Kenkyūkai*) in the LDP, while Koizumi’s affiliated faction (Mori Faction, *Keisekai*, although he claimed not to belong to any faction) did not command the power of his competitor. At the early stage of the election, external opinions inclined to believe that Hashimoto would win (*Asahi Shimbun*, 14 April, 2001), for LDP elections had been traditionally dominated by factional dynamics. Koizumi refused to rely on factional support. He skipped over the step of party support and directly appealed his political proposals to public opinion. The strategies he employed to gain leadership are dramatically different form previous Japanese political practice (Kabashima and Steel 2007). This is also the official starting point that academic and public opinions regard him as a populist, which Koizumi himself persistently denied to be, by claiming that since the reforms he proposed were “painful”, hard to accept for the public, they---and he---could not be populists (Kabashima and Steel 2010:77; *Asahi Shimbun*, 27 July, 2002).

A technical factor of Koizumi’s success with public opinion is that he happened to ride the tide of the mass media boom of his time. Previous academic research has already expanded on this point (Ōsaka 2014; Taniguchi 2007). Besides that, there are three distinctive media tactics in Koizumi’s public opinion operation (at least in comparison to Nakasone’s): 1) the importance put on the television wide-shows;[[53]](#footnote-53) 2) innovative use of media interviews; 3) active propaganda of personal image and political proposals (Ōsaka 2014).To the success of the last measure, Iijima Isao made indispensable contributions. According to political journalist Gotō Kenji, throughout the time of Koizumi Cabinet almost every piece of media strategy, every link with major media outlets and every wave of image pushing were dripping with Iijima’s efforts (Gotō 2014: 186).

1. the importance put on the TV wide-shows

Hoshi Hiroshi and Ōsaka Iwao claimed that “the wide-shows were responsible for Koizumi’s popularity” (Hoshi and Ōsaka 2006). They also pointed out that producers of wide-shows in collaboration with Koizumi took the economic value of the Koizumi stories into account (Hoshi and Ōsaka 2006). They chose to cover Koizumi because he proved be popular with viewers. The beginning of the Koizumi Cabinet in 2001coincided with the booming start of wide-shows, in a sense one could argue it is Koizumi who pushed forward the politicization of wide-shows and shaped them into important part of public opinion (Ōsaka 2014; Gotō 2014). Wide-shows are in the form of live broadcast, which offers a speaking floor to the more eloquent and improvisational politicians, and the result proved that wide-shows are highly effective in getting messages across and boosting support rate.

Professor Ōsaka Iwao, who specializes in media-politics relations, offers statistics of publications of four major newspapers (*Yomiuri/Asahi/Mainichi/Sankei*) between 2001-2005. A series of search on four keywords: *“Koizumi Gekijō”* (Koizumi theatrics), “*Waidoshō-seiji*” (Wide-show politics), “*Terebi Seiji*” (TV politics) and “*Koizumi majikku*” (Koizumi Magic) returned a considerable proportion of wide-show occurrence.

**Table 4.1 Keywords Occurrence in Four Major Newspapers**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | *Koizumi Gekijō* | *Waidoshō-seiji* | *Terebi Seiji* | *Koizumi majikku* |
| 2001 | 3 | 23 | 15 | 12 |
| 2002 | 12 | 23 | 44 | 12 |
| 2003 | 5 | 14 | 26 | 14 |
| 2004 | 4 | 3 | 13 | 5 |
| 2005 | 660 | 9 | 12 | 105 |

*Source: Ōsaka 2007:5*

Moreover, the proportion of political and foreign affair topics in wide-shows was clearly on the rise, especially in the cases of the wide-shows addressing the Koizumi Cabinet, Diet election and Japanese foreign relations, which constantly ranked in the top three hottest wide-show of the year. Wide-shows concerning the North Korean problem, SDF deployment in Iraq and anti-terrorism issues were normally the priority program of major TV stations (see table 4.2). Koizumi himself took part in various wide-show live broadcasts; other LDP politicians and Koizumi’s political advisors also participated to offer their interpretation of Koizumi’s foreign policy (Kabashima and steel 2010:80). Through wide-shows, viewers (also voters) acquired a rough understanding of Koizumi’s foreign policy, which usually translated into a higher support rate for the Koizumi Cabinet.

#### Table 4.2 Top Wide- show Topics ranked by accumulated Air-time

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| year | rank | Topic | air time |
| 2001 | 1 | Mori Cabinet resigned/Koizumi Cabinet born | 206 hrs 9 mins |
| 2 | 9/11Attacks in America | 203 hrs 53 mins |
| 3 | The birth of Princess Aiko | 26 hrs 59 mins |
| 2002 | 1 | Koizumi’s first visit to North Korea | 222 hrs 9 mins |
| 2 | Foreign Minister Tanaka Makiko ousted | 216 hrs 42 mins |
| 3 | Japan/South Korea football World Cup | 85 hrs 21 mins |
| 2003 | 1 | North Korea related | 197 hrs 23 mins |
| 2 | Iraqi War | 144 hrs 51 mins |
| 3 | House Election related | 80 hrs 29 mins |
| 2004 | 1 | North Korea related | 210 hrs 23 mins |
| 2 | Iraqi situation | 81 hrs 58 mins |
| 3 | Athens Olympic Games | 77 hrs 56 mins |
| 2005 | 1 | House Election related | 166 hrs 30 mins |
| 2 | North Korea Related | 80 hrs 51 mins |
| 3 | Futagoyamabeya disturbance | 72 hrs 44 mins |

*Source: Ōsaka 2014: 298*

1. innovative use of media interviews

Koizumi changed the system of reporting. When a previous prime minister returned to the *Kantei* form the Diet or other functions, journalists from the newspapers, but not television, would follow him, and the prime minister would answer their questions as he walked into the residence (the so-called *burasagari shuzai*, or hanging onto sources). Koizumi and his team changed all this: they limited *burasagari* to the daytime and focused on television journalists in the evenings (Uesugi 2006; Uchiyama 2010); breaking with a long-standing tradition, they began allowing television cameras into the press conference and in May 2001, daily press briefings were introduced as an administrative routine.

The Koizumi administration put great importance on media operations, although Koizumi’s concern over the media may differ from his predecessors. In Japan’s politics-media relationship, traditionally the mainstream media (such as *Yomiuri Shimbun, Asahi Shimbun and Sankei Shimbun*) monopolized most of the political attention, while in his term Koizumi set the precedence of actively dealing with weekly magazines and sports news, even granting them privileged interviews and bringing sports news reporters into Cabinet routine press briefings (Kabashima and Steel 2010: 80-82). For a long time sports newspapers had been excluded from mainstream political reporting, thus their reporters were usually critical towards politicians, sometimes even more hostile than left-wing reporters (Ishizawa 2002). Ever since their admission into Cabinet routine press briefings, their coverage of Koizumi took an unsurprisingly positive turn (Taniguchi 2007).

There are maybe two reasons for Koizumi’s preference for politically “fringe” media, one historical and one compensational. First, Koizumi has a taciturn disposition, famous for his lone-wolf character and “one phrase” terseness. As a result, reporters of mainstream newspapers were initially not too willing to spend their energy and time on him. Famous reporters, who follow politicians around, also favour politicians with sensational potentials and Koizumi was not on their radar, yet. Before becoming the prime minister in 2001, Koizumi lost two LDP elections for president, and his deficiency in media skills might be one of the causes (Ōsaka 2014:281). Second, based on experiences gained from these failures, Iijima Isao concluded that the mainstream media enjoy dominance of readership only in *Nagata-cho* (an area in Tokyo where most Japanese national institutions are located), and their faithful reader base are mostly active within the 2km radius of *Nagata-cho*. In comparison, weekly magazines and sports are more popular with average Japanese, especially housewives. So, they are more effective as the instrument to carry Koizumi’s media push (Suzuki 2008).

1. active propaganda of personal image and political proposals

At the very start, the Koizumi Cabinet learned a lesson from the downfall of the Mori Cabinet as far as the media is concerned. The first measure taken was the improvement of the personal image of the prime minister. Koizumi shaped a persona quite different from the bland image of regular Japanese politicians such as Mori. His untraditionally single status, his curled “lion hair” and his relatively plain wardrobe all shortened his distance from ordinary people, especially housewives. His simplistic work style and lifestyle also seemed to proclaim a new image appropriate for the prime minister of the new century (Gotō 2014:187).

Besides participation in talk shows, wide-shows and print media interviews, Koizumi issued his own Cabinet mail magazine within the *Kantei*, and named it *Lion* *Heart* after his hairstyle. On every Thursday, subscribers receive updates on Koizumi himself and some crucial ministers (Iijima 2006: 35). After his exit, selected parts of the *Lion Heart Mail Magazine* were recompiled and published (Koizumi 2006).

Prime Minister Koizumi on Radio (*Koizumi Sōri: Radio de kataru*), his personal radio broadcast, started on 18 January, 2003 and recurred on the third Saturday of every month, lasting about 10 minutes every time. In this program Koizumi confided in listeners throughout the country, about all the trivia in a prime minister’s life, as well as serious political opinions and observations. This program was in synchronized broadcasting between 34 private radio stations, suggesting a very high audience rating and an extensive recipient base. Such a personable measure not only propagated his political visions, but also helped in building a very human image of the prime minister. By appealing for the concern of ordinary people about politics, it also smoothed the way for the Koizumi Cabinet to push forward its policy.

1. Cabinet Support Rating and Comprehensive Journals’ Criticism of Koizumi

As prime minister of Japan, Koizumi Junichirō enjoyed a tenure of 5 years and 5 months, in term of duration second only to that of Satō Eisaku and Yoshida Shigeru, and slightly longer than the Nakasone Cabinet in the 1980s. What is more, his overall Cabinet support rating has been the highest of all post-war LDP Cabinets. According to the polling numbers of *Asahi Shimbun*, the average support rating of the Koizumi Cabinet is above 50 per cent, with a peak as high as 84 per cent, an unprecedented feat never achieved by any other post-war Japanese prime minister (*Asahi Shimbun*, 9 August, 2006). Figure 4.1 below illustrates the Koizumi Cabinet support rate during his term in office. The *Asahi Shimbun* analysis of polling data also revealed that Koizumi won most credits with his reforms represented by postal privatization, while he received relatively low approval with his handling of foreign and security-related affairs. The trend of fluctuation in figure 4.1 is basically in accordance with this analysis.

#### Figure 4.1 The Support Rate of the Koizumi Cabinet

*Source: Asahi Shimbun, dates as noted above.*

In sharp contrast, the comprehensive journals seemed not enthusiastic about Koizumi, or his general popularity. Despite Koizumi’s phenomenal support ratings both in mainstream newspaper polls and NHK’s public opinion surveys, on the notable comprehensive journals few articles appeared to show approval or support. The yearly numbers of articles concerning Koizumi published in three representative journals are listed in table 4.3. Among them *Bungei Shunjū,* counted most. *Chūō Kōron* numbered next, and *Sekai* displayed the least interest. There is no discernible pattern of correlation between numbers of published articles and years, unlike the situation in the Nakasone years.

#### Table 4.3 Yearly Numbers of Articles concerning Koizumi published by Comprehensive Journal*s*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | *Sekai* | *Chūō Kōron* | *Bungei Shunjū* |
| *2001* | *19* | *16* | *25* |
| *2002* | *13* | *29* | *20* |
| *2003* | *17* | *10* | *28* |
| *2004* | *8* | *14* | *27* |
| *2005* | *16* | *20* | *27* |
| *2006* | *18* | *19* | *23* |

*Source: CiNii (Scholarly and Academic Information Navigator) Database,* [*http://ci.nii.ac.jp/en*](http://ci.nii.ac.jp/en)

*\* Koizumi’s term lasted from 4/2001 to 9/2006. The time limits of this table is set to 6/2001-11/2006, adapting to the convention of Japanese comprehensive journals that the actual release date preceded the official issue date by a considerable margin.*

Moreover, among the limited number of articles that made their way to the three journals, few are in favor of Koizumi and his policies, while criticism is overwhelming. This is also quite different from the mixed critiques Nakasone Cabinet had faced. In other words, Koizumi was not only attacked by journals on the left like *Sekai*, but also by centrist and right-leaning journals like *Chūō Kōron* and *Bungei Shunjū*. Certainly, different camps have different stances, hence different focuses of criticism. Leftists condemned his submissiveness to America on defence and security matters, as well as his visits to the Yasukuni Shrine which led to a diplomatic impasse with China and South Korea; rightists berated him for his rashness in suggesting an empress and held him to his unfulfilled promise of visiting the Yasukuni Shrine on every 15 August (For details, see, Watanabe [T] 2005; Ishizawa 2002; Nakasone 2005; Tanaka 2005). The criticism of Koizumi from both wings of Japanese political intellectuals, in contrast with his immense popular appeal, made it hard to build a straightforward or objective assessment of Koizumi and his politics.

### 4.4.3 Testing Koizumi’s Conservative Thought: Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law and Iraq Special Measures Law

On September 11, 2001, the terrorist attacks on New York sent shockwaves throughout the world. Among the Western countries, Japan is the first to manage a response. In the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, Koizumi acted far more boldly than any previous prime minister in sending the SDF overseas to support the United States (Midford 2011: 122). A “Kantei liaison room” (*Kantei Renrakushitsu*) was promptly set up in the Cabinet Crisis Management Center (*Naikaku Kikikanri Sentā*), providing real-time information and policy support for the prime minister. One hour after the 9/11 breakout, the liaison room was renamed “Kantei contingency room” (*Kantei Taisakushitsu*), presided by Koizumi himself. The former name implies a limited function of information collecting and distributing, while the latter bears the authority to dispose ministerial personnel and resources in coordination (Shinoda 2006:33-34).

The sudden impact of the 9/11 event undoubtedly provided a chance for the Japanese government to put its Cabinet power into practice – and enlarge it in the course. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in theory responsible for such contingency but at the time paralyzed by a confrontation between Minister Tanaka Makiko and entrenched bureaucrats, was in no condition to handle its duty. Koizumi and his *Kantei* team promptly realized that this is a great opportunity to take over the power of foreign policy decision-making from the Ministry. Later in the Diet legislative review, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda took the place of Tanaka Makiko in proposing and explaining the new act, with the excuse that Tanaka Makiko may not possess the capacity to defend this act and improvise with answers. In short, the power of foreign policy-making was taken over by the Kantei, at the expense of Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Shinoda 2004: 60).

To Japanese government, the PKO Act passed in 1992 is just an ersatz law in enabling SDF overseas deployment, for its legitimacy stop with peace-keeping operations only when armed conflicts stopped. In order to take a bigger part in the America-led anti-terrorism war, Japan has to come up with some new legislation (Lam 2009). In addition, the PKO Act also precludes operations in the name of natural disaster assistance and international emergency assistance. Although Japan-America Defense Cooperation Guidelines helped the legislation of Situations in Areas Surrounding Japan Law (*Shuhenjittaihō*, SIASJ Law) in 1998, in no way Indian Ocean and Afghanistan could be interpreted as “surrounding areas”. It was imperative for the Japanese government to have a new contingency law passed.

On September 16, Koizumi formally proposed a new legislation task intended to help the American anti-terrorism action. A special contingency team was set up, headed by Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Furukawa Teijirō and including chief bureaucrats from Defense Agency and Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Akiyama Osamu, Deputy Director of the Cabinet Legislation Bureau (Naikaku Hōseikyoku, CLB), is also member of the team. In principle, draft of legislation needs to go through the review and legal counsel of the CLB. In this case this process was skipped in the name of special occasion and urgency, hence Akiyama Osamu’s presence as a compensation.

Inevitably the new bill would involve SDF overseas deployment and trigger the perception of deviation from the Constitution. Aware of possible repercussion in public opinion, Koizumi preemptively declared that the Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Act would operate within the frame of current Constitutional interpretation. Anticipating a complication with collective defense rights, Koizumi decided not to overreach with an attempt to change the Constitutional interpretation (Shinoda 2006:36).

For a long time, Koizumi kept most of his LDP comrades in the dark about the contents of the Act and the rationale behind it. In contrast, he made an immediate visit to America and promised President Bush to support American anti-terrorism action with Japan’s SDF deployment, maybe goaded by the American complaint of Japan about its Gulf War assistance: “Too little, too late” a decade before. Only when he was back to Japan did the seriousness of this problem start to dawn on other LDP leaders, who began to blame him for the lack of intra-party communication, not without justification (Shinoda 2004:57). Urgency is the excuse, but not the only reason that Koizumi ignore the LDP faction leaders on this matter. Ignoring intra-party coordination (or not seeking party support) has always been his consistent stance. Given his weak base inside the party, negotiation and coordination are likely to be disrupted by faction disputes if he actually tried, causing delay or even abortive setback to his undertaking.

Conventionally, policy and act proposed by a LDP prime minister first need to be discussed in the party’s Policy Review Committee and passed by the General Affairs Committee, then coordinated with the Komei Party, the LDP’s coalition partner, then subjected to Cabinet review. The next step is to present the bill (or act) to the Diet, where opposition parties would likely challenge it, and only when opposition is defeated in the Diet vote could the act become a law (Hayes 2009: 47-66). Any disruption in any link of this process could delay the legislation and implementation of the policy. In order to push his policy speedily, Koizumi chose to ignore the convention and adopt a reverse process. Before negotiation with LDP leaders, he went to the opposition and coalition partner, with whom he settled a prototype of the bill, leaving the pressure to his own party. The consideration behind this tactic is twofold: on one hand, he is emboldened by his high ratings of public support; on the other hand he avoids the LDP battleground where he has too many enemies. Preemptive understanding with opposition and coalition partner, in addition to the urgency and serious nature of the matter, discouraged the LDP faction leaders from making trouble for Koizumi. A Cabinet staffer observed that “for Prime Minister Koizumi who is normally lackluster in party coordination, this approach works surprisingly well.” (Shinoda 2006: 91).

In normal procedure, Diet approval is also the prerequisite for a bill to be drafted. But in this case Koizumi went ahead without obtaining it, only presented a report afterward. In his making of the Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law, Koizumi committed to the strategy of “act first, speak later”. The bill was passed by the Diet and officially became law on October 20, dating 24 days after it was presented, a phenomenal speed for such matters. The registered time of Diet review added to 62 hours for the bill. Compared to 154 hours for the SIASJ Law in 1998 and 179 hours for the PKO Law in 1992, the efficiency of Koizumi’s approach is admirable (Shinoda 2006: 35).

Koizumi’s strong will and the realistic urgency of the matter are not the only reasons of this efficiency. The principle political capital held by Koizumi is the constant public support he enjoyed. First, his personal appeal among Japanese people often put them behind any policy publicly advanced by Prime Minister Koizumi, which is the essence of populism. Second, the 9/11 attacks broke out with brutal imagery, shaking Japanese people to the core; overnight terrorism became the sworn enemy of democratic western world, of which Japan is no exception. According to *Nihon Keizai Shimbun* polling numbers of September 21, 2001, 70% of Japanese were in favor of military assistance to America and the support rating of Koizumi Cabinet raise to 79% from 69% a month before. It was Koizumi’s white-hot support rating that delivered the new law with a speedy birth (*Nihonn Keizai Shimbun*, 25 September,2001).

The Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law is widely considered one of the milestones marking the transition of Japan’s defense and security policy, in that it expanded the SDF’s sphere of overseas activities to a large extent. Work had begun on developing legislation to broaden the sphere of SDF activities after the 1991 Persian Gulf War. The Law Concerning Cooperation for United Nations Peacekeeping Operations and Other Operations (popularly referred to as the PKO Law) was enacted and the Law Concerning Dispatch of Japan Disaster Relief Teams (hereafter the JDR Law) revised in 1992. With the SIASJ Law enacted in 1999 it became possible to provide rear-area support to US forces in the event of a situation occurring in an area near Japan. However, many points in the Anti-Terrorism Law were a big step beyond these other legal measures. (Uchiyama 2010:87)

### 4.4.4 Testing Koizumi’s Conservative Thought: The Yasukuni Shrine Visits

The single most controversial issue of foreign relations in Koizumi’s term is undoubtedly the Yasukuni Shrine visits. In appearance, these visits are purely domestic politics, which was exactly Koizumi’s usual rhetoric and pretext, regarding Chinese and South Korean protests against his visits as the interference in Japan’s internal politics (Koizumi 2006:94). But the Chinese and Korean perception of Yasukuni Shrine visits by a Japanese prime minister is essentially different. Considering the memorial tablets of Japanese class-A war criminals of World War II worshiped in the Shrine, they believe these visits are the epitome of Japanese refusal to repent (Cheung 2016; Smith 2015). Across such gaps in perception, the matter of Yasukuni Shrine visits eventually escalated into a bitter diplomatic problem between Japan and its East Asian neighbours, further aggravated by a series of related disputes on history perception and war responsibilities. So how did the Yasukuni issue come into being in Koizumi’s office and what is his personal perception and understanding of the Shrine? Through his creation and handling of this problem, what can we learn about his conservative political thinking?

Other than two visits to the Yasukuni Shrine, no position or opinion about the issue was ever offered by Koizumi before his prime ministership. Nevertheless in the LDP presidential election, he made a pact with fellow candidates promising to visit the Shrine on 15 August if elected prime minister (*Asahi Shimbun*, 23 April, 2001). This decision was a counterweight against Hashimoto Ryūtarō, his primary competitor, who once was the head of the Japan War-Bereaved Association (*Izokuku-kai*),[[54]](#footnote-54) also a necessity to form alliance with Kamei Shizuka, who is a devoted nationalist. Certainly, with little intersection with foreign policy and no experience of diplomacy, at the time Koizumi probably was not aware that the Yasukuni Shrine visit could become such a damaging issue in Sino-Japan and South Korea-Japan relations (Smith 2015:82-96; Cheung 2010:534-5; Wan 2006:237-9).

Koizumi repeatedly put his Yasukuni Shrine visits as an issue of domestic politics, but on occasions he also involuntarily (or perhaps intentionally) connected it to foreign relations. For instance, when attending the ASEAN Regional Forum in July 2001 Chinese Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan expressed China’s wish that Koizumi would refrain from those visits (*Asahi Shimbun*, 10 July, 2001). In an interview with Japanese reporters, Tang spoke in Japanese about this issue and used the Japanese word “*genmei*” to convey China’s position. By the word Tang meant “clarify”, but its pronunciation can also be interpreted as meaning “order harshly”. Deliberate misreading into the word ensued in the Japanese media, with the intention to create a scenario of arrogant China making out-of-line demands and defiant Japan sticking to its way (Gotō 2014: 199-200; *Asahi Shimbun*, 25 July, 2001). Koizumi also joined the chorus, countering China’s protest: “To suspend summit meetings on difference of opinions, or some other countermeasure, such as an offer of discussions on condition of not visiting, such are not mature attitudes in international relations.” (Gotō 2014: 429). Iijima Isao, his chief advisor, offered a different take on this issue. According to him, China’s strong reaction on Yasukuni Shrine visits was a result of the ill-prepared bureaucracy in the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, negligent in communication and sending confusing signals (Tahara and Iijima 2007:221). As to Koizumi’s personal perception, he repeatedly stressed that he will not give in to any external pressure on the matter of Yasukuni Shrine visit. He even retracted from his “domestic politics” remark before, declaring his visits is not of political nature at all, but a “private spiritual matter” (*Kokoro no mondai*) (*Asahi Shimbun,* 15 August, 2005; Kizumi 2006:94)

Of the real perception of the visits, Koizumi’s remark of “private spiritual matter” provoked great repercussions, both domestically and internationally. Wakamiya Yoshibumi, chief editor of *Asahi Shimbun*, observed that “I do not know whether Koizumi did it for the sake of spirit, maybe it is true. But one thing is certain that he also did it for the votes of *Izoku-kai*. Those votes went to Hashimoto Ryūtarō, Koizumi wants them back” (Lai 2014:123). What is more, by honoring his promise to the electorate with Yasukuni Shrine visits, Koizumi had made it political from the very start, and he had explicitly listed it as one of the reasons to visit (Mochizuki 2010:45). Later facing increasing criticism from media and intellectuals, he withdrew from the previous position and started finding pretexts like “the freedom of personal belief is protected by law” or “the visits are purely matter of spiritual freedom of a private individual” (Wakamiya 2014: 80). Watanabe Tsuneo, president of *Yomiuri Shimbun,* raised some incisive questions in his writing: If the visit is a private spiritual matter, like Koizumi argued, then what is the importance of 15 August, why not choose a night time or other insignificant time? And above all, why create such controversy, if there is no political consideration? (Watanabe 2005)

In essence, what is the meaning of Yasukuni Shrine visit to Koizumi? Obviously, Koizumi is not a conservative of the retrogressive type, suggesting he is not a nationalistic Yasukuni Shrine fanatic (Kurashige 2013: 393). Aside from the common understanding that he intended to win over the *Izoku-kai*, there are psychological factors worth examining. Rather than a matter of history perception and diplomatic contention, to Koizumi the problem of Yasukuni visit is indeed a display of personal style (Mochizuki 2010; Mikuriya 2006). In other words, he continued the practice despite China and South Korea’s opposition, with the intention of showcasing his defiant political style and his integrity as the Prime Minister of Japan to honor a tough promise, both contributing to his gravitas and charisma (Kurashige 2013: 395). Just like Iijima argued: as the leader of the Japanese people, to honor his political promise is Prime Minister Koizumi’s duty, a long-forgotten virtue in Japanese politics (Tahara and Iijima 2007: 220). Besides, Koizumi may have tried to rally the nation with his visits, as renewed nationalism in the Japanese populace could be favorable. With the LDP party and other social conservatives, fronts that he normally would have had trouble with, Yasukuni Shrine visits may have the effect to tip the trend of opinion in his favor (Kurashige 2013: 396).

Nevertheless, Koizumi’s Yasukuni visits eventually led to the cancelation of Japan-China summits and the interruption of shuttle visits between South Korean and Japanese government leaders. The adverse effects on Japan’s East Asian relations were more than evident. In late 2005 when Koizumi’s term was nearing its end, the Yasukuni Shrine problem was no longer a media-instigated “Japan vs. China/South Korea” contest of national feelings (Li 2010: 232). Instead, it evolved into a renewed, domestic and comprehensive problem in politics, media and religion and caused structural damage to Japanese society. Foremost, it became a power struggle between opposing factions within the LDP. In the LDP of late 2005, the “Yasukuni Shrine visit” was the rallying call for the fight between traditional conservatives and neo-conservative in contest over the “post-Koizumi era” dominance, and the line was drawn between pro-visit and anti-visit crowds (*Asahi Shimbun*, 11 November, 2005). The “YKK” moderates group, whose name is the initial combination of their leaders (Yamasaki Taku and Katō Kōichi), began to criticize Koizumi for his visits, despite their former good terms with the Prime Minister (*Asahi Shimbun*, 19 November, 2005). Besides, the political tie between the Emperor and Yasukuni Shrine was undone. *Nihon Keizai Shimbun* published the Tomita Memo on 20 July, 2006, revealing the discontent of the late Emperor Shawā over the Class-A War Criminals’ entry into Yasukuni Shrine, vindicated with his absence there ever since (*Nihon Keizai Shimbun,* 20 July, 2006). This revelation further dampened the enthusiasm of Japanese politicians to visit the Shrine.

