

Miller The National Police Reserve, Democracy and Military Power in the Early Cold War

研究会記録

The National Police Reserve, Democracy and Military Power in the Early Cold War¹

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In the early 1950s, U.S. occupation policy in Japan underwent a seemingly radical shift. Since 1945, the occupation authorities had emphasized democratization and demilitarization, innately arguing that Japanese democracy required the eschewal of military power and the purging of military leaders, which American authorities firmly blamed for the violence and aggression of World War II. This postwar commitment against military forces was most famously articulated in Article 9 of the Japanese constitution, which outlawed war and military forces as a legitimate expression of state power. Yet with the creation of the National Police Reserve in July 1950, U.S. civilian and military officials elevated the rebuilding of Japanese defensive forces as a vital goal in the U.S.-Japanese alliance. Only five years removed from World War II, the United States began to provide weapons, funding, and personnel to rearm its former enemy. As Commander in Chief Far East (CINCFE) Matthew Ridgway asserted in December 1951, “The importance of creating at the earliest possible moment consistent with its political feasibility a well equipped, well organized, properly motivated Japanese Ground Force with fighting spirit and ability equivalent to that displayed by Japanese Forces in World War II – is to my mind presently paramount over any other long range project in the Far East.”²

Yet the development of the postwar Japanese military has received little attention in English-language histories of the U.S. occupation of Japan, the U.S.-Japanese alliance, or U.S. policy in East Asia.³ Instead, both historians and

¹ Do not cite or circulate without permission from the author.

² Commander in Chief Far East (Ridgway) to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, December 21, 1951. RG 218 Records of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Geographic File, 1951 – 1953, Folder: CCS 383.21 Japan (3-13-45) Sec. 27, Box 27. National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland [hereafter NARA].

³ While studies of postwar U.S.-Japanese relations often do discuss American and Japanese negotiations and debates over rearmament, they offer little on the institutional development of the NPR or its successors. See, for example, John Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake*

political scientists have emphasized Japanese pacifism, a long-standing legacy of the violence of World War II, the experience of the atomic bombing, and the occupation authorities' emphasis on demilitarization. When it is discussed, the United States' decision to create the National Police reserve (NPR)—an internal security force and the nucleus of a nascent Japanese military—is often framed as a turn away from Japanese democracy in the interest of building a firm security apparatus in Japan and stabilizing Japan as an important Cold War ally.

As this talk will argue, however, the United States' approach to the remilitarization of Japan was not simply a shift away from democracy towards privileging security. Rather, it reflected a complex transformation in American thinking about the relationship between democratic political systems and military power, which historians have not yet fully explored. During World War II and especially the early Cold War, many Americans had come to fear that the openness, diversity, and free speech inherent to democratic systems were a serious weakness against a mobilized, expansive, and totalitarian enemy.⁴ In the words of Paul Nitze, director of Policy Planning in the State Department, free societies had to overcome their natural vulnerabilities by mobilizing the people around an “inclusive” sense of “unity, confidence and common purpose.”⁵ Democracy therefore required not just representative political institutions, elections, and the protecting of rights such as free speech. It required specific mentalities and values, in particular popular resolve and

of World War II (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999); Michael Schaller, *Altered States: Japan and the United States Since the Occupation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997) and *The American Occupation of Japan: The Origins of the Cold War in Asia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); and John Swenson-Wright, *Unequal Allies?: United States Security and Alliance Policy Towards Japan, 1945 – 1960* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005). One exception is the recent work of Thomas French, which focuses explicitly on the creation and development of the National Police Reserve. However, he argues against the use of the terms “military” or “rearmament” to describe the NPR and instead describes it as a constabulary force focused on internal security. While it is true that the NPR was focused on internal security, which served as the prime rationale behind the force for many members of the Japanese government, many U.S. policymakers and military leaders envisioned the NPR as the foundation of a future Japanese military, highlighting the different visions that shaped this force from its inception. See Thomas French, “Contested Rearmament: The National Police Reserve and Japan’s Cold War(s)” in *Japanese Studies* 34(1): 25-36.

⁴ See also Ira Katznelson, *Fear Itself: The New Deal and the Origins of Our Time* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2013) and James T. Sparrow, *Warfare State: World War II Americans and the Age of Big Government* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

⁵ National Security Council, NSC-68, April 14, 1950, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1950* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1977), 1:255.

