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Review of doctoral dissertation “Changes of Japanese Defense Policy and Its Social Perception at the Turn of the 20th and the 21st Century” by Mr. Takaharu Uesugi, University of Wrocław, Faculty of Social Science, Institute of International Studies

The review is divided into several sections that examine the research problem, hypotheses, methodology, structure of the thesis, factual accuracy, conformity with topic, bibliography and linguistic correctness. The final assessment is based on the evaluation of these eight factors.

Research problem

Mr. Takaharu Uesugi’s PhD thesis entitled “Changes of Japanese Defense Policy and Its Social Perception at the Turn of the 20th and the 21st Century” analyzes an important problem that has been widely debated both in Japan and abroad. Since the end of Cold War Japan’s security policy has experienced gradual, yet profound changes. The demise of the Yoshida Doctrine was symbolized by passage of the bill that authorized Japan’s participation in UN Peacekeeping Operations in 1992, revision of the guidelines for Japan-US alliance in 1997, sending Maritime Self-Defense Force (SDF) to the Indian Ocean to assist US operation in Afghanistan in 2001, dispatch of troops to US-occupied Iraq in 2004, and establishment of the Ministry of Defense in 2007.

The process of adapting Japan’s security policy to new international conditions accelerated even further after return of Abe Shinzō to the post of prime minister in December 2012. Adhering to the new concept of “Proactive Contribution to Peace” (*sekkyokuteki*



heiwashugi), in 2014 the Abe administration passed a revolutionary cabinet decision that revised interpretation of Constitution to allow participation in collective self-defense initiatives. The new regulation was confirmed by security bills passed in the Diet in the summer of 2015. In addition, in April 2014 the government significantly relaxed the ban on arms export, and in February 2014 it replaced the ODA Charter with the Development Cooperation Charter that did not exclude possibility of financing projects with involvement of armed forces. All these changes signified a sudden shift towards a more assertive security policy, aimed mainly at protecting Japan from potential threats from North Korea or China.

I positively evaluate the research problem undertaken by Mr. Uesugi. The dynamic changes in Japan's security policy are an important issue that necessitates analysis by political scientists.

Research hypotheses and methodology

The dissertation examines the determinants, effects and social perception of changes in Japan's national security policy. Mr. Uesugi formulated two research hypotheses:

- “1. The more external threats, such as: power of Japanese neighbor states or international terrorism rise, the more Japanese defense policy and strategy become assertive.
2. The more internal threats, such as: natural disasters, and external threats, such as: power of Japanese neighbor states or international terrorism rise affect Japanese society, the more Japanese social perception of the Japanese defense policy, strategy and the SDF become moderated.” (p. 13)

In my opinion, the Author succeeded in proving the correctness of both hypotheses. I agree with Mr. Uesugi that it is the new external threats after the end of Cold War, such as the rise of Chinese power, North Korean nuclear armaments and, to a lesser extent, international terrorism that exerted the greatest impact on increase in Japan's assertiveness on the international scene. While the first hypothesis is far from innovative or original, real value of the dissertation lies in the second hypothesis. As proved by the Author through a range of opinion polls regarding two case studies (Hanshin-Awaji earthquake in 1995 and Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011), it is disaster relief activities of the SDF that played a vital role in “changing anti-militaristic identity of Japanese society” (p. 236). Moreover, domestic economic stagnation and growing power of Japan's neighbors caused rise of Japanese



nationalism, which in turn changed the social perception of remilitarization. As argued by Mr. Uesugi, these new tendencies emboldened such right-wing prime ministers as Koizumi Jun'ichirō and Abe Shinzō to redefine Japan's security strategy.

In his research Mr. Uesugi relies on several methodological approaches: historical approach, legal and institutional analysis, comparative analysis, as well as decision making analysis. Rather than being based on a single theory, the dissertation assumes theoretical eclecticism. It refers to neorealism, regional security complex theory, social constructivism, as well as historical institutionalism. This mixed methodology and theoretical framework seems adequate to the complexity of the research topic. It would be better, however, if after describing the abovementioned theories in the Introduction, the Author referred to them more often in chapters 1-4. For instance, while Mr. Uesugi indeed analyzes the evolution of Japan's security strategy in line with historical institutionalism (e.g. when describing the influence of pacifist education on preservation of the Yoshida doctrine until the end of Cold War), he fails to underpin his narration with the terms characteristic to this theory, such as critical junctures, positive feedback or path-dependence. Theoretical eclecticism requires an innovative method for linking together the diverse theories in question, and the way Mr. Uesugi did that is not sufficiently convincing.

Research hypotheses, methods and theories seem adequate to the topic of dissertation, though in some places the analysis should have been more oriented towards resolution of the indicated research problem.