## Conclusion

Koizumi is far from typical in terms of his conservatism. There is no settled measurement of how conservative (or neo-conservative) he is, nor where he should be placed on the spectrum of Japanese political conservatism, or if he ever is a conservative, in the real sense.[[55]](#footnote-55) The academic study and media scrutiny of the prime minister offers views of his many facades, often contradicting one another. To Koizumi, political thought is something comfortably inconsistent and easily subject to practical needs. For instance, he did not reveal any tendency of nationalism or statism, nor visited the Yasukuni Shrine, nor developed a clear political position. More tellingly, he did not raise the issue of the Yasukuni Shrine visit in his first two unsuccessful runs for the LDP presidency; but after winning the third time and taking the prime minister’s office, he abruptly switched to the mode of yearly visit. One cannot help but wonder how much of his “conservative” behavior is ideological, and how much theatrical (Wakamiya 2014:81). His position about Tennoism, which is another conservative “bastion issue”, further deviates from conservative tradition and their expectation of him. His accommodation of the idea that a female is fit to ascend the throne infuriated the conservative old guards, who believe in the divinity of the Emperor with its unbroken male lineage (Nishio 2005; Nakanishi and Fuakuda 2005).

It is easier to understand the practical and opportunistic nature of Koizumi’s political thinking through the security issue and constitutional revision issue. Before becoming prime minister, Koizumi was vocally against SDF overseas deployment -- especially the PKO Law in 1992 – on the grounds that SDF overseas deployment is not in accordance with the government’s constitutional interpretation. When he served as the Posts and Telecommunications Minister in the Miyazawa Kiichi Cabinet, he opposed continuing the Cambodia deployment (Blustein 1993). Who would expect him to be the politician to later distinguish himself as prime minister by expanding SDF deployments overseas?

In other words, Koizumi had no problem with Constitutional revision, if it serves the end of collaboration with the US. In the meantime, he disapproved of constitutional re-interpretation. However, after taking office, he did not make any substantial move on constitutional revision, and just like former administrations, chose the means of re-interpretation, which he once belittled. Again, Koizumi seemed to be inconsistent on constitutional revision and overseas deployment issues.

If political ideology (or belief) is not the guide of Koizumi’s action, as these inconsistencies suggest, then what is? The dominant academic explanation is populism. That is to say, most of Koizumi’s actions and policies are designed either to cater to public opinion and build his own popular image, or to instigate particular public sentiments and utilize it to his own advantage. As discussed in this chapter, there is a constant and strong presence of populism in his media operation, his use of political advisors and his concentration of political power to the *Kantei*. In contrast to his popularity with mainstream newspapers, his oscillation in political positions incurred sustained criticism from both conservative and progressive intellectuals, as shown by the study of comprehensive journals in this chapter. This line of difference reflected a distinctive feature of populism: it works with the mass populace, whose opinion is in this case represented by poll ratings of the newspaper; it is not favoured, or often opposed by intellectual elites, who in this case use comprehensive journals, Japan’s traditional intellectual channel, to voice their distaste.[[56]](#footnote-56) The criticism of Koizumi in the majority of books published by intellectuals further proves my point (*Yomiuri Shimbunsha* 2006; Watanabe Osamu 2005; Mikuriya 2006; Saeki 2002 etc.).

Then how to account for Koizumi’s series of breakthrough actions on defence and security? The SDF came to be dispatched overseas in the wake of the 9/11 terror attacks for the purpose of assisting the US forces. One school of thought in Japan maintains that the government should as a rule leave defence matters in the hands of the US, while an opposing school believes Japan should strengthen the alliance by making manpower and military contributions. Koizumi made clear that he stood with the latter. On this point, the Koizumi administration can be said to have held definite principles also in the areas of foreign and defence policy. Certainly, the series of cooperative efforts with the US “can be thought of as an almost Pavlovian response caused by an obsessive conviction that Japan must deploy the SDF and support the US” (Uchiyama 2010: 93), as well as a result of Koizumi’s close personal relationship with Bush.

Yet on the matter of the Yasukuni Shrine visits, public opinion did not quite follow Koizumi’s lead, nor was there any significant drop in his support ratings. In short, the public’s attitude changed little on this matter despite Koizumi’s Yasukuni drama, if measured by poll ratings. The reason may be that Yasukuni visit is not recognized as the only or major measure of conservativeness. Or Koizumi’s motive for the visits was widely speculated as not of ideology but of political necessity. After all, the Yasukuni visit has long become a standard political prop used by Japanese neo-conservative politicians to appeal to the right-wing electorate, especially in the course of running for government or party posts. Koizumi was just following earlier leads. Certainly, many of these politicians handle the visits with nuance and flexibility: they may stop visiting in response to political imperatives, choose less conspicuous visiting times, or present offering instead of themselves (Li 2010: 253). In comparison, Koizumi kept true to his promise and visited every year, though not one hundred per cent: not until 2006, the last year of his office, did he fulfill his promise of visit on 15 August (Nishio 2005: 161).

The case study of Koizumi’s security policy and Yasukuni policy embodied his mixed achievement: success in defence and security policy but stalemate in East Asian foreign relations. Koizumi himself tends to believe in a correlation between these two fronts, based on his understanding that US-Japan relation holds a decisive sway over Japan’s East Asian relations. He once suggested that “so long as the US-Japan relationship remains in good shape, other foreign relations would fall naturally in order; Japan cannot expect friendly terms with any other country if US-Japan relation is damaged” (Nakano 2015: 129). Of course, he has been proven wrong. Iokibe Makoto, an advisor on security policy for the Koizumi Cabinet, offered a quite balanced assessment of Koizumi’s foreign policy. He highly praised Koizumi for his maintenance of US-Japan relations, credited him for solving the hostage crisis with North Korea, but was sharply critical of is failure to improve East Asian relations.[[57]](#footnote-57) The study in this chapter further concludes that considering Koizumi’s political style and strategy, East Asian foreign relations is an unsolvable dilemma for him.

Certainly, Koizumi’s economic policy is featured with de-regulation, characteristic of neo-liberal economic policies. It bears much resemblance with the American and British economic reforms carried out by neo-conservatives in the 1980s, which is why Nakano put Koizumi down as a neo-conservative in the sense of economic policy.[[58]](#footnote-58) However, Koizumi’s positions on matters more attached to value system, such as defence and security, Tennoism and view of history, are much harder to define. As Nakanishi Hiroshi put it, Koizumi is a populist in terms of political tactics, but at the same time can be called a liberal in terms of certain political positions. He is the best example illustrating that economic conservatism and liberalism are not necessarily coupled to their political counterparts.[[59]](#footnote-59)

# Chapter 5 Abe Shinzō’s Conservative Thought and Foreign Policy

## 5.1 Introduction

At the end of 2012, by winning a clear majority in the House of Representatives, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) reclaimed its political leadership of Japan after a three-year hiatus. Echoing its campaign slogan— “Take Japan Back” (*Nippon o torimodosu*), the LDP declared itself regrouped and renewed upon its return to power (Abe 2014:17). This phrase contains a multitude of messages as it is designed for both international and domestic audiences (Maslow 2015:750). On 22 February, 2013, Abe delivered a highly anticipated speech at the Washington, DC-based Centre for Strategic and International Studies, entitled “Japan is Back” (Abe 2014: 13-27). Abe outlined his reform agenda, pledging to balance economic reform with new security policy measures. Promising to intensify cooperation in the US- Japan alliance, Abe declared that “Japan is not now and will never be a tier two nation” (*niryū kokka*) and therefore “Japan must stay strong, strong first in its economy, but also in its national defence” (Abe 2013). In defining Japan’s international role, Abe outlined Japan would act as a “rule promoter” and a “commons’ guardian”, as well as an “effective ally and partner of the US and other democracies” (Abe 2014:13). Abe Shinzō, the president of the winning party and by default the prime minister of Japan, was not new to the role: he had earlier been the occupant of this office for a year (2006-2007). His victory represented the first time that an ex-prime-minister retook the prime minister’s office since the merger of the two conservative parties in 1955. Even with the entire seventy years of post-war Japanese history taken into account, only Yoshida Shigeru achieved this feat before Abe (Hughes 2015:2). Admittedly, for Abe’s return to power the party should claim most of the credit by winning a majority in the election, but how did Abe make it again to the LDP presidency? What empowered him with such confidence and perseverance that are imperative to his latest success? What difference did Abe’s political thought make in this process? Answers to these questions are the most central to this chapter’s study of Abe.

More specifically, what convictions revitalized Abe to make a second run for the LDP presidency, arising from a brief and failed first term as prime minister? How did he win over once more the trust of the LDP community, especially the support of LDP House Members? As it was, the first Abe Cabinet had lasted only for a year, with its policies generally perceived as lackluster (Endō and Pekkanen 2016). Despite a mediocre performance, in his first term Abe already displayed an ambition for long-term governance (*Asahi Shimbun,* 8 June, 2007), which only materialized in his second term from December 2012 on. In terms of Cabinet duration, Abe’s record already has surpassed that of Kishi Nobusuke, his own grandfather, Koizumi Junichirō, Nakasone Yasuhiro and ranks third among all post-war Japanese prime ministers.[[60]](#footnote-60) The study of this thesis places an emphasis on interpreting the behaviour of Japanese leaders from the perspective of conservative thinking, which aims to provide a deeper understanding of Abe’s political tenacity and resilience.

Abe is universally considered as an archetypal conservative politician by academics and public opinion, as evidenced below, and his words and deeds in his terms as prime minister live up to the reputation. Then, what is the content of his political thought? How has it been shaped? What are the influences of his family background and education on the shaping of his conservatism? Last but not least, how has his conservatism been manifest in the policies of the Abe government? These are the questions this chapter seeks to answer.

In terms of sources, unlike Koizumi Junichirō, Abe has always been more than willing to share his ideas and articulate his positions and policies in public, whether in the prime minister’s office or not. Sometimes he actively put them into personal practice, as illustrated by his connections with nongovernmental conservative organizations (e.g. *Nippon Kaigi*). In this sense, he is more like Nakasone Yasuhiro. With such conditions, my study primarily uses first-hand materials based on his speeches and writings, as well as direct records and critiques of Abe by others (e.g. Abe 2014; Abe 2013; Abe 2006; Abe and Okazaki 2004). Of course, these materials cannot be immune to partiality: after all, Abe himself and his close associates would hardly expose any undesirable traits or deliver serious criticism. Therefore, the chapter investigates the veracity and credibility of the materials, and makes critical interpretations of them.

However, a remaining limitation of this chapter is that Abe is the incumbent Prime Minister, making my writing concurrent with his term in office. It poses a challenge of not sliding into constructing a current-events commentary, without ignoring how his current behaviour is still influenced by his conservative thought. Another limitation is that the majority of my materials on Abe is contemporary commentary, along with a modest amount of academic literature. Presumably, some of my assessment and viewpoints may be subject to challenge in the future (especially when more crucial and detailed materials are revealed or more official records are declassified). In order to make a sustained attempt to approach the subject, official records (such as the proceeding records of the Diet) are used as sources as well. Interviews with active politicians and academics are also given emphasis, for the benefit of creating a panorama and finding unique perspectives on Abe’s conservatism and his policies.[[61]](#footnote-61)

The structure of this chapter is as follows: first, we address the origins and formation process with which Abe developed his political thought, focusing on his family, education and some peripheral personalities; second, we analyse Abe as a politician, focusing on his political activity of both an official and private nature, as well as his words and deeds reflecting his conservatism; third, the chapter examines Abe’s foreign policy as the Prime Minister, focusing on the logical connection between his policy, his conservatism and his political tactics. Specific illustrations are addressed in the last part of the chapter.

## 5.2 Abe Shinzō: Personality and Thinking

### 5.2.1 Family Background and Influences

Abe has a well-publicized personal motto: “Never forget your first resolution” (*Shosshin Wasurerubekarazu*), in which the phrase “first resolution” has a subtle meaning in the original Japanese. It can be interpreted as faith, or conviction, or vocation, or some more specific political thought. An analysis of this term will be carried out in the following section, while here we deal with how his “first resolution” originally came into being and under whose influence. Some researchers consider it a development of his political ideology before becoming prime minister; some cite the influence he received when he served as his father (Abe Shintarō)’s secretary; some attribute it to his time at university; some trace it back to the legacy of his maternal grandfather Kishi Nobusuke, or even to the “political DNA” (Wang and Wang 2007:3-4; Tamogami 2013: 18-20) passed down by Abe Kan, his paternal grandfather who had died before Abe Shintarō’s marriage. Varied as these interpretations are, all point to the vital part played by his family background in the conception of Abe’s ideas.

Abe Shinzō was born in Tokyo to a prominent political family in 1954. His mother, Abe Yoko, is the daughter of Kishi Nobusuke, Prime Minister of Japan from 1957 to 1960 who earned the nickname “The monster of Shōwa” (*Shawā no Yōkai*) (Tajiri 1979). Abe Kan, his paternal grandfather, was a renowned liberal politician in pre-war and wartime Japan. Abe Shintarō, his father, served as high up as the Foreign Minister but died of ill health just when he was preparing to run for prime minister. This incident resulted in Abe Shinzō’s takeover of his father’s electoral turf in 1993. A curious and often neglected detail is that Abe Shinzō talked a great deal about Kishi Nobusuke, his materal grandfather but seldom mentioned his paternal grandfather, Abe Kan. In fact, Kan was also a political heavyweight in his time, albeit famous for his liberalism and staunch opposition to the wartime foreign policies of the Konoe Fumimaro and Tojō Hideki Cabinets (Yoshida 2002: 66). It seems that Kan’s early death (1946) precluded a direct impact on the ideological development of Abe Shinzō, who subsequently seems to have inherited Kishi Nobusuke’s political genes. In addition, Satō Eisaku, Prime Minister of Japan from 1964 to 1972, is Kishi Nobusuke’s brother and Abe Shinzō’s great uncle. Being an elite disciple of the Yoshida School, Satō Eisaku was a core figure in the Conservative Mainstream in contrast to Kishi Nobusuke, who was arguably the founder of the Conservative Anti-mainstream.

Kishi Nobusuke was born Satō Nobusuke in Yamaguchi Prefecture, a region known for producing political leaders, including those of the Meiji Restoration (Kitaoka 2016:98-99). Numerous Japanese prime ministers have their roots in Yamaguchi, including three in the extended Abe family (Kishi Nobusuke, Satō Eisaku and Abe Shinzō). There is little doubt of Kishi Nobusuke’s nature as a conservative in general, as well as his implication in the old regime’s war crimes. What distinguished him from post-war Conservative Mainstream politicians are the underlying traces of pre-war statism in his political thinking and policies (Hara 1995: 148-149). Abe Shinzō repeatedly made the claim that he inherited his grandfather’s politics on multiple fronts, which is suggested by the general trend of his policies (Abe 2006:18). Kishi resigned from public office in 1960 and lived to 1987 when Abe was well into his thirties, leaving a lot of time for the grandfather and grandson to share and to form political bonds. In the meantime, Abe Shintarō had been preoccupied with his own career until his son became his secretary, and only then did Shinzō start to understand his father (Matsuda 2015:17). Abe himself spoke of this: “There was not much togetherness in our family, because my father was scarcely home. When he actually was, it could be a little uneasy for the rest of us” (As quoted in Nogami 2015: 16). This may help explain why Shinzō frequently mentioned Kishi but neglected to mention his father’s role in general. Another reason for Kishi’s impact on Shinzō’s conservative thought is that, politically speaking, Kishi was a more substantial politician than his father.

Abe Shinzō’s orientation towards his maternal grandfather was also linked to the role Kishi played in politics compared to his father. In his understanding, Kishi is a statesman of the pre-war “Greater Japan” who survived its downfall and strived for its resurrection (Watanabe 2007: 138-139). As Abe declared himself:

To talk about who had the greatest influence on my conservatism, the answer is undoubtedly my grandfather. He was born in the great Meiji Era and grew up in the pre-war time, which is an unacquainted yet fascinating period to me. The pre-war stories told by my grandfather were both refreshing and inspiring to me as a teenager. On the part of my father, although he had a pre-war education, he was plunged into the war and the tragic experience defined his political thought ever since. He was committed to the soul-searching typical of his generation: why did such a war could happen? … He was fundamentally skeptical about pre-war Japan. But grandpa lived through a time of glory and dream for Japan. The spirit of that time had been built into him, too deep to be erased whatever came next. That’s the essential difference between my father and my grandfather (Kurimoto and Abe 1996:44-45).

In his book *Utsukushii kuni e*, again Abe could hardly contain his veneration toward Kishi:

“Even when I was very young, I understood that my grandpa is one of the very few great statesmen who took the destiny of the nation upon himself. He never gave ground, never compromised, against long odds and despite all criticism. I admire him with all my heart.” (Abe 2006: 24)

Among Abe’s many ideological elements inherited from Kishi, constitutional revision is the most entrenched. Political journalist Nogami Tadaoki, who conducted exclusive interviews with multiple members of the Kishi/Abe family, argued that, in a sense, Abe’s focus on constitutional revision reflects his wish to carry out Kishi Nobusuke’s “political will” (*Seijiteki Itaku*). In his own memoir, Kishi said that “constitutional revision is the most imperative mission for Japan to rebuild, also my cause to return to politics. The current Constitution is the mainstay of American occupation policies. It is the prime minister’s job to convince the Japanese people so, and to persuade them into action” (Quoted in Hara 1995: 23). One of Abe’s university classmates recalled that the young Abe’s political passion and his vocation to become a statesman were both built on the vision of constitutional revision (Nogami 2015:9). Sometimes, Abe’s sense of right and wrong was not based on personal judgment or what was taught in university class about politics and history, but on his grandfather’s “instruction” (*oshie*) from an earlier time (Nogami 2015:59).

The relationship between Abe Shintarō and Kishi Nobusuke helps to shed further light on Abe. Despite being married to Kishi’s daughter, Shintarō did not want to be labeled as one of the Kishi Clan (Bessatsu Takarajima 2014:22). The marriage between Abe Shintarō and Kishi Yoko in 1951 was dubbed “the handshake between war and peace” (*Sensō to Heiwa no akushu*) by many contemporaries, or more caustically, “the handshake between monster and human” (*Yōkai to Ningen no akushu*) (Bessatsu Takarajima 2014:22). As previously noted, Shintarō’s father Abe Kan was a liberal politician famous for his anti-war stance, while Kishi Nobusuke was deeply involved in the affairs of war and was once a suspect of war crimes.

Although the political background of his own family was noteworthy enough, Abe Shintarō nevertheless benefitted a great deal from his Kishi connection, especially in his running for the Diet and his appointment as Cabinet minister (Envall 2015: 145).

However, since this study focuses on the political nature of Abe Shinzō’s thought, more references to and connections with Kishi are pertinent, while Shintarō’s influence is only of secondary importance.

### 5.2.2 Education and the Formation of Abe’s Thought

As noted in the previous section, the crucial family influences on Abe’s political career can be summarized as two factors: first, generation after generation of predecessors with conservative ideas passed their legacy onto Abe and this formed his basis as a conservative politician; second, with so many prominent names in the family as political leaders and high ranking officials, the hereditary Japanese electoral system allowed Abe to become a politician, and even a prime minister.[[62]](#footnote-62)

Of course, these two factors alone are not sufficient to understand Abe’s political makeup today. In order to explore Abe’s conservative thinking further, we also need to examine his wider milieu beyond his family.

Abe’s education is quite atypical for a Japanese prime minister. The highest academic degree he received is the Bachelor of Laws from Seikei University. Japan puts emphasis on educational qualifications; the popularity received by and achievement expected for a graduate from certain university can always serve as a reverse-indicator to the prestige of the institution, no matter in political, governmental, economic or academic environment (Kariya 2013: 98-103). Of all the thirty-two prime ministers in post-war Japan, only Tanaka Kakuei and Suzuki Zenkō held no university degree; the others are at least university graduates, most of them from prestigious institutions, University of Tokyo, Waseda University, Kyoto University and Keio University. In comparison, Abe, who was from Seikei University, can be arguably named as the lowest degree-holder among prime ministers (those with degrees, that is). In his books Abe went out of his way to avoid bringing up his life in university. Even in his semi-autobiographical books: *Utsukushii Kuni e* (2006) and *Atarashii Kuni e* (Toward a New Nation, 2013), he managed to omit the details of his university years.

Then, how much of Abe’s conservatism was a product of his university, or what is the school’s function in the formation of Abe’s conservatism? Currently, much criticism of Abe focuses on his arbitrary political style and his rejection of different opinions (Hosaka 2015; Kakizaki 2015; Hughes 2015). One can speculate that a certain educational inferiority complex is at play in Abe’s mind. Another investigation of the educational background of the Abe Cabinet members reveals that only four ministers of the third Abe Cabinet (since October 2015) graduated from the University of Tokyo, the fewest among all post-war Cabinets (Nogami 2015:65).

Abe’s attitude towards intellect, education and elites is reflected in these instances. Some researchers make a connection between Abe’s inferiority complex (supposedly originated in his university years) and the “anti-intellectualism” exhibited by the Abe Cabinet. On issues such as the legislation of State Secrecy Law and The National Security Bills, for instance, Abe displayed his lack of respect for public opinion, especially intellectual opinion (*Asahi Shimbun*, 12 June, 2015; Uchida 2015; Akazaki 2015). Anti-intellectualism, the hostility towards intellect and intellectuals, has a widespread presence in culture, politics and social life. It generally takes two forms, the first being scepticism of intellect, education and rationality, the second mistrust and derision of intellectuals (Hofstadter 1962; Lim 2008). As a manifestation of conservatism, certain element of anti-intellectualism is evident in Abe’s behaviour, such as his attitude towards political advisors.

### 5.2.3 The Formation of Abe’s Political Thought

##### 5.2.3.1 A Definition of Abe’s Political Thought

Abe Shinzō is commonly described as “a modern-day representative of Japan’s revisionist policy elite, advocating a hawkish foreign and security policy” (Samuels 2007). In terms of seniority, Abe is not at an advantage inside the LDP, as there are plenty of LDP politicians with longer Diet membership than his, such as his current Cabinet members Ishiba Shigeru (elected House Member in 1986 despite being 3 years younger than Abe) and Asō Tarō (elected House Member in 1979 and Prime Minister between Abe’s two terms). Evidently, Abe’s victory over powerful competitors is not merely the result of his personal qualifications and political thought. There are multiple factors at play, including political timing, power dynamics and strong allies, which converged into Abe Shinzō’s political dominance (Tahara 2015b).

Watanabe Osamu suggests the uniqueness of the Abe Cabinet lies in that he is the first prime minister born after the war, and that he is the first prime minister who avowed to bring about constitutional revision within his term in office (Watanabe 2007:7). Four reasons are offered in this study as to why Abe stands out among Japanese prime ministers. First, Abe is a hereditary politician. In comparison, Koizumi Junichirō is also a hereditary politician, but he is an atypical one and managed to play it down by personal choice, while Abe embraces his prominent legacy and does not mind the high-profile at all. Second, Abe’s political thinking and position generally cater to the prevailing trend of Japanese society. In other words, his right-leaning strategy and view of history are tailored to the surging conservative politics and right-wing social forces (Taniguchi 2015). Third, being relatively young is one of his most valuable political assets. Technically this is only true for his first term in 2006, and his sudden resignation in 2007 was lamented by the media as the price paid for youth (Watanabe 2016; Kakizaki 2015). And last, the novelty and vigour of his policies bring about hope, which has been scarce in Japanese politics for decades. His youth might be the apparent winner in 2006, but the stability of his regime from 2012 on can only be explained more convincingly in terms of the economy (Hughes 2015; Kakizaki 2015). The series of economic reform policies known as Abenomics and the consequent economic excitement, for better or worse, are the primary reasons behind his unfaltering support ratings.

Too many political labels are attached to Abe as prime minister. Some of these labels are self-styled; some he owns unapologetically; the media, public opinion and academic critics contribute the rest (Kakizaki 2015; Hughes 2015; Nakano 2015; Hosaka 2015). Critiques of Abe from the public and academic spheres are generally more diversified than those of Koizumi, and much more heated when it comes to criticism (Watanabe 2007:200). In the previous chapter where we analyzed Koizumi, the bulk of the commentary was focused on his populism and political theatrics, in other words, on the level of political tactics. But Abe, besides wielding political tactics with skills on a par with Koizumi’s, is much more ideological, a true believer in conservatism, and a serious right-wing thinker.[[63]](#footnote-63) Thus he deserves more thorough investigation into his political thought.

Many branches of Abe’s political thought are so close to the far end of the right-wing spectrum that some researchers regard them beyond the scope of classical conservatism (Watanabe 2016; Nakano 2015; Hughes 2015; Hosaka 2015). They even suggest that it is no longer appropriate to define Abe’s political thought as conservatism. For instance, Nakajima Takeshi opined that as self-styled conservatives, prominent Japanese politicians like Abe Shinzō and Asō Tarō preach “liberty, democracy and human rights as universal values” in Japan’s foreign policy, in the hope of building an “Arc of Freedom and Prosperity” along with the US, Australia, New Zealand and India, but the real aim is to contain China (Nakajima 2010: 80). Nakajima deemed it even beyond Abe’s own conservative norm, to be nothing but a resumption of a Cold War mentality. From Nakajima’s perspective, the so-called conservative logic of Abe Shinzō’s foreign policy has deviated from conservative doctrines to represent Cold War era anti-leftism and anti-communism (Nakajima 2010: 81).