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a deep faith in democratic values. American leaders such as President Truman, Secretary of State George Marshall, Secretary of State Dean Acheson, and General Omar Bradley therefore increasingly elevated military training and service—at home and abroad—as key to fostering social unity, confidence, and vigor, as a venue to develop the mental and psychological strength necessary to the survival of democratic values and the democratic state.⁶

Crucially, this transformation was not limited to the United States. In ways that scholars have not recognized, policymakers also looked abroad, taking a similar approach in a newly democratic Japan. Against Japanese popular calls for neutralism and pacifism in a divided and wartorn Asia, U.S. policymakers fixated on the NPR as a site to not only expand Japanese defensive power and foster Japan's commitment to the U.S.-Japanese alliance, but also to strengthen Japanese democracy against internal weakness, both physically and psychologically. They increasingly argued that the NPR could provide the discipline, leadership, and vigor necessary to securing democracy in Japan. In the process, they increasingly turned to the experiences and personnel of Japan's wartime military as key to building spirit, unity and confidence in postwar Japan. Changing ideas about democracy, then, did not simply operate as a barrier to the expansion of Japanese defensive power; they also served as a rationale to expand Japanese forces and even helped rehabilitate Japan's wartime military in the eyes of Americans.

Today's talk will therefore have two parts. First I will examine American policymakers' view of the changing relationship between democracy and military power in the early Cold War, especially the belief that the military was key to the internal strength and confidence of democratic societies. Second, I will analyse how these ideas reached Japan in the form of the development and expansion of the

⁶ This theme was clear in postwar American debates over Universal Military Training. See William A. Taylor, *Every Citizen a Soldier: The U.S. Army's Campaign for Universal Military Training Following World War II* (PhD Dissertation: George Washington University, 2010) and Michael Hogan, *A Cross of Iron: Harry S. Truman and the Origins of the National Security State* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 119 – 158. In advocating for increased military assistance overseas, in both Europe and Asia, government officials emphasized that military power was key to building morale, confidence, and anti-Communist psychological strength. See Chester Pach, *Arming the Free World: The Origins of the United States Military Assistance Program, 1945 – 1950* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 198 – 122. See also Military Assistance Program, Joint Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations and the Committee on Armed Services, United States Senate, Eight-First Congress, August 1949 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1949), 6 - 13.

National Police Reserve in the early 1950s. This talk therefore seeks to examine how Japan both reflected and shaped the ways that U.S. policymakers thought about democracy and Cold War diplomacy.

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Although the initial decision to create the NPR was a direct product of the Cold War, specifically the start of war in Korea, it reflected a broader transformation in American thinking about politics and security. For decades prior to the 1940s, Americans were deeply suspicious of the military's anti-democratic potential. With its hierarchy, focus on obedience, and its high costs, many believed that maintaining a large standing army had could undermine American freedom and weaken the fabric of democracy. In the aftermath of large-scale wars, such as the Civil War and World War I, the United States quickly demobilized; maintaining a large standing army was believed to be unnecessary and anti-democratic.

Yet in the middle of the twentieth century, the experience of unprecedented international aggression, large-scale national mobilization, and a global war waged on multiple fronts challenges these suspicions of the military's corruptive influence. Historian James Sparrow notes that during World War II, the United States rapidly "departed from some of its longest and most dearly held political traditions" particularly with the 1940 inauguration of a peacetime draft, which continued into the postwar era with only slight interruptions.⁷ World War II changed understandings of military power in part by making military experience widespread. The citizen-soldier GI became a cultural touchstone that embodied the highest form of democratic citizenship, an understanding enshrined after the war through preferential programs like the GI bill.⁸ Moreover, though the U.S. military remained racially segregated during the war, wartime military service served as an integrative experience for previously marginalized groups, especially Jewish soldiers.⁹ The military thus also seemed to embody democracy's capabilities for social progress, a narrative further perpetuated by the integration of African-Americans into the military in the late

⁷ James Sparrow, *Warfare State: Americans and the Age of Big Government* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 5.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 240-241.

⁹ See Deborah Dash Moore, *GI Jews: How World War II Changed a Generation* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2004) and Jeremi Suri, *Henry Kissinger and the American Century* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2007), 52-91.

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1940s.¹⁰ Finally, the sudden attack at Pearl Harbor proved the need for military readiness: in the next war, the United States might not have time to train and deploy military forces.

