

How The Japanese Protest Movement From 1964 To 1968 Changed The Japan-United States Bilateral Relationship During The Vietnam War

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ABSTRACT

Despite the outward appearance of U.S. leadership during the occupation, and despite U.S. military domination in the years following, Japanese policymakers managed to follow their own paths. The Japanese people had the power to change, through demonstration and other means, the foreign policy of the decision makers at the top leading up to and during the Vietnam War. Historically the social upheaval that occurred within Japan during the Vietnam War was not precedent setting, but rather, existed in varying degrees of strength since the Occupation of Japan by the United States commenced in 1945, both in government and in public venues. A number of groups encompassing all scopes of Japanese society arose to protest during two tumultuous periods in Japanese history: the 1961 renewal of the U.S. Japan Security Treaty and the use of U.S. military bases located in Japan during the Vietnam War. The Japanese people made their voices of dissent heard to both the Japanese and U.S. governments through mass demonstrations and rallies. The United States, recognizing its need for Japan as a strategic waypoint in East Asia, had no choice but to honor the requests of the Japanese government, who was feeling pressured by the protests of its citizens, to limit their demands. While these changes in policy were by no means drastic, it shows the power that the organized Japanese protest movements had over U.S.-Japan relations.

Introduction

The relationship between the United States and Japan after the conclusion of World War II is of great importance in considering the later happenings and their intertwining complexities before and during the Vietnam War. The Japanese generation that lived during World War II decided that they had had enough of war, and were very quick to demonstrate this demeanor when hostilities reared. In the decades following the end of the war Japan rebuilt itself with the assistance of the United States government all the while demonstrating their loathing of war. In the 1950's when the Korean War reared its head, the Japanese politely declined the U.S.'s request to bolster the Japanese military citing both public sentiment and their own U.S. created Japanese constitution, in particular Article IX. When the security treaty came up for renewal in 1960 a great storm of anti-U.S. sentiment brewed in Japan, as many still remembered the harsh realities of World War II. As the United States began its war in Vietnam, the Japanese were on the forefront of the anti-war demonstration with such loud and magnanimous voices they could not be ignored by both the Japanese and U.S. policy makers despite their best efforts to do so. In essence, the Japanese demonstrations and anti-war movements that occurred during the U.S. war in Vietnam were so powerful that they could not be ignored by the Japanese and U.S. policy makers who wanted to use Japan as a primary staging ground for the war in Vietnam, and they ultimately affected, to varying degrees, the policies set forth by both Japan and the United States. Despite these loud voices of protest, however, the United States needed Japan as a strategic waypoint for operations in East Asia during the Vietnam War.

It was necessary with a lack of Japanese sources, and my limited reading ability with the Japanese language to thoroughly examine both the *Foreign Relations of the United States* Documents, and the New York Times news articles from the period in question to infer the evidence needed to support the thesis of the paper. While the *F.R.U.S.* documents officially relate the actions of the United States in regards to foreign policy matters from 1964 to 1968, by reading the interactions that took place between Japanese and U.S. policy makers, various bits of evidence can be deduced, such as the reluctance of the Japanese government regarding the docking of U.S. nuclear powered submarines. Similarly, the New York Times

articles can be used as a source regarding the magnitude of the various resistance movements which sprang up in response to U.S. decisions in Japan.

This topic is important because: Japan has been and is a very important international partner with the United States; and I believe that the strength of the Japanese protest movement, which was years ahead of the U.S. protest movement, is worth exploring, especially given the homogenous label that is typically applied to Japan's people.

A Brief and Partial History between Japan and the U.S. after World War II

In August of 1945, Japan capitulated to its wartime enemy the United States of America. At the end of the war there were almost 3 million Japanese dead from the conflict and many more wounded or ill. Almost all of Japan's major cities lay in ruin from the firebombing campaign waged by the U.S., millions of Japanese people were homeless, and the once mighty Japanese military was scattered throughout the East Asian sphere.¹ Japan as a nation was in ruin.² September 2nd, 1945 conveyed to the Japanese the destitution of their situation vis-à-vis the United States.; the Japanese were the weak and vanquished, and the U.S. was the strong vanquisher.³ The war era had left an indelible effect upon the Japanese people, and they were determined by any means necessary to avoid the mistakes of the past, even going so far as outright defiance of their own government.

The decades of the 1940's and 50's were dominated by three main themes in U.S.-Japan relations: firstly, the Occupation of Japan by U.S. forces; secondly, the rebuilding of Japan; and the third which was tied in closely with the second, Japan's economic trade. The Occupation was an issue that evoked great fervor in U.S. politics, while the rebuilding of the nation of Japan as a democratic and demilitarized entity was of great importance; on an ancillary note, democracy and demilitarization eventually took a backseat to the rising, U.S. perceived, threat of communism from the U.S.S.R. and China.

The rebuilding of Japan required, from the U.S. perspective, an increased role for Japan in the East Asian region as a center of trade. In order for this to occur it was necessary to get Japanese goods onto the global trade market which required that Japan work with its huge communist neighbors, China and the Soviet Union, a role which the United States, the great enemy of communism, did not agree with. The United States saw Japan as an opportunity to relieve some of the pressures it felt from the rising tide of communism, and attempted to pursue a policy in Japan of economic and military buildup; but first, the nation of Japan needed to be rebuilt.