Abe is quite complacent about “Abenomics”, the term specifically created to refer to his economic reform policies. There are some other less-known bynames and political slogans circulating, such as “Abe-geopolitics” (*Abe Seijigaku*) and “Proactive Pacifism” (*Sekkyokuteki Heiwashugi*), But labels coming from the media and academics are not always as positive as those, such as “statism” (*kokkashugi*), “retro-statism” (*kyoku kokkashugi*), “retro-hawk” (*kyoku uyoku*), “fascism” and “Abeism” (*abeizumu*) (Kakizaki 2015; Inoguchi 2014). Some researchers have attempted to create an umbrella term to cover all of Abe’s policies, internal and external. For example, “Abeism” was first used by Kakizaki, who defines it as an incarnation of statism, featuring revisionism on the view of history, a tough stance on foreign affairs, remilitarization in defence and indoctrination in education (Kakizaki 2015: vi). Hughes made another attempt in his recent book using the phrase “Abe Doctrine”. He put “Abe Doctrine” to the historical level of “Yoshida Doctrine” and points out that the former is in the process of transcending the latter (Hughes, 2015:2). In other words, the “Abe Doctrine” has always wielded the latent force to set Japan on a new path of international relations (Pilling 2014: 242-244).

Abe seems indifferent to these negative political labels. He once said that “I do not mind being called a hawk or a conservative. Those who call me a hawk constantly put themselves on the opposing side of anyone they deem hawkish, thus losing their objectivity and political maneuverability. I make my judgment based on the interests of the people and the nation. The purpose of my politics is to protect the property and safety of Japanese people, and to maintain peace and stability for Japan. I will not give up some options of my means in fear that the leftists would call me a hawk. As to the question whether they are the right means to the end, it is up to the people’s choice and history’s judgment.” (Abe and Okazaki 2004: 213)

Watanabe Osamu uses three features to define the first Abe administration: 1. retro-hawkish regime. 2. escaping-the-post-war regime. 3. weakened regime (Watanabe 2007: 17-21). These three features are innately consistent with the subject: Abe is himself a retro-hawk; his ultimate political goal is to escape the post-war regime; the brevity of his first term proved the weakness of his government. Certainly, the second Abe Cabinet has been consolidated with the experience learnt from his previous failure and cannot be described as a “weak regime”.

Watanabe points out that the second Abe Cabinet is basically formed under the pressure from big business (*zaikai*) and the US, thus not politically strong in nature; but a series of tactics can be employed to neutralize such negative influences (Watanabe 2013:89). One example is the Abe regime’s slogan: “Revival of a Strong Japan” (*Tsuyoi Nippon no Fukkatsu*). On 28 February 2013, Abe opened his keynote speech with such words:

“There is no one who can create a strong Japan but ourselves: “National independence through personal independence” (*Isshinn dokuritsu*, *Ikkoku dokuritsu suru*, quote from Fukuzawa Yukichi). We must abandon expectations of others. If we cannot become the master of our own destiny, on our own terms, then there is no hope in our future.”[[64]](#footnote-64)

Watanabe also offered interpretations of the second Abe Cabinet’s catchphrases: “Strong Economy, Strong Defence and Strong Society”. (1) A neo-liberal structural reform in order to escape from Japan’s prolonged deflation. This is the nature of so-called Abenomics. (2) Exercise the right of collective self-defence through constitutional re-interpretation and become a military power. The State Secrecy Law (*Tokutei Himitsu Hogohō*), the creation of NSC (Japan) and the National Security Bills passed in 2015 are all concrete steps towards this goal. (3) A re-integration of Japanese society under the banner of neo-conservatism. A series of policies is implemented to promote Abe’s conservative ideas throughout Japanese society, e.g. the Education Rebuilding Council (*Kyōiku Saisei Jikō Kaigi*) resurrected in January 2013 (Watanabe 2013:89-110).

The most comprehensive revelation of Abe’s political thought is his 2006 book *Utsukushii Kuni e*, which served as his manifesto in running for prime minister. After his victory, it was repeatedly reprinted and became a bestseller (Abe 2006). The “Beautiful Nation” slogan faded out of public attention during his first term. After five years of lying low and contemplation, Abe led the LDP back to victory at the end of 2012 and published *Atarashii Kuni e* in 2013. In the new book, Abe introduced a new slogan: “Take Japan Back” (*Nippon o torimodosu*). What kind of Japan is to be taken back? In Abe’s words, the old Japan with a long history and rich tradition. Here the “old Japan” seems to contradict the “new nation”, but Abe’s logic is in fact coherent. In his view, the current Japan is not what it is supposed to be: the old Japan with a long history, rich tradition and superior culture, and his mission is to reshape Japan into the nature and glory of the good old days (Abe 2013).

Abe constantly claims he is a conservative: “Conservatism, or enlightened conservatism, is my basic principle. In my view conservatism is not an ideology, but the way to understand Japan and the Japanese.” (Abe 2013: 31-32) Moreover, he believes being conservative is not only a responsibility to current and future Japanese, but also an obligation to all Japanese predecessors. In his own words: “I need to understand and contemplate how to preserve and develop the Japanese tradition passed to us through thousands of years.” (Abe 2006: 1) Abe harbors a strong sense of mission, regarding himself as destined to find the path forward for Japan (Abe 2006:38). His favourite quote (which is also Yoshita Shōin’s favourite) is an aphorism by Mencius: “If, on self-examination, I find that I am upright, I will go forward against thousands and tens of thousands.”(Abe 2006: 40) With this quote Abe displays his conviction.

The ideal of Abe’s conservatism is not American-style liberty, but British Toryism. His role model as a political leader is not Richard Nixon, but Winston Churchill (Abe and Okazaki 2004:214). Certainly, Abe’s British taste can be partly attributed to the influence of Nakanishi Terumasa (Nakanishi 2000).

In Abe’s political thought, the conservative political line and ultra-nationalism are two sides of the same coin (Watanabe 2007:206). He inherited Kishi Nobusuke’s nostalgia for pre-war Japan, making “national independence” and “economic revival” his top priorities, instead of keeping his feet and head in the post-war or post-Cold-War Japan. Abe’s conservatism is both retrospective and unorthodox, a crossbreed between nationalism and neo-liberalism (Kakizaki 2015). His kind of nationalism is also different from the post-war mainstream conservative nationalism represented by Nakasone Yasuhiro. The mainstream nationalism more or less builds on self-reflection of pre-war Japan and repentance of the war. It denounces the pre-war fascist nationalism, advocates Japan’s re-affiliation with Asia, and rejected American occupation and domination (Watanabe 2007:206-208). While in Abe’s nationalism, there is no repentance of war, no reflection on the Meiji Constitutional regime or on Tennoism, only limited interest East Asian rapprochement,[[65]](#footnote-65) and no thought of independence from America. In short, Abe’s nationalism rejects the post-war paradigm. And in his own words, all his political thought can be condensed into the catchphrase, “escaping from the Post-war Regime (*Sengo Regime kara no dakkyaku*)”.

##### 5.2.3.2 Escape from the Post-war Regime

On 28 April, 2013, shortly into his second term, Abe launched a new public event, the “Ceremony to Commemorate the Anniversary of Japan's Restoration of Sovereignty and Return to the International Community” (or the Restoration of Sovereignty Day, *Shukenkaifuku/ Kokusaishakai Fukki wo kinensuru Shikiten*). This was the first time for such ceremony after 28 April, 1952, 61 years ago, when Japan held a similar but one-time event to mark the restoration of sovereignty.

In Japan’s post-war years there had been plenty of public ceremonies to mark historical events, such as the enactment of the Constitution, the End-of-war Memorial Day, and the Emperor’s birthday. But Abe set a precedent by making 28 April, 1952 (the day the San Francisco Peace Treaty went into effect) the subject of commemoration. This clearly reveals how Abe sets critical points to segment Japan’s post-war history and how he defines the “Post-war Regime” that he is so eager to escape. 28 April, 1952 was the day when Japan, except for Okinawa and a number of other islands, ended the Occupation period and regained its sovereignty. The seven years (1945-1952) of American occupation of and GHQ dominance over Japan are the crucial link to understand Abe’s view of the nation and its history. Abe was born in 1954, two years after the Occupation, thus cannot have any direct experience of it. His perception of that period was probably initially instilled by Kishi Nobusuke and later reinforced by the narratives of other conservative thinkers (Hughes 2015:11). The central issue of his perception is the deprivation of Japan’s independence and the severe encroachment on Japan’s sovereignty. In Abe’s own words, the Occupation period is a time of historical discontinuity, because Japan was put under the rule of non-Japanese (Abe 2006:23).

In Abe’s view, the 1955 merger of the two conservative parties was a compromise out of the necessity to pursue Japan’s *bona fide* independence. Despite the formal restoration of Japan’s sovereignty by the San Francisco Peace Treaty in 1951, the crucial parts of post-war Japan’s institutional frame, such as the Constitution, is dictated by the GHQ in the Occupation period. In Abe’s own words, “despite the fact that the drafters of the Constitution are political romantics, the foremost intention of the GHQ is to make sure that Japan cannot rise again.” (Abe 2013: 32) In response, Abe believes that the founding objective of the LDP is to “build an autonomous constitution”. In order to achieve this objective, a two-thirds majority in the House of Representatives must be attained to pass a motion to revise the constitution, and this is the most important reason for the merger (Abe 2013: 33). Abe holds high regard for post-war Japan’s miraculous economic development under LDP rule, but also expresses criticism:

“It has been more than 50 years for the LDP to govern Japan. Its first objective: fast economic development was fulfilled as early as in the 1970s, but the second objective (constitutional revision) is severely delayed. Given that economic development precedes constitutional revision in priority, such a long interval is still detrimental and unacceptable. During this period, our feelings towards our family, homeland and nation has always been neglected and ridiculed” (Abe 2013: 33). Undoubtedly, in Abe’s mind such negligence and ridicule are caused by the absence of prescription of these traditions in the Constitution.

**Abe’s address at the ceremony started with these words:**

“It was sixty-one years ago today that Japan again began to stride forward under the power of its own people. On this day, the San Francisco Peace Treaty came into effect, restoring sovereignty and making Japan the possession of the Japanese people alone.

Sixty-one years have passed since that day. I wish to mark this day as a major milestone and make this a day on which we renew our hopes and our determination towards the future, as we reflect upon the path we have followed until now.”[[66]](#footnote-66)

Next, Abe steered his speech to the expression of his political ideas and visions. To the end, there are two sentences worth special note:

“We are taking upon ourselves the responsibility to make Japan, our precious country, even better and more beautiful. ….I believe that we have a responsibility to make Japan a nation of which we can be proud, that makes contributions as it goes forth, in order to create a better world.”[[67]](#footnote-67)

These two sentences express Abe’s political thought in a nutshell. The former is his key message of domestic politics: to restore Japan’s “glory” (read economic prosperity) and “beauty” (read tradition); the latter is the ultimate goal of his foreign policy: to make Japan a normalized and active contributor with power status in international affairs, which is also what “proactive pacifism” means (Kakizaki 2015:89; Katō 2015: 429-430).

The current Peace Constitution Abe revised was drawn up in the Occupation period, when Japan had lost its sovereignty.[[68]](#footnote-68) Abe called both of them “symbols of the Post-war Regime”. Following his logic, it is understandable that he regards them as legislation under duress and pushes to overhaul them. In addition, he also questioned the legitimacy of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East. It seems Abe’s challenges of the Post-war Regime are predominantly directed at what happened during 1945-1952, the Occupation period, and many clues to understand his political thought can be gleaned from his views on the events of the same period.

In practice, Abe in his first term achieved the revision of the Fundamental Law of Education (*Kyōiku Kihonhō,* 22 December, 2006) and passed the National Referendum Act (*Kokumin Tōhyōhō*, 18 May, 2007) which serves as a preparing step to constitutional revision (Nakano 2015). The Fundamental Law of Education was also revised in his first term, adding patriotic and traditional elements into basic educational requirement as a precursor to similar constitutional amendments. In his second term, he maneuvered the controversial National Security Bills through the Diet, lifting the ban on Japan’s right of collective self-defence within the current constitutional framework (Hughes 2015). Together with his visits to the Yasukuni Shrine, these are all actions meant to challenge Japan’s Post-war Regime.

Abe holds an overall negative view of Japan’s education over the 60 post-war years, mostly because of his conclusion that the concept of “state” has been vilified in Japanese education (Abe 2006:202). In his words, post-war Japan “blamed everything about the war and defeat on Japanese statism. As the result, the equation ‘state=evil’ is inoculated into the collective awareness of Japanese people. This is the ultimate failure of post-war education” (Abe 2006:202-4; Kakizaki 2015: 150). Abe’s statist nature is not only reflected by his particular grievance against post-war education, but also embodied by his orientation in his reform of the Fundamental Law of Education. He deemed it compulsory to add “educational elements which facilitate the consolidating of the Japanese State” (*Kunizukuri no tame no kyōiku*) into the law, and had it drafted accordingly (Abe 2015: 150).

In the next section, Abe’s thinking and actions on core conservative issues, including constitutional revision, Tennoism, views of history, and defence and security, are examined in detail.

##### 5.2.3.3 Abe’s View on Tennoism

In his 2006 book *Utsukushii Kuni e*, Abe declared that “Japanese history is a long and magnificent epic with the Imperial lineage as its main thread. Tennoism is Japan’s basic polity and nature” (Abe 2006:101). In Abe’s view, the emperor and Tennoism are crucial instruments to maintain the Japanese conservative tradition and values, and the fundamental cause for Japan’s very being (Abe 2006:102-104). Abe’s attachment to Tennoism goes even further than that of his grandfather. According to Kishi’s memoir, when asked whether he regarded Tennoism to be absolute, his answer was he never held such belief (Kishi 2003:360). And Kishi generally avoided the issue of Tennoism during his post-war politically active period. Abe did not inherit his grandfather’s reticence on this matter. Instead, he is much more extreme to the point of piety (Kakizaki 2015: 197). In April 2012 when Abe was the president of the LDP, the party issued a constitutional revision draft with a supplemented provision proclaiming that “the Emperor is Japan’s head of state” (*Asahi Shimbun*, 28 April, 2012).[[69]](#footnote-69) For the entire post-war period, the Emperor has been just a symbolic head-of-state both in perception and in practice. Abe is the first prime minister to articulate the revisionist title and try to formalize it in the Constitution (Hara 2015:4).

On the aforementioned ceremony of Restoration of Sovereignty Day on 28 April, 2013, when the Imperial couple entered the venue Abe and a collection of ministers and departmental chiefs hailed in chorus, three times, “*Tenno Heika Banzai*” ( Long live Your Majesty!) (*Asahi Shimbun*, 30 April, 2013). Given that many former prime ministers (such as Yoshida Shigeru and Nakasone Yasuhiro) harbour some sort of royalist complex, the *Banzai* Hail has strictly been a post-war political taboo, being linked to prewar and wartime militarists (Amy 2013).

##### 5.2.3.4 Constitutional Revision

In *Utsukushii Kuni e*, Abe recorded his early efforts pertaining to constitutional revision. When the LDP formed a coalition with the Japan Socialist Party (JSP) and came back to power in 1994, the leadership moved to delete the principle of “independent constitutional legislation” from the party platform (Abe 2006:39). Abe was vehemently against the move, along with Nakagawa Shōichi, at the time a junior House Member and his ally (Abe 2006:39). They won the fight and the principle has been preserved until today, in an updated phrasing: “…to hold a national conversation and pursue constitutional revision accordingly, in order to make adjustment to the new circumstances of the twenty-first century.” (Abe 2006:39) A substantial move for constitutional revision has been Abe’s motivation for a long time. Now with his power consolidated in the second term, he is waiting for the right opportunity to move beyond what he has already achieved by reinterpreting Article 9.

In his discussions with Okazaki Hisahiko before he was elected Prime Minister, Abe offered three reasons making constitutional revision necessary: first, the current Constitution was essentially drafted by the GHQ in haste and forced upon Japan; second, from Shōwa to Heisei on to the twenty-first century, the Constitution, especially Article 9, is outdated and cannot address the new circumstances; third, the New Age put the mission of constitutional revision on “us” (the Abe regime) as a privilege and a responsibility, for it is a crucial moment for Japan’s future (Abe and Okazaki 2004: 217).

The Manifesto that Abe proposed when he was running for the president of the LDP in 2006 specifically brought forward constitutional revision as one of its catchphrases (*Asahi Shimbun*, 2 September, 2006). Abe set “culture, tradition, history and natural environment” as the basic orientation of his proposed administration, and he concluded that a new Constitution in keeping with the new time is the most important instrument to achieve it (Watanabe 2007:7). The Scheme ends with the words “Japan is to … depart from the Post-war Regime and start a new historical journey” (Watanabe 2007:7). Evidently, in Abe’s calculation the crucial step to “escape from the Post-war Regime” is to reform the post-war Constitution; his ideal of Japan, new in form and rich in tradition and history, cannot be fulfilled without constitutional revision. (Watanabe 2007:9-10; Singh 2013:28)

There are some changes in Abe’s governing techniques and political tactics, given that his belief and resolution are not likely to change. For instance, when he was running for president of the LDP as well as his second term as prime minister, he toned down the “escaping the Post-war Regime” rhetoric (Kakizaki 2015: iii). The LDP’s new draft of constitutional revision in 2012 still emphasized its importance, but in the actual campaign, the constitution was no longer among the central issues to be contested, at least in a public capacity. However, rather than an implication of Abe’s conservatism in retreat, it is more like a change of tactics (Hughes 2015:14; Kakizaki 2015: 23).

But this does not mean that constitutional revision lost its importance to Abe or that he will not try to resolve it during his second term. Although the LDP achieved an overwhelming victory in the 2012 House of Representatives election, in the House of Councilors, the seats of the LDP combined with its coalition ally Kōmeitō did not reach a simple majority. The disparity in the Diet Houses was bound to thwart any attempt at constitutional revision, and that’s the reason why Abe played it down with the issue in his manifesto and specific policy (*Asahi Shimbun Seijibu Shuzaihan* 2015: 39). However, with a substantial increase in seats for the LDP and Kōmeitō after the 2013 House of Councilors election, Abe started to build momentum on constitutional and defence/security issues. Consistently bent on constitutional revision, the second Abe regime is more patient and deliberate in operation. The 2013 House of Councilors election provided an important opportunity: if a super-majority of two-thirds could be achieved, in theory a motion for constitutional revision could be put under way. But even adding the seats of the Japan Restoration Party, which favours constitutional revision, Abe’s coalition was still 18 seats short from a super-majority. However, after the House of Councilors election in July, 2016, the pro-constitutional-revision coalition now holds more than two-thirds of the seats. The check-and-balance in the Diet regarding this issue has been overcome, and Abe is one huge step closer to his aspiration of constitutional revision (*Asahi Shimbun*, 11 July, 2016). Political commentator Tamogami Toshio pointed out that “to make sure constitutional revision goes without setbacks, first Abe tries to revitalize the economy and gather the support of the citizenry. He is building an irresistible momentum for constitutional revision” (Tamogami 2013: 158).

In both of Abe’s terms, he brought substantial changes to the constitutional revision procedure. In his first term the National Referendum Act was passed, meaning now Japanese citizen can choose constitutional revision in a national referendum with their personal votes. In his second term, Abe still faced difficulty to achieve two-third majority in both Houses, so he turned to a proposition to revise Constitutional Article 96 (*Asahi Shimbun*, 18 December, 2012). Article 96 is about constitutional revision procedures, prescribing that a two-thirds majority in both Houses of the Diet must be reached to pass a motion in support of constitutional revision. Abe considers the bar too high and so the clause needs to be lowered to a simple majority. On 4 February, 2012, in the Budgetary Committee of the House of Representatives hearing, Abe pointed out that “it is unfair to deprive Japanese people of the right to decide on constitutional revision, simply because of opposition from one-third. Public opinion may not favor a revision of Article 96, but it is necessary as an attempt to win over the real people” (*Kokkaigijiroku*, Shūginyosaniinkai, 4 Feberary, 2014).

On 10 July, 2016, the election of the Japanese House of Councillors ended with an overwhelming victory for the ruling alliance of the LDP and the Komeitō. The current seats held by these two parties, joined by the seats held by other two pro-constitutional-revision opposition parties, constitute a clear majority of two-thirds prescribed by the current Constitution for a motion of revision. However, at what point is Abe going to initiate the constitutional revision process still remains unknown, and what parts of the Constitution are to be revised is also undergoing discussion. Public opinion generally anticipates Abe will make a move to revise Article 9, but Shinoda offered a different view. He deems it very likely that Abe would leave the first clause of Article 9 (the permanent renunciation of war as a sovereign right) unchanged, while attempting to revise the second clause (never to maintain land, sea, and air forces). By Shinoda’s reasoning, since Japan is unlikely to start a war in the foreseeable future, the renunciation of right of war matters little, for it does not preclude the right of self-defence. Also, the revision of the second clause would be only a matter of formality, because the SDF are not “forces” only in the sense of constitutional recognition, while foreign countries generally consider the SDF none other than armed forces, both in notion and practice. Abe’s impending constitutional revision is just to institutionalize the *de facto* existence of Japan’s armed forces.[[70]](#footnote-70)

## 5.3 Abe’s Conservative Thought and Actions

Unlike the analyses of Nakasone Yasuhiro and Koizumi Junichirō in previous chapters, academic research on Abe is an ongoing process, since he is the incumbent Prime Minister. Therefore, a slightly different approach is adopted in this section. The discussion of Abe’s conservative thought and his political measures and tactics to implement it is focused on two specific cases. In his two terms, Abe saw through many reforms or alterations which are both controversial and can be considered conservative, including reform of the Fundamental Law of Education, upgrading the Defence Agency to the Ministry of Defence (9 Jaunary, 2007), legislation of the National Referendum Act (18 May, 2007) in his first term, and the creation of NSC (Japan) (7 Jaunary, 2014), the State Secrecy Law (10 December, 2014), the National Security Bills (19 September, 2015) in his current term. On the basis of prior introductions of Abe’s position on Tennoism, education, defence/security, constitution and view of history, this section concentrates on two cases of highest profile and public concern to find connections between Abe’s various conservative thinking. The choices are: 1.National Security Bills; 2.The “Abe Statement” concerning Japan’s view of history (14 August, 2015). These two cases are also connected to Tennoism, education reform and constitutional revision, directly or indirectly. Through studies of these two representative cases, the components and structure of Abe’s conservative thinking are to be clarified.

### 5.3.1 The National Security Bills and the Abe Statement

##### 5.3.1.1 The Passing of the National Security Bills

Simply put, the National Security Bills and the Abe Statement are the signature policies of Abe Shinzō and the Abe Regime in the fields of security and view of history, respectively. This section first reveals their nature and provenance, then discusses in what circumstances and ways they were implemented.

At the dawn of 9 September, 2015, the LDP- Kōmeitō coalition government had a Package of National Security Bills (*Anpo Hōan* for short, also 2015 Japanese military legislation) passed amid an uproar of controversy. The National Security Bills is not one specific law, but a series of bills concerning Japan’s defence and security, packaged together for legislative process through the Diet. There are ten bills in the package. Among them the “International Peace Support Bill” (*Kokusai Heiwa Shienhō*) is completely new, while the rest are pre-existing laws that have undergone revision and re-interpretation, including the PKO (Peacekeeping Operations) Law (19 June, 1992) and SIASJ Law (28 May, 1999). The National Security Bills nearly covered all Japanese laws and bills concerning defence and security, and particularly, offers a final resolution to the right of collective self-defence, which has been a topic of controversy in post-war Japanese politics as well as the legal sphere. Of the right to collective self-defence, the Abe government’s interpretation is that it can be exercised without revising the current Constitution. This tweak of logic is one of the most important reasons why the National Security Bills incurred so much criticism in Japan.

The right of collective self-defence has been a long-standing issue of controversy in post-war Japan. In May 1981, CLB issued a formal interpretation recognizing that Japan has the right of collective self-defence under international law but is forbidden to exercise it under Article 9 (Samules 2007: 49). Article 9, which prescribes such effect, has been the target of Abe’s strongest grievance toward the Constitution. For instance, In May 2000, at the Parliamentary Constitutional Research Commissions (*Shūgiin Kenpō Chōsakai*), Abe expressed such criticism: “there is a legal term, interdiction, which means the legal status of a person who cannot dispose of his own property due to causes like mental incapacity. Japan’s attitude towards collective self-defence suggests that Japan is practically an interdicted nation, for which and I feel deeply ashamed.” (Abe 2006:131-2).

Certainly, it is in the third year of his second term (2014) as the prime minister that the Abe administration passed the National Security Bills, after substantial preparatory works in developing a media strategy, political support and campaign manifesto (Nakanishi 2015: 406). The Abe Cabinet has already changed the doctrinal, institutional, and legal frameworks of Japanese security and defence policy. According to Nakanishi, the security and defence reforms of the current Abe Cabinet contain four types of changes: doctrinal changes, such as the issue of National Security Strategy (NSS 2013) and National Defence Program Guidelines (NDPG 2013); institutional changes, such as establishing the National Security Council (NSC); legal changes, such as re-interpreting the constitution; and operational changes, such as updating US-Japan defence cooperation guidelines (Nakanishi 2015: 407). Abe’s approach of pushing his defence/security strategy is apparently methodical: first deploy institutional changes, then provide explanation and re-interpretation, and finally secure legislation.

Abe’s personal role in such process is indispensable. Academic study uses the term “Abe’s true colours” to describe his influence on Japan’s defence and security policy breakthroughs in the past 2-3 years, and some researcher have already begun to call it the “Abe Doctrine” (Hughes 2015:4; Maslow 2015). Abe has undoubtedly pursued vigourous foreign and security policies, picking up from where he left off in his first administration, and then reworked them in the past three years of his second administration, making his efforts worthy of being branded as a potential new doctrine. The doctrine is clearly articulated and with his inherent ideology and revisionism stands as an alternative to the previously dominant “Yoshida Doctrine” that is characterized by expediency and low-profile caution (Hughes 2015: 92). In Japan’s quest for the military power status and the right of collective self-defence, the “Abe Doctrine” seems poised to become an important milestone.