As a consequence, World War II fostered a new interest in Universal Military Training (which quickly became known for its acronym, UMT) as the key to efficient national defense in an era of total war. In 1943, the Army first proposed a program of universal training that required a year of military training, followed by membership in a citizen reserve army.¹¹ Leading policymakers and military leaders, such as Secretary of War Henry Stimson, General George Marshall, and Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy, all became fierce advocates for UMT. In contrast to the United States' historical aversion to a large standing army, UMT supporters argued that only widespread military training could instill the skills and preparedness necessary to quickly defend the United States in a total war. In the summer of 1945, President Harry S. Truman himself began to advocate for UMT, sparking three years of fierce political debates about the role of military power in a democratic state.

In particular, civilian and military advocates of UMT argued that the program offered a uniquely democratic solution to the pressures of total mobilization by disseminating democratic values and inculcating a deeper and wider commitment to active citizenship. As a 1945 War Department Pamphlet argued, a military trainee had acquired the valuable ability "to adjust himself socially to the personalities of people with diverse backgrounds [which] has made him more tolerant and understanding. He has learned to assume responsibility and exercise leadership. He has had an experience in democracy...He should be proud, for he is a responsible citizen now, prepared to defend his country if ever the need arises."¹² Military leaders, though they regularly cited UMT's defense benefits, particularly the deterrent value of rapid mobilization, also celebrated the program's democratic benefits. In an August 1944 circular explaining why the War Department sought UMT, General George Marshall asserted that UMT represented the American democratic tradition of "full

¹⁰ On the Cold War-era framing of American race relations as a story of democratic progress, see Mary Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 47-78.

¹¹ William Taylor, *Every Citizen a Soldier: The U.S. Army's Campaign for Universal Military Training Following World War II* (PhD Dissertation: George Washington University, 2010), xii.

¹² Quoted in Taylor, *Every Citizen a Soldier* xxvi.

civic participation in defense.”¹³ Through widespread participation, UMT would allow talent to rise to the fore, a system that reflected a democratic government based on popular consent. In doing so, it would mitigate the development of an isolated, professional, narrow-minded military class. In his 1944 circular, Marshall argued that an army dominated by a professional caste of officers had “no adequate provision for developing the latent military leadership and genius of the people as a whole.” In contrast, through UMT, “all citizen soldiers after their initial training are encouraged to develop their capacity for leadership to such an extent as may be consistent with their abilities, their tastes, and their civic obligations.”¹⁴

More than anyone, President Truman struck this note of democratic education in his enthusiastic and vocal advocacy for UMT. Through UMT, he argued in June 1945, the United States would build “a real democratic army, a real citizen army, which could be continually trained in the ideals of a republican form of government.”¹⁵ UMT would train young bodies and minds in the ways of democracy; as Truman argued, great republics like Greece and Rome had collapsed when “their peoples became fat and prosperous and lazy.”¹⁶ Advocates of UMT thus emphasized its universal nature, its ability to foster a “disciplined and virtuous citizenry.”¹⁷ They celebrated the military’s capacity to call forth latent democratic leaders, and its ability to widely disseminate the active commitment to republican values necessary to preventing the rise of militarism or democratic collapse under the pressures of total war.

Moreover, Truman’s call for physical and spiritual stamina as the key to protecting democratic societies was echoed by other leading policymakers, including those who worked closely with Japan. In his 1950 book *War or Peace*, John Foster Dulles argued that societies had to mobilize to protect peace the same way they mobilized for war. In talking about mobilization, Dulles did not concentrate on economic, military or strategic resources but rather “the potentialities, particularly the moral and spiritual potentialities, which we usually reserve for war... The political leaders of the so-called ‘democratic’ nations, who depend on popular choice, seldom try

¹³ Ibid., 48.

¹⁴ Quoted in Ibid., 49-50.

¹⁵ Quoted in Ibid., 149.

¹⁶ Michael Hogan, *A Cross of Iron: Harry S. Truman and the Origins of the National Security State* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 135.

¹⁷ Ibid., 134.

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to develop moral power and a sacrificial spirit until war is upon them and when the task is no longer one of averting war but one of winning it. If this time we wait that long, we shall have waited too long.”¹⁸

This changing role of the military stemmed, in part, from growing fears about democratic weaknesses in the Cold War. American leaders and policymakers increasingly asserted that the Cold War did not just raise the threat of external communist aggression. Equally potent was the fear that democratic societies would collapse under the strain of resisting communism, whether due to Communist infiltration or to a lack of popular resolve and commitment to the democratic state. Nothing represented this fear more clearly than the famous doctrine outlined by the National Security Council in a document called NSC-68, written in the fall of 1949. Principally written by Paul Nitze, director of the State Department Policy Planning Staff, NSC-68 boldly proclaimed that “the integrity and vitality of our system is in greater jeopardy than ever before in our history.”¹⁹ It claimed that the United States had to engage in a military struggle across the globe and dramatically expand “free world” military capabilities, including an expansive military buildup within the United States.