In August of 1945 Japan was in ruins. In a nation with a population of seventy-four million, the results of a decade and a half of war were telling. Two and a half million Japanese were dead as a result of the war.⁴ Nine million Japanese people were homeless.⁵ Sixty large urban centers, and fully one-quarter of the country's wealth was destroyed by allied bombing. In Tokyo alone, "65 percent of all residences were destroyed."⁶ At war's end, there were approximately six million men at arms at home in Japan and spread throughout the various nations of "Manchuria, Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, Burma, the Philippines, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Taiwan, and...[parts] of mainland China."⁷ Approximately three and a half million soldiers were stationed abroad, adding in the three million Japanese civilians who had been relocated for the purposes of expanding Japan's empire, there were about six and a half million Japanese citizens, or about 10 percent of the populace, who needed to be repatriated to their home nation; the repatriation process, spearheaded by a reluctant United States, took a full three years to complete, and in some cases there were many who never made it home.⁸ World War II exacted a costly human toll upon the nation of Japan which it would not soon forget.

For those who made it home, and for those who never left, the Emperor's pronouncement of surrender in August of 1945 caused a mix of feelings. Some citizens, who were tired of fighting the war, felt that Japan was experiencing an "instant of rebirth" in which a new democratic Japan could emerge from the ashes of the old imperial nation.⁹ With the defeat, others felt that "a new culture of freedom" could be created.¹⁰ A great many more, on the other hand, felt *kyodatsu*, the Japanese clinical word for exhaustion after spending the better part of two decades giving their all for the war effort.¹¹ The war for Japan started in 1931 with the invasion of Manchuria, and continued for a full fifteen years, with the

expectation that the emperor's subjects were to sacrifice all for the nation of Japan.¹² The abrupt end of the war came as a shock for many who believed that Japan could not lose, but for many the end could not come soon enough.

The end of the war, however, did not mean an end to the trials faced by the Japanese people. Quite to the contrary, in many cases things became worse. The surrender of Japan brought about rampant inflation which imperiled Japanese society.¹³ The black market's of Japan surged; called "blue sky markets" for their open air settings, by October of 1945 there were over seventeen thousand of these black markets in existence for those who had the means to barter for food or supplies. For those who did not, starvation became a real threat; in 1946 thousands did die from starvation, with millions on the verge.¹⁴ Life for the Japanese people during the war era was extremely harsh, and hunger was one of the harsh realities that the Japanese people experienced due to wartime rationing. Hunger, however, came about as a result of the war not as a result of defeat, and the occupation.¹⁵ These harsh lessons in the human condition were not forgotten, especially in light of the sufferings that future wars would create, particularly the Vietnam War.

The Occupation of Japan was supposed to be an "allied occupation of Japan" with all of the victorious allied powers working together to determine Japan's future, this however was a farce. From start to finish the United States, alone, determined basic policy and exercised decisive command of Japan and its people. The power of the United States as the authority in Japan was not to be questioned by anyone, whether in the international community or in Japan; at least not initially, however, the Japanese government, particularly the various Prime Ministers who served throughout the occupation and afterwards, worked quickly to assert Japanese authority back into their occupied country, often disagreeing with policies set forth by the U.S.

Douglas MacArthur, commander of the U.S. troops, was acknowledged as the "supreme commander" of Japan during the occupation years.¹⁶ The Supreme Command of Allied Powers, or SCAP, was comprised of MacArthur and his top commanders and worked to decentralize the war-time power structure which existed in Japan, and worked to install the new U.S. directed Japanese government. Ultimately SCAP purged 200,000 people from Japanese government, business, and academia whom they deemed a threat to the burgeoning democratic government.¹⁷

The new government which the U.S. was setting into place was supposed to be one of peace and democracy that worked for the people of Japan. And initially, a number of reforms were enacted in order to change Japan to suit these purposes and to further weaken the power structure of war-time entities. The first major reforms that were enacted in October of 1945 granted the Japanese people the freedom of speech, press, assembly, and the right to organize labor or form unions.¹⁸ Major land reforms were undertaken in an effort to abolish the tradition of landlordism which concentrated the wealth and power of the nation in the hands of a select few. The Japanese government was forced to grant farmers the rights to land ownership.¹⁹ Women were granted the right to vote. The de-monopolization of business and finance was undertaken in order to reduce the power that the corporations, or *zaibatsu*, held over the Japanese government.²⁰ All of these reforms and more were undertaken to diminish the strength of the war-time power structure, and to encourage the democratization of Japan. Who knew that in short order these policies granting the Japanese people the right to organize would come back to haunt the U.S. in later years.

The Emperorship was left intact albeit, now the emperor only acted in a ceremonial capacity.²¹ Douglas MacArthur supported keeping the Emperor intact and supported the idea of an imperial democracy. Similarly, the idea supported by a group in Washington "favored preserving the emperor and using his prestige to legitimize occupation reforms." Although there were calls by some to have Emperor Hirohito tried as a war criminal, many others including MacArthur felt that the Emperor should be preserved in order to maintain the Japanese social order, as a trial or forced abdication would cause a possible revolt by the Japanese people.²² Ultimately it was decided that the emperor would not be prosecuted or forced to abdicate his throne and that he would remain as the emperor and act as a symbol for the Japanese people, however, he would wield no power over the redesigned Japanese government. Despite the Emperor's change in status, he was still seen as an important figure to the nation of Japan.²³

Communism, however, put the notion of peace and democratization a bit further down the list of priorities for the U.S. policy makers when it came to Japan. The impetus for policy bureaucrats became not so much democratization as changing the psychology of the people of Japan to immunize them against the spread of communism.²⁴ China's switch from a factionalized nationalist/fascist state to a united communist state caused a great uproar in the U.S., and the fear of communism and the so called "domino effect" which it might possibly spawn in Asia was, to the minds of U.S. policy makers, all too real; the United States, working to firmly entrench itself in Japan, hoped to use the island nation as a staging area for the fight against the spread of communism within East Asia.²⁵