A contrasting academic view believes that the shift in Japan’s defence and security policy is a response to the change in the post-Cold-war East Asian international environment. Japanese policy has been in a slow but continuous evolving process, in which the driving factor is not the individual, Abe or not, but the dynamics of the international system. (Liff 2015) The radical leap-forward in defence and security carried out by the LDP government is the inevitable result of a paradigm shift in this field, with or without certain individual politicians. If there were no Abe, the argument runs, probably some other politician would emerge with a similar policy. A research report submitted to Abe by the Advisory Panel on the Reconstruction for the Legal Basis of Security (*Anpohōsei Kondankai*) pointed out: “Changes in the international environment render it imperative for Japan to develop countermeasure.” (*Anpohōsei Kondankai* 2014)

Nakanishi Hiroshi, a member of the Advisory Panel on the Reconstruction for the Legal Basis of Security and currently Abe’s political advisor, believes that Abe’s ideology or political stance reflected by his security and defence reforms are not unique, but rather a continuation of the general conservative trend Japan has followed since the 1980s. Abe’s uniqueness lies in his strong political willpower to drive these reforms through the intricate environment of Japanese domestic politics (Nakanishi 2015: 406). Consequently, Abe’s “proactive contribution to peace” policies are not merely a deviation from the “Yoshida Doctrine”, which precludes using military forces outside of Japan. Abe’s security and defence reforms, along with an overall foreign policy reorientation, break ground for a long-term strategic change that brings about a paradigm shift from the stereotypical post-war international roles or traditional East-West division. Nakanishi deems that Abe’s defence and security policies are just logical consideration based on realism, while his conservative ideology is more evident in his dealing with neighbouring East Asian countries of issues like view of history, Yasukuni Shrine visits and comfort women during the Pacific War. In other words, Abe’s defence and security strategy is essentially a reactive response to the international environment that Japan faces. Nakanishi did not address the other essential cause of Abe’s line on foreign policy, which is his discontent with the post-war international establishment and order. The element of Abe’s personal thinking is more revealed in this respect.[[71]](#footnote-71)

In terms of explanatory power, however, I believe it is inadequate to attribute Abe’s pursuit of constitutional revision and the right of collective self-defence to the change of the international environment. Although Abe offered the international situation (especially East Asian security) as a justification, his commitment is not based on a realistic response to the international situation, but is instead driven by a strong nationalist sentiment and conservative thought. This is particularly evident in Abe’s book *Utsukushii kuni e* (Abe 2006). Admittedly, the rapid change in the East Asian security situation, such as the rise of China and North Korea’s nuclear tests, poses a certain degree of security challenges to Japan. However, rather than being genuine threats, these challenges serve more as pretexts for Japan to pursue constitutional revision and the right of collective self-defence. With or without these changes, Japanese conservative politicians prove to be constantly trying to legitimize the use of force (Yahuda 2014; Smith 2015; Pyle 2007: Chp.10).

##### 5.3.1.2 The Issue of the Abe Statement

Abe’s view of history is the most representative aspect of his conservatism, attracting constant criticism from domestic audiences and other East Asian countries (Hosaka 2015). Then, what is Abe’s basic view of history? The aforementioned “Escape from the Post-war Regime” can be seen as Abe’s basic attitude towards the war, history and the post-war political system. Abe’s long-term revisionist agenda has been further manifested in his tacking of history issues in both his first and second stints in power. In 1993 when he was elected a Diet Member for the first time, he joined the LDP’s History Investigation Research Group (*Jimintō Rekishi Kentōkai*) and became a core member. The following year, he joined the Diet Members’ League for Post-war 50th Anniversary (*Shūsen 50shūnen Kokkai Giin Renmei*) that managed to pass a Diet resolution in 1995, subtly renouncing war responsibility.[[72]](#footnote-72) In 1996, basically the same group of Diet members formed the Diet Members’ League for a Bright Japan (*Akarui Nippon Kokkai Giin Renmei*), of which Abe acted as secretary-general. Further in 1997, the Diet Members’ League to Consider Japan’s Future and History Education (*Nippon no Zentō to Rekishi Kyōiku wo Kangaeru Giin no Kai*) was founded by Abe, who has also acted as its adviser (Hughes 2015:15).

Moreover, Abe is also a Special Counsellor of the Japan Conference (*Nippon Kaigi*), Japan’s biggest conservative organization with approximately 35,000 members, mostly elites such as politicians and lawyers (*Tokyo Shimbun*, 13 July, 2014). Among the 19 members of the current Abe Cabinet (the second Abe Cabinet formed in September 2014), 15 belong to the Japan Conference.[[73]](#footnote-73) So do more than half (289) of all the Diet Members. These numbers suggest that Abe’s conservatism is not the least unique: the entire Japanese political sphere is saturated with conservative thinking. The manifesto of the Japan Conference emphasizes three stances: (1) respect for historical tradition and nationalism; (2) pursuit of national glory and independence; and (3) a world of coexistence and co-prosperity respecting each other’s culture.[[74]](#footnote-74)

On 29 November, 2015, the LDP’s 60th anniversary, the party announced the founding of the History Study and Future Thinking Headquarters (*Rekishi wo Manabi Mirai wo Kangaeru Honbu*), an organ directly under the president of the LDP (currently Abe Shinzō) with strong revisionist intention (*Tokyo Shimbun*, 21 November, 2015). Its stated mission is to discuss Japan’s important historical events since the ending of the First Sino-Japanese War in 1895, in the name of LDP intraparty study. Undoubtedly, the most controversial issues, including comfort women and the Nanjing Massacre are within the scope of discussion. Inada Tomomi, an emerging female LDP politician and Abe’s political ally (Defence Minister in the Abe Cabinet, 3 August, 2016), has been actively pushing for the creation of this organization.

Listed above are organizations and activities Abe joined or initiated in his political career, reflecting his conservative thinking. However, we should not neglect the other side: his effort as the leader of the Japanese government to seek reconciliation with East Asian countries on the view of history issues. For instance, the Japan-China Joint History Research Committee launched in 2006 and headed on the Japanese side by Kitaoka Shinichi, Abe’s political advisor, was a major move of rectifying historical problem with China in Abe’s first term.[[75]](#footnote-75) Despite the already conspicuous revisionist tendency of Abe at the time, the joint report of the Committee acknowledged Japan’s role of aggression in the Sino-Japanese War, and confirmed the existence of the Nanjing Massacre (Kitaoka 2010).

On multiple occasions, Abe expressed scepticism about the 1993 Kono Statement and his intention to revise it, but eventually both the first and the second Abe Cabinets left it untouched (Kim 2015: 7). As a conservative politician, Abe is entitled to have his personal positions; but as soon as he became the head of the state, he has to take the continuity of policy into consideration and maintain the consistency of the Japanese government, therefore restraining his own personal desire in regard to the issue. ­It is noteworthy that the official narrative in either the first or the second Abe Cabinet has been that the Kono Statement is “inherited by the Cabinet”, instead of “acknowledged by Prime Minister Abe” (*Asahi Shimbun*, 10 March, 2007; *Asahi Shimbun*, 2 October, 2014). Moreover, at the end of December 2015, Japan and South Korea reached a settlement on the matter of Korean comfort women in World War II. Japan agreed to pay ¥1 billion to a fund supporting surviving victims while South Korea agreed to refrain from criticizing Japan regarding the issue (*Asahi Shimbun*, 30 December, 2015).

Among all the view of history matters, the most controversial and conspicuous is the Abe Statement issued on 14 August, 2015. This followed the Murayama Statement of 1995 and the Koizumi Statement of 2005, basically following a pattern of 10-year intervals.[[76]](#footnote-76) Among all of them, the Murayama Statement was especially well received by the international community due to its sincerity in demonstrating Japanese repentance. Although the Murayama Statement is essentially an oral address delivered by Prime Minister Murayama Tomiichi in a personal capacity, its stance has been inherited by all subsequent Japanese administrations, and it is widely considered as the baseline of Japan’s relationship with other East Asian countries. Thus what changes the Abe Statement would bring about, in regard to the spirit of the Murayama Statement, became the focus of domestic and international concerns (Tōgō 2013; Kim 2015; Hughes 2015). The public opinion and media held pessimistic expectation even before Abe released his statement, considering his many previous revisionist remarks and his recent intimation to “change the course” of the Murayama Statement (*Asahi Shimbun*, 27 January, 2015). Whether the keywords “aggression”, “apology” and “repentance” would appear in the statement became the watch-list of the domestic and international public in anticipation of the Abe Statement (*Asahi Shimbun*, 10 March, 2015). The most crucial words of the actual statement went as follows:

“Incident, aggression, war -- we shall never again resort to any form of the threat or use of force as a means of settling international disputes. We shall abandon colonial rule forever and respect the right of self-determination of all peoples throughout the world. In Japan, the post-war generations now exceed eighty per cent of its population. We must not let our children, grandchildren, and even further generations to come, who have nothing to do with that war, be predestined to apologize. Still, even so, we Japanese, across generations, must squarely face the history of the past. We have the responsibility to inherit the past, in all humbleness, and pass it on to the future” (Abe 2015).

Other than repentance and apology, the Abe Statement seemed to be more preoccupied with an introduction of Japan’s view of the current international environment and Japan’s post-war international contribution. Abe’s focus is not history, but a so-called transcendence of history (Rozman 2015). Nevertheless, the Abe statement turned out to contain all of the watched keywords. Internationally, it was put under such a close scrutiny that some have criticized his choice of grammar and phrases for lacking a clear subject, which means that there is no nominative in the sentence meant for an apology (Kawashima 2015). Kawashima Shin, a professor of the University of Tokyo and also Abe’s political advisor, offered an explanation: “This happens often in spoken Japanese, although there is a subject for the English version of the statement due to English grammatical rules” (Kawashima 2015). According to Kawashima, Abe’s proposition about “the end of Japan’s apology” also led to much discontent. His generation, Abe proclaimed, must rid the next generations the “predestination to apologize” (Kawashima 2015). Obviously, this sounds dismissive to those who do not think that Japan had apologized enough, or sincerely enough for the war crimes, especially when considering the thorough reconciliation of East Asia is yet to take place.

Thanks to the low expectation, the Abe Statement is generally perceived as a relatively “positive” declaration of stance (Mark 2016: 107; Kawashima 2015). Of course his personal opinion would play an important part, but he was speaking on behalf of the Abe Cabinet and the entire Japanese government. At the same time, pressures from different directions had to be negotiated. There are domestic right wing and left wing actors in play; there are different concerns of the international community in need to be addressed, including China, Korea and America (Rozman 2015). In the same manner, Abe personally found many problems in the Murayama Statement and the Kōno Statement and openly expressed his unwillingness to inherit their spirit, but the official policy has always been “the Abe Cabinet and Japanese government will carry on the spirit of the two statements”, eclipsing Abe’s personal view (*Asahi Shimbun*, 14 August, 2015). At least in the sense of official procedure, Abe and the government under his leadership are compartmentalized on the view of history issue. Abe personally continues to challenge the above mentioned two statements despite the issue of the Abe Statement. For instance, right after the conclusion of the agreement concerning the Korean comfort women, on 18 January, 2016, Abe said in the Diet that “there is no evidence suggesting the comfort women were forced into service, therefore the matter cannot be considered a war crime” (*Sankei Shimbun*, 19 January , 2016).

### 5.3.2 Political Advisors and Policy-making

Compared with the turbulent entanglement with security matters (collective self-defence in particular), Abe’s view of history is more consistent, better reflecting his conservatism as Nakanishi suggested. In prior sections we investigated how Abe acquired his conservative ideology from family inheritance and education. Later in the stage of his political career, his conservatism developed together with conservative intellectuals, such as Okazaki Hisahiko, Yagi Hideji and Nakanishi Terumasa (*Asahi Shimbun,* 3 May, 2015). Apart from personal contact, his conservatism has been mainly cultivated through the reading of conservative writing when he was a newly elected Diet member. At that period Nishibe Susumu was the conservative writer he appreciated most (*Asahi Shimbun,* 3 May, 2015; Nogami 2015: 149). According to a source close to Abe, “he listens to Nishibe’s suggestion from time to time, even after he became the prime minister.” (Nogami 2015: 149)

Abe organized a “Basic Party Ideas Committee” (*Tōkihonrinen Iinkai*) as the Secretary-General of the LDP and recruited Nishibe as a lecturer. The title of Nishibe’s lecture is “the conservative spirit that the LDP should uphold” (*Jiyūminshutō no mamoriurubeki hoshu no seishin*). In his lecture, Nishibe defined conservatism as “the will to uphold history, custom and tradition”, and progressivism the will to destroy them. This definition is basically identical to the conservatism Abe advocated in his later writing (Abe 2013; Nogami 2015:149). On the other hand, Nishibe’s criticism of the Constitution is extensive and unreserved (Nishibe 2012). He argues that the SDF is the armed forces of the Japanese nation, fully justified to exercise the right of collective self-defence and should not be bounded by any constitution. Or conversely, the current Constitution of Japan is abnormal. He also suggests the constitutional debate should not be dominated by the constitutional scholars of the University of Tokyo; instead it should be carried out by the people with common sense of history, like him.

The passing of the National Security Bills and the issue of the Abe Statement are the two controversial events of the current Abe Cabinet, attracting great concern from domestic and international society. In both cases, Abe handpicked a staff of advisors and consultants to participate in the process of policy-making. Especially for the National Security Bills legislation, Abe created the Advisory Panel on the Reconstruction for the Legal Basis of Security (*Anpohōsei Kondankai*) as early as in his first term (2006-2007). For intellectual support for the Prime Minister’s scheduled official Abe statement in August 2015, the Advisory Panel on the History of the 20th Century and on Japan’s Role and World Order in the 21st Century (*21Seikikōsō Kondankai*) was assembled at the beginning of the year. Focusing on the policy-making process involving these two advisory panels, this section investigates Abe’s political thinking and his relationship with his political advisors.

##### 5.3.2.1 *Anpohōsei Kondankai*

As discussed in prior sections, Abe’s focus on collective self-defence is long-lasting. In his first term, Abe laid the groundwork for the reconstruction of Japan’s defence and security legislation, aiming to reclaim the right of collective self-defence. In April 2007, Abe founded the Advisory Panel on the Reconstruction for the Legal Basis of Security (*Anpohōsei Kondankai*). The panel held five sessions during Abe’s first term, having produced a framework of national security legal system.[[77]](#footnote-77) However, after Abe’s resignation in August 2007, the panel remained inactive through the years of the Fukuda Cabinet, the Asō Cabinet and the Democratic Party administrations. Not until Abe re-entered the prime minister’s office in 2012 did the panel pick up where it had left off, and submitted its final report in May 2014, recommending the necessity and feasibility for Japan to exercise a “limited” right of collective self-defence by re-interpreting the current Constitution.

The members of the panel represent various characteristics: first, their political positions are close to Abe’s political thought. For example, Okazaki Hisahiko, the chair of the panel in Abe’s second term and one of Abe’s most trusted advisors, has long been a champion for Japan’s collective self-defence (*Shūkan Asahi*, 28 August, 2006). Some research even points out that the founding of the panel as well as Abe’s focus on the matter are the results of Okazaki’s constant intervention. In their investigation, The *Asahi Shimbun* Political Department Interview Team revealed that Okazaki had been on a quest to find a political strongman to push forward collective self-defence, ever since his retirement (*Asahi Shimbun Seijibu Shuzaihan* 2015). He made many attempts to gain access to the political circles addressing this matter, and eventually Abe Shinzō became the one who accepted his persuasion. (*Asahi Shimbun Seijibu Shuzaihan* 2015:25-26). Besides Okazaki, panel members like Kitaoka Shinichi and Nakanishi Hiroshi also hold similar beliefs on the matter of collective self-defence.

Second, despite the panel’s name containing “legal basis” (*hōteki kiban*), there are few appropriate jurists (constitutional experts or international law experts) on the name list of the panel. The objective of the panel requires expertise in constitutional law and re-interpretation of legal phrasing. Moreover, the definition and application of collective self-defence are subjects of jurisprudence research in the field of international law. Only two jurists appear on the member list: Nishi Osamu (constitutional jurist, Professor of Komazawa University) and Murase Shinya (international law jurist, Professor of Sophia University). The rest are mostly experts of international politics. Like another constitutional jurist Kobayashi Setsu criticized, Abe simply gathered a group of people with ideas similar to his own, for the sake of “passing” them as laws, not being meant for any serious investigation from a legal perspective (Kobayashi 2014). This naturally incurs criticism from the legal community, especially constitutional experts. In July 2015, the *Asahi Shimbun* polled 209 Japanese constitutional experts in regard to whether exercising the right of collective self-defence is constitutional. Among 122 respondents, 104 deemed it “unconstitutional”, 15 gave indecisive replies, only two answered “constitutional” (*Asahi Shimbun*, 11 July, 2015). Those experts with “unconstitutional” replies generally believe that Abe’s position of collective self-defence is well beyond the limit of constitutional interpretation; the current constitutional framework does not allow the exercise of the right of collective self-defence, no matter what attempts are made to circumvent it.

Abe’s partiality in selecting members of the panel became a subject of investigation in the Diet. To this accusation, Abe answered “my standard of selection is to exclude the doctrinaire who only know abstract theories (*kusō na giron*), and to rely on pragmatic experts.” (*Kokkaigijiroku*, Shūgiin Yosaniinkai, 13 February, 2014) But the fact is, the panel consists of few constitutional jurists with value neutrality, but full of Abe’s “friendly” (*tomodachi*) intellectuals and so-called experts. In Koga Shigeaki’s words, Abe’s definition of “doctrinaire” is the experts with ideas inconsistent with his own; Abe’s advisory panel is nothing but a smokescreen, covering his personal political agenda and his violation of democracy (Koga 2014:3).

The Advisory Panel on the Reconstruction for the Legal Basis of Security, despite its purpose, may have not conducted sufficient discussion on constitutional interpretation of the right of self-defence, its central issue. Sase Masamori, professor of the National Defence Academy of Japan and a panel member, once revealed the scarcity of serious discussion in the panel sessions. According to Sase, there was altogether only one discussion of self-defence right, and the final report was produced in haste, following pre-determined conceptions (*Mainichi Shimbun*, 16 June, 2015). Being a proponent for the right of self-defence, Sase is quite candid about the perfunctoriness of the panel. The Japanese Communist Party made similar accusation against the panel. (*Akahata*, 6 May, 2014)

Abe’s favoritism is another reason why he is accused of violating democratic principles. In general, it is reasonable for a leader to put well-trusted personnel in charge of crucial posts, but appointments inconsistent with common principles, existing conventions and democratic process certainly lead to the suspicion of favoritism. A case in point is Abe’s appointment of the Director-General of CLB. Traditionally, the appointment of the Director-General of CLB is a selection from the four chiefs of its four internal departments. But to the position Abe appointed Komatsu Ichirō, a retired bureaucrat from the Foreign Ministry, a close associate of his and a proponent for collective self-defence. This unconventional appointment justifies the worry of Japanese society that Abe is challenging the constitutional democracy of Japan. (Hughes 2015: 43) More blatantly, when the Cabinet Legislation Bureau officials were questioned in the Diet hearing, Abe proclaimed that “I am the highest person liable and I take final responsibility in the government. Standing on trial today is not the Cabinet Legislation Bureau, but the Prime Minister.” (*Asahi Shimbun*, 14 February, 2014) Such statement with a strong statist flavour is another reason for Japanese society to question the democratic process for the passage of the National Security Bills. Abe’s authoritarian tendency is another distinctive side of his conservatism and closely connected to his family environment and life experience.

##### 5.3.2.2 *21Seikikōsō Kondankai* (The Advisory Panel on the History of the 20th Century and on Japan’s Role and World Order in the 21st Century)

Abe’s denial of the “War of Aggression” was conceived under the influences of both his grandfather and contemporary conservative thinkers, and became his cause to launch the Advisory Panel on the History of the 20th Century and on Japan’s Role and World Order in the 21st Century. Academic studies generally believe that the Abe Statement is to a large extent affected by the final report of this panel. Therefore to understand Abe’s conservatism, it is necessary to examine the composition and representative position of the panel and the significance of its final report.

First, some panel members are retired bureaucrats from central ministries and agencies; the rest and the majority are professors of universities and research institutes (See Appendix 5 for panel members). Considering the name list, few scholars are experts in Japanese modern history or East Asian international relation history, with most members being in the field of political science. The Abe Cabinet anticipated criticism concerning the composition and prepared an answer that “this is an advisory panel for the 21st century, not just for the past. Its purpose is to “conclude the post-war Japan’s international contribution and to envision the possible contribution of Japan in the future” (*Mainichi Shimbun*, 6 August, 2015). In other words, the focus of the panel is “international contribution” rather than reflections on war responsibility. The content of the final report is consistent with the Abe Cabinet’s stated purpose.[[78]](#footnote-78)

Second, there are many prominent conservatives on the panel, including aforementioned Nakanishi Terumasa, and Abe’s advisors on security matters, such as Nishihara Masashi and Miyake Kunihiko. It is noteworthy that Kitaoka Shinichi’s name appeared on the list again. Earlier, Kitaoka was appointed the Japanese chair of the China-Japan joint history research group. He is known to admit the aggressive nature on Japan’s part in the Asia-Pacific war (Kitaoka 2010). Kawashima Shin, a professor of the University of Tokyo and an expert of the history of Chinese foreign relations, is also on the panel. However, the public opinion was not enthusiastic about the panel, as it is dominated by conservative intellectuals in composition. Thus the Abe Statement, supposedly based on the recommendations of the panel, was not given much positive expectation (*Asahi Shimbun*, 26 February, 2015).

Third, even with his strong control of the panel’s composition and purpose, Abe did not fully accept the panel’s final recommendations. In a media interview after the submission of the final report, Kitaoka Shinichi revealed that among all sixteen members, there were two members unwiling to admit the use of the word “aggression”, so the actual phrasing is somewhat ambiguous in the panel’s conclusion. (*Asahi Shimbun,* 1 September, 2015) Nevertheless, the “war of aggression” on Japan’s part is admitted in the final report. Nakanishi Terumasa later revealed that it was him who questioned the admission of aggression. In the panel session he suggested that some annotation be attached to the word “aggression” to clarify his personal stance, and he threatened to resign from the panel if his request was not sufficiently addressed. (Itō and Nakanishi 2015:68) However, in the Abe Statement the prime minister used the word “aggression” without grammatical subject. Kitaoka later commented that he wanted Abe “to use the first person subject to admit aggression” (*ichininshō de itte hoshikatta*) (*Asahi Shimbun,* 1 September, 2015) But Abe did not listen to Kitaoka’s advice.[[79]](#footnote-79) This suggests that despite Abe’s reliance on political advisors or advisory panels, he was willing to ignore them if his preset limit of acceptance is overstepped.

##### 5.3.2.3 The Media, Public Opinion and Abe’s Conservatism

Rather than introducing Abe’s conservative thought, this section is more about how he put it into practice. Nakanishi Hiroshi suggested that the uniqueness of Abe’s defence and security reforms is not his conservative thought, but his political tact (Nakanishi 2015: 405). However, Abe’s political tact is exactly the embodiment of his conservative thought and best reflects his political style (Kakizaki 2015). Some extant literature harshly criticizes Abe’s “political tact” (*seiji shuhō*) such as his undemocratic cracking down on the media, deeming it a sign of statism and authoritarianism (Nakano 2015; Koga 2014; Tahara 2015a).

Abe’s control, coercion and suppression of the media start with the State Secrecy Law. The State Secrecy Law, effective since December 2014, has been domestically controversial on the ground that public access to information of government activities would be obstructed in under the pretext of national security (Liff 2015: 85). As an indispensable pre-requisite for the NSC (Japan), the new bill aims at tightening the government’s control over security information critical to state legislation. It allows the Japanese government to designate twenty-three types of information, including diplomacy, counter-terrorism, and defence, as “special state secrets” (Maslow 2015: 755).

The passing of the State Secrecy Law incurred vehement criticism from Japanese public opinion, especially from the media and public intellectuals. The criticism focused on how to designate whether a certain secret is a “state secret”, who is to make the decision, and what are the measures to protect the “specially designated secrets” (Hughes 2015:36; Maslow 2015: 755). More profoundly, what risk does the law bring to Japanese society after it came into force? The majority of the Japanese media believe it will reduce the space of public opinion, suffocate the freedom of speech, or even lead to the collapse of post-war Japanese democracy (*Asahi Shimbun*, 18 September, 2013). The country’s largest newspaper, *Yomiuri Shimbun*, however, backed Abe’s move in dispatching the president, Watanabe Tsuneo, to the seven-member expert council in charge of clarifying the standards for designating and declassify government secrets under the new law (*Yomiuri Shimbun*, 15 January, 2015).

In climbing to the top echelons of politics, Abe has continued to challenge societal views and Japanese government statements on history. Media investigations revealed in 2005 that Abe as Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary in 2001 had compelled NHK, the national public broadcaster, to edit sections of a documentary on “comfort woman” so as to remove criticism of Emperor Hirohito and the testimony of the surviving women themselves about their treatment (*The Japan Times*, 13 January, 2005). In 2014, Abe appointed as NHK Chairman Momii Katsuto, a conservative who pledged not to let his personal views influence NHK programming. After his remarks defending the “comfort women” system touched off a firestorm, Momii apologized in the Diet (Pekkanen and Pekkanen, 2014: 108).

Unlike Koizumi Junichirō, who made the media his ally by initiating positive contact, Abe attempts to “control the media” by a classic “carrot and stick” (*ame to muchi*) approach. Also unlike Nakasone Yasuhiro, who directly channeled his discontent with negative media coverage to the specific media, Abe has put wholesale pressure on the media, trying to build an image of a “pro-Abe” media, or at least not an “anti-Abe” media (Mikuriya 2015:67). Also, his specific approach is more down-to-the-earth. For instance, the Abe Cabinet regularly invites the management and cadre of media outlets, newspapers and TV broadcasters to dinners, especially on the day following major political events (such as election). Gifts are also spread to keep their coverage “more flexible” (Mikuriya 2015: 67).

In dealing with newspapers and TV stations hostile to the Abe government, Abe’s major weapon is direct interference with their personnel arrangement, or suppression until certain any undesired person in charge is let go. For instance, NHK is a state-owned national public broadcaster with a traditionally neutral political stance. With Abe’s close associate Momii Katsuto appointed as the NHK chairman, NHK is sliding into the pro-Abe camp (Hughes 2015:20; Pekkanen and Pekkanen 2015: 108). Momii’s famous speech of allegiance is clear: “NHK is the national TV station. If the government position is right-wing, then NHK cannot be on the left.” (*Asahi Shimbun*, 25 January, 2014)

Two other of Abe’s conservative associates, writers Hyakuta Naoki (11 December, 2013 - 28 February, 2015) and Hasegawa Michiko (since 11 December, 2013), were also appointed members NHK’s management board. Hyakuta and Hasegawa are both famous for conservative writing and co-authored a book which justifies Japan’s Pacific War and advocates “escape from the Post-war Regime” (Abe and Hyakuta 2013). When serving on the NHK management board, Hyakuta is known for his many radical and problematic comments, as illustrated when he commented on a LDP Diet member meeting: “two newspapers in Okinawa must be destroyed” because they openly oppose the Abe government’s policy. (*Sankei Shimbun*, 26 June, 2015; *Okinawa Times*, 26 June, 2015; *Ryūkyū Shimpō*, 26 June, 2015) Hasegawa is a seasoned conservative political commentator and a standing committee member of the Japan Conference. In 2012, she was instrumental in organizing supporter’s association for Abe’s campaign, acting as the chief representative of “Civilian Scholars’ Association Supporting Abe Shinzō as Prime Minister” (*Abe Shinzō Sōridaijin wo Motomeru Minkanjinyūshi no Kai*). Abe’s appointment of Hasegawa is regarded as a reward for his support(*Mainichi Shimbun*, 7 February, 2014).