Yet despite this call for overwhelming military strength, the National Security Council ultimately defined the Cold War as a clash of opposing values, where victory was dependent on morale and spiritual resolve. The strength of “free societies” relied not just on military might, but on citizens’ commitment to democracy. Democracy, however, was in a disadvantage in this clash. “The democratic way,” Nitze mused, “is harder than the authoritarian way because, in seeking to protect and fulfill the individual, it demands of him understanding, judgment and positive participation in the increasingly complex and exacting problems of the modern world...A free society is vulnerable in that it is easy for people to lapse into excess... the excess of tolerance degenerates into indulgence of conspiracy and the excess of resorting to suppression when more moderate measures are not only more appropriate but more effective.”²⁰ Throughout NSC-68, the call for expanded military power was deeply tied to

¹⁸ John Foster Dulles, *War or Peace* (New York: MacMillan, 1950), 4, 248.

¹⁹ National Security Council, NSC-68, April 14, 1950, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1950* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1977), 1:262.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 254-255.

democratic states' need to constantly discipline mobilize their peoples' minds and morale.

Within the United States, then, the UMT discussion represented a broader belief that the military was becoming a key institution through which the United States could build the popular resolve necessary to protecting the democratic state. Though UMT failed to pass through Congress due to fears that it would spark militarism, Congress instead passed the Selective Service Act in June 1948, establishing the United States' long-standing program of peacetime conscription. Though not as drastic as UMT, selective service was still a radical break with previous traditions. It was premised on similar ideas, especially the belief that military service was an integral component of male democratic citizenship and the need for rapid mobilization capabilities in the Cold War. Selective Service highlighted that the creation of the national security state was not simply about expanding the United States' military capabilities, but also about forging a society that could engage in—and resist the pressures of—a constant battle.

The UMT vision of a democratizing military was not confined to the United States. Rather, it shaped U.S. policymakers' approach to defense and security across the globe. In particular, these ideas manifested in the discussion over international military assistance that began after the end of World War II, part of a broader attempt to create societies capable of resisting Communist incursion. A key turning point in this policy was the decision to offer aid to Greece and Turkey in 1947, explained through Truman's March 12, 1947 address to Congress. Drawing a strong rhetorical contrast between the Free World and totalitarianism, the so-called Truman Doctrine explicitly committed the United States to a policy of supporting "free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures."²¹ Such statements translated into massive economic and military foreign commitments such as the Marshall Plan and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). In October 1949, the United States expanded its military efforts even further, when Congress passed the Mutual Defense Assistance Act (MDAA), which inaugurated a large-scale program of military assistance premised on the principle of "self-help and mutual

²¹ Harry S. Truman, Address to a Joint Session of Congress (Truman Doctrine Speech), March 12, 1947, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/trudoc.asp.

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aid.”²² MDAA offered 1.314 billion dollars of military assistance to thirteen countries; this program continued into the Eisenhower administration and was ultimately extended to over forty countries.²³

The creation of NATO, MDAA and similar organizations and programs was of course deeply tied to economic and geostrategic calculations, especially preventing Soviet control over industrial and strategic centers. But as with UMT, a vital strand of argument highlighted the necessity of military power to building confident, vigorous societies mobilized around a spirit of Cold War sacrifice. For example, looking at France in the late 1940s, Secretary of State George Marshall argued that the United States should not provide much-needed heavy armaments but rather small arms; weapons that people could “put in their hands” would do far more to create “the spirit and will of resistance.”²⁴ In testimony advocating for military assistance funding at joint hearings held by the Senate Committees on Foreign Relations and Armed Services in August 1949, Secretary of State Dean Acheson argued that countries like France and even formerly fascist Italy demonstrated that “if strength in the hands of democratic governments is resolutely and wisely used, they can prevent aggressive Communist minorities from seizing power by force.”²⁵ Speaking for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Omar Bradley reiterated Acheson’s claims that defensive military power would solidify spiritual and psychological strength in Europe. “In our visit we were everywhere heartened by the strong resurgence of spirit and morale that United States aid and encouragement have fostered. The nations of Western Europe are on the uptrend. They have hope. They are working. Arms aid, by adding to their strength, will add to their confidence and will hasten the day when we may see a world united in striving for peace.”²⁶

This emphasis on military assistance’s ability to create vigorous societies and

²² See Harry S. Truman, “Statement by the President Upon Issuing Order Providing for the Administration of the Mutual Defense Assistance Act,” January 27, 1950. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=13590>.