Fear of communism by the U.S. was so great that a crackdown against the Japanese communist party was promoted in 1950, referred to as the "red purge", in which 13,000 alleged communist party members were removed from their business or academic positions for supporting communism. This course of action was widely criticized, especially in later years when analyzed from a historical point of view as being highly undemocratic as it upset the balance of political power in Japan.²⁶

In order for Japan to succeed the U.S. felt that Japan must have power in East Asia, and a mode of achieving power was to have a military presence. This was a bit of a problem as Japan's military was disbanded on November 30th, 1945 by U.S. occupiers. One of the primary desires of the United States was to have Japan build up its military presence in Asia to remove the onus of the security of East Asia from the hands of the United States, to the Japanese.²⁷ Resistance to these demands, however, mounted very quickly from the unlikely sources of Article IX of the Japanese Constitution and major opposition from the leadership and public of Japan starting with Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida. Article IX stated that Japan would "forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat of use of force as a means of settling international disputes."²⁸ In essence this required Japan to give up any and all military apparatus' that it possessed. Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida only grudgingly acceded to the will of the occupation, and worked exceptionally hard to steer, and in some cases shove, the occupation policies toward his desired goals rather than the goals of the United States.²⁹ Yoshida regularly quipped that the Allied Powers General Head Quarters, or GHQ for short, which handed down decisions regarding the rebuilding of Japan actually stood for "go home quickly."³⁰

As for rearmament, Yoshida expressed great fear of reinstating members of the Japanese military who had fought during the war, as he was concerned that the defeat of Japan by the Allies forced a number of former military officers to turn to communism as a means of expressing their dissent.³¹ Yoshida also insisted that Japan could not afford a military buildup of the size the U.S. felt was needed, and instead needed to focus on economic growth with the U.S. supplying security for the nation.³² There was also a very palpable fear, as the Korean War came about, that any troops or military that Japanese created might be requisitioned by the United States as offensive troops for the war.³³ Additionally, Yoshida believed that public opinion would not allow for the creation of a large defense force.³⁴ Rearmament was not an option for Prime Minister Yoshida, despite the U.S.'s demands.

The rebuilding of Japan was of great importance to the United States and went hand in hand with economic growth; however, the path to accomplishing this task was rocky at best. From 1945 to 1949 inflation was out of control.³⁵ Much of Japan's wealth had been destroyed by the wartime bombing campaigns. SCAP estimated that Japan had "lost one-third of its total wealth and from one-third to one-half of its total potential income." The bombing "destroyed four-fifths of all ships, one-third of all industrial machine tools, and almost a quarter of all rolling stock and motor vehicles."³⁶ Rebuilding the economy of Japan would be a major undertaking.

The major economic road to rebuilding was trade in the eyes of the United States. Japan's two biggest trade partners, however, were also the largest communist enemies the U.S. had ever faced, great strain was inevitable. Japan wanted to trade with China, however, the U.S. did not approve of the relationship, as China was a communist nation. Japan decided that the trade was in its best interests despite U.S. objections, and in 1953 brokered a trade agreement with the communist government.

Investment was another key to rebuilding the country, and Japan worked very hard to control foreign investment in Japan keeping it substantially limited.³⁷ In a major irony it was war, the Korean War and trade with the U.S., which helped to facilitate the rebuilding of Japan's economy.³⁸ From 1951

to 1953 U.S. procurements for the Korean War totaled over two billion dollars, or sixty percent of Japan's exports. Profits for Japanese corporations began to climb, and they in turn reinvested those funds into plants and equipment.³⁹ Within just a few years of having its major cities firebombed, and surrendering to a foreign power, Japan was rebuilding its place on the world stage, albeit this time with trade rather than guns.

From a political standpoint the relationship between Japan and the United States was put in place at the San Francisco Peace Treaty, otherwise known as the 1951 U.S.-Japan Security Treaty. The treaty laid out a number of key provisions for the nation of Japan: it terminated the state of war which up to that point still existed between Japan and the United States; restored Japan's sovereignty; Japan's right to self-defense was spelled out; and easily the most contentious issue for the Japanese, the United States was permitted to station troops indefinitely in Japan. This last provision was highly criticized as being too open ended, allowing the U.S. too much power in Japan; an opinion poll taken by the general public indicated that Prime Minister Yoshida had given the United States too much. This issue would come to a head in later years as Japan was required to field U.S. military forces for military campaigns in Asia; the foundation for future social unrest in Japan was laid.⁴⁰

In 1960 the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty came up for renewal. Article VI of the treaty stated "For the purpose of contributing to the security of Japan and the maintenance of international peace and security in the Far East, the United States of America is granted the use by its land, air and naval forces of facilities and areas in Japan." Critics of the renewal felt that the original treaty was "a continuation of the occupation and an encroachment on Japanese sovereignty."⁴¹ The renewal came up against immense widespread public disapproval.⁴² Demonstrations were immense with hundreds of thousands of student protestors holding protest rallies against the renewal; labor unions went on strike, and the Japanese Socialist Party, backed by labor, led a political attack on Prime Minister Kishi condemning his actions.⁴³ Many Japanese were fearful, that by renewing the treaty, they would enable the government of Japan to retread a path which they had no desire to walk, that of remilitarization, especially in light of the events which took place during and prior to the Japanese surrender to the U.S.⁴⁴

Kishi Nobusuke, prime minister of Japan during the treaty negotiation period, sought clarification in the rights and responsibilities of both Japan and the United States as outlined by the Security Treaty agreement. Specifically, the explicit statement of the U.S. responsibility to defend the nation of Japan, and more importantly in the case of the U.S.-Vietnam War, improved communication and consultation of the Japanese government "in the disposition of [U.S.] forces." The previous U.S.-Japan security treaty did not explicitly spell out the arrangement, and Prime Minister Kishi, and the Washington leadership looked favorably upon this new arrangement.⁴⁵