When Abe was attending “NEWS 23”, a TBS television program, scenes of anti-Abe street demonstration were inserted in the show. Abe lost his composure at once and blamed TBS for intentionally embarrassing him. After the incident, the LDP issued a memorandum to the major TV broadcasters, urging them to “keep impartiality in the coverage of the election” (Nogami 2015: 56). The situation continued to ferment and emerged as the incident of “pressured reporting incident” (*hōdō atsuryoku jiken*). After the election (21 December, 2014), NHK and Asahi TV chiefs were summoned to the LDP headquarters for inquiry (*jijō chōshu*) (Nogami 2015: 56). Abe’s generally attitude to the media, especially TV, is distrust. His typical response is rejection of different opinions and arbitrary suppression.

Abe’s retribution to the media first hit *Asahi Shimbun* and its affiliates, such as the Asahi TV (Pekkanen and Pekkanen 2015: 108). *Asahi Shimbun*’s report of the comfort women used many citations from Yoshida Seiji’s publications in the 1980s and 1990s, which have been proven to involve fabrication (*Yomiuri Shimbun*, 23 December, 2014). Conservative media, including *Sankei Shimbun,* the Asahi’s nemesis, criticized the Asahi for tarnishing Japan’s international image (*Sankei Shimbun*, 20 August, 2016; Pekkanen and Pekkanen 2015: 109). After a series of blows, the influence of the Asahi continued to decline and the management resigned one by one, even the personnel arrangement of their reporting staff had to yield to the Abe government’s pressure (Pekkanen and Pekkanen 2015: 109).

Moreover, some guest commentators and news anchors of newspapers and TV stations had to be removed due to the pressure from the Abe Cabinet. A typical case is Koga Shigeaki, a regular political news guest commentator for the Asahi TV (Koga 2013). He is a retired bureaucrat from the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry and critical of many current government policies. The Abe government forced Asahi TV to remove him as a guest commentator. According to Koga himself, he is already on the “media blacklist” of the Abe Cabinet. Not only on Asahi TV, but his activities involving all TV programs and newspapers were also canceled (Koga 2013:178-179).

Abe’s manipulation and suppression of the media exerted a significant impact on the public opinion outlets, as evident in the responses and critiques from *sōgō zasshi*, concerning Abe and the Abe government. The overall effect is further polarisation (see Figure 5.1). Left wing journals represented by *Sekai* attacked Abe with a new degree of vehemence, accusing his tampering with the freedom of the press. The centre-right *Chūō Kōron* almost lost its voice regarding Abe: in comparison with its critiques of Nakasone and Koizumi during their respective terms, *Chūō Kōron* displayed much less interest in Abe, and the few published articles contain next-to-none criticism. It did run an Abe special edition, which contains mostly speculative topics, such as “Is the Abe regime heading for a rise or fall?” or “Is the Abe cabinet really rock-stable?”, and offers no definitive opinion. The rest of the articles are mere policy suggestions (such as Obata, Iida and Yoshizaki 2013; Yachi and Gotō 2013). On the right, *Bungei Shunjū* put out many articles supporting Abe, not only enthusiastic in numbers, but taking nearly identical stances with the Abe government on highlight issues like the State Secrecy Law, the National Security Bills and Tennoism (for instances, Sakurai and Itō 2013; Tokuoka 2016; Suzuki 2016). If the attitude of *Chūō Kōron* can be described as ambiguous, *Bungei Shunjū* is unequivocally taking Abe’s side. Its several Abe special editions took titles like “Suggestions for a long-term Abe regime” or “A historian’s perspective of Abe”, etc.

#### Table 5.1 Number of Articles Published concerning Abe (and his Cabinet) in Comprehensive Journals

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Year | *Sekai* | *Chūō Kōron* | *Bungei Shunjū* |
| 2013 | 17 | 12 | 39 |
| 2014 | 30 | 3 | 25 |
| 2015 | 20 | 3 | 24 |
| 2016 | 13 | 1 | 17 |
| Total | 100 | 20 | 105 |

*Source: CiNii (Scholarly and Academic Information Navigator) Database,* [*http://ci.nii.ac.jp/en*](http://ci.nii.ac.jp/en)*. (Accessed 16 June, 2017)*

*\* For clarity, only the data of sōgō zasshi during Abe’s second term are included in this table.*

In summary, Abe’s suppression of the media is a reflection of the way he implements is conservative thought. Political journalist Nogami pointed out that the nature of Abe’s suppression is a combination of his insecurity with the media and his tendency to reject different opinions (Nogami 2015:57). From an ideological perspective, his approach also involves elements of authoritiarianism. This is an inevitable result of Abe’s personality reacting with his political thought.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, Abe Shinzō’s conservatism and its practice in Japanese foreign policy have been investigated in detail. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Abe is still the incumbent Prime Minister of Japan during the course of writing this thesis; his own account of events, expression of his thoughts, and follow-up academic research are expected to accumulate in the near future. Currently, most (not all) Japanese academic research and public opinion of Abe are polarized: either all-around praise of Abe’s political thought and policies, or sharp criticism of his politics. This polarization is quite typical of Japanese media and public opinion regarding contemporary politics, albeit Abe seems particularly divisive. It also poses a challenge for this study to introduce the literature: materials must be carefully screened and compared to maintain our own perspective. Fortunately, some purely academic (or value-free to some extent) studies of the Abe administration have started to emerge, providing important references for this thesis (Hughes 2015; Taniguchi 2015).

Based on the investigation in this chapter, these conclusions of Abe Shinzō can be drawn:

Evidently and admitted by himself on various occasions, Abe is a conservative thinker. This identification differs from Koizumi Junichirō, the subject of the last chapter, and the comparison between them is detailed in the next chapter (Abe 2014; Abe 2006; Abe and Okazaki 2004). So what is the essence of Abe’s conservatism? Two origins are highlighted in the investigation of this chapter: Abe’s family background and his educational environment. Kishi Nobusuke, his grandfather, undoubtedly played a crucial role in the formation of Abe’s conservatism. However, it is not that Abe came from an overall conservative family background. His paternal grandfather Abe Kan was a renowned liberal politician during the war and his father Abe Shintarō resisted being identified too closely with Kishi. There are spontaneous elements of Abe’s conservatism, but the influence of the family forerunner (Kishi), education and career associates are the deciding factors in shaping Abe’s conservative thinking.

Another distinctive attribute of Abe’s conservatism is the strong presence of statist and authoritarian elements, incorporated through his preferred conservative learning during his education, also a reflection of his personal disposition. As Nogami pointed out when analyzing Abe’s character, Abe generally rejects different opinions not only because of his character, but also due to his ideological affinity to authoritarianism (Nogami 2015). This leads to Abe’s narrow approach in selecting political advisors: those with opposing ideas or critical opinions are beyond his consideration.

Abe’s specific policies are all-around reflections of the multiple facades of his conservatism. This chapter focused on his defence/security policies and view of history, while Abe’s conservative policies go far beyond. Initiatives like Constitutional revision, reform of the Fundamental Law of Education and State Secrecy Law can all be considered the manifestation of Abe’s conservatism in policy. On the other hand, Abe’s defence/security and view of history policies, though still conservative, are not extreme. They are the result of both his long-game thinking and the limitation of current condition (for instance, he passed the National Security Bills through constitutional re-interpretation, not the conservative’s ultimate goal of constitutional revision).

What is the relationship between Abe’s conservatism and Japan’s Overall Conservatism? This is an important question to be answered by this chapter and, in a sense, this entire thesis. Abe’s conservatism is generally considered the manifestation of Japan’s current overall right-leaning environment, and many of his policies are interpreted as political moves to garner the support of Japanese right-wing voters. This explanation is logically sound, but does not answer the question: Does Japan’s Overall Conservatism make conservative politicians? Or rather did these politicians create Overall Conservatism? It cannot be answered without examine the differences and connections between the two entities. Japanese socialist Oguma suggests that Japan did not become more conservative as a consequence of the Abe government.[[80]](#footnote-80) To my appreciation, Oguma’s definition of conservatism tilts to the side of cultural/social conservatism. By this statement He may mean that Japanese people vote more for conservative politicians, but the society and culture are not necessarily more conservative. Compared to constitutional revision, Japanese are much more concerned with their personal and immediate interest, i.e. the economy. The gradual deviation from pacifism may be a result of the progress of time, which leads to less and less Japanese with any real experience of war. Oguma offers this explanation, but does not recognize it as an essential change of Japanese society.

A simple example can be used to examine this question. At the end of December 2015, Japan and South Korea reached a settlement on the matter of Korean comfort women in World War II. Japan agreed to pay ¥1 billion to a fund supporting surviving victims while South Korea agreed to refrain from criticizing Japan regarding the issue (*Asahi Shimbun*, 30 December, 2015). When the news was out, there was an outcry from conservatives, especially the “internet right-wing” (*netto uyoku*), and some of them retracted their support for Abe.[[81]](#footnote-81) The dynamic of this incident demonstrates that Abe’s policy may not necessarily represent the position of conservative social groups. The National Security Bills were also passed in a roar of controversy. So, are the conservative politicians taking the lead to implement conservative foreign policy, or the conservative social trends compelled them to cater to the public opinion? This chapter raises these questions, and the final chapter is to attempt to answer them through comparison of the three prime ministers.

# Chapter 6 Conclusion

Under the general theme of Japanese conservatism and its foreign policy practices, this thesis conducted a specific investigation of three of Japan’s longest serving prime ministers since the 1980s (Nakasone Yasuhiro, Koizumi Junichirō and Abe Shinzō), based on a case study approach. Conservatism, as an ideology, can be investigated in terms of different structural layers, such as the Institutional Change layer, the Social System layer or the Individual Layer (Muller 1997; Mannheim [1925] 1986). In Japan’s case, political scientists and theorists usually adopt the Institutional Change and Social System approaches, while academic studies of Japanese conservatism from an individual perspective, as in this thesis, are rare (Shinoda 2013; Kabashima and Steel 2010; Krauss and Pekkanen 2011).

This thesis ventured an individual approach by building on case studies of the three prime ministers. The prime reason for choosing Nakasone, Koizumi and Abe as cases is that they share defining similarities or proximities in terms of political stance and policies, while drawing a significant contrast in their respective tactics. The combination of the three prime ministers has previously become the subject of certain academic studies or media analyses (Shinoda 2011:48-59; Uchiyama 2011; Watanabe 2006; Murata 2013). On the other hand, it is also a major concern of this study to identify similarities as well as differences between the conservatism of the three. What are their ideological differences? How did these differences originate and how did they become manifest in their policies? Although they can be roughly regarded as contemporaries (at least they are all alive today), the social environment, ethos and political trends that they lived through are indeed quite distinctive. So what are the environmental influences on their conservativism and policies? In the concluding chapter of this thesis, three aspects of Nakasone, Koizumi and Abe’s conservatism and foreign policies are compared and analyzed.

First, a systematic summary of the common ground and differences between the three prime ministers based on the analyses in the case studies of the previous chapters is carried out. Second, an examination of how each prime minister regarded and assessed himself and each other follows. As a supplement to academic and public perceptions, their self- and mutual perceptions can prove significant and revealing. Third, a summary of Japan’s social ethos and backlash, combined with analyses and comparison in the previous sections, ends the thesis by drawing out the conclusion to the whole work.

## 6.1 Comparisons between the Three Prime Ministers

As previously stated, one of the most important reasons to choose prime ministers Nakasone, Koizumi and Abe as the subjects of study is that they share similarities (hence the comparability), as well as possess distinctive differences from one another. Following this logic, a comparative approach is implemented in the case-study chapters, analyzing the three prime ministers respectively in terms of their positions and actions reagrding the same set of issues. Table 6.1 below is an overall comparison between them and a summary of their representative positions.

It needs to be clarified that not all issues and features in table 6.1 are covered in this thesis. Factional background, (political) hereditary situation, family background, alma mater, relations with the media, security issues and the Yasukuni Shrine issue are directly related to the formation of the prime ministers’ political thoughts, thus are analyzed in detail in the case-study chapters; the rest of the listed issues, including Tennoism, are either domestic politics or not a priority concern of one of the prime ministers, thus are only briefly introduced in the thesis. The reason to include them in the table is to provide a general picture of the common ground and differences between the three prime ministers with as much details as possible, for a better representation of their political characteristics.

#### Table 6.1 Comparison between Three Prime Ministers and their Representative Positions

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Nakasone Yasuhiro （1982-1987） | Koizumi Junichirō（2001-2006） | Abe Shinzō  (2006-2007; 2012-present) |
| Term of office | 4 years 11 months | 5 years 5 months | more than 5 years \* |
| LDP faction | fourth-place faction;  Conservative Anti-mainstream | second-place faction;  Conservative Anti-mainstream | first-place faction;  Conservative Anti-mainstream |
| Hereditary politician | No | Yes | Yes |
| Family political influence | no definitive influence | limited influence | strong influence |
| Alma mater | Tokyo Imperial University | Keio University | Seikei University |
| Relations with the media | exploit and influence the media | exploit alternative media | exploiting combined with suppression of media |
| Relations with political advisors | active use, receptive;  connections with all kinds | active use, receptive;  connections with all kinds | selective use and receptive;  connections with exclusively conservative intellectuals |
| Stance on constitutional revision | support, with a focus on direct election of prime minister | support without specific focus | support, with a focus on collective self-defence |
| Stance on Tennoism | support;  early suggestion of abdication, receptive to female emperor | support;  in favor of female emperor | support;  opposed to female emperor |
| Stance on Article 9 | support revision;  refrained from overseas deployment during term in office | support revision;  implemented conditional overseas deployment during term in office | support revision;  exercise of collective self-defence approved during office |
| Stance on Yasukuni Shrine | visited;  later given up in consideration of foreign relations | visited;  insisted on visits in spite of international opposition | visited;  low profile and circumstantial |
| Average support rate in office | 40.67 per cent | 47.18 per cent | 48 per cent † |

*Source: compiled by author based on Hattori 2015; Nokami 2015; Nakasone 2012; Asahi Shimbun 2016; Abe 2013.*

*\* To date (20 December, 2016), the combined duration of Abe’s two terms of prime minister has reached 5 years. Barring unexpected interruption, it would be as long as approximately 7 years if it lasts to the end of his term as the LDP President, far exceeding those of Nakasone and Koizumi.*

† *The data of Abe’s average support rate in office is to date not available, due to his current incumbency. Here the number 48 per cent is a substitution using the Asahi Shimbun poll numbers in January, 2016.*

The comparison in table 6.1 highlights that all three prime ministers belong to the Conservative Anti-mainstream, which has been noted by a strong desire for national independence, sustained efforts at constitutional revision and hardline positions on security and defence. In turn, these positions constitute the core narrative of Japanese Neo-conservatism since the 1980s (see Chapter 2 for a more detailed analysis).

Kishida Fumio, Foreign Minister of the Abe Cabinet and currently the most influential Conservative-Mainstream politician, recently in a Diet debate made such comments on the Conservative Mainstream and its relative status vis-à-vis Neo-conservatism: “The term Conservative Mainstream is rarely used in recent years. But that does not mean we forget the political tradition formed in the long years of post-war Japan, a tradition championed by great statesmen like Ikeda Hayato and Ōhira Masayoshi, a tradition of moderate stances and the spirit of cooperation, a tradition with Liberalism (*riberāru*) as its fundamental feature. Today, the political narratives of the Liberal Democratic Party have deviated from the track of the Conservative Mainstream, but I believe it is still necessary for the Conservative Mainstream to carry on as a school of political ideas within the party.” (Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives, 27 March, 2016) As the head of *Kōchikai* (the Conservative Mainstream faction of the LDP), Kishida certainly stresses the value of traditional conservatism. However, his comment clearly revealed the universal realization that the Conservative Anti-Mainstream, represented by “Neo-conservatism”, has overtaken the dominant role of the Conservative Mainstream and become the new “mainstream” ideology of the LDP and Japanese politics. Nukaga Fukushirō, another representative Conservative Mainstream politician, offered a similar observation in his interview with the author. He cited the crucial role played by the Conservative Mainstream in the political history of post-war Japan, but also admitted to its current decline compared to the surge of the Conservative Anti-Mainstream, with its politicians wielding dominant influence on the progression of neo-conservatism.[[82]](#footnote-82) It is worth noting that Nukaga is the president of the *Heisei Kenkyūkai*, second largest faction in the LDP, which is nevertheless sidelined in the current Abe Cabinet due to its Conservative Mainstream stance. Ōsaka Iwao, another interviewed political scientist, put it more succinctly: in a pure sense of current trend, “Mainstream” and “Anti-Mainstream” might as well trade their names.[[83]](#footnote-83)

### Term of office

One of the direct criteria to choose these three prime ministers as the subjects of this study is their long terms of office. To date, they rank as the three most long-lasting Japanese prime ministers since 1980. Even put in the broader context of post-war Japanese political history or the whole duration of Japanese constitutional politics, their terms still stand out as long and stable.[[84]](#footnote-84) Political leaders generally need time to leave their marks on history. The duration of their terms alone bespeaks their prominence in contemporary Japanese neo-conservative politics.

### LDP Factions

One interesting fact is that Nakasone, Koizumi and Abe had all been underdogs in their initial run for LDP president, despite their later long terms in office. The faction led by Nakasone Yasuhiro ranked fourth place in the LDP, hardly a major one. He won the leadership with strong support from the powerful Tanaka faction (Hattori 2015:191-194). Koizumi Junichirō was not the favourite at the first stage of the race, either, because Hashimoto Ryūtarō, his prime rival, led the biggest faction in the LDP. Koizumi’s final win can be attributed to his alliance strategy and his declaration of populist policies (Ōtake 2006). Abe Shinzō’s first term was lifted by Koizumi’s recommendation, but the LDP presidential run prior to his second term had been more troublesome. Public support favored his rival Ishiba Shigeru, but he eventually won more party-member votes and became LDP president, thus prime minister of Japan for the second time (Hamamiya 2012). The Seiwa Policy Research Council (*Seiwa Seisaku Kenkyūkai*), to which Abe belongs, is currently the most powerful faction in the LDP. But both the Nakasone and Koizumi’s factions were not the strongest when they were elected. (Krauss and Pekkanen 2011: 122,138-139) Anomalous to the LDP intra-party political tradition, their successes may be partly the result of factional power-play and inter-factional deals. But more importantly, their manifesto, slogans and strategy proved to be superior and carried the win. A deeper explanation is that the entire ethos of Japanese society had taken a neo-conservative turn in their times, providing them with a solid base of public support. The relation between social ethos and individual politicians is to be explored in the third section of this chapter. Here is just a highlight of this significant pattern: LDP politicians from non-major factions created and maintained long-term regimes. It is also one of the reasons to choose these three prime ministers as the subjects of this thesis.

### Hereditary Politics and Family Influence

Whether a politician is hereditary or not is not positively correlated to one’s conservativeness. However, considering family influence, the inevitable consequence of political heredity, it still merits investigation. Some researchers hold that hereditary politicians are more inclined to be conservative. Edmund Burke, for instance, wrote about the importance of hereditary institution (monarchy and aristocracy, in Burke’s ideal) in the continuity of conservatism and tradition (Kabashima and Takenaka 1996; Burke 2008). With Nakasone being the exception, the other two prime ministers are both hereditary, scions of powerful political leaders of the older generation. Undoubtedly, the deposit of “Old Japan” traditions in such families played an important role in the formation process of their conservatism. The strong family influences on Koizumi and Abe have been fully explored in previous chapters, while Nakasone, who is not a hereditary politician thus his family legacy is not included in the case study, is examined here for better comparison. Instead of family legacy, school education and personal experience played the crucial role in the formation of Nakasone’s political thought. Moreover, Nakasone’s case is different from the other two on a deeper level. He personally lived through the pre-war era, the wartime and the post-war era, gaining first-hand experience. Indeed, he is rather the standard bearer of Japanese conservatism and tradition than a “heir” of such post-war ideological inheritance. Another difference is that Nakasone became politically active and ran for the Diet right after the war, when the political playing field was leveled for a fresh post-war start. At the beginning of a new era, in a ground-breaking democracy, young elites without any political capital could aspire to be Diet members and actually succeed, unlike Koizumi and Abe who were in need of massive financing, electoral turf and political inheritance in their times. Certainly, both being hereditary politicians, Koizumi and Abe still have different degrees of involvement with their political legacy and family influence. This is not a readily quantifiable issue, but a brief review of the case studies in the previous chapters indicates that the influence of family members (especially Kishi on Abe) are more frequently mentioned in Abe’s discourse of political thinking, while Koizumi showed much less enthusiasm to bring it up.

### Alma Mater and Educational Background

Alma mater, or educational background in a broader sense, is also an important referential variable affecting the formation process of these politicians’ conservatism. This study found two paths for educational background to exact its influence on their conservative political thoughts and policies. First, a politician’s ideological stance can be directly forged in his years of early education. When studying in Tokyo Imperial University, Nakasone formed a close bond with his professor, Yabe Teiji, who was a prominent scholar of political science and well-connected in the political sphere. In wartime, Yabe was regarded as Prime Minister Konoe Fumimaro’s patronized scholar. It is very likely that Nakasone’s political thinking was profoundly imprinted by his mentor at this stage, since in Nakasone’s autobiography he frequently mentions Yabe’s planning for his life and guidance to his political career. Koizumi and Abe do not fit this pattern: their alma mater and teachers leave little mark on their political thinking, which was mainly formed through other experiences. Second, alma mater and related social contacts, as well as its psychological impact, play a large part in the formation of a politician’s “people’s skill” and personality, which in turn affect policy-making and political tactics. Nakasone, with his Tokyo Imperial University background, developed a keen understanding and utter respect for the intellectual elites. His political advisors mostly graduated from top Japanese universities or even worked there, and Nakasone’s deftness in using them to his own purpose can be attributed to his own elite membership. Koizumi, a graduate of Keio University, was better at using the “alumni faction” to his own advantage, compared to Nakasone. Keio University’s alumni organization is Mita Association (*Mitakai*), from which Koizumi selected many alumni to be his political advisors and associates, or even Cabinet members. Takenaka Heizō, Minister for Internal Affairs in the Koizumi Cabinet, is such an example. Abe graduated from Seikei University, which barely qualifies as an elite institution even among private universities. Some researchers link Abe’s alma mater to his apparent inferiority complex (Nokami 2015:65). This may also explain Abe’s distrust of elite intellectuals and his authoritarian tendency. With a very few exceptions (Kitaoka Shinichi from the University of Tokyo being one), Abe’s political advisors are mostly fringe conservative intellectuals who are not widely acknowledged or well-received in the academic mainstream. Abe’s arbitrary approach in policy-making and authoritarian leadership in governing raised a surge of anti-intellectualism in Japanese politics, which is essentially another form of conservative resurrection (Uchida 2015). Since the start of Abe’s second term, discussions of the connection between anti-intellectualism and conservatism frequently occur in the Japanese media and academic sphere, revealing a troublesome perception of Abe’s anti-intellectualism and its social impact. (Satō and Saitō 2015; Uchida 2015)

### Relations with the Media

Ōsaka suggested that Nakasone, Koizumi and Abe share a trait different from LDP prime ministers of the past: that none of the three is good at using the *soshiki* (organizational power) of the party, such as *kōenkai*, to maintain the stability of their Cabinets. Instead, they are all proficient in using the power of public opinion and the media.[[85]](#footnote-85) One practical reason for this is the organizational shift of the LDP, especially the introduction of small electoral districts (Krauss and Pekkanen 2011: 65-99). But more significantly, it is determined by the three prime ministers’ personal style. They are all politicians of the masses, catering to popular demands and taste. Ōsaka defines this phenomenon as the “mediatization” of politics, in which the media wields more influence than pure politics. On more and more occasions, there is even a tendency that the media logic takes over from political logic and becomes the overwhelming factor.[[86]](#footnote-86)

In dealing with the media, Nakasone proved the most competent of the three, having little trouble with the media throughout his term as prime minister. This is because a long time before he became the prime minister, Nakasone had developed close ties with the major media outlets. In his early political career he accepted a great deal of advices from media tycoons, and the major media played an important role in his ascension to power (see Chapter 3.4.3). Some of his political advisors were themselves media professionals, such as Watanabe Tsuneo, president of the *Yomiuri Shimbun*, and Miura Kineji, chief editor of the *Asahi Shimbun*, who were also both close personal associates of Nakasone. Aside from powerful personal connections, Nakasone was also very deft at using the media to build his own positive image (Hattori 2015:187-8). Koizumi had his own unique approach to the media: he preferred to use alternative newspapers and magazines to promote himself, and frequently participated in TV shows in person. In general, he had a positive relationship with the media (Kabashima and Steel 2007). In Abe’s time, the government-media relation and the media’s attitude towards the Abe Cabinet have taken a sharp turn to polarization. The *Yomiuri Shimbun* and the *Sankei Shimbun* came to be regarded as Abe’s supporters in the press, while the *Asahi Shimbun*, critical of Abe, suffered one blow after another from the Japanese government. Abe is frequently called a dictator for his manipulation and suppression of the media, and the recent incidents that multiple TV anchors and commentators had their contract terminated or program canceled due to their criticism of Abe seems to corroborate this view (Koga 2014).

Especially since the end of 2012 when Abe re-entered the prime minister’s office, the government’s suppression of the media has reached a post-war apex to clear obstacles for the implementation of his political agenda (Hughes 2015: 20). The international community is fully aware of this change. *The Guardian* and *The Economist* both reported on the Abe regime’s media suppression in their February issues, 2016 (*The Guardian*, 17 February 2016; *The Economist*, 20 February, 2016). The news that the Abe government had three prominent Japanese TV anchors (Furutachi Ichirō, *TV Asahi*; Kuniya Hiroko, *NHK*; Kishii Shigetada, *TBS*) ousted incurred an outcry from the international media. As a democracy with self-claimed western values, Japan has lagged behind most western countries on freedom of the press in recent years. According to the world ranking list delivered by Reporters Without Borders, Japan’s freedom of press ranking dropped from 20th in Koizumi’s term to about 50th in Asō’s term (2002-2008). Later with the DPJ government, Japan’s rank climbed back to 17th and 11th. But in Abe’s second term, the rank plummeted to 53th in 2014, 59th in 2014 and 61th in 2015, lowest of all time since the ranking started.[[87]](#footnote-87) This free fall of freedom of press ranking reflects how severely the Abe regime impacted on Japanese society with its conservatism.