²³ Zoltan Barany, *The Soldier and the Changing State: Building Democratic Armies in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 52.

²⁴ Quoted in Chester J. Pach, *Arming the Free World: The Origins of the United States Military Assistance Programs* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 202.

²⁵ Military Assistance Program, Joint Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations and the Committee on Armed Services, United States Senate, Eight-First Congress, August 1949 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1949), 13.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 91.

boost popular morale was not limited to Europe. If anything, it was becoming even more important in Asia, especially after the Chinese Communist victory in 1949. U.S. policymakers turned increased attention to Asia, and began investing in aid and military assistance in a desperate effort to contain Communist expansion. While historians have paid much attention to such economic aid and “development” projects, the American focus on creating vigorous and stable societies in Asia also relied heavily on military assistance.²⁷ Korea received aid under the 1949 Mutual Defense Assistance Act; after the start of the Korean War in 1950, the United States expanded military assistance to countries like Taiwan, Vietnam, the Philippines, and Indonesia.

To be sure, U.S. leaders were well aware that not all these countries were flourishing democracies. They knew that many of these leaders, such as Taiwan’s Jiang Jieshi and South Korea’s Syngman Rhee were autocrats and dictators, even as they spoke of their commitment to the so-called Free World. Yet military assistance to Asia was not simply a question of deterrence through defense strength. In their conviction that anti-Communism required the mobilization of entire populations, U.S. leaders envisioned military training as a site to build morale, vigor, and confidence in newly independent Asian states. Writing about Indonesia, which became independent from the Dutch in December 1949, Bradley Simpson notes that the U.S. military began training and assisting Indonesia security forces in August 1950, a process that assumed great “importance as a means of transmitting ideas and influence [and] reinforced the proclivity of Indonesian armed forces officers to envision themselves as guardians of political order...”²⁸ At the beginning of the Cold War, then, American policymakers developed an expanded sense of the military’s importance as a social and political organization. As the Cold War increasingly became a global phenomenon, especially in Asia, they were eager to export their vision to new nations and continents.

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In was in this context—intense debates over the relationship between

²⁷ See, for example, Nick Cullather, *The Hungry World: America’s Cold War Battle Against Poverty in Asia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013); David Ekbladh, *The Great American Mission: Modernization and the Construction of an American World Order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011); Daniel Immerwahr, *Thinking Small: the United States and the Lure of Community Development* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014).

²⁸ Bradley Simpson, *Economists with Guns: Authoritarian Development and U.S.-Indonesian Relations, 1960 – 1968* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 32 - 33.

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democracy and military power, a new American commitment to building military strength overseas, and a belief in the need to foster vigorous anti-communist allies—that U.S. policymakers began to consider Japanese rearmament. Rather than a demilitarized and neutralized state, they believed that a strong, revitalized Japan, closely allied with the United States, could play a central role in building U.S. Cold War security and anti-Communist hegemony in the Pacific.

Yet like the fears raised in NSC 68, American policymakers increasingly worried that Japan was haunted by the specter of internal subversion and democratic collapse. Indeed, by the late 1940s, U.S. policymakers believed that the key threat to Japanese democracy was not an active Soviet invasion. Rather, following several years of vigorous Japanese labor activism, to which the Occupation authorities and the Japanese government responded with series of anti-Communist purges, U.S. policymakers identified internal subversion as the key threat to Japan.

In the event that the present world situation continues much as at present, the denial of Japan to the USSR constitutes a problem of combatting, not overt attack and invasion, but concealed aggression. The threat to Japan in these circumstances comes from agitation, subversion, and coup d'etat. The threat is that of a conspiracy inspired by the Kremlin, but conducted by Japanese. It is essentially a conspiracy from within—and whether it succeeds depends primarily on the political, economic and social health of Japan itself.²⁹

In negotiating the peace treaty, then, policymakers like John Foster Dulles regularly emphasized the future of peace and democracy in Japan required not simply anti-communist security arrangements, but “a healthy and vigorous Japanese society.”³⁰ As in the United States, the future of democracy in Japan required constant vigor, commitment, and popular resolve.

