

**AXEL BERKOFISKY**

# **A Pacifist Constitution for An Armed Empire**

**Past and Present of Japanese Security  
and Defence Policies**



**CENTRO STUDI PER I POPOLI EXTRAEUROPEI  
CESARE BONACOSSA  
DELL'UNIVERSITÀ DI PAVIA**

**FrancoAngeli**

La collana storica del Centro studi per i popoli extraeuropei pubblica monografie di storia moderna e contemporanea relative alle aree culturali afroasiatiche. Essa mira a coprire un terreno che si colloca tra l'orientalistica e africanistica tradizionali e gli studi di politica e di sociologia riferiti alla realtà attuale. Tale terreno era, fino a qualche decennio fa, abbandonato alla storiografia cosiddetta coloniale. La prospettiva marcatamente eurocentrica da cui questa si pone ne fa uno strumento scarsamente utile per la comprensione delle trasformazioni in atto nelle società asiatiche ed africane investite dal processo di modernizzazione. La Collana storica del Centro studi per i popoli extraeuropei mira a fornire tale strumento, in armonia con gli scopi statutari del Centro stesso. Quella in corso di pubblicazione è la terza serie della Collana. Le due serie precedenti comprendevano 16 titoli.

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*In copertina:* Douglas MacArthur, Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in Japan, is accompanied by Fleet Admiral Chester Nimitz, Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Pacific Fleet as he walks up the deck of the USS Missouri before the opening of the ceremony in which Japan unconditionally surrendered (September 3, 1945) (© Kibbe Museum, Hancock County, Illinois, USA)

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*In Memory of my Father. His support, affection and inspiration always made a difference when I took some of those bumpy roads less travelled by.*



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I dedicate this book to my father. He was there with good advice, support and affection when it mattered and I could not have had a better and more caring father. He went far too early, but I have the feeling that a part of him will always be with me and he might have liked to see me turning to be a lot like him. He is greatly missed and Silvia and I regret that he did not have a chance to get to know our two insanelly cute daughters Caterina and Claudia.

## *Presentation*

by Dr. Giovanna Mazzocchi, President Domus Editoriale, Milan

I have graduated from Pavia University, one of Europe's most prestigious and historic universities. Apart from having educated numerous globally well-known alumni, the university has a tradition of being committed to establish and maintain strong and sustainable ties between the teaching staff and the students.

During my professional career I have always sought to continue to follow the activities initiated and conducted by the university's Faculty of Political Sciences and have hence with great enthusiasm endorsed the proposal made by the faculty's then Dean Professor Fabio Rugge – with whom I maintain a year – long and warm friendship – to follow the example of other major international prestigious universities to establish a privately financed chair – the first one not only in Pavia but also in the whole of Italy.

It is with great pride that I named the chair after my late father, Gianni Mazzocchi, a particularly innovative editor and publisher, always ahead of his time. He e.g. introduced the first major post-World War Italian magazines such as 'L'Europeo' ('The European') and 'Il Mondo' ('The World'), in addition to Italy's first real consumer magazines 'Quattroruote' and 'Quattrosoldi'.

A man of culture, my father always sought to promote the understanding and exchanges between nations, in his view the only way to reduce and ideally eliminate further conflicts and war. Paying homage to my father's intellectual and idealistic heritage, it was with great enthusiasm that I have accepted the proposal presented to me by Professor Rugge and Professor Silvio Beretta to establish an 'Asian Studies' ('Studi dell'Asia') chair, assigned to Japan and China scholar Professor Axel Berkofsky.

Following my father's convictions that the Asian continent will be at the center of global economics and also politics in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in-depth research and knowledge becomes more and more indispensable. Against this



background I would like to congratulate and warmly thank Axel Berkofsky for this extremely useful and academically relevant book on past and present Japanese foreign and security policies written during his two-year assignment as 'Gianni Mazzocchi Fellow' at the faculty of Political Sciences at the University of Pavia.

## *Preface*

by Professor Carlo Filippini, Bocconi University, Milan

Japan's 1946 post-war constitution is unique as the second paragraph of Article 9 prohibits the country to maintain armed forces; the war-renouncing article's first paragraph is much less controversial: renouncing war is enshrined in a few other constitutions – including the Italian one – adopted after WWII. An extreme interpretation of the article suggests that Japan gave up the right to defend its national territory, a universally acknowledged fundamental right, which international law assigns to all countries.

The research and debate in Japan on Japanese security and defence policies have been often influenced and shaped by a wide range of political ideologies and actors coming to at times very different conclusions why or why not Japan should be a pacifist country with pacifist security and defence policies. Axel Berkofsky's book on the origin and very controversial US-driven birth of the Japanese constitution and its relevance in Japan's current defence and security policies is therefore a very topical and relevant contribution.

The book is divided into two parts: in the first one the author – supported by numerous and relevant sources – explains how and why the occupying US or, more precisely, its 'Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces' ('SCAP'), General Douglas MacArthur, was able to impose democracy onto the country, dethroning the 'divine' Emperor without practically any opposition from the Japanese people. Ironically, or indeed sadly from a democratic point of view – as Berkofsky points out – Japan adopted what John Dower refers to as 'imperial democracy' when the by then de-facto dethroned Japanese Emperor Hirohito was given the mandate to 'order' the Japanese people to endorse democracy. Indeed, Berkofsky concludes, the 'Imperial Rescript' of 1946 introduced a sort of 'Imperial Democracy' into Japan. This in turn – the author refers to the Japan scholar Glenn Hook – left a mark on Japan's democratic legitimacy ever since. While Japan is without any doubt a very stable, well-functioning and prosperous democracy, the country's democratic foundations and its ability and will to better come to terms with its colonial and

imperial past would probably be stronger and consolidated if the Japanese people had been given the chance to develop their own constitution without what Berkofsky calls 'US-guided democracy', saving the Emperor and his family from the certain incrimination as criminals of war.