A problem, from the perspective of the Japanese public, which arose, was with Kishi Nobusuke himself. Kishi was a former government servant who had served as an official in Manchukuo during Japan's imperial wartime period; after the war ended, Kishi was indicted by SCAP, but never tried. As such the voters of Japan, and his political opposition, by whom he was referred to as "War Criminal Kishi" did not trust his actions.⁴⁶

The Japanese public did not look favorably upon the renewal of the security agreement. There was great fear amongst the people of Japan that with the renewal of the U.S. Japan security treaty, Japan would become a battleground between the U.S. and Communism; students, workers, intellectuals, political groups, and the public at large protested the impending renewal.⁴⁷ A number of groups who would protest during the Vietnam War were actively engaged in demonstrations during the renewal period of the 1960 security treaty. Zengakuren, *Zen Nippon Gakusei Jichikai Rengo* or the federation of Japanese students, a student organization boasting three-hundred thousand members, was an active participant in the anti-Kishi, anti-U.S. demonstrations as was the Japanese Socialist Party, which in April of 1960 in an effort to get their voices heard, dropped five-hundred thousand leaflets over Tokyo.⁴⁸ Sohyo was a group formed in the late 1940's, and at the time of the 1960 security treaty renewal, was the "largest federation of labor unions in Japan with about 3.7 million members."⁴⁹

This did not deter Kishi however, and he rammed the Security Treaty through the Japanese Diet. Many people were very upset with the undemocratic nature of Kishi's actions, and mass demonstrations

once again ensued; ultimately, Prime Minister Kishi resigned in disgrace.⁵⁰ Once the treaty took effect in June of 1960 calm ensued, demonstrations diminished, and all was well, at least for a short time.

Despite being virtually destroyed from the war era, Japan was able to rebuild with the assistance of the United States. While often times the United States was able to get its policies put into place in Japan, there were just as many occasions where internal political resistance, and external public demonstration swayed policy formation in Japan.

The Japanese View on Vietnam and the Peace Movement

Initially the war in Vietnam was seen as a peripheral conflict, and was not integral to Japanese daily life.⁵¹ “Fire across the sea” or *taigan no kasai*, was the driving force behind the Japanese policy towards Vietnam, what happened on distant shores had little to no impact on Japanese life unless the Japanese became directly involved.⁵² In May of 1964 the Japanese Cabinet “approved [a] study of how Japan could help the United States in the war in South Vietnam.”⁵³ Japan in general was not interested in the war in Vietnam, as it had not direct impact upon the nation.

With the escalation of the war, however, and more importantly, the use of Japanese land as a staging ground by the United States military for this escalation, the Japanese people’s awareness grew and their national conscious became incensed by the U.S. war in Vietnam.⁵⁴ In particular a great number of social organizations sprang up to protest the U.S. actions in Vietnam starting with the Gulf of Tonkin incident which occurred in August of 1964; Beheiren, Sohyo, the Japanese Socialist Party, and the Japanese Communist Party to name a few.⁵⁵ So quick was the response, that within the month, the Japanese Socialist Party, and the Japanese Communist Party staged a protest in condemnation for the U.S. response to the Gulf of Tonkin Incident.⁵⁶ The U.S. war in Vietnam evoked a swift response from many parts of Japanese society.

The Japanese media seized upon the U.S.-Vietnam War with great vigor, especially after the U.S. bombers struck across the 17th parallel.⁵⁷ “Interest in the war in Japan increased dramatically and Saigon, which up to then was very much a journalistic backwater, suddenly became the focus of attention. Television and radio stations sent their correspondents, as did all major weeklies and daily newspapers.”⁵⁸ Between television and newspapers, virtually every household in Japan was inundated with news of the war. The 171 daily newspapers which existed in Japan reached almost 50 million households.⁵⁹ Quite a substantial number considering the population of Japan at that time was approximately 100 million people.

Zengakuren rose in the middle of 1967, this time using the U.S.-Vietnam War and other social issues within Japan as its focal point.⁶⁰ Often acknowledged by historians as being a highly militant and radical protest group, Zengakuren movements on the streets involving “militant struggles with police, the use of wooden or iron sticks, stones, powerful chemicals, or handmade bombs, and sometimes culminated with the burning of police boxes, barricading streets, and attacking radio stations” caused great chaos and disruption in the major cities of Japan; while more restrained actions on campus “were carried on by strike,[and] class-boycott.”⁶¹

In May of 1968 four thousand five hundred Zengakuren students “held coordinated demonstrations in 10 major cities demanding an end to the war in Vietnam and early return to Japan of the Ryukyus Islands.”⁶² The most violent clash came in October of 1968 when approximately six-thousand Zengakuren students “staged several violent demonstrations, fighting riot police in bloody street battles [while] other groups of students stormed the Parliament grounds and tried unsuccessfully to break into the compounds of the Defense Agency Headquarters near Roppongi, Minato Ward, Tokyo.” There was also an attempt to march to the U.S. embassy which was, however, unsuccessful due to local law enforcement.⁶³ The Tokyo police department was forced to invoke an anti-riot act against the protestors and disband them with the use of force.⁶⁴ It is important to note that Zengakuren was one of the few exceptions to the norm; most protests were held in a non-violent manner although with no less fervor in its supporter’s beliefs.