For a politician, the exploitation of the media is not necessarily linked to his ideological orientation. Hosokawa Morihiro was considered a liberal politician when elected prime minister in 1993, and he is a master of media manipulation. But as a general tendency, conservative parties and politicians are often viewed as supporters of media control and press suppression, while liberals show little impetus to control the media due to their progressive stance(Jamieson and Cappelia, 2008). On the other side of the relationship, this thesis investigated media feedback of the three prime ministers based on the case study of three comprehensive journals (*Sekai*, *Chūō Kōron*, and *Bungei Shunjū*), and found that a particular journal’s response to the prime ministers is highly correlated to its ideological stance. *Sekai,* as a left-wing journal, maintains a critical attitude towards all three prime ministers; *Chūō Kōron* is centre-right and claims rational objectivity, so its responses to the prime ministers are generally mild and constructive. Since being acquired by the Yomiuri Group, *Chūō Kōron*’s editorial orientation quickly fell in line with the *Yomiuri Shimbun* (Hashimoto 1999). *Bungei Shunjū*, a self-styled conservative journal, is generally supportive of the conservative policies of the three prime ministers. But on occasions that their policy deviated from the perceived conservative principle, *Bungei Shunjū* responded with fierce attacks, as in the case of Koizumi revealing his favor of a woman emperor (see details in Chapter 4).

### Relations with Political Advisors

The three prime ministers share in common their recruitment of certain intellectuals as political advisors, built close relations with them and utilized their intellectual support before pushing major changes in policy (as in Nakasone’s Yasukuni visit and breach of the limit of 1 per cent of GNP defence budget, Koizumi’s postal reform and SDF overseas deployment, and Abe’s National Security Bills and the Abe Statement, see Chap. 3.4.2; Chap. 4.5.1; Chap. 5.3.1). But on an operational level, the three are quite different in perception and tactics in the use of political advisors. Nakasone proved extremely tactful in operating political advisors, who in turn proved instrumental in forging many of his policies. He took over his predecessor Ōhira Masayoshi’s entire advisory crew and made his own supplement. Nevertheless, Nakasone was criticized for bias in choosing advisors sharing his own ideas. (See Chapter 3.4.3) Koizumi also favored political advisors who agree with him. He differed from Nakasone in that his advisors seemed to be encouraged to play a bigger and more hands-on role in policy-making and implementation. Among his political advisors, Takenaka Heizō was appointed Minister of Internal Affairs to preside over structural economic reform; Inoguchi Kuniko was appointed Minister of State to tackle women, aging and population problems; Kitaoka Shinichi was sent to be Japan's ambassador and deputy permanent representative to the United Nations. In other words, Koizumi delegated more and left more space for his political advisors to release their expertise and energy. (See Chapter 4.4.2) On this particular issue, Koizumi is on another level above Nakasone and Abe. Abe’s relation with his political advisors is as polarized as much of his other tactics. His trust in them is generally lower, but a few fringe conservative intellectuals became his confidants and developed close ties with him. Abe’s favoritism and strong preference for certain types of advisors are particularly salient (See Chapter 5.2.2). The differences of using political advisors between the three are the result of their distinctive types of conservatism, as well as their personal experiences.

### Tennoism

Since the very existence of post-war Japan is built on the preservation of Tennoism, the LDP always puts support for Tennoism at the core of its conservative principles. It may seem unnecessary to compare the three prime ministers concerning this issue. However, degree carries significance. The extent of support for Tennoism, as well as the pitch and content of their rhetoric, can serve as a good index to estimate the depth of their conservatism. Nakasone suggested abdication at the first stage of his post-war career, but later repudiated his position and lifted the emperor to the status of the spiritual symbol of a democratic Japan. Koizumi remained quite quiescent concerning the issue of Tennoism. He is never recorded as uttering any definitive support for Tennoism, at least not in the scope of this study. Conversely, he was attacked by conservatives because of his suggestion of the feasibility of a female imperial successor. Judging from this incident, it is questionable whether Japanese conservatives could really take Koizumi as one of their own.[[88]](#footnote-88) Abe is completely different from Koizumi on this issue. He idolizes the unbroken chain of Japanese imperial succession and insists on the absolutism of a male imperial successor. His many other words and deeds regarding Tennoism reveal a retro imperialist tendency, almost pre-war style. Recently, the U.N. Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women issued a recommendation for Japan to revise the Imperial Law and allow women descendants in the female line also to succeed to the throne. Abe harshly retorted to the U.N. panel’s criticism in his Diet speech, admonishing the U.N. against such criticism in the future and calling for a “better understanding” of Japanese tradition and culture (*Mainichi Shimbun*, 2016.3.14).

### Constitutional Revision and Article 9

All three prime ministers support constitutional revision, although due to different causes and by different lines of action. Nakasone fought for constitutional revision throughout his political career. Earlier, his cause for constitutional revision was to pursue the direct election of prime minister instead of the parliament/cabinet government system prescribed by the current Constitution. Later his goal of constitutional revision kept moving closer and closer to security and defence, setting Article 9 as his target. Nakasone did not succeed in his pursuit of direct election of the prime minister, but he became the prototype of “presidential prime minister” in post-war Japan. He admitted that “under current constitutional frame, Japanese prime minister is in terms of power somewhere between the American president and British prime minister, though closer to the former. Compared to the pre-war Japanese Imperial Constitution, the current one rendered the emperor merely symbolic while it gave much more power to the prime minister.” (Hattori 2015:196) Nakasone raised his famous slogan of “comprehensive settlement of the post-war accounts”, but it did not touch constitutional revision, the most pressing inheritance of post-war politics. In the House Budgetary Committee hearing on 19 February 1983, to a Socialist House member’s questioning he replied that “the current cabinet did not put constitutional revision on our political agenda.” (*Kokkaigijiroku*, Shūgiin Yosaniinkai, No.10, 19 February, 1983) Later in the discussion with the leader of the Japan Socialist Party, he again offered a positive view of the current Constitution. Certainly, the practical obstacle was that the LDP did not command two thirds of the Diet seats at the time, making constitutional revision impossible to launch. In his memoir, Nakasone expressed his deep regret that he had not pushed constitutional revision forward (Nakasone 2012:496).

Compared to Nakasone’s “more thinking than action” (*kōdō yori shisō*) on constitutional revision, Koizumi is more active. In his early political career, constitutional revision was one of his slogans and an important component of his expressed conservative thought (Asakawa 2001:86). In the Koizumi Cabinet period, the media took for granted that Koizumi supported constitutional revision, but he remained ambiguous. According to Asakawa’s research, Koizumi is neither a radical constitutional revisionist nor a defender, but a moderate revisionist (Asakawa 2001: 87). Another researcher listed Nakasone and Abe as revisionists but left Koizumi out, claiming him to be without an ideological stance on this issue, or in other words, a realist (Iseri 2014:2). For Koizumi, constitutional revision aims at both challenging Article 9 and direct election of the prime minister, the latter an aim shared with Nakasone. One point worth note is that Japan’s open public discussion of constitutional revision started in Koizumi’s term, which developed to a prevalent and intense debate and left the impression that Koizumi is an active revisionist. In action, Koizumi formed “the Headquarter of New Constitution Promotion Campaign” (*Shinkenpōseitei Suishinhonbu*) in 2004 and put himself in the chair. He also launched the LDP constitutional draft committee. These efforts to promote constitutional revision at this stage largely left Article 9 and overseas SDF deployment out of focus. Rather than the ambition of constitutional revision, Koizumi depended on provisional legislation to overcome the constitutional hurdle impeding overseas deployment. The Afghan War in 2001 and Iraq War in 2003 provided such opportunitiess for the Koizumi government to pass the Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law and Iraq Special Measures Law, subsequently sending the SDF beyond Japan’s border for the first time. This is what Nakasone aspired but failed to achieve. Nevertheless, Koizumi’s achievement is on a provisional basis; Permanent legislation and normalization had to await the future Abe regime. Unlike Nakasone, after leaving the Prime Minister’s office Koizumi seldom mentioned constitutional revision in public. He seems much less commited than Nakasone regarding this matter: although he followed the trend when leading the tide, as soon as he stepped down he seems quite content to be no longer promoting the cause.

Abe Shinzō has always put constitutional revision at the centre of his political positions as the primary goal of his political ambition. His focus on this issue is not only a political inheritance from his grandfather Kishi Nobusuke, but also the manifestation of Japan’s conservative political environment in his person. Abe shares with Nakasone a common cause that the post-war Constitution of Japan was formulated under American duress, and therefore lacks independence. As mentioned in Chapter 4, his emphasis on national autonomy is also the reason for him to establish the Restoration of Sovereignty Day. Aside from this, the more practical and important cause is his pursuit of a defence and security policy breakthrough. More specifically, the objectives are the right of collective self-defence and SDF overseas deployment, which have been endlessly contested in post-war Japan. Therefore, Abe set the target of constitutional revision on Article 9, having little problem with other constitutional provisions (unlike Nakasone and Koizumi who desired the direct election of the prime minister). The National Security Bills passed on 20 September 2015, as well as the previously passed State Secrecy Law and the National Security Council can all be considered as Abe’s preparations for the final and major push for constitutional revision. Another difference with Nakasone and Koizumi is that the Abe Cabinet set constitutional revision as an explicit part of its political agenda, to be addressed within the term and never missed discussion in Diet sessions and LDP conferences. As discussed in Chapter 5, after the House of Councilors election in 2016, Abe’s ruling coalition attained a supermajority of two-thirds of the seats in both Houses, and the parliamentary condition for constitutional revision is ready.

Why did Nakasone, a prime minister with a strong impetus for constitutional revision, never take action in his term in office? Conversely, why did Koizumi, who obviously had little enthusiasm for constitutional revision, turn it into a hot topic of controversy during his own term? Abe, who is not known for his intellectual prowess, passed the National Referendum Act (*Kokumin Tohyōhō*) riding Koizumi’s tide, then in his second term breached one forbidden zone after another, eventually pushing constitutional revision to the front of Japanese political reality. It is not to deny the importance of political thinking to a conservative politician, but there are many other factors affecting the consequence, such as social ethos, international environment and public opinion. These factors are to be discussed in section 3.

### Security and Defence

All three prime ministers made significant breakthroughs in the field of security and defence. This issue is not listed in table 6.1 because it is closely related to constitutional revision. But as an important aspect of conservative political thinking, the three prime ministers’ positions and actions on security and defence merit a separate summary and analysis in table 6.2.

#### Table 6.2 The Three Prime Ministers’ Positions and Actions on Security and Defence

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Nakasone Yasuhiro | Koizumi Junichirō | Abe Shinzō |
| SDF overseas deployment | proposed SDF mine-sweeping mission in Persian Gulf, unfulfilled | proposed SDF participation in Afghan and Iraq post-war reconstruction;  achieved first SDF overseas deployment | proposed SDF aiding US military operation;  further expanding SDF operating space |
| Security and defence strategy | increasing defence budget beyond 1 per cent GNP limit;  military equipment export and technological cooperation with the US;  general self-restraint | support US Anti-terrorism War;  strengthen Japan’s defence through provisional legislation | exercising collective defence right;  seeking SDF upgrade to regular military;  doctrine of Proactive Contribution to Peace |
| Legislation related to security and defence | replace the National Defence Council with the Security Council;  attempted Anti-Espionage Act in 1986, voted down | Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law;  Emergency Measures Law; Iraq Special Measures Law | State Secrecy Law;  National Security Bills;  creating National Security Council (Japan) |
| US-Japan alliance | strengthened;  repairing US-Japan relation weakened by Suzuki Cabinet;  “Japan is America’s unsinkable aircraft carrier”  Ron-Yasu Relationship | strengthened;  prompt support for US after 9/11;  moral and financial support for American Anti-Terrorism War | strengthened;  repairing US-Japan relation weakened by DPJ government;  Japan’s active role in US strategy of Asia rebalance |

*Source: author, summary of previous chapters in this thesis*

### Foreign Relations

To clarify first, the foreign relations summarized in this section are not the entirety of Japan’s foreign policies and transactions, but Japan’s relations with specific and significant countries, including US-Japan, Japan-China and Japan-South Korea relations. Foreign policy is to a large degree the extension of domestic policy, prime ministers’ conservatism in domestic politics can well be reflected in foreign relations. Nakasone, Koizumi and Abe all faced troublesome foreign relations when they came into office, with Koizumi’s foreign problems a little less than the other two.

Before Nakasone, Prime Minister Suzuki Zenkō’s statement[[89]](#footnote-89) about US-Japan alliance in his state visit to the US caused a public upheaval back home, and consequently damaged US-Japan relationship (*Asahi Shimbun*, 17 May, 1981). The first history textbook crisis in Asian relations also occurred during Suzuki’s term: history textbook with revisionist changes, such as substituting “aggression” (*shinryaku*) with “enter” (*shinshutsu*), was sanctioned by the Ministry of Education and incurred strong protests from China and South Korea. As soon as he entered office, Nakasone set out to repair Japan’s relation with its East Asian neighbors and the US. His first state visit was to South Korea, instead of the US, the conventional choice of past prime ministers. Of course he did not neglect US-Japan relation and built a special personal relationship with President Reagan in his subsequent trip to America. His relation with Chinese leader Hu Yaobang was also exceptionally good (Nakasone 2004: 135). Despite a series of frictions with China and South Korea during his whole term (including view of history and Yasukuni Shrine visits), he handled Asian relations well, listening to Chinese and Korean voices with sincerity and bringing the relations with these two countries to a honeymoon period (Vogel, Yuan and Tanaka 2002).

Compared with Nakasone and Abe, Koizumi had a head start in foreign relations by inheriting little trouble from the preceding Mori Cabinet. The US-Japan relation grew closer during his term. The 9/11 Terror Attacks occurred right after the start of his term as prime minister. In swift response, he offered support to the US and its anti-terrorism strategy. The Koizumi Cabinet passed the Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law and Iraq Special Measures Law, and sent the SDF to the Indian Ocean to offer logistical support American Naval forces. However, Japan’s relations with East Asian countries plummeted during Koizumi’s term due to his insistence on visiting Yasukuni Shrine. When explaining his foreign policy, Koizumi held that Japan’s relations with surrounding countries will improve as long as the US-Japan relation stands strong, but the reality proved otherwise.

At the start of his first term in 2006, Abe tried to improve Asian relations with a pragmatic attitude. His first state visit was to China, also an unconventional choice, which was welcomed by the Chinese media as “the ice-breaking trip”. During this visit, Abe proposed a Japan-China strategic partnership and launched a joint history research project, bringing positive energy to the Japan-China relation. Short as his firm term lasted, his effort to improve the Japan-China relation left benefit and good will to the ensuing Fukuda, Asō and Hatoyama governments. Similar to Nakasone’s start, the second Abe Cabinet faced double challenges in foreign policy, with US-Japan and East Asian relations both needing attention. Relation with the US was cool due to the Futenma Military Base relocation problem (Gotō 2015:243-249); the Japan-China relation soured due to the nationalization of Senkaku/Diaoyu islands; relation with South Korea was stagnant because of the comfort women issue. After three years of governing, US-Japan relation improved with the passing of National Security Bills, while the other two relations remained frigid. Abe’s “value diplomacy” and his conservative view of history proved to be formidable obstacles in the way of improvement in Japan-China relation.

### The Yasukuni Shrine Problem

Since 1985 when Nakasone paid his visit to Yasukuni Shine, there have been not many Japanese prime ministers who followed suit in visiting the shrine in their official capacity. Hashimoto Ryūtarō visited in 1996; Koizumi first visited in 2001 then repeated his visit in each of the next five years. Later, Abe in his first term, Fukuda Yasuo, Asō Tarō and all subsequent Democratic prime ministers did not make a visit. Eventually, Abe in his second term picked up visit again at the end of 2013. The three prime ministers studied in this thesis are typical cases on this issue, and their stances on Yasukuni Shrine visit serve as good reference index for the investigation of their conservatism.

After becoming prime minister, Nakasone visited Yasukuni Shrine in 1983 and 1984, albeit in his private capacity. The year of 1985 was the 40th anniversary for Japan’s end of the War; also the year when Nakasone proposed his famous “comprehensive settlement of the post-war accounts”, so he chose to turn the visit official on 15 August. Before the visit he consulted his personal advisory panel, and accordingly skipped the Shinto ritual to abide by the constitutional principle of separation of religion from politics (Nakasone 1996: 490). Nevertheless, the official nature of his visit incurred heated protests from China and South Korea. Chinese university students even took to the street in mass demonstrations, the first since the end of Great Cultural Revolution. This incident is regarded as the origins of modern China’s anti-Japan sentiment (Weiss 2014:92-95). Being deft at diplomatic reconciliation, Nakasone sent his envoy to China to explain, and eventually decided to give up future visits. This was a compromise in consideration of the negative international impact of his visit. In his heart, the reverence of Yasukuni Shrine and the self-justification of the visit never changed. Nakasone later wrote in his memoir: “I would probably continue to visit Yasukuni Shrine if it was not for the strong opposition from China and other countries. To force it would destroy Japan’s relations with our Asian neighbors, and the spirits may not be pleased about it”. (Nakasone 2001a: 100-111) Since Nakasone’s official visit and later giving-in, the Yasukuni Shrine issue has transcended Japan’s domestic politics and become an international problem, exposing an unhealed scar in Japan’s relations with its East Asian neighbors. Whatever Nakasone’s original intention had been, his 1985 visit created difficulties, and his negative legacy in foreign relations still carries on.

Nakasone’s visit just set a bad start, while his negative legacy began from Koizumi’s term. Koizumi could have taken certain measures to prevent the situation from deteriorating, but he did the opposite, eventually locking Japan’s Asian diplomacy into an impasse. Koizumi’s Yasukuni Shrine visits were different from that of Nakasone in two points: first, he did not put much ideological connotation into them, unlike the definitive conservative sentiment in Nakasone’s case. There was no emphasis or promise of visiting Yasukuni Shrine in Koizumi’s early years, or in the manifesto of his first two runs for LDP presidency. His abrupt commitment to visit and consequent diplomatic crisis took many Japanese political observers and journalists by surprise. Second, Koizumi’s visits were consecutive. His first visit, as expected, again raised vehement protests from China, South Korea and much of the rest of the international community (*Asahi Shimbun*, 14 August, 2001). In defiance, Koizumi kept visiting for years, using “personal spiritual matter” and “peaceful intention” as his reasons (Koizumi 2006: 94). Eventually, China cancelled the summit meetings with Japan, and mass protest in China kept heating up throughout Koizumi’s term. Thus, the major distinction of Koizumi’s Yasukuni Shrine visits is that he did not give foreign relations due consideration, putting priority instead on domestic politics (Smith 2015: 83-86). Despite the absence of ideological motivation in his visits, his actions created a diplomatic impasse. Attempts are made in Chapter 4 of this thesis, to find a theoretical frame which could explain such an anomaly. The best explanation is populism. In other words, Koizumi was using the Yasukuni Shrine visit as a gesture to instigate nationalistic sentiment among the Japanese people and consolidate his mandate. It had little to do with his personal conservative ideology, if any.

Abe’s stance on Yasukuni visits is between Nakasone and Koizumi. On one hand, he did not succumb when pressured by China, unlike Nakasone; on the other hand, neither did he fixate on yearly visits like Koizumi. Abe’s attitude towards Yasukuni Shrine itself has always been ambiguous. In his own words, whether he should visit depends on the practical political judgment of the moment. In his first term (2006-2007), Abe took the road of restraint in order to repair the Japan-China relation which had turned sour during Koizumi’s term. But before his second term, he expressed the desire to visit early on. On 17 October 2012, two months away from his inauguration as prime minister, he visited the Yasukuni Shrine for the first time as president of the LDP. On 7 February 2013, he stated before the Diet Budgetary Committee that he “deeply regretted having not visited Yasukuni Shrine in my first term” (*Asahi Shimbun*, 2 February, 2013). On 26 December, 2013, the one-year mark into his second term, he visited again and “briefed the spirits” about his achievement in the past year. Abe’s visits do not seem unexpected, given his noted conservativeness. But his selective timing of visits reveals the tact and cynicism of a seasoned politician. He did not promise future visit or regular visits, but he often preaches about the importance of visiting Yasukuni Shrine during party elections and Diet elections. His behavioral pattern on this issue is like a bomb with a random time-fuse, having the potential to go off anytime and disrupt foreign relations.

## 6.2 Continuity and Discontinuity between the Three Prime Ministers

The previous section covered the comparisons between the political thought, stance and foreign policies of the three prime ministers. In this section, continuity and discontinuity are to be explored based on these comparisons. In the case-study chapters, analyses of the three ministers are essentially independent of one another; while the analysis in this section is comprehensively carried out in order to find out the continuity and discontinuity between them. In the previous case studies, their self-perception and self-assessment are investigated through evidence provided in their writings, speeches and memoirs. In the same manner, this section deals with how they perceive and assess each other’s conservatism and policy, especially Nakasone’s views of the other two from a predecessor’s perspective.

### The “Other” between the Three Prime Ministers

Due to so much common ground and similarities between Nakasone, Koizumi and Abe, there have been numerous studies in Japanese academics and media, comparing at least two, or all three of them with each other. For instance, Hirakawa Shōji’s study points out that the current ‘Abenomics’ is not much different from Nakasone’s economic policy in the 1980s, thus the economic bubble crisis in Nakasone’s time might repeat itself if the current economic course remains unchanged (Hirakawa 2015). Other such studies include Kinoshita Kazuhiro’s comparison of Koizumi and Abe’s media strategies, Hirai Shōshu and Mikuriya Takashi’s comparative research of Nakasone and Abe’s style of Zen meditation, and Nakakita Kōji’s comparative study of Koizumi and Abe’s party politics (Kinoshita 2007; Hirai and Mikuriya 2015; Nakakita 2015). Other than these studies from a third-party perspective, this section explores their mutual perceptions and assessment of each other.

When Nakasone served as the prime minister, Koizumi was a young House member in the Fukuda faction. In Koizumi’s term, Nakasone still held a seat in the House of Representatives. Abe Shintarō, Shinzō’s father, had been Foreign Minister in the Nakasone Cabinet and had been considered one of the important cabinet members, and probable candidate for the next prime minister. Abe Shinzō directly inherited Koizumi’s posts of party president as well as prime minister, reflecting a deep trust on Koizumi’s part. However, Koizumi’s anti-nuclear position after 2012 is in conflict with Abe’s policy. Koizumi Shinjirō, the son of the former prime minister, is currently a promising young prospect in the LDP led by Abe (Ōshita 2015). There are frequent and thick intersections between the political careers of the three prime ministers.

Due to the fact that in Nakasone’s term Koizumi was just an inexperienced politician and Abe was yet to start his political career, this section is biased towards Nakasone’s assessment of the other two. The views the other way around are also to be covered, albeit to a much lesser degree. At the beginning of Koizumi’s term when he was criticized by the media for his populist style, Nakasone stepped up to support the new prime minister, stating that certain ingredients of populism are necessary to a politician (Nakasone 2001b). In a press interview at about the same time, Nakasone also expressed great expectations of Koizumi, claimed himself to be a populist no different from Koizumi, and echoed Koizumi’s proposal of direct election of the prime minister (Nakasone 2001b). However, later Koizumi started a purge of LDP elders, “persuading” senior politicians (Nakasone, Miyazawa) to leave the political stage (*Asahi Shimbun*, 12 November, 2003). Since then, Nakasone has been increasingly critical towards Koizumi, even attacking his populism that he previously endorsed (Nakasone 2005).

Nakasone’s criticism of Koizumi also included leading Japan into an awkward situation with his Yasukuni Shrine visits, lack of long-term vision in foreign policy, absence of strategic thinking and so on (Nakasone 2005). To be fair, Nakasone’s discontent with Koizumi is not merely a personal feud, since what Koizumi did to him is but a copy of what he had done to Tanaka Kakuei (Hattori 2015:224-225). What really troubled him is Koizumi’s limitation in political thinking: all populism, little conservatism. Nakasone’s ideal of conservatism focuses on educational reform, constitutional revision and exercising of collective self-defence right. He had expectations of Koizumi because Koizumi’s slogans when running for the LDP presidency were close to his political appeal. But Koizumi failed to deliver in office, so in Nakasone’s eyes he failed him (Nakasone 2005).

Therefore, at the beginning of the Abe regime, Nakasone used caution, grudging positive remarks. He warned Abe of repeating Koizumi’s mistakes, of imitating Koizumi’s style (Nakasone 2006). He regarded Koizumi’s politics as “politics for show” (*miru seiji*), which only aims for the theatrical effect on the public, devoid of basic ideas. He demanded Abe to develop “politics of thinking” (*kangaeru seiji*), which means Abe’s policy should reflect well-thought out political ideology and philosophy. (Nakasone 2006:100). Because of these doubts, Nakasone did not seem impressed by Abe’s book *Utsukushii Kuni e.* In Nakasone’s view, “a beautiful nation” is not a vision of a state (*kokkazō*), but a vision of an ideal (*risōzō*) (Nakasone 2006:100). What Abe should be concerned about is fundamental matters like the Constitution, the Fundamental Law of Education, social welfare and national security, instead of lesser issues like Koizumi’s postal reform (Nakasone 2006:101). Along with the spread of Abe’s deployment on security and constitutional revision, Nakasone’s view of Abe gradually turned to become more positive. These kinder words are also a form of appeal to Abe: for instance, Nakasone published successive articles for *Seiron*, appealing for further actions on security matters and constitutional revision (Nakasone 2007a; Nakasone 2007b). In Abe’s second term, Nakasone responded favorably to the State Secrecy Law, the National Security Bills and the creation of the National Security Council (Japan), although he also pointed out the necessity for Abe to properly communicate with China. Abe’s core policies in the second term are essentially what Nakasone had aspired to in his term in office, but was unable to attain them, hence his support for the prime minister (Nakasone 2015a; Naksone 2015b). Nakasone especially favored the revision of the Fundamental Law of Education in Abe’s first term and the National Security Bills passed in the second. On the former, Nakasone commented that “it is absolutely not an introvert or reactionary revision”; on the latter, he opined that “there is certain degree of discontent about the National Security Bills among Japanese people. But the ideas of the law are just fine; what’s inadequate is the Abe government’s explanatory work. What is left to be done is to eliminate the misunderstanding.” (Nakasone 2015b:149-153) Of course, after the victory in the 2016 Upper House election, the *kangaeru seiji* suggested by Nakasone is ready to be replaced by *kōdō no seiji* (politics of action).[[90]](#footnote-90)

There are more political connections between Koizumi and Abe, not only because Abe is the direct successor of Koizumi, but also as their political thoughts, tactics and policies are either similar or opposite, hence the constant comparison between the two in research to date. When asked why choose Abe as his successor, Koizumi did not invoke the common ground in political stance or ideology, but simply answered that “Abe is the right man for the Prime Minister’s position” (*Tekinin*). However, neither did Koizumi try to conceal his support of Abe (Koizumi 2015:109). For Koizumi used to belong to the Abe (Shintarō) faction in the LDP, and Japanese politics still represent connections and favours. Koizumi had been well looked-after by Abe Shintarō, so to a large extent, promoting Abe Shinzō to be his successor was a return of the support offered by his father. Evidently, some of Abe’s policies and approaches, such as the second Abe Cabinet’s forcing through the National Security Bills, are not well received by Koizumi, who remarked that “the government did a poor job explaining it to the public” (Koizumi 2015: 109). His son Shinjirō, current head of the LDP's Youth Division, also disagrees often with Abe, especially taking his father’s side on denuclearization against Abe’s expressed position. In general, Koizumi does not express high regard in regard to Abe’s developing policies. On the other side, Abe went out of his way to avoid offering any official comment on Koizumi, while his policies are clearly deviating from the line of the Koizumi government (Nakakita 2015). In spite of Koizumi’s efforts to dismantle the factional politics of the LDP, Abe reenlisted many politicians expelled from the party in the Koizumi era, bringing back factional politics and money politics (Nakakita 2015:99-100). This was one of the reasons that the first Abe Cabinet did not last long.

