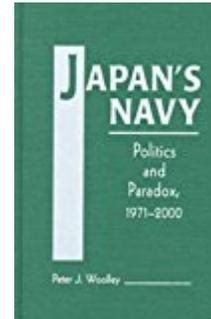




Peter J. Woolley. *Japan's Navy: Politics and Paradox, 1971-2000*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000. xviii + 165 pp. \$28.50 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-55587-819-1.



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Defining and Defending the National Interest

Defining and Defending the National Interest

Both as a title and as a concept, *Japan's Navy* is controversial by anyone's standards. For some, it evokes images of the misery wrought by Japan's armed forces in the earlier half of the twentieth century. For others, it sits uneasily with Japan's war-renouncing constitution, which declares that "war potential will never be maintained." For still others, it flies in the face of Japan's perceived unwillingness to engage in anything but "cheque-book defence," whereby Japan is seen to rely solely on the United States for the protection of its interests. Precisely because it addresses frontally these "cultural, legal and political hurdles encountered and overcome by the Japanese Government in growing [its maritime forces]," (p. xii) *Japan's Navy* is a particularly fitting title for this book.

Japan's Navy comprises a timely study of the development and activities of Japan's so-called Maritime Self-Defence Force, or the JMSDF, in the last three decades of the twentieth century. It was a period which saw Japan's role as a member of the international community expand

from that of a relatively quiescent junior partner of the United States, to that of an industrially advanced, democratic American partner in possession of a global reach. In that time, the MSDF undertook the protection of sea-lanes of communication (SLOCs) within 1,000 nautical miles of Japan; it dispatched mine sweepers to the Persian Gulf immediately after the end of the Gulf War in 1991; and it contributed to United Nations' peacekeeping operations in Cambodia, Mozambique, Kenya, Zaire, and the Golan Heights. Peter Woolley's discussion of the military and political decisions that underlay these enterprises is a useful corrective to the popular misconception that Japan's economy is the only reason underlying the nation's power.

Woolley has employed a variety of methodologies in analysing the emergence of the Japanese Navy from defeat in World War II. Chapter two examines the cultural dimensions of naval rearmament, paying particular attention to what Woolley describes as the "kata" behind the slow but steady rehabilitation of the JMSDF. He suggests the word "kata" implies "first, incremental growth

in capability; second, long practice; and, finally, the performance of a new mission and public acceptance of that mission.” (p. 24). In this connection, Woolley considers the JSMDF’s annual overseas dispatches, which began with its initial trip to Guam and Hawaii in 1957, and gradually expanded to include trips to Western Europe, the circumnavigation of South America, and visits to Africa. Chapter three analyses the legal/constitutional conundrum that has faced Japanese policymakers ever since the so-called MacArthur Constitution was promulgated in 1947. Delving into the original meaning of the clause in which the Japanese people “forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as a means of settling international disputes,” Woolley contends that its drafters always intended it to be “subject to interpretation, elaboration, detailed articulation, and change.” (p. 46) At the same time, he recognises that Article Nine has struck a chord with the Japanese people, thereby providing a real and lasting constraint on Japanese policymakers.

Chapter four is an examination of Japan’s commitment to help defend 1,000 miles of sea-lanes radiating from Tokyo. Analysing the “pulling and hauling that is politics” in Japan, Woolley traces Japan’s sea-lane defence to its intellectual beginnings in the 1960s, when United States President Richard Nixon sought a more equitable sharing of the defence burden with Japan (p. 65). He discusses the vision of defence commentator Sekino Hideo, who throughout the 1970s argued that Japan’s sea-lane defence ought to be acceptable to not only factions within the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, but also to Japan’s alliance partner, the United States. Woolley asserts that the threads were picked up in the 1980s by Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro, who urged both the modernisation of Japan’s fleet, and its assumption of an expanded role in the Pacific.

In Chapter five, Woolley considers the Persian Gulf War of 1991, and Japan’s role in that conflict. Woolley characterises the decision to deploy JMSDF in the Gulf in April 1991 as a “drastic change in Japan’s policy.” Dismissing both critics and apologists of Japanese policy in the early ’90s, Woolley asserts that, “the Japanese Government had sent minesweepers to the Persian Gulf because minesweeping was a routinized task, and among the organisational responses available to Japan this one was well prepared by both the [Japan Defence Agency] and the JMSDF” (p. 97). In support of this notion, he traces Japanese minesweeping missions back to the Ko-

rean War of 1950-53, and argues that Japan’s policy responses were predictable insofar as they were within the predictable range of organisational routines.

Chapter Six is an examination of Japan’s contribution to United Nations’ peacekeeping operations. Woolley contends that by the end of the Cold War Japan’s stake in the economic status quo of the world order gave it both the interest and the capacity to contribute to the “defence of the international security of a peaceful, free-trading world order” (p. 111). Over the course of the 1990s, Japan contributed to peacekeeping operations throughout Asia and Africa, signalling that it “would continue to expand its geographic scope and build a record of success” (p. 126). The final chapter considers Japan’s Navy as an important leg of the Japanese-American partnership that has evolved over the postwar era. Woolley contends that “the US Navy never really let the Japanese navy die, but resuscitated, nurtured, made use of, and encouraged the rebirth of Japan’s maritime forces” (p. 133). Naval co-operation between Japan’s navy and that of the post-Cold War’s sole superpower has served both nations’ interests, which have coincided with the general peace and stability of the Pacific area.

In sum, in adopting a variety of methodologies in his exploration of Japan’s post-WWII naval rearmament, Woolley has provided a useful overall analysis of one of the world’s strongest navies. The book’s strength, though, is also its greatest weakness. Woolley’s chapter-by-chapter approach leaves the reader at times critically short on details. In other words, *Japan’s Navy* teaches a number of important lessons—that the JMSDF is indeed a first class navy; that Japan’s Constitution provides no real barriers to continued Japanese rearmament; and that bureaucratic wrangling within the Japanese Government has played an important role in the ever-widening scope of activities assumed by the JSMDF—without, however, providing the detail that such lessons demand. The reader is left itching for more. That criticism aside, *Japan’s Navy* ought to provide students of Japan’s postwar rearmament with a necessary starting point for many years to come.

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