Beheiren (Betonamu ni heiwa o Shimin rengoo) or “Peace for Vietnam” was formed in April of 1965. “The movement was supported by left-wing intellectuals, writers, professional people, students, and housewives. The founder members included writers like Kaiko Ken, Oe Kenzaburo,...Noma Hiroshi, Nakano Shigeharu,...Komatsu Sakyo and the playwright Terayama Shuji.”⁶⁵ Beheiren wasted no time in demonstrating for peace in Tokyo, holding their first rally on April 24, 1965. The aims of Beheiren were: “peace in Vietnam, self-determination for the Vietnamese, and an end to Japan’s complicity in the war,” and they were willing to accept anyone into their ranks who shared their own similar sentiments. Beheiren was different from many of the other protest organizations in that it was not centralized, there was at one time during the war 400 loosely affiliated groups; their only physical location was an office in Tokyo which published a monthly newsletter.⁶⁶

Beheiren, at its inception, had roughly fifteen hundred members. As the conflict in Vietnam grew and U.S. military involvement escalated and its accompanying media coverage increased, however, the Japanese public took notice. Beheiren, with its large number of diverse groups located throughout the cities of Japan, had a membership of about seventeen to eighteen million at the time of its dissolution in 1974.⁶⁷

Beheiren, however, chose not to hold large mass rallies, instead relying upon regular smaller localized meetings, in which all participants could be quickly brought up to speed on the currents of the war. “The Tokyo Beheiren faithfully held its protests on the first Saturday of each month from September 1965 until October 1973,” quite an accomplished feat for an organization with no centralized control structure.⁶⁸

Sohyo, the general council of trade unions, also participated in the U.S.-Vietnam anti-war movement. Sohyo routinely turned out hundreds of thousands of demonstrators at protest meetings. While Sohyo was able to turn out great numbers of people in support of the anti-war rallies, they were ultimately split from within on the appropriate responses to the U.S.-Vietnam War.⁶⁹

There was a mass outcry from Japanese scholarly intellectuals as well. In February of 1965 Nobel Prize winning physicist Yukawa Hideki and six of his colleagues made an appeal to President Johnson to end the war; another Nobel physicist, Tomonaga Shinichiro, formed a committee for similar purposes.⁷⁰ In April of 1965, 92 of Japan’s best known intellectuals put forth a petition to Prime Minister Sato requesting that president Johnson end hostilities with Vietnam. The Japanese scholars reasoning was thus, they believed that “the present use of force by the United States in Vietnam” was a violation of the first article of the U.S.-Japan security treaty. Furthermore, the petition put forth the recommendation to the Japanese government “that if the war in Vietnam should escalate into a war on a larger scale involving additional countries, Japan would refuse to let the United States bases in Japan be used for the purpose of military combat operations.” Lastly the petition declared that President Johnson was welcome to participate in unconditional discussions on the premise “that such diplomatic discussions must be accompanied by an unconditional cease-fire, so that there can be no room for continued military operations with the aim of gaining a favorable position for negotiations.”⁷¹ The Japanese academia even attempted to gain the notice of the U.S. people with an ad in one of the U.S. major newspapers. In November of 1965 a group of 30 Japanese intellectuals placed a full page add in the New York Times with the assertion that “the conduct of the war in Vietnam is alienating the sympathies of the Japanese.” In their endeavor to receive the attention of the U.S. public they received assistance from 20,000 Japanese contributors to pay for the full page add.⁷²

Despite being an ancillary concern, initially, the War in Vietnam quickly came to the forefront of Japanese attention. Anti-war organizations were quickly mobilized, many old, some new, to protest the involvement of the U.S. in the war. Perhaps most striking of all was the reality that the Japanese reaction to the war was so intense, especially in light of the fact that Japan was not directly involved in the war. There were no Japanese police, or troops directly involved in the Vietnam War, and yet despite this, the protest against the war was incredibly swift in mobilizing, and large in all of the different strata of Japanese society.

The Heart of the Matter

Direct involvement in the war in Vietnam was effectively prohibited by the Japanese constitution; nonetheless, there were a number of events which the Japanese leadership was not pleased with in regards to the actions of the United States. Even the possibility of being indirectly implicated in the war was enough to set off the ire of the Japanese public, as illustrated by a number of incidents. The United States and the Japanese government did not agree on the use of force originating from any of the Japanese islands or Okinawa, while the government often assented to these requests, there was great concern over the public response to these incidents, and as such the Japanese government was often obliged to limit the scope of U.S. demands.

In July of 1964 the U.S. requested permission to dock nuclear powered submarines at U.S. bases located in Japan, a request to which the government of Japan acquiesced; in turn however, Japan requested that the U.S. not make the information known to the public for fear of the possible public outcry.⁷³ The Japanese government, it appears, had a premonition regarding the future state of affairs in their own country regarding U.S. military forces.

The first of many incidents which sparked a public outcry occurred in July of 1965; a fleet of B-52 bombers based in Guam, threatened by a typhoon, took refuge at the U.S. airfield in Itazuke, Kyushu. A short time later, it was discovered that these same B-52's were used to attack targets in Vietnam; the response was immediate, the actions of the U.S. military were condemned by Beheiren and a number of other organizations. The government of Japan, whom normally supported U.S. decisions, felt that the public outcry from the incident was just too great to ignore.⁷⁴ In accordance with the Security Treaty policies, however, the government of Japan did not feel it was necessary to notify the public of this incident, and furthermore, the Japanese government was forced to remind its citizens that "direct sorties from Okinawa are not a subject for prior consultation." Conversely, however, a Foreign Minister official, Shiina Etsusaburo, issued a response to the United States asking for "the Americans not to use Okinawa for combat operations." Prime Minister Sato as well voiced his displeasure stating "that the B-52's were disturbing and inflammatory."⁷⁵ The U.S. action's put Prime Minister Sato in a very difficult situation.