## 6.3 Politicians, Foreign Policies and Japan’s Social Ethos

What kind of relationship exists between politicians (prime ministers), government (cabinet) foreign policies and Japan’s social ethos? Is it a positive correlation, negative correlation or irrelevant? This is one of the core questions put forth by this study. With this question in mind, this thesis conducted case studies of three important Japanese neo-conservative politicians, investigated the forming of their political thoughts, the mechanism of their policy-making, and their relationship with the international community and domestic society (public opinions, support rates, etc.). As the conclusion of the thesis, this section discusses the relationship between politicians, foreign policies and Japan’s social ethos.

In recent years, there are two opposing views about whether Japanese politics went too far to the right. One view is that Japanese politics are rapidly trending towards conservativism, to the point of right-wing politics. Especially after Abe became prime minister for the second time in 2012, this retro-conservatism has incurred concerns that Japanese militarism and statism might be resurrected (Banno and Yamaguchi 2014; Nakano 2015). Politicians with revisionist positions are not only dominating the LDP, but also vocal and active in most opposition parties. The opposite view holds that Japan finally took a crucial step towards the “normal country” (*futsū no kuni*) promoted by Ozawa Ichirō (Ozawa 1994); that Koizumi and Abe’s reforms and policy shifts are necessary preparations for the belated normalization of Japan; that it is imperative for Japan to recover “the lost decade” (*ushinawareta jūnen*) in economy and fend off China’s rise in foreign relation and defence, so nothing helping these goals can be denigrated as right-wing (Nakano 2015:3).

In his speech at Nagoya in 2015, Kōno Yōhei, former president of the LDP, former foreign minister and current speaker of the Lower House, exclaimed that “I hope the LDP won’t go further to the right, since it has already reached the boundary between conservative politics and right-wing politics” (*Asahi Shimbun*, 29 August, 2015). Yamazaki Taku, former vice president of the LDP, also pointed out that the current LDP lost the animated debates it used to enjoy, and became something like the prewar Imperial Rule Assistance Association (*Taisei Yokusankai*) (*Asahi Shimbun*, 8 August, 2015). To some extent, the criticism from these LDP elders revealed that the LDP is at an unprecedented peak of conservatism and right-wing outreach.

Political scientist Nakano Kōichi suggests a most significant cue for Japanese politics to turn radical right: the erstwhile Conservative Anti-mainstream politicians are becoming the mainstream now (Nakano 2015:3). Igarashi Jin, another political scientist, suggests that the Conservative Anti-mainstream’s takeover is the main reason for Japan’s right-wing turn (Igarashi 2015: 112-3). The dominance of the Conservative Anti-mainstream politicians is embodied in four aspects. First, the “constitutional revision by re-interpretation” (*kaishaku kaiken*), which had been pursued by the Conservative Mainstream, is now evolving into “explicit constitutional revision” (*meibun kaiken*) and “substantial constitutional revision” (*jisshitsu kaiken*). Second, the policy priority is shifting from the economy to politics. The LDP had followed the line of “economy first” for a long time and it served to defuse many political confrontations. But now, the LDP leadership is disregarding domestic concerns and economic worries about the State Secrecy Law and National Security Bills, and using economic policy to divert political opposition. Third, the long-standing cooperative relationship with the US is becoming more and more submissive. The Conservative Mainstream politicians in the past, like Yoshida Shigeru, refused American request for Japan to re-militarize, on the grounds of upholding the Constitution; while Abe embraced American global strategic interests, using “American pressure” to advance his constitutional revision (Igarashi 2015: 112-113). Last but not the least, from Nakasone to Koizumi to Abe, the tactics and approaches engaged in Japanese politics are turning from consensus, negotiation and discretion, to radicalism, arbitrariness and authoritarianism. Igarashi went so far as to suggest that “escape from the post-war regime” (*Sengo Regime no Dakkyaku*) is no longer sufficient to define the Abe regime after 2012; now he aims to “restart the prewar regime” (*Senzen Regime no Kaishi*).

Certainly, the right-wing turn of Japanese politics did not start with the sudden emergence of Koizumi and Abe, nor would it magically disappear or stagnate after Abe. It is a historical movement taking shape no later than the Nakasone era, with its deep social roots and politically overwhelming momentum, and it can be expected to run its course (Nakano 2015). However, does political conservatism also imply a right-wing turn of Japanese social ethos?

Not necessarily. The so-called political conservatism (*Seiji Hoshuka*) does not entail social conservatism (*Shakai Hoshuka*). Certainly there are some civil factors (such as conservative intellectuals) of social conservatism in Japan, but it is essentially ignited, led, and pushed forward by political elites (Nakano 2015:3). Within this trend, spontaneous social elements are not taking the leading position. In contemporary Japan, there is dissociation of the political and social trends: the popular base and social consciousness have not shifted so much as the political conservatism seems to indicate. On the contrary, they often backlash against the political trend, most visibly in the form of the elections. Thus it is necessary to differentiate between political conservatism and social conservatism. In this section, political conservative developments are shown parallel not to social conservatism, but to social backlashes against conservatism, thus leads to the summary conclusion of Japanese neo-conservatism in terms of social background.

The main waves of Japanese political conservatism since the 1980s are listed in table 6.3. According to Nakano’s analysis, there have been five of them, represented by Nakasone Yasuhiro, Ozawa Ichirō, Hashimoto Ryūtarō, Koizumi Junichirō and Abe Shinzō. Among these politicians, Ozawa Ichirō is the only one who never served as prime minister, but he undoubtedly played a crucial role in reshaping the post-Cold-War Japanese political ecology. Hashimoto Ryūtarō is also a heavyweight in post-Cold-War Japanese politics. However, it is questionable whether Ozawa and Hashimoto could qualify as neo-conservatives, or how much history revisionism affected their political thinking. Given that this study does not wholly agree with Nakano on his ‘five major waves’, his analysis is still valuable in providing general support for the point made in this study.

#### Table 6.3 Japan’s Neo-conservative Waves and Backlash since the 1980s

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| time | neo-conservative wave | events in foreign relations, security and Yasukuni Shrine visit | resistance and backlash |
| 1982⁻1987 | Nakasone Yasuhiro: Comprehensive settlement of the post-war accounts | US-Japan alliance  “unsinkable aircraft carrier”  defence budget breakthrough  first official visit |  |
| 1989 |  |  | LDP rout in Upper House election, took less than half seats |
| 1989⁻  1994 | Ozawa Ichirō: Political reform and regroup | “normal country ”;  PKO |  |
| 1994⁻  1996 |  |  | LDP out of power;  Coalition government of LDP and JSP. |
| 1996⁻  1998 | Hashimoto Ryūtarō: Six Major Reforms  Backlash[[91]](#footnote-91) | redefinition of US-Japan alliance;  Hashimoto’s visits |  |
| 1998 |  |  | LDP rout in Upper House election, took less than half seats |
| 2001⁻  2007 | Koizumi Junichirō: structural reform  Abe Shinzō: escape from post-war regime | consolidation of US-Japan alliance;  PKO;  upgraded to Ministry of Defence  Koizumi’s visits |  |
| 2007⁻  2012 |  |  | LDP routs in both House elections, less than half seats  Democratic Party government |
| 2012-  now | Abe Shinzō: Take Japan Back | Proactive Contribution to Peace;  State Secrecy Law;  NSC(Japan)  The National Security Bills;  Abe’s visits to Yasukuni Shrine |  |

*source: Nakano 2015, with modification by the author*

Since the 1980s, several leading Japanese politicians infused their conservatism into Japan’s foreign and security policies, and one by one breached the political forbidden zones of the post-war Japanese Constitution, defence and view of history. Meanwhile, a political counter force acted as a brake (*hadome*) from time to time, swinging Japanese political trend like a pendulum. Almost every rightward surge is followed by a backlash or resistance, which originates from the populace. This is the way in a democracy that politicians, foreign policies and social ethos interact with one another. So, why are the conservatives met with resistance from the people? A fundamental reason is that the post-war pacifism has sunk its roots deep into Japanese society (Midford 2011). Whenever conservatives overreach with radical security or foreign policies, the sensitive pacifist nerves deep in Japanese society feel it, take it more seriously as a threat and retaliate with votes. This reflects the sway held by public opinion on Japanese foreign policy. Does this mean conservative politicians like Abe are not able to put their agenda forward? This is not the case, because they have ways around public opinion. According to Iida Keisuke and Sakaiya Shirō’s research, foreign policies made during, or dealing with specific contingencies are much less susceptible to public opinion. That is to say, such foreign policies probably do not reflect the true public opinion about the specific issues (Iida and Sakaiya 2014). Japanese public opinion polls about Abe foreign policy corroborate this suggestion. Only 28.6 per cent of those polled agreed that Abe’s foreign policy reflects Japanese public opinion, while 48 per cent, almost half, believe the opposite (Iida and Sakaiya 2014: 16).

This incongruity leads to the conclusion that the conservative trending in the past 30 years (since Nakasone) is merely the overall right-turn of Japanese politicians; while their constituency, the Japanese people, did not become noticeably more conservative—or in other words, Japanese society did not follow Japanese politicians to the right. The studies of Taniguchi Masaki and others have also reached similar conclusions (Taniguchi 2015; Akenaka, Endō and Jou 2015). Then, why could Abe, with his radical conservative tendencies, gain the trust of the voters and serve multiple terms? Takenaka offered an explanation that in the last 30 years, the Japanese voters, as a whole, have evolved from ideological dichotomy (left versus right) to centralism; they have undergone de-ideologization (Takenaka, Endō and Jou 2015: 42). The Abe regime enjoys a high support rate not because the populace support his conservative policies (constitutional revision, new military legislation), but because they have high expectations for his Abenomics as a prescription to Japan’s long time economic stagnation (Takenaka, Endō and Jou 2015: 42). Abe and his team were well aware of the lack of public support for his conservative policies, but they were still able to capture the de-ideologization of Japanese society, and his political strategy is built on it. His election platform was focused on economic policy and placed little importance on foreign and security policies. But after the LDP secured the control of the Diet, Abe turned his attention from the economy to politics, and advanced his conservative goals (collective self-defence right, constitutional revision, Yasukuni Shrine visit) one by one, with careful preparation and swift execution.

The survey conducted by *Asahi Shimbun* on the 2015 Constitution Memorial Day shows that the policies representing Abe’s conservatism do not receive majority approval from the Japanese people (*Asahi Shimbun*, 3 May, 2015). 43 per cent of those surveyed agree that constitutional revision is necessary; 48 percent disagree. Only 28 per cent support upgrading the Self-Defence Forces to regular Defence Forces; 69 per cent opposed it. 35 per cent are in favor of exercising collective defence right; 54 per cent are against it (Nakakita 2015: 104). The joint research of Asahi Shimbun and Taniguchi Masaki Research Studio of Tokyo University also reveals stark differences towards Abe’s conservative policies among LDP Diet members and core supporters, especially in regard to collective self-defence, the State Secrecy Law and the restart of nuclear power plants.[[92]](#footnote-92) In general, Japanese voters voted for Abe the economic reformer, not Abe the political reformer. This is not only true for Abe, but also can be extrapolated to Koizumi and Nakasone, to some extent.

Facing such obstinate resistance, by what means do conservative politicians advance their political ideas? “By persuading (*settoku*) the voters”, that is Taniguchi’s answer (Taniguchi 2015:21). The persuasion (or manipulation) of political advisors, public opinion and the media is a common feature for all three prime ministers examined in this thesis. However, there are differences of focuses and priorities between them. Nakasone and Abe are more of the political thinker type, and they strive to put their political thoughts into practice; Koizumi is not an ideologue and depended on populism, on instigating the masses to maintain support. So, Koizumi did not implement policies by persuading the voters, but by compromising (*ayumiyoru*) with the voters, by tailoring his policies to suit the public opinion (Taniguchi 2015:21). Nakasone is different from Abe in that he values consensus despite his desire to break the status quo, so he inched his way to his goals through inspiring, recruiting and coordinating political advisors, public opinion and the media. In contrast, Abe assumes a commanding posture, employing unilateral, even authoritarian force to advance his political agenda.

## 6.4 Future Research Agenda

In the overall design of this thesis, I followed the logic of treating conservatism and neo-conservatism as a given reality, rather than delve into the theoretical analysis and differentiation of both. Nevertheless in the chapter about Nakasone, neo-conservatism is discussed with details and comparisons, in order to address the fact that Japan’s neo-conservatism originated in the Nakasone era and is to a large extent thanks to him. In such a given frame, is it true that Japanese politician’s defence, security and foreign policies embody their conservatism? If true, then how does it happen? These are the fundamental questions of this research. Through comparative study of the three prime ministers, a simple outcome can be identified before the final conclusions: On defence, security and foreign policies, although Nakasone, Koizumi and Abe share the same tendency to change the status quo (such as consolidation of the US-Japan Alliance, visiting Yasukuni Shrine, overseas military deployment, remilitarization and constitutional revision), their intrinsic logic, or their ideological drives are different from one another. Upon completion of this comparative case study and field interviews with political scientists, politicians and others, it has been confirmed that one of the three cases, namely Koizumi, is indeed a negative case. Koizumi’s thinking does not fit into the preset frame of this study, i.e. conservatism or neo-conservatism. [[93]](#footnote-93)

Then, how do we explain the outcome of the preset frame, that the resulting policies of the three prime ministers are all conservative? My explanation consists of two factors: domestic politics and international politics. On one hand, politicians’ thinking is subjected to the influence of many elements, including family background, education, career and experience, as well as interaction with political advisors. These elements vary from politician to politician, but their joint force may result in choices for a similar set of policies. On the other hand, international politics presents a compelling reality and dictates an approach which must integrate political realism. Other components of such an approach can be personal and ideological with different stripes, but the dominant realistic component tends to produce similar results in terms of policies. On various occasions, Nakanishi and Shinoda repeatedly proposed that Japan’s conservative tendency in defence and security policy is essentially a response to the pressure of shifts in the international environment. Japan’s political leaders act as enforcers, carrying out this response through personal determination, political tactics and policy-making process.[[94]](#footnote-94)

To sum up, today Japanese politics is on course for the present neo-conservatism to evolve into radical conservatism and right-wing politics. There are setbacks and stand-stills in the process, but the overall tendency seems to be this course. There are various approaches to investigate the reasons behind such historical change, such as from an institutional change perspective, a national character perspective, or from an international relations perspective (Shinoda 2013; Kabashima and Steel 2010; Krauss and Pekkanen 2011). This study chose to approach the subject from the perspective of political processes and decision-making processes, tracking the evolution and development of Japanese neo-conservative politics since the 1980s, and specifically put focus on foreign policies. The thesis expanded on case studies of three Japanese prime ministers: Nakasone Yasuhiro, Koizumi Junichirō and Abe Shinzō, and drew conclusions from individual and comparative analyses. Due to the limited number of cased selected, this study may not be immune from over-generalization or narrow interpretation. For instance, the investigation of Koizumi in this thesis established that his political profile is very different from Nakasone and Abe despite their similar political goals and foreign policies, so it is debatable whether these three should be classified together. Moreover, although Abe and Nakasone share similar ideological positions in regard to constitutional revision, the courses of action they took and the outcome are entirely different. These findings imply that individual political thinking is not predominantly responsible for political actions and policies, and there are more factors to be investigated in history and present political environment, as well as in domestic society and international dynamics (Hayao 1993:14-19). These issues were encountered and uncovered in this study but due to limitations of space could not be adequately explored. Such revelations can serve as inspirationfor follow-up research in the future.

This research suggests a number of potential future topics. To start with, what are the characteristics of Japan’s overall political conservatism and its impact on Japanese foreign policy? In the current research, there are topics and related issues which are insufficiently investigated or not dealt with. For example, this thesis aims to address the distinctions between Neo-conservatism and the “old” (traditional) conservatism, and sought to illuminate these differences through case studies of the three prime ministers. But the analyses are disproportionally concentrated on traditional conservatism, resulting in the contrast between the “new” and the “old” not sufficiently presented. Another limitation is the sensitivity between study of Japanese conservatism and the real-time politics. Abe Shinzō, being one of the primary subjects of this research, is the incumbent Prime Minister of Japan. The delay in the production of academic literature behind current political events and development creates difficulties for data collection and definitive understanding. My hope is that, by adopting a comparative perspective, this thesis contributes to a deeper understanding of the current Abe administration.

### Three Areas for Future Research

First, future research could extend the study of this thesis by expanding the knowledge base and developing further understanding of Japanese conservatism, neo-conservatism, various ideological schools in Japanese political thinking and their representative positions.

Second, realizing the limitation of current primary data, further effort could be made to investigate data sources which are unavailable or undiscovered now. For example, in this thesis the analysis of Koizumi is not as detailed as the other two, due to the scarcity of primary data concerning the prime minister. Koizumi himself is not vocal about his political thinking, and has kept minimum public communication since the end of his term as prime minister. Moreover, his son is currently a rising star in the LDP, so the academic study or political review of the Koizumi Cabinet faces particular difficulties. Under such circumstances, it takes time, efforts and future developments (such as the declassification of diplomatic document archives) to uncover more data for future research of prominent politicians.

Third, to understand the current state of Japanese Neo-conservatism and its development in the future, it needs not only the investigation of Japan’s political thinking and trends inside the country, but also the consideration of Japan’s international environment and interactions with multiple foreign countries. For example, does the rise of China stimulated Japan’s re-militarization? Do the changes in US-Japan relationship prompt Japan to adjust its security policy and overall strategy? The mechanism through which external stimulants trigger the reshaping of Japanese conservatism merits a comprehensive investigation. Meanwhile, the impact of Japanese domestic political changes on its foreign policy and its influence on the entire East-Asia international environment are both topics worthy of further research, which would take a macroscopic perspective and systematic approach.

# Appendices

### Appendix 1 Japan’s Changing Party System, 1946-2016

X

Conservative

×

Japan Liberal

Japan Progressive

Japan Socialist

Japan Cooperative

Japan Communist

Liberal

Right Socialist

Democratic

Left Socialist

Reform

Liberal Democratic

Japan Socialist

New Liberal Club

Democratic Socialist

1946

1955

1960-70s

Kōmeitō

Sakigake

Renewal

Japan New

New Frontier

Social Democratic

Democratic

Kōmeitō

Various

groups

Liberal

1990s

Your Party

New peoples

Japan Restoration

People’s Life

LDP

Kōmeitō

JRP

DPJ

SDP

PLP

JCP

2000s

2010s

2016

*Note: The processes of fragmentation and mergers are simplified. For more detailed diagram of the evolution of Japan’s party system, see: Hrebenar 2000: 311-313*

*Source: Shinoda (2013:238), edited and supplemented by the author.*

### Appendix 2 List of Nakasone, Koizumi and Abe’s Political Works

##### Nakasone’s Political Works

(1947) *Seinen no Risō* (The Aspiration of a Youth), Tokyo: Ichiyōsha.

(1954) *Nihon no Shuchō* (Japan’s Proposition), Tokyo: Keizai Ōraisha.

(1963) *Nankyoku: Ningen to Kagaku* (Antarctica: Human Race and Science), Tokyo: Kōbundō.

(1966) *Nihon no Furontia* (The Frontier of Japan), Tokyo: Kōbunsha.

(1975) *Kaizu no nai Kōkai: Sekiyukiki to Tsūsanshō* (The Voyage without a Chart: The Oil Crisis and MITI), Tokyo: Nihon Keizai Shimbunsha.

(1978) *Shinhoshu no Ronri* (The Theory of Neoconservatism), Tokyo: Kōdansha.

(1980) *Kokoro to Fureau Toshi: 21Seiki no Teigen* (Cities Approaching the Soul: Suggestions for the 21st Century), Tokyo: Sankei Shuppan.

(1984, with Takemura Kenichi) *Naikaku Sōridaijin Nakasone Yasuhiro ga Kataru Bōei to Kenpō: Bokoku no Hibusōchūritsuron wo Utsu* (Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro on Defence and Constitution: Aggression Leads to National Subjugation, hence Unarmed Neutrality), Tokyo: Yamate Shobō.

(1990, with Henry Kissinger) *Sekai wa Kawaru: Kissinger Nakasone Taidan* (The Changing World: interlocution of Kissinger and Nakasone), Tokyo: Yomiuri Shimbunsha.

(1992, et al.) *Kyōdōkenkyū: Reisen Igo* (A Joint Research on Post-Cold-War), Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū.

(1992) *Seiji to Jinsei: Nakasone Yasuhiro Kaikoroku*, Tokyo: Kōdansha. English

(1999), *The Making of the New Japan: Reclaiming the Political Mainstream*, Translated and annotated by Lesley Connors, Surrey, UK: Curzon Press, 1999.

(1996, with Umehara Takeshi) *Seiji to Tetsugaku: Nihonjin no Arata no Shimei wo Motomete* (The Philosophy and Politics: The Renewed Destiny of Japanese People), PHP Kenkyūsho.

(1996) *Tenchi Yūjō: Gojūnen no Sengo Seiji wo Kataru* (Fulfilled Destiny: Political Narratives of the Post-war 50 Years), Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū.

(1997) *Rīdā no Jōken* (The Requirements to be a Leader), Tokyo: Fusōsha

(1998) *Nihonjin ni Itteokitai koto: 21Seiki wo Ikiru Kimitachi e* (To the Japanese who Will Live in the 21st Century), Tokyo: PHP Kenkyūsho.

(2000, with Miyazawa Kiichi) *Kenpō Daironsō: Kaiken VS Goken* (The Great Debate of Constitutional revision vs. Constitutional Defending), Tokyo: Asahi Shimbunsha.

(2000) *Nakasone Yasuhiro Kushū: Shinpan* (Nakasone Yasuhiro Quotation: New Compilation), Tokyo: Hokumeisha.

(2000) *Japan: A State Strategy for the Twenty-first Century*, translated by Lesley Connors and Christopher P. Hood, Routledge Curzon, 2002.

(2001, with Ishihara Shintarō) *Eien nare Nippon: Motosōri to Tochiji no Katariai* (Eternal Japan: Interlocution between Former Prime Minister and Governor of Tokyo), Tokyo: PHP Kenkyūsho.

(2002, et al.) *Ronsō: Kyōiku towa nanika* (Debate: What is Education), Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū.

(2003, with Takemura Kenichi) *Inochi no Kagiri, Semi Shigure: Nihonseiji ni Senryakuteki Tenkai wo* (None-stop Striving: The Strategic Development of Japanese Politics), Tokyo: Tokuma Shoten.

(2004, with Nishibe Susumu and Masumoto Kenichi) *Kenpōkaisei Daitōron: Kokuminkenpō wa Kōshite Tsukuru* (The Great Debate of Constitutional revision: How to Create a People’s Constitution), Tokyo: Bijinesusha.

(2004) *Jiseiroku* (The Meditations), Tokyo: Shinchōsha.

(2004) *Nihon no Sōrigaku* (Stewardship of Japan), Tokyo: PHP Kenkyūsho.

(2005, et al.) *Shawā 80nen: Sengo no Yomikata* (Shawā 80 years: An interpretation of the Post-war Japan), Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū.

(2005) *Sengo Seiji* (The Post-war Politics), Tokyo: Yomiuri Shimbunsha.

(2007, compiled by Yanagimoto Takuji) *Nakasone Yasuhiro Goroku: Tetsujinseijika no Sugao* (Nakasone Yasohiro Quotation: The Real Face of a Philosopher Statesman), Tokyo: Sankei Shimbunsha.

(2008) *Nakasone Yasuhiro Kushū: 2008*(Nakasone Yasuhiro Quotation: 2008), Tokyo: Hokumeisha.

(2010) *Seiji wa Bunka ni Hoshisuru: Korekara no Seiji to Nihon* (Politics Serves Culture: Politics of Japan in the Future), Tokyo: Shiata Terebijon Shuppankyoku.

(2010.5) *Hoshu no Igon* (The Last Words of Conservatism), Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten.

(2010, with Umehara Takeshi) *Rīdā no Rikiryō: Nippon wo Futatabi Sonzaikan no aru Kuni ni suru tameni* (The Power of a Leader: Reinstate Japan’s Presence), Tokyo: PHP Kenkyūsho.

(2010) *Watashi wa Leadership ni tsuite Katarunara* (My Two Cents on Leadership), Tokyo: Popurasha.

(2012) *Seizan Jōunpo: Nakasone Yasuhiro Taidanshū* (The Never-ending Journey: Nakasone Yasuhiro Interlocutions), Tokyo: Mainichi Shimbusha.

(2012) *Nakasone Yasuhiro ga Kataru Sengo Nihon Gaikō* (Japanese Foreign Policy Since 1945: Nakasone Yasuhiro Oral History), Tokyo: Shinchōsha.

(2015) *Nakasonesō: Kenjin tachi wa Gekidō no100nen wo dō mitsumetekitanoka* (Nakasone’s Wisdom: Interpretation of a Turbulent Decade), Tokyo: Sekaibunkasha.

##### Koizumi’s Political Works

(1996) *Kanryō Ōkoku Kaitairon: Nihon no Kiki wo Sukuuhōhō* (The Downfall of the Bureaucratic Regime: How to Save Japan from a Crisis), Tokyo: Kōbunsha.

