



4-15-2018

# Tracking Public Support for Japan's Remilitarization Policies: An Examination of Elitist and Pluralist Governance

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## **Keywords**

democracy, pluralism and elitism, public opinion and polls, self-defense forces

## **Disciplines**

Comparative Politics | Political Science

## **Comments**

Produced as part of the [Gettysburg College Kolbe Summer Fellows Program in the Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences](#) during Summer 2017.

# **Tracking public support for Japan's remilitarization policies: An examination of elitist and pluralist governance**

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## Abstract

Has Japan's post-Second World War transformation into one of the most militarily capable nations been the result of 60 years of truly representative government? This research compares government-collected opinion polls to policy trends and actions, to determine whether the case of Japan's remilitarization argues for or against the country's democratic quality. For the purpose of this research, the size of Japan's military and its legislative freedom to act as a more conventional military were considered the most pertinent militarization policies. Results indicated that those policies were consistently unjustified by measured opinion, suggesting elitist policy formation. However, other policy areas, such as Japan's military budget, participation in UN peacekeeping, and national defense capability, have indicated a more pluralist model of policy formation. Therefore, results suggest that the country's remilitarization has been the product of both elitist and pluralist governance.

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## Introduction

The remilitarization of Japan has been shaped by a multitude of foreign and domestic factors. To understand a minute facet of that phenomenon, this research focuses upon the nation's military policy through the lens of elitism and pluralism. Its approach offers a domestic angle in which to analyze the nature of Japan's representative democracy. Thus, it asks whether, in remilitarizing Japan, government elites have acted in response to public opinion or ignored the electorate. This study hypothesizes that, considering Japan's past subjection to military rule and traumatic losses during the Second World War era, as well as the less democratic persistence of a one-party dominant system, elites likely ignored measured opinion while remilitarizing the nation.

Article 9 of Japan's constitution states that "the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation," and that "land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained" (Umeda, 2006). As the constitution has never been amended, the words of the document remain as clear today as they were when written in 1946 (Europa World Plus, 2017a). However, Japan has an active military of 247,000 personnel, 690 tanks, 339 combat planes, 220 weaponized helicopters, and 66 militant ships and submarines (The International Institute of Strategic Studies, 2017). Additionally, 56,000 reserve troops stand

ready to engage in warfare. In fact, Japan's military has been ranked the seventh most powerful military in the world (GlobalFirePower, 2017). Considering the contradiction between Japan's constitution and the actual state of its military, it is relevant to ask how democratic its militarization has been.

The idea of democracy is to allow citizens to present their opinion to influence and collectively control government policy. According to Kobayashi (2012: 1), "pure democracy is physically and logistically impossible [democracies] use representatives to debate and hand down decisions in [the citizenry's] place." Thus, a representative that does not act in the interests of his/her constituents is not truly "a representative" in a democracy. It is arguable that elected officials may occasionally disobey the public's wishes to protect the nation. However, doing so more often than in extreme situations arguably negates the notion that elected officials represent the public, and that the public is in control.

While this standard is not always met in the world's democracies, the goal of placing power in the hands of the people makes constituent-conscious representation desirable. In many countries, the democratic nature of representation is supported by the ability to choose between many politicians and parties. Parties that fail to act in the people's interest are not elected in the next election, giving the people discretionary power similar to an employer.

However, it is difficult to hold politicians accountable in Japan's one-party dominant political system. The leading party, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), has been in power for almost the entirety of Japan's post-war era. Thus, it has comparatively little incentive, at least in theory, to pay attention to the voters, reducing the power of the Japanese people to enforce democratic representation (Kobayashi, 2012: 2). Given the LDP's dominance, the question emerges as to whether the country's militarization has been the result of effective representation of Japanese public opinion (Midford, 2011: 2).

The issue of public influence in Japanese politics has remained pertinent since the beginning of the Meiji era, a political period that began in the 1860s and encompassed most of the time before the reign of Emperor Hirohito, who ruled Japan through the Second World War. Meiji political scientists referred to public opinion using two terms, "yoron" and "seron" (Midford, 2011: 11). "Yoron" was used by those who considered public opinion to be molded by elites, reflecting the sentiment of contemporary "elitists" (Midford, 2011: 9–10). Elitists feel that public opinion fluctuates inconsistently and is far too incoherent to properly influence policy formation (Midford, 2011: 9–10). In contrast, "seron" was used by those who felt that public opinion referred to the collage of opinions the community held at the time (Midford, 2011: 11). The term demonstrates an appreciation of the Japanese public as capable of coherent opinion formation

and majority consensus in general public policy. Modern day pluralists argue that public opinion is powerful enough to influence elite decision making. While the public can rarely decide specific policy, pluralists feel that Japanese citizens constrain elites to a community-formed realm of acceptable policy outcomes. Such constraints are defined by the outcomes excluded in the array of public policy desires (Midford, 2011: 12). Despite the juxtaposition between elitist and pluralist answers to the policy influence debate, public opinion is likely a combination of the two, conditional by policy realms and issues.

Debates regarding public opinion are complicated by the disconnect between true policy opinion and measurable opinion. As poll data is collected, responses can be influenced by how a question is worded. For example, poll respondents were asked in 1961 which of four roles was the most important of the SDF, one of which was national defense. However, in 2015, poll respondents were asked to identify the purpose of the SDF, of which one of four possible answers was national defense (内閣府, 2012). Arguably, the difference in semantics poses an issue as to whether responses can be considered equally. Even if syntax remains constant between polls, interpretation of the question may differ based on current context. However, consistent trends in measured opinion can support the validity of the data gathered and the coherent and stable nature of public opinion (Midford, 2011: 172).