As part of early discussions about ending the occupation in the late 1940s, U.S.

²⁹ “Department of State Comments on Current Strategic Evaluation of U.S. Security Needs in Japan (NSC 49),” September 30, 1949 in Hiroshi Masuda, ed., *Rearmament of Japan Part 1, 1947 – 1952* [Microfiche Collection] (Congressional Information Service, 1998), Document no. 1-A-119.

³⁰ John Foster Dulles, “Peace May be Won,” February 2, 1951. *State Department Bulletin* 24 (February 12, 1951), 252-253.

policymakers also began to discuss rearmament as a necessary element of securing an independent Japan. Reflecting the growing relationship between democracy and military power, both opponents and proponents of rearmament cast their argument in terms of protecting, maintaining, and invigorating Japanese democracy. Members of the State Department, for example, cautioned against Japanese rearmament, claiming that the risk of resurrecting wartime militarism imbued rearmament with the potential to completely destroy the “healthy” Japanese society so necessary to building a strong U.S.-Japanese alliance and resisting totalitarian infiltration from the right and the left. Early supporters of rearmament, especially in the U.S. Army, therefore cast their advocacy in similar terms. Rearmament, they claimed, would foster unity and morale through the “revival of national prestige.”³¹ It could actually *dilute* the power of wartime militarism by assuring that remilitarization would be channeled in support of democratic values, U.S. hegemony, and international stability, which they took to be synonymous.³² Even before the decision to create the NPR in 1950, American policymakers on both sides of the rearmament discussion framed Japanese rearmament as inherently connected to the future of Japanese democracy, as a site where this democracy would be either threatened or secured from the predations of communist aggression, internal subversion, and the return of Japan’s recent wartime past.

The start of the Korean War on June 25, 1950 resolved U.S. policymakers’ rearmament debate. The rapid departure of U.S. troops from Japan drastically heightened U.S. fears of a security vacuum primed for Communist subversion. In light of this new security situation, General Douglas MacArthur, head of the U.S. Occupation Authorities, acted quickly to bolster Japan’s defense capabilities. On July 8, 1950, he instructed Japanese Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru to create a new policing force—the National Police Reserve (NPR)—to help ensure internal and domestic security. From the beginning, however, American policymakers framed the NPR in more expansive terms, seeking to reconcile the seeming contradiction between democracy’s ideological and emotional strengths and its structural and institutional weaknesses. They hoped that defensive power would serve as a powerful tool in forging

³¹ Department of the Army, Plans and Operations Division, “Limited Military Armament for Japan,” 1948 in *Rearmament of Japan Part 1, 1947–1952*, Document no. 1-A-46.

³² *Ibid.*

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the spirit of Cold War sacrifice and resolve necessary to resisting both external aggression and internal subversion. Writing in September 1950, the State Department asserted that the Korean War raised questions about “the psychological attitudes of the Japanese people. Unless the Japanese people have some sense of continued security from external attack by Communist forces, it will be natural to expect a growth of a sense of futility of resistance to Communism.”³³ American policymakers thus hoped that the defensive capabilities of the NPR could instill a firm and broad Japanese commitment to its own defense and new confidence in Japan’s ability to thrive within the so-called “free world.”

Historians have often explored how these ideas faced the resistance of Japanese pacifists and anti-war activists. But just as important, these concepts fostered growing cooperation and convergence between American policymakers and Japanese conservatives. Japanese conservatives, such as former Prime Minister Ashida Hitoshi, paralleled the claims of American policymakers by heralding defensive power as the key to building unity, spirit, and national purpose. As Ashida wrote in a 1950 opinion paper requested by the occupation authorities, “Present-day Japan is in urgent need of unifying its national will... the task of the government is to take the initiative to tell the people that Japan is on the brink of danger, to remind them that we must defend the country by our own efforts.”³⁴ By identifying defense, and by extension military capabilities, as the key to “unifying the national will,” Ashida harkened back to a version of Japan’s history where militarized empire, expansion, and war paved Japan’s path to international prominence and fostered national unification.³⁵

This the growing emphasis on military and defensive power as key to instilling the spirit and vigor necessary for Cold War survival was especially reflected in the search for officers and leadership in the NPR. Like Truman and Marshall at home,

³³ State Department Position Paper, Received by the Joint Chiefs of Staff on December 3, 1950. RG 218 Records of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Geographic File 1948 – 190, Folder: CCS 338.1 Japan (9-1-47) Sec. 3, Box 35. NARA.