Not surprisingly, Okinawan reaction to the episode was particularly harsh. The local legislature condemned the actions unanimously, and demanded an immediate end to the "acts of war" being perpetrated from the U.S. island bases. Prime Minister Sato was harangued when he visited Naha in August of 1965 as "an accomplice of the war."⁷⁶ Prime Minister Sato, however, was caught between a rock and a hard place. He disapproved of the use of force, in particular the bombings, that the U.S. military was conducting, while at the same time supported the U.S. actions to stop the threat of communist infiltration of South Vietnam.⁷⁷

The docking of U.S. nuclear powered submarines were also highly contentious issues to both the Japanese government and the Japanese public. In an effort to avoid alerting the Japanese general public and causing uproar from both the public and the oppositional elements present within the Japanese government, the U.S. Embassy in Japan requested that "complete secrecy concerning the dates of the proposed visit(s)" be kept.⁷⁸

In November of 1964 the U.S. submarine Seadragon departed from Sasebo port reportedly without incident. While there were calls from the Japanese Socialist Party, the Japanese Communist Party, Sohyo, Zengakuren, and government oppositionalist groups for mass demonstration and rallies, there was reportedly little public response in regards to the docking of the nuclear powered submarine.⁷⁹ Perhaps it could be speculated that timing was everything in regards to the submarine visits; as the United States increased its war effort in Vietnam, similar efforts were underway in swaying Japanese public sentiment. Ironically, U.S. ambassador Reischauer made mention of future concern over docking the submarine in Yokosuka, as it was much closer to large population centers.⁸⁰ In September of 1966 the Seadragon left the Japanese port of Yokosuka amid a clamor of four-hundred and fifty "fist-swinging" demonstrators. During its four day stay at port it attracted an amazing 157,000 demonstrators "claiming that the presence of the submarine indirectly involved Japan in the war in Vietnam."⁸¹

In August of 1965, after the incident in which bombers diverted from Guam to Okinawa went on to fly bombing missions in Vietnam, another incident occurred in which U.S. transport planes were diverted to Itazuke Air Base seeking shelter from a typhoon, and an immediate response was issued from the Socialist party of Japan condemning the use of Japanese bases for U.S. military use in Vietnam.⁸²

In May of 1966 the U.S. nuclear submarine *Snook* docked at Yokosuka naval base and the Socialists again quickly mobilized to protest the visit believing that the visit was one more way that Japan would be dragged into the Vietnam War. “Foreign Minister Etsusaburo Shiina declared in a Diet committee session...that Japan was under obligation to let the United States use its bases in Japan for port calls because the American military operations in Vietnam were contributing to peace and security in the Far East.”⁸³

In April of 1968 there were daily riots staged by student protestors against the opening of a military hospital in which Vietnam War casualties were treated.⁸⁴ In June of 1968, in a number of major Japanese cities, more than twenty-three thousand protestors participated in anti-U.S. demonstrations against the war in Vietnam. Tokyo accounted for almost half of the protestors with almost ten thousand people marching by the U.S. embassy shouting slogans like “Yankee go home” and “Get out of Vietnam.”⁸⁵ In October of 1968 there were violent protests sparked by the observance of “International Anti-War Day” in which an estimated eight hundred thousand people demonstrated against the Japanese and U.S. governments and their actions in the war in Vietnam; over seven hundred of the demonstrators were arrested.⁸⁶ The Japanese public did not approve of the United States War in Vietnam.

From the general public’s perspective there was an expression of the fear of Japan becoming a battleground resulting from the U.S. and its cold war policies.⁸⁷ The Mutual Security Treaty, passed into law in 1960 by Prime Minister Kishi, bound the U.S. and Japan as allies and as a result the fear of becoming enmeshed in the U.S.’s war against North Vietnam began to weigh heavily upon the minds of the Japanese people. A public opinion survey carried out in an area of Tokyo in March of 1965 by the *Mainichi Shinbun*, asked the question: “What did you think of first when you heard of the U.S. bombings of North Vietnam?” “The most common answer was ‘possible war between American and Communist China.’ Next came ‘I was reminded of the air raids on Japan during the Pacific War’, followed by ‘the war might spread to Japan.’”⁸⁸ It is quite apparent from the responses of the Japanese people that the war and its subsequent repercussions were prevalent on people’s minds.

One of the ironies of the U.S. war in Vietnam is that despite the great opposition to the U.S.-Vietnam war present in Japan, Japanese companies profited greatly from the war; somewhere between 500 million and 4 billion dollars per year flowed into the Japanese economy as a result of the production of items for fighting in the war.⁸⁹ In August of 1966, MITI, the Ministry of International Trade and Industry, issued a report regarding the previous six month period, from January to June of 1966. The report indicated that the U.S. military procurement orders had “skyrocketed” with contracts for the period totaling 49.7 million dollars with the break up as 36.3 million for goods, and the remaining 13.3 million for services. The *New York Times* even went so far as to acknowledge that “the war in Vietnam has been a tremendous boon to the Japanese manufacturers...” in terms of the increase in foreign, particularly U.S., trade.⁹⁰

Another consideration for the Japanese government to maintain the U.S. as an ally despite their opposition to the war was the political motivation of regaining control of the Okinawa Islands which the U.S. had maintained control of since the end of World War II.⁹¹ “The issue of the islands [was] considered the major sticking irritant in relations between Japan and the United States” during the Vietnam War. Japanese Premier Eisaku Sato believed that by helping to resolve the U.S.-Vietnam War the possibility of regaining Okinawa and the Ryukyus Island chains would increase in Japan’s favor.⁹² While the Japanese government found assisting the United States in the war in Vietnam to be highly distasteful, there were political ends that needed to be considered in all decisions regarding the war.