Opinion polls in Japan have consistently demonstrated a general lack of support for militarism and military endeavors, especially of the offensive sort that dominated pre-Second World War imperialist Japan. Since the war, traditional militarism has faltered due to a general distrust of the military and of the “state’s ability to control it” (Midford, 2011: 14). The public’s doubts about state control are based on the military’s willingness to end civilian government in the mid-1930s (Midford, 2011: 14). Thus, when the Self Defense Forces were formed in 1954 from the National Police Reserve, a defense force created in 1950, elites were cognizant of the need to appease both domestic and international concerns about Japanese militarism (Hook et al., 2011: 129; Japan Ministry of Defense, 2006; Miller, 2011). Public support “was predicated on the assumption that [the] primary role [of the SDF] would be nonmilitary disaster relief...[while] national defense was considered [of] secondary importance” (Midford, 2011: 14). Japanese support for defensive realism, the doctrine that a state must be militarily prepared to protect itself, remained low until the end of the Cold War. In the dawn of the 1990s, rising concerns about a North Korean threat, Chinese militarization, and the loss of US protection through the fight against communism overshadowed the more standard worries about getting roped into American conflicts (Midford, 2011: 14, 15, 17; Yakushiji, 2015). Despite the emergence of defensive realism, the new era has failed to reinvigorate public support for goal-oriented offensive militarism, for example that practiced by the United States in invading Afghanistan (Midford, 2011: 27). The contrast between Japanese defensive realism and recent militaristic developments (see Figures 2 and 3) calls to light the question of whether Japan’s remilitarization

has been the product of elites shaping public opinion, of ignoring public opinion, or of representing it (Midford and Scott, 2008).

Hawkish policy makers may have militarized Japan through their success at shaping public support for combative legislation (Midford, 2011: 9). However, a more negative sign for Japan's democracy is the possibility that in militarizing Japan, elitist politicians have ignored public opinion completely. Alternatively, it is reasonable to assert that Japan's militarization may have been the pluralist result of a public that desires Japan to have an adequate military. After all, almost all other countries in the world—democracies included—have some sort of offensively capable military, which the Japanese may feel is the right of any normal sovereign nation.

In order to understand the relationship between Japan's measured opinions and militarization policies, poll results were collected from over 30 Japanese Cabinet Office surveys from the last six decades and compared to political and military actions of the Japanese government. Given the complexity of Japan's militarization, the relationships between public opinion and government action were compared in policy categories (national defense legislation, annual budget, etc.) to determine whether certain aspects of Japan's militarization were more responsive to public opinion than others.

## Method

Polls conducted and published by the Yomiuri Shimbun, a Japanese newspaper, were included to demonstrate public support from 2002 to 2017 for amending Article 9 of the constitution to allow for explicit militarization. As Article 9 has never been amended, poll support for amendment was included to contextualize Japan's militarization, rather than to compare to any government actions. The Yomiuri Shimbun was also used as a source for poll data regarding support for combating terrorism in 2002. The newspaper's articles were collected using the Access World News (2017) database, a database of NewsBank Inc., and the Yomidas Rekishikan database, at the Asian Reading Room of the Library of Congress (Madison, 2017). All other polls were accessed at 世論調査(全調査表示), a web page maintained by the Cabinet Office of Japan. Polls generally surveyed 1000–3000 randomly selected participants, reflective of the Japanese population.

Data was collected by searching for survey questions that reflected the general question of each of six categories. These general questions (see Figures 1–7) allowed for data to be collected despite the dynamic nature of survey question syntax. Answers were recorded as percentages in support of militaristic action or militarism, so that higher percentages always indicate higher support for militarization. Percentages of anti-militaristic and indifferent responses to the survey questions were not used in this research.

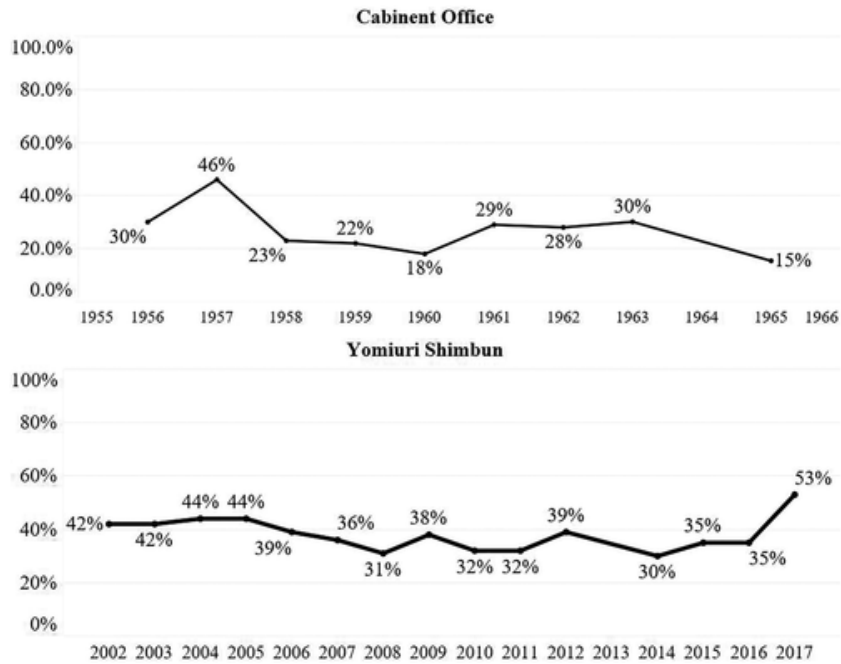


Figure 1. Poll support for amending the constitution.

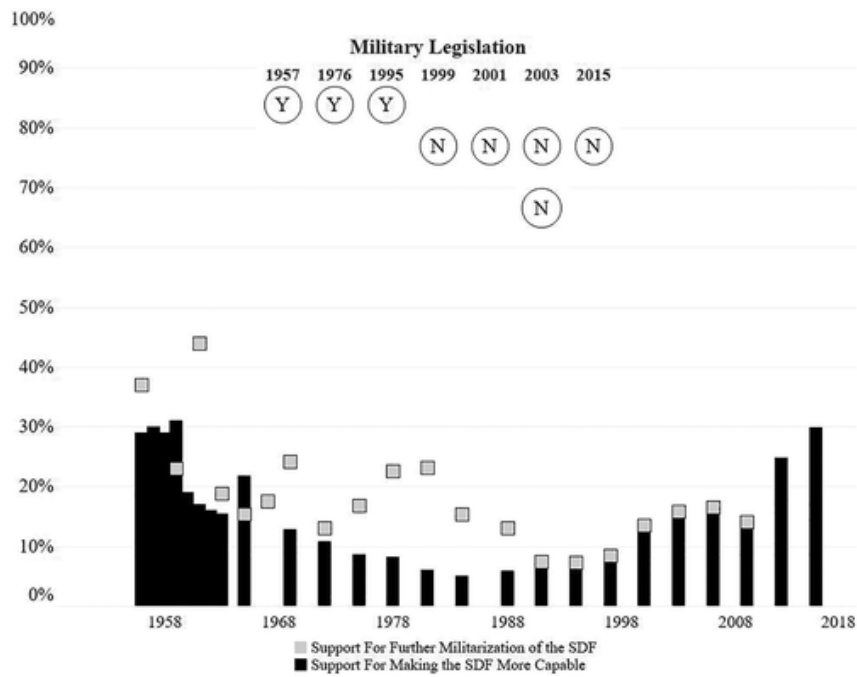


Figure 2. Militarization polls vs legislation and action.