Structure of the thesis, factual accuracy and conformity with topic

Chapter 1 deals with geographical, cultural and historical determinants of Japan's security policy. It is understandable that these factors played an important role in shaping the international strategies of Japan. Nevertheless, some of the parts of the chapter seem redundant. For instance, a detailed description of the evolution of Japanese culture (pp. 46-49) is very vaguely related to the topic of the thesis. Similarly, the description of Japan's historical conflicts with foreign powers over the centuries (pp. 59-80) does not contribute too much to answering the research questions. In addition, the first chapter is not accompanied by any final conclusions that would summarize the determinants of Japan's security policy and link them with recent international initiatives of that country.



Chapter 2 analyzes the evolution of Japan's defense capability, as well as security policies and strategies in the postwar period. It examines the geopolitical situation behind promulgation of the Constitution in 1946 and its entry into force in 1947. Perhaps the most interesting part is the description of the change of interpretation of Constitution by Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru to allow creation of the National Police Reserves and the SDF. Equally valuable is analysis of the National Defense Program Guidelines and the Standard Defense Force Concept. The Author interprets systemic changes after the end of Cold War and the Operation Desert Storm as vital causes of a gradual demise of the Yoshida doctrine. In my opinion, Mr. Uesugi correctly considers personal beliefs of Prime Minister Koizumi Jun'ichirō as one of significant factors behind the changes in Japan's security policy at the beginning of the 21st century. I also agree with him that it is the new threats in the post-Cold War period that compelled Japan to introduce the new concept of Dynamic Joint Defense Force. Unfortunately, just as in the first chapter, the Author fails to summarize the second chapter by drawing general conclusions on the direction, intensity and pace of revisions in Japan's security policy. Moreover, Mr. Uesugi omits description of such important decisions by the Abe cabinet as relaxation of the ban on arms export and overhaul of the ODA Charter.

Chapter 3 describes the social perception of Japan's security policy and strategy. It is the most analytical part of the dissertation. The Author refers to a range of opinion polls regarding revision of Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution, possession of military forces, rearmament, constitutionality of the SDF and waging wars. I agree with Author's main conclusion that despite strong pacifism in Japan, most of the Japanese held a pragmatic approach towards possession of minimum defense capability. Over time, recognition of constitutionality of the SDF increased, while support for revision of Article 9 declined. This trend indicated that many Japanese felt that the current Constitution sufficiently protected the interests of Japan in the security sphere. An interesting part of the chapter is evaluation of the societal factors behind the change in perception of the SDF by ordinary Japanese. The thesis that it is SDF's participation in disaster relief activities in 1995 and 2011 as well as strengthening of nationalism that caused the shift in the image of the SDF to more positive is well grounded in facts. The change in perception of the SDF, in turn, facilitated such right-wing politicians as Prime Minister Abe to overhaul Japan's security policy by allowing collective self-defense.



Chapter 4 analyzes the impact of recent threats on Japan's security policy. In my opinion, a detailed description of history of relations with Russia (pp. 188-191) seems too long and redundant. Moreover, the Author should have given concrete opinion polls data on affinity of Japanese towards China, as he did in the case of Russia and South Korea. It is also unsuitable that the Author failed to sufficiently analyze such determinants of security relationship with China as war apologies or history textbook issues. Taking into account the gravity of China containment policy in Prime Minister Abe's security strategy, Mr. Uesugi should have devoted much more space to this problem. I also think that analyzing the causes of Japanese society's anxiety regarding security issues should not have taken place in the last chapter. Causes should always precede results, and it is the systemic factors, such as the rise of China or North Korean nuclear armaments, that influenced ordinary Japanese citizens' stance regarding security policy.

In some places I received an impression that the Author's personal background and ideological convictions to some extent influenced his narration, which should not be visible in an academic dissertation. As Mr. Uesugi used to be a Ground Self-Defense Force employee, his emotional attachment to the SDF is understandable, but still some comments seem overly biased. When describing the historical determinants of Japan's security policy, the Author mentions the number of Japanese victims of World War II, but he fails to mention the war atrocities committed on Chinese and Southeast Asian nations. Moreover, Mr. Uesugi claims that right-wing groups "did not make radical acts as leftists did", and in the same paragraph he denies himself by admitting that "rightist drove a car into the marching people and wound participants" (pp. 161-162). In order to maintain impartiality, the Author could have mentioned many more radical acts by Japanese nationalists (*uyoku dantai*), such as the Mishima incident in 1970. When describing the change in interpretation of Constitution by Prime Minister Abe in 2015 (p. 178), Mr. Uesugi seems to clearly sympathize with this decision and fails to mention that according to majority of Constitution experts the security laws violated the Constitution. It is of utmost importance for a political scientist to always examine all factors of the researched problem, regardless of one's own ideological leaning.