³⁴ Quoted in Ōtake Hideo, “Rearmament Controversies and Cultural Conflicts in Japan: the Case of the Conservatives and the Socialists,” in *Creating Single Party Democracy: Japan’s Postwar Political System*, ed. Tetsuya Kataoka (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1992), 60-61.

³⁵ Here I am not arguing that Japan was a uniquely militarized or aggressive state, but simply that a wide variety of people and groups in Japan engaged in and supported empire and war. See Louise Young, *Japan’s Total Empire*.

American military advisors saw NPR leadership as the key to Japan's spiritual resolve against Communism. As one of them put it, it was "essential that commanders and staffs from the lowest to the highest have the moral and patriotic stamina to resist communism and become a real force for law and order."³⁶ But despite their success in recruiting volunteers for the NPR—within a month, 380,00 people had applied to join a force to 75,000—U.S. military advisors expressed constant disappointment in Japanese officers and enlisted men.³⁷ They worried that if the NPR did not maintain high personnel standards, "we will only get the jobless and probably uneducated type of no professional standards, which are wide open to subversive influences."³⁸ Writing in August 1950, only a month after the creation of the NPR, occupation authorities raised the prospect of depurging more experienced military personnel as the solution to these fears.

Japanese rightists and conservatives, including wartime officers, commanders, political leaders and other nationalists quickly recognized the opportunity opened by American anxieties and increasingly offered their own ideas and plans for the new force. As a group of purged military generals, including a former governor-general of Korea Jirō Minami and a commanding general in Burma, told U.S. foreign service officer John P. Gardiner in December 1951, "...there [is] a crying need for the reestablishment of the Japanese armed services...so far as Japan is concerned, the USSR and the Politburo had always been considered the prime enemy."³⁹ Along with celebrating their long-standing anti-Communist credentials, these former military leaders lamented that the United States' demilitarization policies had undermined the

³⁶ Memorandum for General Willoughby, "Personnel for the National Police Reserve," August 9, 1950. RG 331, Allied Operational and Occupation Headquarters, World War II, SCAP, Government Section, Administrative Division, Misc. Subject File, 1945 – April 1952, Folder: Untitled, Box 1.

³⁷ Lt. Col. Eugene J. White (Zentsuji Detachment), "Comments and Recommendations on Advisory Policy," April 23, 1952. RG 554, Records of the General HQ, Far East Command, Supreme Commander Allied Powers and United Nations Command, Security Advisory Section, Japan, General Correspondence, 1952, Folder: 014.3 Records File to be Retired 1952, Box 1. NARA.

³⁸ Memorandum for General Willoughby, "Personnel for the National Police Reserve," August 9, 1950. RG 331, Allied Operational and Occupation Headquarters, World War II, SCAP, Government Section, Administrative Division, Misc. Subject File, 1945 – April 1952, Folder: Untitled, Box 1.

³⁹ John P. Gardiner, Memorandum of Conversation, December 11, 1951. RG 84, Records of the Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State, Japan, Tokyo, Office of the U.S. Political Advisor, Classified General Records, 1945 – 1952 (Entry UD 2828), Folder: 350 Japan 1952, Box 66. NARA.

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patriotism and vigor embodied by the Imperial Army and Navy. They especially decried the postwar constitution, which, according to one right-wing think tank, had “[obliterated] from the Japanese mind the ethical principle of national self-defense. This is particularly true of the younger generation.”⁴⁰ Imperial Army doctrine had emphasized that “spiritual or intangible values” conferred significant benefits on the battlefield; in contrast, spirit became a key area where the NPR was deemed deficient.⁴¹ As an officer who served in both the NPR and wartime military explained, “While the Japanese soldier during most of World War II believed that he was an invincible warrior fighting for a divine emperor, the postwar Japanese young man...has as yet not acquired enough faith in the new Japan to be ready to lay down his life for it.”⁴²

These statements reflected the longevity of Japanese wartime nationalist ideology. Yet they also appealed to U.S. officials and their growing Cold War association of democracy with the spirit of sacrifice, resolve, and spiritual mobilization, premised on the presence of strong and capable leaders. Only former soldiers, American supervisors of the NPR now began to claim, could supply the experience and expertise needed to buoy not only Japanese capabilities but also a sense of sacrifice and spirited defense necessary to the survival of democracy in the Cold War world. As J. Owen Zurhellen Jr., American Vice Consul in Fukuoka, concluded after meeting NPR officials, the United States could not simply train and arm Japanese soldiers; “more fundamental, and of more immediate importance, is the task of convincing the Japanese people that it will be ultimately possible for them to obtain a free, secure, and economically sound existence on the side of the United States and its allies, and that such a hope is worth fighting for.”⁴³ While this idea of fighting for democracy and a “way of life” differed dramatically from calls for the resurrection of the Imperial