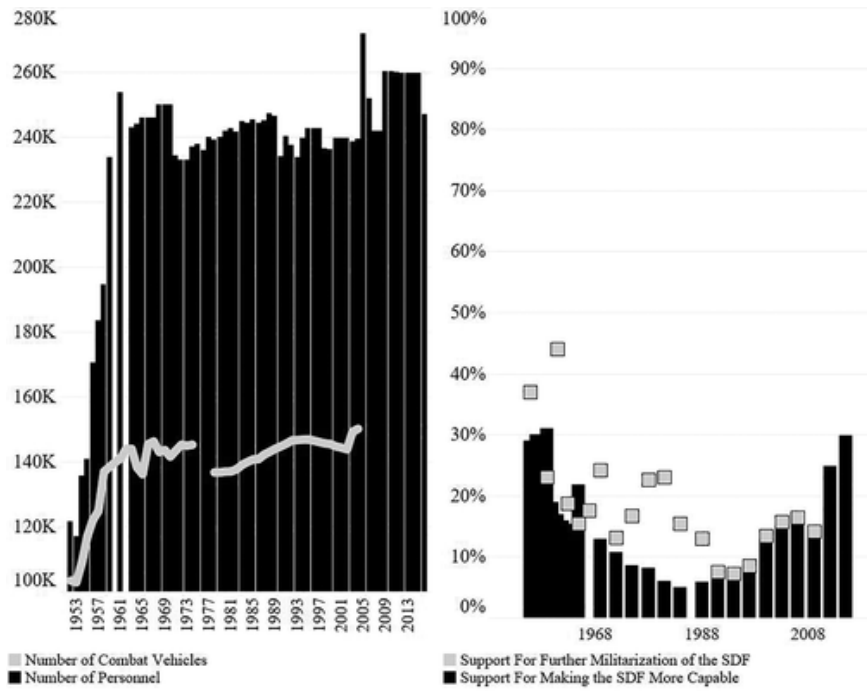


Figure 3. Militarization polls vs number of personnel and combative vehicles.

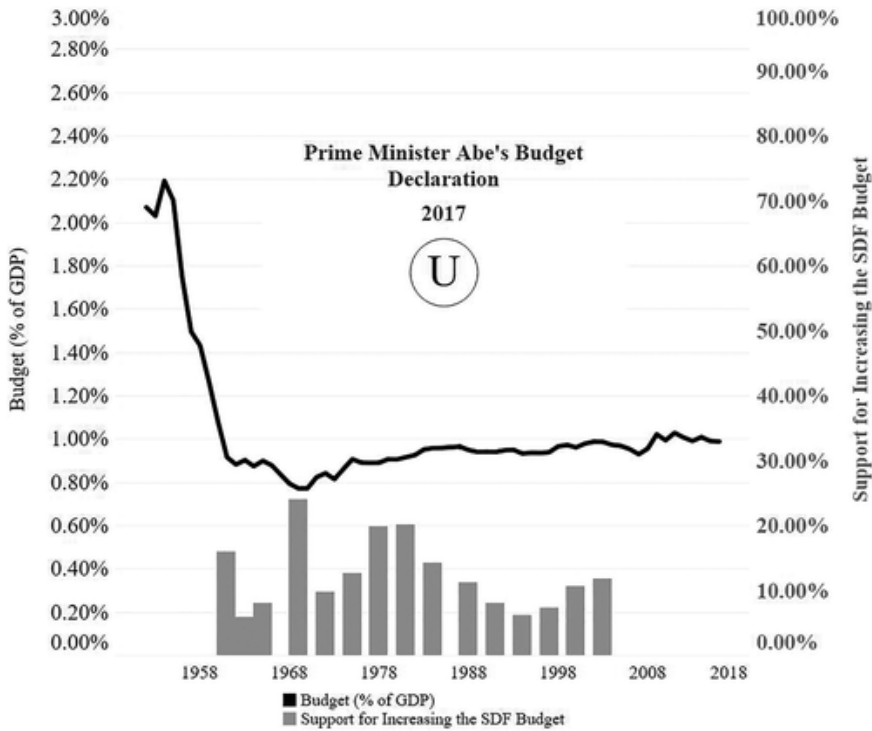


Figure 4. Military budget polls vs military budget.



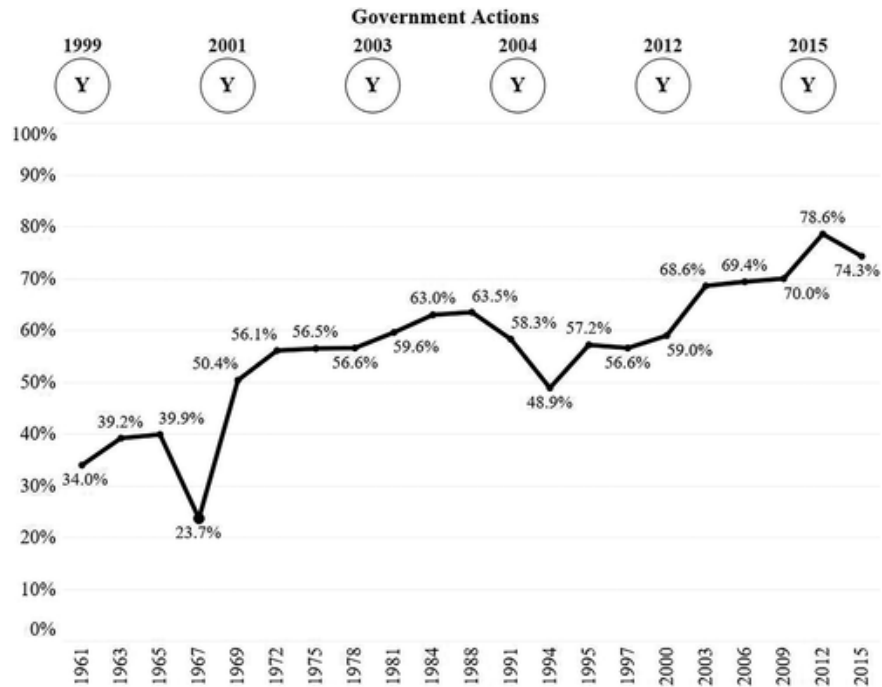


Figure 5. National defense role polls vs national security efforts and legislation.