The dissertation contains minor factual errors. On page 18 the Author wrote that American occupation of Japan "lasted until 1951", while in reality it ended in 1952, when the San Francisco Peace Treaty of 1951 entered into force. On page 62, Mr. Uesugi called the Mongol invasions in the 13th century "the only battles fought on Japanese soil" until World



War II, while in reality he probably meant the only battles fought against foreign armies on Japanese soil until World War II. On page 118, it is written that SDF were deployed in Iraq in 2003, while it happened in January 2004 (although the decision was made in 2003). On page 152, the Author wrote: “1973 was only 3 years after the revision of alliance between Japan and the United States”, while the US-Japanese security treaty was revised in 1960 (as described by the Author himself elsewhere in the text). In addition, the names of some institutions are incorrect, for example “League of Nation” (mentioned three times on p. 73) instead of the League of Nations or “Liberal Democratic Party of Japan (LDPJ)” (p. 156) instead of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), which is the official English translation for Jiyū Minshutō. Moreover, the Author erroneously names Chinese President “Xi Jing Ping” (pp. 200 and 238) instead of Xi Jinping. The factual errors are not numerous, but Mr. Uesugi should pay more attention to accuracy of descriptions and avoid typos in terms and names.

Although I find some of the sections of the dissertation redundant, the thesis generally conforms with the topic. Despite several minor factual errors, the research is well grounded in accurate descriptions of the evolution of Japan’s security policy as well as its external and internal determinants. The weakest point in this section is structure of the thesis. None of the chapters is accompanied by proper conclusions, and the order of some chapters should be different.

Bibliography and linguistic correctness

Mr. Uesugi based his research on rich and comprehensive sources. In bibliography he enumerates 98 books, 4 book chapters, 87 articles, and a range of internet sources. The Author took advantage of both English and Japanese-language titles, which is essential in case of topics so extensively commented in Japan. I have not found any major errors in footnotes and references. On the other hand, one would expect the Author to base theoretical descriptions on more numerous titles of the leading international relations scholars who dealt with Japan. For instance, when referring to the constructivist approach the Author should have mentioned *Cultural Norms and National Security: Police and Military in Postwar Japan* by Peter Katzenstein or the concept of Japan as an adaptive state coined by Thomas Berger.

The greatest weakness of the dissertation lays in its language. I understand that the Author is not a native speaker, but he should have paid more attention to proofreading the text. Literally every page of the doctoral thesis is riddled with linguistic errors, such as:



- frequent usage of singular instead of plural form or vice versa (e.g. “the word: “security” it is a vague and ambiguous word that contain”, p. 6; “his analysis are not correct”, p. 8; “what makes this changes”, p. 19);
- lack of prepositions (e.g. “it refused expand role of”, p. 17; “participate overseas missions”, p. 20);
- misuse of verbs’ conjugation (e.g. “and it not mention social factors”, p. 9);
- usage of verbs or adjectives instead of nouns (e.g. “He asserts emerge of these threats are exaggerated”, p. 8; “this condition brought reluctant to Japanese political leaders”, p. 57);
- erroneous tenses (e.g. “I am motivate by my personal experience”, p. 10; “could occurred”, p. 19; “did not became”, p. 52; “does Japan renounces”, p. 83);
- bad word order in sentences (e.g. “Japan is only a state that experienced two atomic bombings”, p. 98);
- wrong words (e.g. “reformation” instead of “reform”, p. 22; “feathers” instead of “features”, p. 32; “preface” instead of “prelude”, p. 73);
- typos (e.g. “that ca explain”, p. 18; “Kuorsawa” instead of “Kurosawa”, p. 71; “Shigieru” instead of “Shigeru”, pp. 89-90);
- wrong transcription from Japanese (e.g. “Terro” instead of “Tero”, p. 117);
- repetitions (e.g. “in the in the”, p. 236);

and punctuation errors. In some cases the language is so bad that sentences become almost unintelligible. The Author should have also chosen one order of writing Japanese family names and given names instead of mixing them in a single PhD thesis (e.g. “Hayato Ikeda” on p. 120 vs. “Tanaka Kakuei” on p. 121). I had serious doubts whether dissertation with so many linguistic errors even qualified for further assessment, but I eventually decided to focus solely on evaluating its research quality.

While bibliography is relatively rich, broad and adequate to the research topic, the language of the dissertation needs far-going improvement.

Conclusion

My final assessment of the eight factors taken into account in the review is as follows:

- positive: research problem;



- mildly positive: hypotheses, methodology, factual accuracy, conformity with topic, bibliography;
- mildly negative: structure of the thesis;
- negative: linguistic correctness.

In my opinion, while the topic of the dissertation is not overly innovative, the analysis of societal factors behind the change in Japan's security policy is a cognitively valuable attempt at explaining the gradual abandonment of the Yoshida doctrine and emergence of Tokyo's more assertive posture on the international scene. Despite its flaws, especially linguistic errors, the dissertation "Changes of Japanese Defense Policy and Its Social Perception at the Turn of the 20th and the 21st Century" constitutes an original resolution of a scientific problem. As such, it meets the requirements specified in Art. 13, Par. 1 of the Bill on Academic Degrees and Academic Title as well as Degrees and Title in Arts from 14 March 2003. Concluding, in my opinion, Mr. Takaharu Uesugi may be allowed to proceed to public defense of his doctoral thesis.