⁴⁰ Watanabe Economic Research Institute Committee on National Defense Program, “Observations Relating to the Establishment and Organization of Japan’s Military Forces,” December 25, 1951. RG 84, Records of the Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State, Japan, Tokyo, Office of the U.S. Political Advisor, Classified General Records, 1945 – 1952 (Entry UD 2828), Folder: 350 Japan 1952, Box 66. NARA.

⁴¹ Edward J. Drea, *Japan’s Imperial Army: Its Rise and Fall, 1853 – 1945* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2009), 157-158; 173-176.

⁴² J. Owen Zurhellen, Jr. to U.S. POLAD Tokyo, “The National Police Reserve and Japanese Opinion Concerning Rearmament,” January 24, 1951. RG 84, Records of the Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State, Japan, Tokyo, Office of the U.S. Political Advisor, Classified General Records, 1945 – 1952 (Entry UD 2828), Folder: 370.1 Police Organization and Regulations 1950-51-52, Box 68. NARA.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

Military, U.S. policymakers sought to channel the energies and expertise of former officers into the civilian-lead NPR, seeking to resurrect military capabilities without resurrecting militarism.

In October 1950, U.S. authorities therefore began the change the provisions of the occupations' initial ban on imperial officers' entry to the NPR to access a new source of trained military leadership. They first altered the definition of "career officers," a group purged in accordance with American occupation provisions and Far Eastern Commission [FEC] regulations, to exclude men who graduated from military academies after December 7, 1941. But U.S. authorities worried this was not enough, writing in July 1951 that "the failure of officers to function in field grade staff and command positions has repeatedly borne out by Civil Affairs Section officers conducting inspection trips to units and installations in the field."⁴⁴ In the summer of 1951, General Matthew Ridgway, now head of the U.S. occupation authorities, sought to again redefine "career officers." Ridgway argued that officers who graduated from war academies after Japan's invasion of China in 1937 should be allowed in the NPR because they only provided the "service which a man owes his country in time of war," and were "motivated by normal patriotism." These officers, Ridgway claimed, were only in their early twenties during the war, and thus "entitled by reason of age alone to the benefit of a presumption that they did not bear personal responsibility for Japan's past policies of expansionism and totalitarianism."⁴⁵ Following the Occupation authorities' Civil Affairs department recommendation, 500 more field grade career officers, selected from the graduates of the former Japanese military academies, entered the NPR in October 1951.⁴⁶

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So briefly conclude this talk: on the surface, the United States push to allow

⁴⁴ General Headquarters, Civil Affairs Section, "Appointment of NPR Officers," July 26, 1951. RG 554 Records of the General HQ, Far East Command, Supreme Commander Allied Powers, and United Nations Command, Security Advisory Section, Japan, General Correspondence 1952, Folder: Staff Study Appointment of Ex-Purgees, Box 1

⁴⁵ Telegram from Ridgway to Washington DC, June 14, 1951. RG 218 Records of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Geographic File, 1951 – 1953, Folder: CCS 383.21 Japan (3-13-45) Sec. 25, Box 27. NARA.

⁴⁶ General Headquarters, Civil Affairs Section, "Appointment of NPR Officers," July 26, 1951. RG 554 Records of the General HQ, Far East Command, Supreme Commander Allied Powers, and United Nations Command, Security Advisory Section, Japan, General Correspondence 1952, Folder: Staff Study Appointment of Ex-Purgees, Box 1.

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wartime military officers to join the NPR seems odd, especially less than a decade after World War II. After five years of demilitarization, it seemed to risk the very outcome that American occupation policy sought to prevent, namely the return of militarism in Japan. Yet if we look at the broader changes in American thinking about military power and politics at home and around the world, we can see why American policymakers did not see the use of former wartime officers—or consultation with Japanese generals and imperial leaders—as contradictory to Japanese democracy. They operated under a growing conviction that the military was in fact an institution to strengthen the vigor and resolve necessary for democratic survival. Ultimately, the remilitarization of Japan was about much more than about geopolitical or security calculations. Rather, it reflected dramatic, and international, shifts in political order and democratic values in the early Cold War.

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