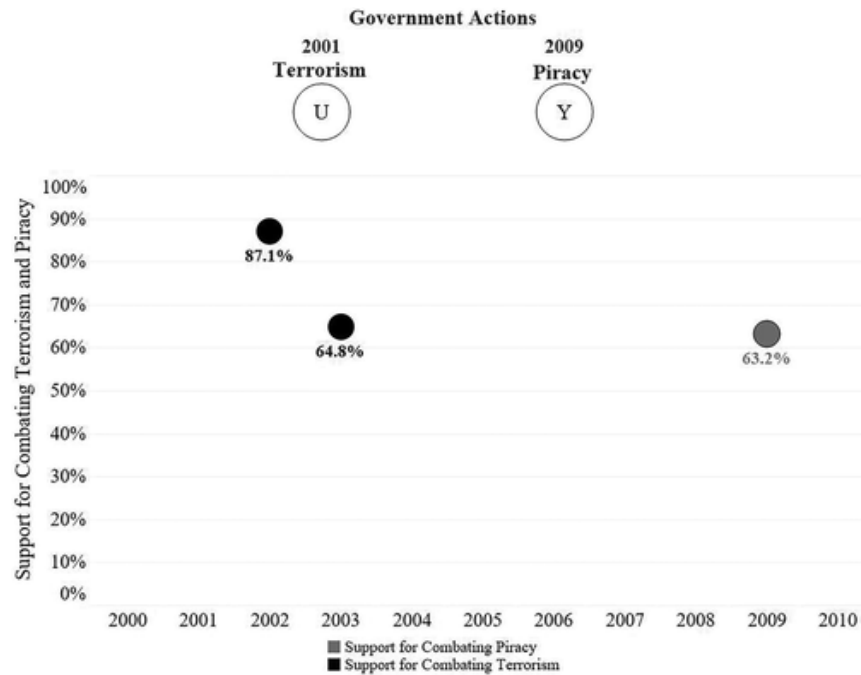


Figure 6. Terrorism and piracy polls vs terrorism and piracy legislation.

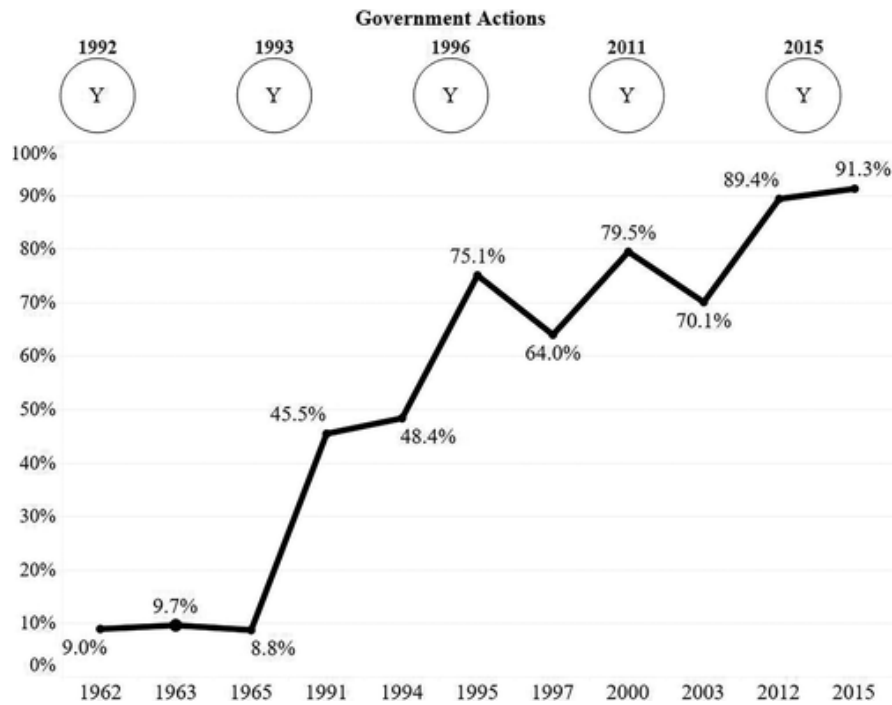


Figure 7. UN PKO participation polls vs UN PKO legislation and operations.

## Results

Results suggest a trend in which more militaristic matters vary directly with indications of elitism. Figures 2 and 3 focus on support for making Japan's military stronger or more offensively militaristic, making those categories the most related to Japan's accession into a military power. Accordingly, the legislation and statistics they present suggest the greatest case for elitism in the study. Figures 4 and 6 pertain to the funding of the SDF and international operations that are policing and protective measures, and thus less militaristic than other combative operations. Suitably, they present cases of general pluralism, but with ambiguous or pluralistically questionable aspects. Figures 5 and 7 address exclusively defensive militarism and UN directed peacekeeping. They demonstrate strong accounts of pluralism, sealing the trend.

Context for this research is found in the two sets of public opinion data regarding amending Article 9, displayed in Figure 1. Data from 1956 to 1965 was accessed from the Cabinet Office's polls, and data from 2002 to 2017 was published by the Yomuiiri Shimbun.

Figure 1 questions: Support for amending Article 9 of the constitution: Should the constitution be revised to allow Japan to militarize?

The first indication of the public's view on amending Article 9 suggests a strong lack of desire to do so. The 1956 poll represents the point at which the public's concern for the Second World War might be at its most salient, assuming a general decline in influence as the war lost its immediacy (内閣府, 2012). Japan's return to normalcy may have been accelerated as the LDP began to drop the issue of national security from their platform to focus on Japan's remarkable economic growth (Catalinac, 2016: 3).

Figure 1 also makes it clear that support for amending Article 9 has been consistently higher in the last 15 years than it was in the decades following the war (内閣府, 2012). This may also be attributed to the major party's platform, as the LDP began to "increase their discussion of national security in the first election after the 1993 electoral reform" (Catalinac, 2016: 9). The electoral reform eliminated competition between LDP candidates in each voting district. Before 1993, LDP members were forced to resort to promising their constituents particularistic goods, also known as engaging in pork barrel politics, because they could not differentiate their programmatic party platform from the other LDP members running in their district. Now that LDP candidates only face competition from minor party members, they can resort to more party-specific programmatic campaigning (Catalinac, 2016: 2). Programmatic campaigning has led the major party to push the issue of national security back into the public spotlight, providing a possible explanation for recent interest in amending the constitution (Catalinac, 2016: 3).