The U.S. View regarding Japan

The United States was hopeful that Japan, as a close ally of the U.S., would take over the role of providing security in the East Asian region. Ambassador Edwin O. Reischauer asserted that while he

understood Japan's hatred of war, they "were under some 'serious misapprehensions' about the true meaning of the war in Vietnam," and that "merely to hate war is not enough to guarantee peace."⁹³ As early as 1951 General Douglas MacArthur pressed Japan to increase its military capacity in an effort to increase Japan's responsibility for regional defense.⁹⁴ In the early part of the 1960's, Deputy Secretary of Defense Roswell Gilpatric under the Kennedy administration worked to encourage the same notion of a strong Japanese military.⁹⁵ Similarly in 1964 as the war in Vietnam was escalating Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara stated in a letter to Secretary of State Dean Rusk that "Japan should make a more vigorous effort in its defense buildup and modernization."⁹⁶ The central irony of the demands of the U.S. for Japanese rearmament and security lay in the insistence of the U.S. for the Japanese to never again take up arms at the end of World War II.

The strategic importance of Japan and the Ryukyus islands for the U.S. military could not be denied, and for all intensive purposes, the U.S. appeared to deem that holding on the island chain was of great importance for as long as there was need for U.S. bases.⁹⁷ Admiral U.S. Grant Sharp stated on December 10, 1965 "without Okinawa we couldn't continue fighting in Vietnam."⁹⁸ In April of 1966 a report was issued on the significance of U.S. military installations located within Japan: "in particular, it would be very difficult to fight the war in Southeast Asia without Yokosuka and Sasebo."⁹⁹ Strategically, the United States felt that it needed its bases in Japan, and the loss of the bases would give rise to an imbalance in the ability of the West to balance the spread of Communism.

The United States worked doggedly to persuade Japan to increase its defense and armament expenditures, but the Japanese government resisted the outside pressures for a number of reasons. In June of 1964, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara held a conversation with Mr. Fukuda, the Director General of the Japanese Defense agency. In their discussions McNamara expressed a desire for Japan to increase its military presence in the region, Fukuda replied that as a result of Article IX of the Japanese constitution and public opinion against militarization Japan, while it had made some strides with implementation of a police force, a security reserve, and a self defense force, would require a major legislative change in order to allow for a military force of the size the U.S. would like.¹⁰⁰

In addition, economically at least, Japan was better off with the United States providing security for the nation, and for not having to maintain its own military. On the downside, however, Japan was required to go along with whatever policy decisions the United States decided to dole out, or face the possibility of losing the main supplier of security for their nation. Despite the need that the United States expressed for Japan both logistically and diplomatically, the U.S. had rather harsh criticisms of Japan at times. In May of 1965, once it was clear that the U.S. intended to escalate the war in Vietnam, Ambassador Reischauer had this to say regarding the anti-war sentiments expressed by Japan:

"Such simplistic attitudes are possible in Japan because of the ostrich-like pacifism of the Japanese during the past twenty years. Reacting in shock against the horrors of the war they lost and safe behind the U.S. defense screen, they have refused to look realistically at the security problems of the world and have built up the myth that peace in Japan has been the product of their "peace constitution," not the U.S. defense posture in the Far East. Such attitudes make it possible for many of them to feel that in the present situation the presence of American military bases in Japan is a greater threat to Japan's continued peace than are Communist expansionism and intransigence."¹⁰¹

It would appear that Reischauer's criticisms do not take into account the previous era of anti-war sentiment expressed by the people of Japan and the conclusion of World War II, or the fact that the United States insisted upon the inclusion of article nine in the Japanese constitution. This criticism of Japan's anti-war stance was the first of many to emerge during the Vietnam War era.

Conclusion

The years after World War II and leading up to the Vietnam War saw the United States and Japan create a new relationship with the U.S. in the lead; however, the protest movements that erupted

throughout Japan had an effect upon the policies that the Japanese government enacted regarding U.S. demands during the early part of the Vietnam War. While initially Japan's public response to the U.S. lead war in Vietnam was slow, it eventually ignited a firestorm of criticisms from much of Japanese society. Japan's leadership found itself in a metaphorical vice with the United States on one side, and the people of Japan on the other, both attempting to force the leadership of Japan into its own desired mold. Writers and scholars, political and labor organizations, students and housewives, all were swept into the inferno of condemnation of the war. Their criticisms of the U.S. war in Vietnam, combined with the great number of incidents which occurred between the United States military's Japanese facilities, and the protestors had the power to sway the decisions of the Japanese government into resisting the demands of the United States.

Epilogue

While this might be presumptive of me as a budding Historian, I believe the importance of change and standing up for what a person believes is right cannot be overstated. The voice of one in amongst the din is almost unnoticeable, the voice of a few while still relatively weak is still often overlooked, but the voice of the many, brazen and in unison, cannot be ignored by those in power. There are lessons to be learned here from the power of the voice of the people, and these lessons extend up to the present day, in any conflict, in any place where many question the actions of a few. While singular we are weak, when we band together as a collective and call forth as one, our voices, given enough time and power, cannot be denied.