(1997) *Koizumi Junichirō no Bōron Seiron* (Koizumi Junichirō on Violence), Tokyo: Shūeisha.

(2001) *Koizumu* (Koisim), Tokyo: Mediarebu.

(2006) *Koizumi Junichirō Desu* (Koizumi Junichirō Here), Tokyo: Jiji Gahōsha.

(1994, with Kajiwara, Kazuaki) *Yūseishō Kaitairon: Maruchimedia no rikken* (The Downfall of Ministry of Post and Telecommunications: The Multimedia Franchise), Tokyo: Kōbunsha

(2016) *Koizumi Junichirō Dokuhaku* (Koizumi Junichiō Speak Out), Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū.

(2016) *Damatte Netewairarenai* (No Longer Sit Around), Tokyo: Fusōsha.

##### Abe’s Political Works

(1996, with Kurimoto, Shinichirō and Etō, Shōichi) *Hoshukakumei Sengen* (Conservative Revolution Manifesto), Tokyo: Gendaishorinkan.

(2004, with Okazaki, Hisahiko) *Kono Kuni wo Mamoru Ketsui* (Determination to Protect This Country), Tokyo: Fusōsha.

(2006) *Utsukushii Kuni e* (Toward a Beautiful Nation), Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū.

(2006) *Abe Shinzō Taidanshū* (Collection of Abe Shinzō Interlocution), Tokyo: PHP Kenkyūsho

(2013) *Atarashii Kuni he* (Toward a New Nation), Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū.

(2013) *Kiseki: Abe Shinzō Goroku* (Trajectory: Abe Shinzō Quotations), Tokyo: Kairyūsha

(2013, with Hyakuta, Naoki) *Nippon yo Sekai no Mannaka ni Sakihokore* (Japan! Be pround of yourself in the “centre of world”), Tokyo: Wakku.

(2014) *Nihon no Ketsui* (Japan’s Resolution), Tokyo: Shinchōsha.

### Appendix 3 Private Consultant Groups (Nakasone, Koizumi and Abe)

##### Nakasone Cabinet (1982-1987)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Name of Organization | Time of Creation | Notable Members |
| Standard Establishment Committee | 21/1/1983 | \* |
| Culture and Education Discussion Group | 14/6/1983 | Ibuka Masaru; Ishikawa Tadao; Tanaka Michitatō; Yamamoto Shichihei |
| Peace Research Group | 5/8/1983 | Kōsaka Masataka; Sejima Ryūzō; Takeuchi Michio |
| Information Society Discussion Group | 1/2/1984 | Kumon Shunpei; Yamashita Isamu; Iijima Kiyoshi |
| Women’s Rights Conference | 29/6/1984 | Ogata Sadako: Takahashi Nobuko; Arita Sachiko |
| Cabinet Visit of Yasukuni Shrine Discussion Group | 3/8/1984 | Yayashi Keizō; Umehara Takeshi; Etō Jun; Sono Ayako |
| Economic Policy Research Association | 4/9/1984 | Makino Noboru; Iida Tsuneo;　Amaya Naohiro; Miyazaki Isamu |
| Crisis Management Discussion Group | 26/9/1984 | Yazawa Ichirō; Watanabe Shigeru; Momoi Makoto |
| Foreign Economic Policy Consultant Committee | 20/12/1984 | Ōkita Saburō; Morita Akio; Usami Tadanobu |
| Subsidy Policy Discussion Group | 31/5/1985 | Kinoshita Kazuo; Ishi Hiromitsu; Kamimura Hajime |
| Commodity Prices Stabilization Conference | 28/10/1985 | Tsuchiya Kiyoshi; Makino Nobuhiko; Yoshino Toshihiko |
| International Cooperation and Economic Restructure Research Association | 31/10/1985 | Maekawa Haruo; Ōkita Saburō; Kōsai Yutaka; Usami Tadanobu |
| Civil Initiative Promotion Discussion Group | 9/1986 | Saitō Eishirō; Kumon Shunpei; Ishikawa　Rokurō; Katō Hiroshi |
| Sports Promotion Discussion Group | 1987.10.1 | Saitō Eishirō; Hibino Hiroshi; Okano Shunichv irō; Yamashita Yasuhiro |

*Source：The Chronicle of Nakasone Cabinet: Material Compilation, (Tokyo: Sekaihewa Kenkyūsho, 1995), pp. 525-527.*

*\* Original source does not include any member information.*

##### Koizumi Cabinet (2001-2006)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Title** | **Founding time** | **Notable members** |
| Defence and Security Discussion Group | 20/4/2004 | Iokibe Makoto, Tanaka Akihiko, Araki Hiroshi |
| Foreign Relations Task Force | 9/2001 | Okamoto Yukio, Kitaoka Shinichi, Yamauchi Masayuki, Nishihara Masashi |
| International Peace and Cooperation Discussion Group | 8/5/2002 | Akaishi Yasushi, Tanaka Akihiko, Kusano Atsushi, Yokoda Yozō |
| Road Enterprises Privatization Committee | 6/2002 | Imai Takeshi, Inose Naoki, Matsuda Masashi, Nakamura Hideo |
| Postal Privatization Committee | 6/2001 | Tanaka Naoki, Ōta Hiroko, Nomura Shuya, Masuda Hiroya |
| Peace Memorial and Mourning Facilities Discussion Group | 12/2001 | Tanaka Akihiko, Mikuriya Takashi, Imai Takashi, Sakamoto Takao |
| Prime Minister Direct Election Discussion Group | 13/7/2001 | Sasaki Takeshi,Inoguchi Kuniko, Yamaguchi Jirō, Asakawa Hirotada |

##### Abe Cabinet (2006-2007; 2012-present)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Title** | **Founding time** | **Notable members** |
| Defence and Security Discussion Group | 10/9/10 | Kitaoka, Shinichi; Hosoya, Yūichi; Nakanishi, Terumasa |
| The Advisory Panel on Reconstruction of the Legal Basis for Security | 17/4/2007 | Okazaki, Hisahiko; Kitaoka, Shinichi; Tanaka, Akihiko; Nakanishi, Hiroshi |
| The Advisory Panel on Security of Overseas Japanese Citizens and Business | 1/3/2013 | Miyake, Kunihiko |
| The Advisory Panel on Relief of the Emperor’s Burden | 23/9/2016 | Mikuriya, Takashi; Imai Takashi; Yamauchi, Masayuki |
| The Advisory Panel on the History of the 20th Century and on Japan’s Role and World Order in the 21st Century | 27/2/2015 | Kitaoka, Shinichi; Kawashima, Shin; Nakanishi, Terumasa; Yamauchi, Masayuki |
| Educational Reform Execution Committee | 15/1/2013 | Kabashima, Ikuo; Yagi, Hideki; Yamauchi, Masayuki |

### Appendix 4 Members of *Anpohōsei Kondankai*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Name | Affiliation | Specialism |
| Okazaki Hisahiko | Director, The Okazaki Institute | Diploma (former), Japan’s foreign policy |
| Kitaoka Shinichi | President,　International University of Japan | Japanese politics, International politics |
| Iwama Yōko | Professor, National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies | International politics |
| Kasai Noriyuki | Chairman Emeritus, Central Japan Railway Company | Businessman |
| Sakamoto Kazuya | Professor, Graduate School of Law and Politics, Osaka University | International politics, US-Japan relations |
| Satō Ken | President, Institute for International Policy Studies | Administrative Vice-Minister of Defence(former) |
| Tanaka Akihiko | President, Japan International Cooperation Agency | International politics, International relations theory |
| Nakanishi Hiroshi | Professor, Graduate School of Law, Faculty of Law, Kyoto University | International Politics, Japan’s foreign policy |
| Nishi Osamu | Professor Emeritus, Komazawa University | Constitutional law |
| Nishimoto Tetsuya | Chairman, Self-Defence Forces Veterans Association | SDF Joint Staff Council Chairman (former) |
| Hosoya Yūichi | Professor, Keio University | International politics |
| Murase Shinya | Professor Emeritus, Sophia University | International law |
| Yanai Shunji | President, International Tribunal for Law of the Sea | Diploma (former) |

### Appendix 5 Members of *21seiki kōsō kondankai*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Name | Affiliation | Specialism |
| Nishimuro Taizō | Chairman, President and CEO, Japan Post Holdings Co., Ltd | Businessman |
| Kitaoka Shinichi | Deputy Chairman, President, International University of Japan | Japanese politics, International politics |
| Iizuka Keiko | Editor, International News Department, Editorial Bureau, The Yomiuri Shimbun | Jounalist |
| Okamoto Yukio | Senior Fellow, MIT Centre for International Studies | Diplomat(former) |
| Kawashima Shin | Professor, The University of Tokyo | International politics, Sino-Japanese relations |
| Kojima Yorihiko | Chairman of the Board, Mitsubishi Corporation | Businessman |
| Kojō Yoshiko | Professor, The University of Tokyo | Political science, Internationa political economy |
| Shiraishi Takashi | President, National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies | International politics, South-east Asia studies |
| Seya Rumiko | President, Japan Centre for Conflict Prevention (JCCP) | NGO affairs |
| Nakanishi Terumasa | Professor Emeritus, Kyoto University | International politics, History |
| Nishihara Masashi | President, The Research Institute for Peace and Security | Internatinal politics, Japan’s security |
| Haneda Masashi | Professor, The University of Tokyo | History |
| Hori Yoshito | President, GLOBIS University | Businessman |
| Miyake Kunihiko | Visiting Professor, Ritsumeikan University | Diploma (former) |
| Yamaguchi Masayuki | Professor Emeritus, The University of Tokyo | History (Middle East) |
| Yamada Takao | Columnist for the Mainichi Newspapers | Journalist |

### Appendix 6 Interview Dates and Interviewees

(In chronological order)

1 June, 2016 Nukaga, Fukushirō, Member of the Diet, President of *Heisei Kenkyūkai* in LDP

9 June, 2016 Nakano, Kōichi, Professor, Sophia University

11 July, 2016 Ōsaka, Iwao, Associate Professor, Komazawa University

15 July, 2016 Nakanishi, Hiroshi, Professor, Kyoto University

21 July, 2016 Shinoda, Tomohito, Professor, International University of Japan

23 July, 2016 Oguma, Eiji, Professor, Keio University

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1. For details on social science and Japanese uniqueness, also see: Dale 2012; Ragin and Becker 1992: 91. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. To date, Japanese political history and political science researchers have carried out certain comparative studies of these three prime ministers, which serve as referential materials of the study in my thesis. For full-detailed comparison in this study, see Chapter 6. For representative extant studies, see: Shinoda 2011:48-59; Uchiyama 2011; Watanabe 2006;Murata 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. For such instances in American and European countries, see: Hurst 2005; Christie 2008; Longley et al. 2007; Hicks 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. For study of bureaucratic conservatism, see: Nakano 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. For further assessment to the method of case study, see: Yin, 2003; Gerring, 2004; Gerring, 2007. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. See *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, <http://global.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/133435/conservatism> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. For representative literature on conservatism from a political science perspective, see: Ansell 2001; Kekes 1998; and on cultural conservatism, see: [Habermas](http://www.worldcat.org/search?q=au%3AHabermas%2C+Ju%CC%88rgen.&qt=hot_author) and Nicholson 1989. Nakano Kōichi also provides an account of modern Japanese conservatism in various domains including fiscal policy, finance, society and science. See: Nakano 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Article 9: (1) Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes. (2) To accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. It is worth noting that radicalism is generally rejected in the traditional conservative concept. So, certain positions of the Japanese right-wing had already transgressed traditional conservatism. Moreover, radicalism existed on both ends of the Japanese political spectrum: far left and far right. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. The counterpart of this rivalry in the pure ideological domain is revolutionary versus counter-revolutionary, which is seldom used in the context of Japanese politics. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Interview with Prof. Nakano, 9 June, 2016, Sophia University, Tokyo. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. One of the convincing examples for similar lines of centrist parties and LDP was the 3-party-Alliance consisting of the LDP, the NCGP and the DSP on the Gulf War oversea deployment issue. It demonstrated that there is no substantial difference but only difference of degree between conservative parties and centrist parties. See: Sasaki 1992. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. For similar polls, see: *Asahi Shimbun*, 25 June,1983; *Asahi Shimbun*, 22 June, 1985; *Asahi Shimbun*, 23 May, 1987. The *Asahi Shimbun* polls indicate that as the largest opposition party, the JSP continued to decline in popularity in the 1980s, holding support rates between 10 and 20 per cent, which was a sharp contrast to its 30-40 per cent rates in the 1960-70s. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Nakano Kōichi did not adopt the term “neo-conservatism” in his narratives. Instead, he suggests that Japan’s “neo-right-wing” politics began to rise in the Nakasone era. In the interview with Nakano (9 June, 2016), it was confirmed that his term “neo-right-wing” refers to the same entity as “neo-conservatism” in this thesis. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. For details of the “Yoshida Doctrine” and its political course, see: Pyle 2007: 141-169. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Interview with Nukaga, 11 June, 2016, Tokyo. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. For recent academic opinions on Japan’s status as a “middle power”, see: Soeya, Welch and Tadokoro 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. For dedicated studies of Maruyama and his political thinking, see: Kersten 1996; Barshay 2004: 197-239. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. For detailed categorisation of Japanese conservative thoughts and representative figures, see: Nishibe 2012. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Japanese historian Tsurumi Shunsuke pointed out that the political and social debates of post-war Japan focused on issues of war responsibility, Tennoism and Pacifism. These observations were made in the 1960s, which is of course subject to change due to the shift of Japan’s domestic and international environments. See: Ōtake 2006; Oguma 2002 for further details. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Nambara Shigeru and Maruyama Masao were prominent Intellectuals holding the position that the emperor should take war responsibility or Tennoism should be abolished. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Tomita Memo refers to the personal records of former Imperial House Chief Secretary Tomita Tomohiko, including 13 volumes of notes and 14 volumes of personal journals. Part of its content documented Emperor Hirohito’s involvement in issues concerning Yasukuni Shrine visits, especially his aversion to the relocation of memorial tablets of Class A war criminals into the Yasukuni Shrine. For the emperor’s role in Japanese nationalism, see: Doak, 2007: 83-126 [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Positions about history education and textbooks are not monolithic within the Conservative camp. Entering 1980s, substantial differentiation occurred on this topic. See: Schoppa, 1993: 251. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. <https://www.jimin.jp/policy/policy_topics/pdf/seisaku-109.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. On Tenko, see Oguma 2002. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. An evaluation of Kōsaka Masataka and Nagai Yōnosuke from the political thinking perspective can be found in Sakai Tetsuya’s research (Sakai 2010; Sakai 2014). [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. In this period, Satō Eisaku put forward the three non- nuclear principles as the guideline for Japanese government on the nuclear issue: that Japan will not possess, manufacture, or introduce nuclear weapons. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. According to Sakamoto, he and Kōsaka had a private dialogue, in which their positions remained parallel right from the start. Sakamoto suggested that Kōsaka did not “live through” the chasm of Japanese nationalism and consciousness of state, thus failing to appreciate the ordeal and consequence of the war. Sakamoto believed that Kōsaka’s Conservative tendency grew out of his birth and early years in Kyoto, which was not subject to mass air raid in World War II (Sakamoto 2011: 192). [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. The English, Japanese and Chinese versions of the Japan-China Joint History Research Report are available at the official website of Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs: <http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/area/china/rekishi_kk.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. <http://www.iwanami.co.jp/sekai/index.html>, accessed 14 June, 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Although Kabashima Ikuo and Takenaka Yoshihiko examined the influences of conservative thinking as an ideology on Japan’s policy-making, their concerns are hardly on “how”, being basically about statistical analysis rather than individual study (Kabashima and Takenaka 1996; Kabashima and Takenaka 2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Specifically, the research into conservative thinking and Japan’s foreign policy needs the public opinion as a medium to connect the two. For example, the way conservative thinking affected foreign policy is examined by referring to major comprehensive journals like *Sekai* and *Chūō Kōron*; while to what extent foreign policy was affected by conservative thinking is again to be found out by referring to public opinion surveys. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. For the pros and cons of oral history, personal journals, autobiographies and memoirs in the study of history, see: Ritchie, 1995. For the application and development of oral history in Japan, see: Mikuriya, 2002. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Saigō Takamori was one of the most renowned samurais in Japanese history. Living during the late Edo Period and early Meiji Era, he played a legendary part in the conflicts around Meiji Restoration. He is the embodiment of devotion and valour, attributes of a true samurai in a traditional sense. He died in the last battle of Satsuma Rebellion (1877), making a desperate stance for the obsolete samurai class, for which he has been dubbed “the last true samurai”. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. For Nakasone’s comments on these prime ministers, see: Nakasone 2004: 48-106; Nakasone 2012: 563-565. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. For full text of the petition, see: Nakasone 1999: 236- 252. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. For the debate on direct election of the prime minister in the 1960s, see: Yoshimura 1962. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Ashida Hitoshi, former prime minister (March, 1948 – October, 1948), at 1950 was a member of *Kokumin Minshutō* (The National Democratic Party), of which Nakasone was a member too at the same period. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. The Japan Liberal Party was created in 1953 by members split from the Liberal Party led by Yoshida Shigeru. It was only active during 1953-1954. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. The definitions of and differences between neo-liberalism and neo-conservatism remain unsettled in both Western and Japanese academic spheres. Especially in the cases of the American, British and Japanese reforms in the 1980s, much confusion occurred between the two. Simply put, neo-liberalism is mostly embodied in the economic domain, advocating market economy and minimal government intervention. Regarding the connection between the two, Anglo-American academic researchers tend to consider the birth of neo-conservatism to be the inevitable result of the Neoliberal reforms. In other words, neo-conservatism is the political-ideological incarnation of economic neo-liberalism (Harvey 2005; King 1987). [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. For details of Maekawa Report, see: [http://www.esri.go.jp/jp/prj/sbubble/data\_history/5/makuro\_kei01\_1.pdf](http://www.esri.go.jp/jp/prj/sbubble/data_history/5/makuro_kei01_1.pdf%20)  accessed 5 October, 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. In the Nakasone-Umehara conversation, Umehara explained that he had two reasons to oppose the Yasukuni Shrine visit. The first is based on scholarly doubt that the Yasukuni Shrine does not reflect the traditional spirit of Japanese Shinto: only friends (who died for Japan) are worshiped there, not the enemies. It seems Yasukuni Shrine adopted Western European statism. The second is based on political consideration that visits are bound to incur opposition from China and the Korean peninsula, then stop to visit would damage Japan’s national prestige and interest (Nakasone and Umehara 1996: 87-89). [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Interview with Nakano, 9 June, 2016, Tokyo [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Interview with Nukaga, 11 June, 2016, Tokyo, and Shinoda, 23 July, 2016, Tokyo. Also see: Sataka 2001. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Interview with Shinoda, 23 July, 2016, Tokyo [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Interview with Shinoda, 21 July, 2016, Tokyo [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. The core contents of the Three Arrow Study are: 1. Japan will be an integral part of the United States Far Eastern strategy and as such will serve as the base for US operations. 2. The Japanese Self-Defence Forces (SDF) will train jointly with US, South Korean and Formosan troops. 3. In case of another Korean crisis, the SDF will fulfill defensive assignments which include helping to blockade the eastern coast of China and supporting US offensive action by serving as a reserve force in Japan as well as in Korea and Manchuria. 4. During the emergency period, all activity will be conducted on a basis of total mobilization. Necessary agencies to control and regulate industry, communications, transportation, information media and all economic activity, including the allocation of civilian and military material, and prices, banks and financial institutions will be established. The Socialist Party has charged that the Three Arrows Study Incident is as significant as the 26 February incident, 1936, and has insisted that the matter be treated with the utmost seriousness. See: Matsueda and Moore 1967: 614. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Having been Koizumi’s university classmate, Asakawa Hirotada made an attempt to summarize Koizumi’s political thoughts in the early years. However, Asakawa based his study on his personal conversations with Koizumi and the hearsay information he obtained from other people close to Koizumi, which can hardly be taken with much credibility, because Koizumi is notoriously reticent about his early life and politics (Asakawa 2001). [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Interview with Nakano, 9 June, 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Interview with Nakanishi, 15 July, 2016, Kyoto. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Since the Koizumi administration, the influence of factional politics within the LDP has been declining, especially evident during the Abe administration. For details, see: Herenar and Nakamura 2015: 40; Shinoda 2013: 105-109; Krauss and Pekkanen 2011:138-149. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. For details of the discussion groups and consultant organizations launched in the period of Koizumi Cabinet, see appendix 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Wide-shows, TV programs that focus on public interest topics, are televised at peak viewing hours, and women and older viewers are their primary audience (Martin 2011:63). For details in Koizimu Cabinet, see next section. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Japan War-Bereaved Association was founded in 1953, advocating for Japanese war-bereaved families. One of its core demands is for Japanese Prime Minister to visit the Yasukuni Shrine. Regional branches of the Association are the integral part of the LDP’s electoral machine, mobilising the war-bereaved families to vote for LDP candidates. In the LDP president election of 2001, soon after a visit to the Association Koizumi proposed the aforementioned pact. Japan War-bereaved Association has maintained a strong clout with LDP president elections for more than 50 years. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Ōsaka Iwao suggests that Koizumi’s best quality, or what sustained his long term, is not his thinking but his actions. His actions are actions without preset ideological restrictions, a populist drive completely directed by the expectation of the popular mass. Therefore, as discussed previously, It is improbable to put Koizumi into a definitive ideological frame, such as conservatism or liberalism. Interview with Ōsaka, 11 July, 2016, Tokyo. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. For the deviation between populace and elites of their political and social perceptions, see: Tang 2011: 71-74. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. <http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/m-magazine/backnumber/2006/0907.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Interview with Nakano, 9 June, 2016, Tokyo [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Interview with Nakanishi, 15 July, 2016, Kyoto [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. To date, the only prime ministers with longer tenure than Abe’s are: Satō Eisaku (1964-1972), Yoshida Shigeru (1946-1947; 1948-1954). [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Author attempted to set up an interview with Prime Minister Abe or his close associates during the field interview trip, without success. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. On hereditary politician, see: Hrebener and Nakamura 2015:14-17; Huang 2009: 164-165. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. In author’s interviews with Nakanishi, Shinoda and Nukaga, all three researchers reached this same conclusion when comparing Abe to Koizumi. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. [http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/96\_abe/statement2/20130228siseuhousin.html](http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/96_abe/statement2/20130228siseuhousin.html%20) , accessed 17 October, 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Although Abe works to a final settlement of the comfort women problem, he did not publicly admit the illegitimacy of comfort woman practice during the war. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. See: [http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/96\_abe/statement/2013/0428shikiten.html](http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/96_abe/statement/2013/0428shikiten.html%20) , accessed 11 November, 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. See: <http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/96_abe/statement/2013/0428shikiten.html> , accessed 11 November, 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. <http://apjjf.org/-Adam-Lebowitz--David-McNeill/2468/article.pdf>, accessed 11 November, 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. For details of the LDP constitutional revision draft, see: <https://www.jimin.jp/policy/policy_topics/pdf/seisaku-109.pdf>, accessed 26 November, 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Interview with Shinoda, 21 July, 2016, Tokyo [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Interview with Nakanishi, 15 July, 2016, Kyoto [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. The Diet resolution of 1995 has been particularly controversial, as it was initiated by the JSP but boycotted by the more conservative factions of the LDP. It was passed with the absence of 241 House members. The repentance for history reflected by the resolution is hardly thorough or definitive (Lind 2008: 62-4). [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. For connections between the Japan Conference and conservative LDP politicians, see: Bobb 2013. Since the second Abe Cabinet, academic researchers and the media have been concerned with the relations between the Abe administration and the Japan Conference. A number of academic literatures put focus on the connection between Abe’s right-wing conservatism and the Japan Conference. See: Aoki 2016; Sugano 2016; Yamazaki 2016; Tawara 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. <http://www.nipponkaigi.org/about>, accessed 26 November, 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. For the Japan-China Joint History Research, see: <http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/area/china/rekishi_kk.html>, accessed November, 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. On Murayama State, see: <http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/press/danwa/07/dmu_0815.html>; on Koizumi State, see: <http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/koizumispeech/2005/08/15danwa.html>, accessed 29 November, 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. <http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/singi/anzenhosyou/index.html>, accessed December, 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. For content of this report, see: <http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/singi/21c_koso/pdf/report_en.pdf>, accessed 26 Novermber, 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. Shinoda, a close associate of Kitaoka, addressed this incident in his interview with the author. Intellectuals may be instrumental in the policy-making process, but their influence with the politicians remains limited. Of their advices and suggestions, politicians only adopt the parts which serve their purpose, discarding those deviate from their intrinsic positions. Interview with Shinoda, 21 July, 2016, Tokyo [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. Interview with Oguma, 23 July, 2016, Tokyo. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. <http://lite-ra.com/2015/12/post-1834.html>, accessed 6 December, 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. Interview with Nukaga, 1 June, 2016, Tokyo [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. Interview with Ōsaka,11 July, 2016, Tokyo [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. For the ranking of post-war prime ministers with the longest terms, see Chap.5.1. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. Interview with Ōsaka, 11 June, 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. For Global ranking of 2016, see: <http://rsf.org/ranking>; for Japan’s ranking history, see: <http://rsf.org/fr/japon>, accessed 27 April, 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. In the interviews with Nakanishi, Ōsaka and Nukaga, the answers offered for this question are all negative. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. In response to the criticism from opposition parties and public opinion, the Japanese government changed position by declaring that the US-Japan alliance is not of military nature, and Japan is unwilling to be involved in the US’s global strategy against the Soviet Union. These statements inflicted damages on the US-Japan relationship. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. Per Article 96 of the Constitution of Japan, the motion of constitutional revision can be put forth only after being passed in both Houses with two-thirds majority, and finally be subjected to national referendum. Currently, the alliance-in-power of the LDP and the New Kōmeitō*,* led by Abe*,* holds enough seats in both Houses to make the motion possible. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. Here refers to the backlashes against history revisionism, such as Association for the Advancement of a Liberal View of History (*Jiyūshugi Shikan Kenkyūkai*). [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. <http://www.masaki.j.u-tokyo.ac.jp/utas/utasindex.html>, accessed 10 December, 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. The author consulted several notable political researchers with this question: Among Nakasone, Koizumi and Abe who is the most conservative and who is the least? The answers are all similar:In the descending order of Nakasone, Abe, and to the last Koizumi. Interviews with Nakanishi, 15 July, 2016; Shinoda, 21 July, 2016; Ōsaka, 11 July, 2016 and Oguma, 23 July, 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. Interview with Nakanishi, 15 July, 2016, and Shinoda, 21 July, 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)