Foreign policy has also played a considerable role in the rise of popular interest in amending Article 9. Japan's military buildup, as seen through the lens of foreign affairs, has originated largely from the United States' involvement in the Cold War, as America sought Japan's support opposing the eastern communist threat (Wittner, 1976). Contemporaneous militarization can be attributed to foreign policy after the Cold War, as the United States is no longer invested in protecting their capitalist ally, and Japan is threatened by China's military buildup and North Korea's hostility (Midford, 2011: 14, 15, 17; Yakushiji, 2015). Thus, the accumulation of support to amend Article 9 may be attributed to a desire to recognize that militarization.

Finally, the data indicates that, in the last 15 years, the majority of Japanese citizens did not support amending Article 9 until 2017 (内閣府, 2012; ヨミダス歴史館, 2017). If the LDP is motivated by public support, Japan may be on the brink of amending the constitution. While it is unclear whether recent support has been the result of elite influence over foreign policy or a grass roots movement, a case for the elitist or pluralist nature of support for amendment can be strengthened by the subsequent research's findings in other areas.

In the following figures, indicators of applicable government actions are included as circular marks with a "Y", an "N", or a "U". "Y" (Yes) indicates that the action seems to have been

conducted in accordance with measured public opinion, “N” (No) indicates that the action seems to have been conducted without regard for measured public opinion, and “U” (Unknown) indicates that the nature of the action’s popular support is not known to this research. Government actions and their interpretation are detailed and contextualized as they relate to this research. For access to the data spreadsheet and supplementary information regarding the intricacies of legislation, government actions, polls, and statistics, visit the website for this research (see supplemental material).

The first result is displayed in Figure 2, which compares support for militarization to Japanese legislation and government announcements regarding the SDF. The second set of results is displayed in Figure 3, which compares the same polls to the number of personnel and combat vehicles in Japan’s military over time. Vehicle data was collected by the Statistics Bureau of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications of Japan. Data regarding personnel was provided by the Statistics Bureau of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications of Japan, the Statesman’s Yearbook Archives, the US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, the IISS Military Balance publications collected by the World Bank, and Europa World Online. The goal of Figures 2 and 3 is to see whether the government has responded to public opinion when expanding the size, power, and combative freedom of the SDF.

Figure 2 questions: Support for militarizing the SDF: Do you support increasing the armament of and number of personnel in Japan’s Army, Air Force, and/or Navy? Support for making the SDF more capable: Do you feel that Japan needs to strengthen the personnel, weapons, and/or capability of the Self Defense Forces in order to protect the security of the country from foreign and domestic threats, to make Japan more independently capable in this manner?

The militarization polls (1956–2015) included in Figures 2 and 3 indicate that both questions measuring public opinion fail to report popular support in any year for an increase in the military capability of the SDF (内閣府, 2012). Thus, the government has collected steady evidence that the people have not desired further militarization, and yet has continued to militarize. Without indication of majority support, increasing the freedom of the SDF to operate internationally and in some cases combatively is unsupported by measured public opinion. The creation of the National Police Reserve in 1950 and that of the SDF in 1954 have not been included in the following analysis, as the earliest Cabinet Office polls available are from 1956. The first three actions marked “Y” are government announcements defining the mission of the SDF. They first define the SDF as a force for providing national security, international aid, peace, and the goals of the United Nations (防衛省, 2017). The next government point in Figure 2 reiterates that the purpose of the SDF is to defend Japan (‘The World and Japan’ Database, 1976), while the third in 1995 is an update of the SDF’s mission statement to address the foreign policy challenges of a world recovering from Soviet power (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 1995). As none of these actions increase the power of the SDF as a military force, they were considered supported

by public opinion, suggesting that the second half of the century's militarization policies were pluralist.

The first seemingly unsupported legislation was enacted as the century concluded. It allowed the SDF to use weapons to defend themselves, Japanese nationals, and foreign nationals in conducting rear operations in non-combat zones (see Law to Amend Part of the SDF Law, Act 61, of 1999). In addition, it allowed the "SDF to use force if necessary in marine non-combat zones outside of Japanese territory...to aid the operations of the United States in the name of Japan's defense" (Madison, 2017; House of Representatives, Japan, 2014; Shugiin, 2014). The expansion of operations outside of Japanese territory is an expansion in the ability of the SDF to behave more combatively, an indication of militarization that demonstrates elitist policy creation, as polls did not suggest support for increasing the power of the SDF to engage in more aggressive combat.

In 2001 the basic law of the SDF was amended to allow the SDF to operate in territories that could potentially become combative, if combat was not currently underway (see Act No. 115 of 2001) (House of Representatives, 2014). As deployment to potentially combative areas brought the SDF closer to the freedom of a conventional military to engage in combat zones, the legislation seems unsupported by measured opinion which has not indicated support for further military normalcy. Additionally notable in the militarization of the SDF are the 2003 amendment to the SDF Law, which allows the SDF to seize property and land for operations, and the 2003 Iraq Special Measures Law, which allowed the SDF to be dispatched to Iraq in non-combative support operations for the United States, despite the combative nature of Iraq at that time (Umeda, 2006). While the seizure of land and property may ultimately be necessary to protect Japan, easing the regulations which restrict the right of the SDF to seizure expanded the potential of the SDF to abuse its power. Deployment in Iraq also seems to have ignored the lack of measured support for further militarization, as permitting the SDF to be dispatched to a country of frequent "small-scale fighting" (Umeda, 2006) further increased the power of the SDF to engage in militaristic situations (Madison, 2017). Such legislative risks loosened the reins of the SDF, contributing to its transformation into a standard military force, which was not supported by polls regarding militarization.