At the same time, however, it is hard to imagine that democracy was an 'alien' concept in Japan's culture and society before 1945. The 'tatemaehonne' dichotomy might help to understand why Japan was able to endorse and support its transformation from a militaristic to a democratic country.

Referring to some of Japan's post-war intellectuals and writers who argued that democracy in Japan came too 'easily' and without much efforts and sacrifice by the Japanese people, the country's democratic foundations and the peoples' participation and interest in day-to-day politics – the author argues – could have been stronger if the Japanese people had been forced to rely on more than only American guidance and determination to make a democratic, war-renouncing and eventually 'obedient' US ally out of Japan. Indeed, Japan's post-war intellectuals mocked the country's (more or less) conscious decision to embrace defeat and US occupation unconditionally and without any resistance to speak of.

Only a few years after the adoption of the country's war-renouncing constitution – the author elaborates – Japan and USA decided to forego pacifism, created Japan's 'Self-Defence Forces' ('JSDF'), re-confirmed and strengthened the military alliance between Washington and its officially pacifist junior partner, and turned Japan into an 'unsinkable aircraft carrier' prepared to host and co-finance the American military on Japanese territory indefinitely. To be sure, the geopolitical environment in the 1950 was indeed very different from the idealistic and rather naïve vision of world peace and cooperation the Western Allied powers envisioned in the early post-war years.

While the Japanese people were seemingly prepared to forever live in a quasi 'one-party democracy' with the 'Liberal-Democratic Party' ('LDP') ruling from 1955 to 2009 with essentially no interruption, Japan again found itself 'bandwagoning' in international relations, this time however with the 'winning side', at the price of leaving its defence and security policy strategies up to Washington. This – as the author elaborates in the second part of his book – was to cost Tokyo dearly. Accused of conducting 'cheque-book diplomacy', leaving the actual fighting to the other members of the US-led multinational coalition to liberate Kuwait from Saddam Hussein in 1990/1991, Japan was de-facto obliged to co-finance the coalition with \$13 billion. Ironically, Tokyo was accused of not participating in a war by the very country that imposed a war-renouncing constitution onto it in 1946.

Japan's very recent and eventually unsuccessful attempt (in 2009 and 2010) to rebalance the asymmetrical alliance with Washington and reduce the American military footprint and presence on its soil by seeking to re-negotiate a 2006 US-Japan base relocation agreement – the author concludes – again and indeed further cemented Japan's junior partner status in its alliance with the United States.

Despite all revisionist efforts initiated and driven by the popular former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi (2001-2006) and his short-lived successor Shinzo Abe (2006-2007) who introduced the so-called 'National Referendum Law' in 2007 in an attempt to create the legal and instrumental basis to revise the constitution, Japan's post-war constitution remains unrevised until today. In fact, the technical hurdles, not to mention the political ones, to revise the constitution will continue to remain in place and, contrary to what the international media has been suggesting in the recent years, nothing will change about that anytime soon.

In other words, Japan will continue to remain a pacifist country, at least on paper. Mainly thanks to former Prime Minister Koizumi – Berkofsky argues in the second part of the book – today this is arguably true on paper and paper only. Indeed Japan and its armed forces are doing almost everything other non-pacifist and 'normal' countries do as regards security and defence. Announced and implemented by Koizumi at that time, Japan e.g. became what the former Prime Minister called an 'unconditional supporter' of the American 'war on terrorism', deployed its navy to the Indian Ocean in 2001 and ground troops to Iraq in 2004. Furthermore, since 2009 Japan has been fighting pirates in the Gulf of Aden and off the coast of Somalia while spending almost \$50 billion on defence annually.

The '3/11' emergencies in Japan, i.e. the March 11, 2011 earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear crisis, have raised the domestic and international standing of Japan's armed forces: the speed, efficiency, and number of the personnel involved into the disaster relief operations came as a surprise to many observers. Japan's armed forces, it turned out, were very well prepared to deal with the natural disaster, which hit the country in 2011. Over the last decades, Japan rose as a world power, albeit to an economic one only, spending just one per cent of its GDP on defence, enjoying the protection of the USA so-called 'nuclear umbrella'. The re-emergence of an increasingly nationalist and military rapidly growing China and the increasingly unpredictable behaviour of North Korea, in a period of relative American decline, has further compelled the country to return to 'normality' as regards its defence and security policies.

Given Axel Berkofsky's qualifications, his previous research and teaching appointments in London, Tokyo, Brussels and Milan – not to mention the many languages he can master – it is 'normal' (an important term in his book) to conclude that this work makes a contribution of great significance to the topic of past and present Japanese security and defence policies. The book provides the reader with a very detailed and informative analysis of the security and defence policies of Japan and the wealth of well-researched analysis and data is impressive. This book is an essential reference for scholars, experts, and political decision-makers working on and interested in Japan.