NOTES

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- ¹ John W. Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999) 43.
- ² *Ibid.*, 37.
- ³ *Ibid.*, 43.
- ⁴ Andrew Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press 2003) 226.
- ⁵ Dower 1999, 47.
- ⁶ Dower 1999, 45.
- ⁷ Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present* 2003, 227; T.R. *Master Kung* (New York: Random House, 1999) 48.
- ⁸ Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present* 2003, 229.
- ⁹ Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present* 2003, 226.
- ¹⁰ Dower 1999, 121.
- ¹¹ Dower 1999, 89; Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present* 2003, 229.
- ¹² Dower 1999, 87.
- ¹³ Dower 1999, 67.
- ¹⁴ Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present* 2003, 228.
- ¹⁵ Dower 1999, 90.
- ¹⁶ Dower 1999, 73; Walter LaFeber, *The Clash: U.S.-Japanese Relations Throughout History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company 1997) 263.
- ¹⁷ LaFeber 1997, 263-265.
- ¹⁸ Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present* 2003, 230.
- ¹⁹ Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present* 2003, 235.
- ²⁰ Dower 1999, 81.
- ²¹ McCain 2002, 537.
- ²² Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present* 2003, 234.
- ²³ McCain 2002, 539.
- ²⁴ Dower 1999, 75.
- ²⁵ LaFeber 1997, 257.
- ²⁶ Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present* 2003, 239-240.
- ²⁷ Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present* 2003, 229.
- ²⁸ Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present* 2003, 231.
- ²⁹ McCain 2002, 526.
- ³⁰ McCain 2002, 555.
- ³¹ LaFeber 1997, 282.
- ³² LaFeber 1997, 282.
- ³³ LaFeber 1997, 299.
- ³⁴ Jeffrey Kingston, *Japan in Transformation: 1952-2000* (Edinburgh Gate, England: Pearson Education Limited, 2001) 22.
- ³⁵ Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present* 2003, 240.
- ³⁶ Dower 1999, 45.
- ³⁷ LaFeber 1997, 303.
- ³⁸ LaFeber 1997, 294.

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- ³⁹ Gordon, A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present 2003, 241.
- ⁴⁰ McCain 2002, 557-558.
- ⁴¹ Kingston 2001, 135-136.
- ⁴² Alex Gibney, *The Pacific Century: Inside Japan Inc.* VHS, Produced by Jigsaw Productions. S. Burlington, VT: Annenberg/CPB Project., 1992.
- ⁴³ Gibney 1992; McCain 2002, 567-570.
- ⁴⁴ Andrew Gordon, ed. *Postwar Japan as History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993) 20.
- ⁴⁵ Akira Iriye, *Across the Pacific: An Inner History of American-East Asian Relations* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1967) 310-311.
- ⁴⁶ McCain 2002, 536, 567.
- ⁴⁷ Gibney 1992.
- ⁴⁸ George R. Packard, *Protest in Tokyo* (Rahway, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1966) 225-227.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 87.
- ⁵⁰ McCain 2002, 567.
- ⁵¹ Irena Powell, *Japanese Writer In Vietnam* (JSTOR February 1998) 222.
- ⁵² Thomas R. H. Havens, *Fire Across the Sea: The Vietnam War and Japan 1965-1975* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987) vii.
- ⁵³ "Japan Weighs Saigon Plea." *ProQuest Historical Newspapers The New York Times (1853 - 2004)*. (New York Times. May 13, 1964)
- ⁵⁴ Karen L. Gatz, Edward C. Keefer, United States Dept. of State, *Foreign Relations of The United States, 1964-1968. Volume XXIX, Part 2, Japan.* (Washington, D.C.: Department of State, 2006) 87.
- ⁵⁵ Marilyn B. Young, *The Vietnam Wars: 1945-1990* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1991) 118.
- ⁵⁶ Havens 1987, 22.
- ⁵⁷ American Assembly, *The United States and Japa.*, Edited by Herbert Passin. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1966) 79.
- ⁵⁸ Powell 1998, 223.
- ⁵⁹ Havens 1987, 35.
- ⁶⁰ Toyomasa Fuse, "Student Radicalism in Japan: A "Cultural Revolution"?" (JSTOR Vol. 13, No. 3 Comparative Education Review. October 1969) 326.
- ⁶¹ Michiya Shimbori, "Student Radicals in Japan." (JSTOR. Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Vol. 395. May 1971)
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- ⁶⁵ Powell 1998, 226.
- ⁶⁶ Havens 1987, 55,57.
- ⁶⁷ Powell 1998, 227.
- ⁶⁸ Havens 1987, 63.
- ⁶⁹ *Ibid.*,46.
- ⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 30.

- ⁷¹ American Assembly 1966, 80.
- ⁷² The New York Times 1965.
- ⁷³ FRUS 1964-1968, 26.
- ⁷⁴ Robert Trumbull, "*Okinawa B-52's Anger Japanese.*" (ProQuest Historical Newspapers The New York Times (1851-2004). August 1, 1965).
- ⁷⁵ Havens 1987, 76-77.
- ⁷⁶ Ibid., 78.
- ⁷⁷ American Assembly 1966, 81.
- ⁷⁸ FRUS 1964-1968, 2006, 39.
- ⁷⁹ Ibid., 44-45.
- ⁸⁰ Ibid., 45.
- ⁸¹ The New York Times 1966.
- ⁸² The New York Times 1965.
- ⁸³ Emerson Chapin, "*50 From Japanese Diet March To Protest Submarine's Visit.*" (ProQuest Historical Newspapers The New York Times (1851-2004). June 1, 1966)
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- ⁸⁵ The New York Times 1968.
- ⁸⁶ Shabecoff 1968.
- ⁸⁷ Gibney 1992; The New York Times 1965.
- ⁸⁸ Powell 1998, 223.
- ⁸⁹ LaFeber 1997, 331.
- ⁹⁰ The New York Times 1966.
- ⁹¹ St. John 1995, 671.
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- ⁹⁴ Kingston 2001, 61.
- ⁹⁵ "*FRUS 1961-63, Vol. XXI, China; Korea; Japan.*" United States State Department. 1996.
- ⁹⁶ FRUS 1964-1968, 3.
- ⁹⁷ Ibid., 15.
- ⁹⁸ Havens 1987, 85.
- ⁹⁹ Ibid., 87.
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- ¹⁰¹ Ibid., 87.

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