However, the most notable militarization measures were passed in 2015. The Peace and Security laws amended the SDF Law to allow forces to be dispatched to areas of active combat to aid the United States, and to use weapons in the exercise of collective self-defense (Cabinet Secretariat, 2015). Collective self-defense is the right of standard military forces to defend their allies, a notion which allows the SDF to operate more as a conventional combative international force. Many Japanese citizens responded unfavorably, as tens of thousands protested in front of the Diet building as the legislation was passed. Protestors felt that the legislation violated the

constitution to the point that the law may as well have been a constitutional amendment enacted without undergoing proper voting procedure. Citizens were also concerned that a policy of collective self defense would pull Japan into other countries' wars to protect its allies (Yakushiji, 2015). The Tokyo Foundation asserts that "in public opinion polls, between 70% and 80% of respondents... opposed the new security laws," increasing indications that the laws were elitist (Yakushiji, 2015). The transformation from being restricted to Japanese territory to having the freedom to operate in combat missions abroad has redefined the character of the SDF, a legislative maneuver that was conducted without regard for government measured opinion polls. Furthering the notion of government autonomy, these measures complement a legislative military history that seems to support an elitist view of policy formation.

Figure 3 compares the same militarization polls to the number of SDF personnel and total military combat vehicles. It indicates that these numbers have risen dramatically despite the lack of popular support for militarization. For the purposes of this research, military combat vehicles are defined as vehicles designed to be used as weapons, including but not limited to destroyers, tanks, and fighter planes. Therefore, vehicles designed solely for transport are not included. The number of personnel in the SDF has risen from 121,752 in 1952 (Statesman's Yearbook, 2017) to 247,150 in 2016 (Europa World Plus, 2017b). At its peak in 2005, the SDF had about 272,000 personnel (World Bank, 2017). The number of combative vehicles in the SDF has risen from 288 in 1952 to 4185 in 2004 (第31章防衛, 1996) Translation: Chapter 31 Defense. Notably, the majority of this inflation occurred between 1952 and 1961, during which time the number of personnel doubled, and the number of combative military vehicles rose by over 3000. As the SDF was considered a purely defensive organization during this time and legislation to increase its military freedom did not emerge until the turn of the millennium, this increase in hard power was likely motivated by the desire to have an effective means of defense, rather than creating a more offensively capable force. While the implications of defensive ambition are more favorable than aggression in the eyes of anti-militarists, the SDF's acquisitions in the 1950s still molded it into a vastly more powerful military force. As government surveys on support for military expansion are not available until that of 1956, respect for public opinion in policy formation before then is unknown. However, measured opinion indicates that support from 1956–1961 was at most 31%, demonstrating that this period of the buildup of the SDF in the decade following its creation was seemingly elitist (内府, 2012). Consistently low support for further militarism extends the trend of elitist military buildup to 2015, when the government last measured public opinion.

The third category is displayed in Figure 4, which compares polls to the military budget of Japan as a percentage of the Japanese gross domestic product (GDP), and includes a statement by Prime Minister Abe announcing the end of the 1% GDP cap on military funding. Military budget data was accessed from the SIPRI Military Expenditure Database. Results indicate whether

public opinion polls have supported military funding, and whether funding has respected measured opinion.

Figure 4 questions: Support for increasing the SDF budget: Do you feel that as a percentage of the national budget, the budget of the SDF should be greater?

Figure 4 demonstrates that poll support for increasing the budget of the SDF has been less than 30 percent from 1961 to 2003 (内閣府, 2012). Accordingly, the budget of Japan's military has remained relatively constant since the Second World War, within three percent of GDP (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2017). As majority support for increasing the budget has been absent, the government's actions from 1952 to 2016 have respected public opinion. Such discipline suggests a pluralist theory of policy formation. However, it is notable that while the budget of the SDF has remained constant as a percentage of GDP, its value has risen from 7,140,000,000 in 1952 to 415,690,00,000 in 2016, in constant 2015 US dollars (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2017). The post-war rise in Japan's GDP has allowed the SDF budget to increase without violating the 1% of GDP cap, which the SDF has been informally limited to since the 1960s (Kaneko, 2017). Thus, it is possible that elites believe they can ignore measured opinion against increasing the SDF budget if they can use the 1% gap to placate public concerns, which weakens the case for pluralist formation of the military budget.

Budget policy shifted significantly in March of 2017, when the prime minister released a statement that "there is no such thinking to keep defense budget below 1 percent of GDP under the Abe administration" (Kaneko, 2017). Increasing spending by exceeding the 1% GDP ceiling would not be warranted by measured opinion leading up to 2003, but as the Cabinet Office has not polled citizens about raising the budget of the SDF since then, support for this statement is unknown. Additionally, it is currently unknown to this research if the 2017 budget surpassed 1% of Japan's GDP. Therefore, the representative value of Abe's declaration cannot be properly evaluated in this study.

The fourth category is displayed in Figure 5, which compares polls to military deployment and legislation regarding the use of the SDF to protect Japan. Results indicate whether increasing the ability of the SDF to be used in national defense has been supported by measured opinion.

Figure 5 questions: Support for National Defense as the most important SDF Role: Do you feel that the most important duty or one of the most important duties (depending on question language and number of possible answers) of the Self Defense Force is to ensure national defense?

Figure 5 displays the public's opinion regarding whether the primary objective of the SDF is to secure national security. The figure demonstrates the positive slope of public opinion trends, indicating that citizens have gradually accepted the SDF's role as a military force for national

security. Up until 1969, the majority of those polled had considered the primary purpose of the SDF to be other than national security, including but not limited to disaster relief, humanitarian aid, and domestic security (内閣府, 2012). However, by 2015 the SDF was considered to exist primarily for national security by almost 75 percent of the population.

Perhaps in addition to the end of the Cold War and the threat of militant neighboring nations, support for national security can be attributed to a public long removed from war, which has grown comfortable admitting its military force is designed to protect Japan from international aggression. While Japan was never expected to surrender immediately given a confrontation, the combative connotations of national security were frowned upon in early post-war Japan, which was ever conscious of avoiding accusations that it had the desire to once again become a threatening military power (Midford, 2011: 1, 2). Rising emphasis on national security reflects the traditional purpose of most national militaries, suggesting Japan's admittance of the capacity to wage defensive warfare has come with time.

Popular support for transforming the SDF into an organization dedicated primarily for national defense seems to have been accompanied by attentive legislation. Polls suggest that the major legislative actions undertaken from 1999 to 2015 enjoyed majority support. Approval of increasing defensive capability only dipped below 50% once between 1969 and 2017, only to rebound immediately, and before the first applicable government action. Such remarkably consistent data suggests that public opinions regarding national defense have been very clear, contending the elitist argument that poll results are inconsistent and therefore incapable of influencing policy.

The 1994 dip in support for national defense as the "primary objective" of the SDF was caused by an 8.1% increase in respondents reporting disaster relief as the most important role, compared to 1991's responses (内閣府, 2012). The results may be attributed to the 1993 Hokkaido earthquake, which killed about 200 people (NOAA Data Catalog, 2017). However, support for the national defense role rebounded quickly. After the devastating Kobe earthquake of 1995, respondents were told to choose two primary roles for the SDF. 66.0% of respondents chose disaster relief as one of their answers, and 57.2% chose national security (内閣府, 2012). The resolve of support for national security through natural disasters indicates that the public's concerns for Japan's security demanded the SDF's top priority be the security of the nation (Asahi Shimbun, 2017).

The first national security event occurred in Japanese waters in 1999, when the MSDF, the marine branch of the Self Defense Forces, fired warning shots at DPRK (North Korean) ships. As the SDF Law (Act No. 165 of June 9, 1959) allows the SDF to engage forces trespassing in



Japanese territory, the actions of the SDF were justified in ensuring Japan's national security (Cabinet Secretariat, 2015). The SDF Law and the Japan Coast Guard Law were later amended in 2001 to explicitly grant the MSDF and the Japanese Coast Guard the right "to fire on suspicious vessels, if necessary, in order to search them in Japanese waters" (Umeda, 2006). In 2003, a law was passed to allow the SDF to "mobilize [to prepare for] an anticipated foreign attack before the attack is imminent" (Madison, 2017). Loosening the procedures restricting the ability of the SDF to mobilize and apprehend security threats indicates Japan's priority shift from preventing the government from losing control of the SDF to ensuring Japan's protection. As measured opinions have supported ensuring national security is as the priority of the SDF, the resultant remilitarization is considerably pluralist in nature.

The next three actions reflect the path of gradually awarding the SDF greater freedom to act to better protect the nation. Laws were passed to allow the SDF to engage in non-combative support activities for the United States in 2004 (Umeda, 2006), Australia in 2012 (House of Representatives, Japan, 2014), and finally with any other country in 2015 (Cabinet Secretariat, 2015.), if the activities support the defense of Japan and do not place Japanese forces in combat situations. Thus, while the Peace and Safety Laws allow the SDF to engage in combative collective self-defense with the United States (see Figure 2), the laws only authorize non-combative support operations with other countries. These operations include the transport of soldiers and supplies, as well as other services that do not place SDF soldiers at sites of current combat. As these actions and laws allow the SDF to more effectively defend Japan without increasing its militant freedom, they are supported by measured opinion.

Additionally, the presence of majority support 30 years before legislative action suggests that, in the matter of national security, the government has acted in response to public opinion, rather than shaping it by persuasively selling its recent actions. As responsiveness best fits the values of democracy, the formation of national security policy contributes to the case for a pluralist pattern of Japan's remilitarization.

The fifth category (Figure 6) seeks to determine whether the government acted in response to public opinion in allowing the SDF to be used to combat international terrorism and maritime piracy.

Figure 6 questions: Support for combating piracy: Should the SDF be dispatched to combat piracy off the east coast of Africa? Support for combating terrorism: Should the SDF be utilized to respond to international terrorism?

Figure 6 presents two laws, the 2001 Anti-Terror Special Measures Law, and the 2009 Act on the Punishment of Piracy and Dealing with Piracy. The first allows the SDF to conduct non-combative support operations for the United States discussed in Act No. 60 of 1999 (see Figure

2) to combat terror. The SDF must maintain consent from the destination country before being deployed on foreign soil, which prevents the law from being misconstrued to allow for military attack or occupation (Umeda, 2006). Due to the expansion of freedom introduced by Act No. 60 of 1999, the SDF may use weapons to protect themselves and those in their custody. The law regarding piracy allows the SDF to conduct patrols and escort missions to protect ships in the Gulf of Aden (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2016).

Displayed in conjunction are polls measuring support for deploying the SDF to combat terror and piracy. The cases present differing relationships between polls and action. As the Cabinet Office only surveyed the public regarding terrorism in 2003 and the Yomiuri Shimbun only surveyed on the subject in 2002, it is unknown to this study whether the public supported the fight against terrorism before the government passed its legislation. While it is difficult to argue that the formation of the Anti-Terror Special Measures Law demonstrates elitism, the absence of an attempt to measure public opinion prior to policy is damaging to the pluralist case, when compared to more clearly pluralist categories (see Figures 5 and 7). However, the Act on the Punishment of Piracy and Dealing with Piracy is consistent with pluralist theory in that it has the support of measured public opinion. A Cabinet Office poll regarding piracy was conducted in 2009, suggesting that before the law was enacted 63.2 percent of the public favored combating terrorism (内閣府, 2012). The act of polling citizens prior to policy output and the congruence between measured opinion and policy indicate that, in the case of combating piracy, the Japanese government operated with respect for the opinions of the electorate, contributing to the case of pluralist democracy.

The sixth category compares support for deployment in UN PKOs (peace keeping operations) with the SDF's engagement in PKOs, and with legislation allowing the SDF greater freedom in doing so. As peacekeeping operations afford the SDF the power to operate internationally, it is notable to consider whether such expansion of the military's role was conducted with consideration for measured opinion.

Figure 7: Support for participation in UNPKOs: Do you think that the SDF should answer requests from the UN to dispatch to foreign countries for peacekeeping operations?

The Cabinet Office did not measure public support for UN PKOs between 1965 and 1991. Japan's eventual interest in peacekeeping operations may have been related to the rise in the number of UNPKOs conducted after the Cold War. The evaporation of US-Soviet tension allowed countries to alleviate intra-state and inter-state conflicts without agitating bipolar loyalties, resulting in a sudden boom in peacekeeping operations between 1989 and 1994 (United Nations, 2017a). As the plurality of respondents supported deploying the SDF for UNPKOs in 1991, the Act on Cooperation in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations in 1992 is considered

by this research as supported by the population, and indicates a case of pluralist reaction to public opinion. As plurality soon led to consistent majority support starting in 1995, Japan's participation in UN PKOs is considered supported by public opinion (内閣府, 2012). Additionally, trends of measured opinion reflect the consistency of national security polls (see Figure 6), further supporting the pluralist argument.

Japan's UN policy led the SDF to Angola, Cambodia, and Mozambique from 1993 to 1995, the Syrian-Israeli territory of the Golan Heights from 1996 to the present, and South Sudan from 2011 to 2017 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2005). While the SDF's participation in these missions was and remains contingent upon a cease fire having been established and consistently honored, the participation listed involved the deployment of SDF soldiers or military officers (United Nations, 2017b). Notably, critics have argued that South Sudan remained an area of armed conflict during the SDF's deployment, violating the terms of Japan's UN PKO law (Kubo et al., 2017). Regardless, the overwhelming support for UNPKO missions from 70.1% in 2003 to 91.3% in 2015 supports the democratic merit of allowing the SDF to conduct their non-combative support operations for the UN in South Sudan (内閣府, 2012). In another conceivably controversial implementation of policy, the 2015 Peace and Safety Laws included an amendment to allow the SDF to conduct defensive PKOs (Cabinet Secretariat, 2015). As the SDF gained the freedom to protect their soldiers with weaponry when deployed abroad in 1999 (see Figure 2), the law does not increase the military power of the SDF, and thus is considered supported by the polls supporting UN PKO involvement.

Considering the preemptive nature of opinion gathering, the policies implemented after 1991 seem to be in response to public opinion, rather than autonomous actions accepted retroactively. Thus, the case of SDF involvement in UN peacekeeping operations aids the pluralist case of military policy acting in response to measured opinion.

## Discussion

When considering that Japan's government may have been shaping public opinion, the consistent rise in measured support for national defense and UN peacekeeping efforts may seem to be the result of a "reassurance strategy" (Midford, 2011: 18). The theory asserts that elites' political actions deliberately exceed the realm of public support for militaristic policy when taking measures to remilitarize. A significant amount of time after militaristic actions and legislation are initiated, the citizenry recognizes that elites have maintained control over the SDF's broadened activities. After adjusting to the further militarized SDF, the public's view of acceptable militarism is inflated, paving the way for elites to exceed the realm of public support again in their next actions, and thus continuing the cycle of "reassurance" (Midford, 2011: 18). In matters of national security and UN PKOs, results indicate that the implementation of policy has corresponded with rising levels of measured support (see Figures 5 and 7). However, in these

cases, government actions have not exceeded measured support. Rather, polls have indicated support before actions have been implemented. Thus, while reassurance strategy would suggest that the connected rise in measured support and government actions is the result of elitist shaping of public opinion, the pluralist nature of policy formation in these areas suggests a more democratic model.

Reassurance is also likely inapplicable to the strengthening of Japan's military, as Figures 2 and 3 indicate no relationship between measured opinion and policy formation. However, it is conceivable that reassurance is responsible for the current resurgence in support for amending Article 9 after the monumental Peace and Security laws in 2015. The government has enjoyed about three years to prove it can control an SDF armed with the legislative means to engage in combat, as it now can with the United States as collective self-defense and in UN Peacekeeping missions. Thus, majority support for amending the constitution may be related to confidence in the ability of Japan to control a conventional military, after the citizenry has accepted the government's ability to maintain control over the newly loosened reins of the SDF.

In general, the study indicates that public opinion polls have accepted expanding the use of the SDF for international non-combative operations and protecting Japanese territory, without supporting expansion of the force's military capability or freedom to engage in combat for reasons not pertaining to national defense. The cases of Japan's budget, increasing the capability to defend Japan, participation in UN PKOs, and retaliation against piracy and terrorism present strong cases for pluralism, and thus Japan's representative democracy. However, comparisons of support for militarization to applicable legislation and military composition suggest strongly elitist policy formation, as government measured polls have never demonstrated majority support (内閣府, 2012). Arguably, democratic governance may not require obedience toward every public poll. However, in a system of government in which those elected to power are meant to represent the will of the people, it is alarming that remilitarizing policies and actions have not once been supported by government measured opinion.

While policy categories presenting pluralism (see Figures 4–7) outnumber those that indicate elitist policy formation (see Figures 2 and 3), the first and second categories are the most directly related to the question of this research. Accumulation of personnel and weaponry, and the acquisition of legislative freedom to engage with fewer combative and territorial restrictions, has transformed the SDF into a more conventionally powerful military force. Therefore, results suggest that Japan's militarization has been, in its most pertinent aspects, the product of elitists failing to represent the measured will of the electorate. However, the government has displayed pluralist restraint by respecting measured opinion gathered regarding policy areas that impact the ability of the SDF to conduct non-combative and defensive operations. Thus, the relationship

between government-measured public opinion and policy formation suggests an inconsistent state of democratic representation in Japan's remilitarization.

Recent events have confirmed the future relevancy of this study's findings, as Japan's remilitarization continues. While Japan has not had aircraft carriers since the Second World War, the country is in possession of a set of helicopter carriers. The largest of Japan's warships, the Izumo helicopter carrier, is under consideration for a conversion to be compatible with US Marines F-35B stealth fighters, which are engineered for vertical takeoff (JMSDF, 2018; Nobuhiro and Kelly, 2017). The modification's political ramifications would be significant, as transformation into an aircraft carrier would make it difficult for the government to assert the ship's defensive nature. Helicopters have use in humanitarian and natural disaster missions, including search and rescue. The primarily offensive nature of the stealth fighters would more clearly violate the pacifist provisions of Article 9, stressing the boundaries through which the SDF is currently tolerated under defensive aims (Nobuhiro and Kelly, 2017). As Prime Minister Abe recently announced a plan to revise Article 9 by the year 2020, public support for revision will play a large role in whether the SDF will become constitutionally legitimized. If the revision succeeds, current restraints on remilitarization may loosen, highlighting the question as to whether the Japanese public will wield proper pluralist influence in this decision (Yakushiji, 2017).

Future analyses regarding the democratic merit of Japan's remilitarization should discuss the responsibility of officials to both honor public opinion and respond appropriately to national security threats. In addition, works considering domestic and foreign motivations for remilitarization should consider that internal actors may have used external pressure as justification for their own hawkish interests. The scope of this study is also limited by the exclusion of public opinion polls tracking general satisfaction with the SDF, which would indicate if gradual militarization has resulted in greater public acceptance of the military. Additionally, obtaining and reporting opinion polls regarding the public reaction to specific instances of SDF deployment would shed greater light on the relationship between public support and duration of deployment, providing another context for public policy influence. Future work should seek to address these and other methods of historically analyzing public support for the SDF and its activities, to further understand how public opinion has responded to and influenced the militarization of Japan's Self Defense Forces.

#### Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Fritz Gaenslen at Gettysburg College for guidance and mentorship in conducting this research.

### Declaration of conflicting interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

### Funding

The author wishes to thank the Eric E Kolbe '65 Student-Faculty Research Fund given to Gettysburg College, Gettysburg, PA for supporting and funding this research.

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