

Japan's Peace Constitution

BY PETER K. FROST

John Junkerman wears his political heart on his sleeve. Opposed to any revision of *Article 9* of Japan's constitution, Junkerman has asked twelve distinguished commentators as well as some ordinary civilians from the United States, Japan, Korea, China, and the Arab world to discuss, while being videotaped, why they think the 1947 constitution of Japan should remain intact. To counter "realist" positions that rearmament is necessary, long-established scholars such as John Dower, Chalmers Johnson, and Noam Chomsky (as well as equally committed Japanese and other foreign speakers) argue that the 1947 constitution has remained intact for close to sixty years because it reflects the will of the people. Eliminating *Article 9*, the commentators continue, will emphasize Japan's refusal to apologize adequately for its World War II war crimes, upset the present balance of power in Asia, and hence cause Japan's neighbors to rearm. On a more emotional level, shots of American bases, interviews with "comfort women" repeatedly raped by Japanese soldiers, comments by Beate Sirota on the constitutional clauses on women's rights and social reforms she helped write, and brief looks at both war survivors and anti-war protestors reinforce the notion that *Article 9* is a lofty moral statement that should be preserved. The net result is a powerful argument, and one many will be inclined to support.

For classroom use, however, I prefer the whole cloth to just the sleeve. Were I to defend keeping *Article 9*, for example, I would discuss Colonel Kades' contention that both the original wording in the American draft and the changes made in the deliberations by the Diet guaranteed Japan the right of self-defense.¹ Japanese court rulings on the constitutionality of the bases could also be explained. I would give data on the present numbers and capabilities of Japan's Self-Defense Forces and do my best to analyze exactly what a relatively low percentage of spending on military matters has meant for Japan's economic growth. This last task might be tough to do, and/or lead to mixed results, but I think it would make the argument to keep *Article 9* intact have even better logic and less emotion.

Most of all, as a teacher interested in finding materials that make for good classroom discussion, I want to see the other side given time to make their case. To take but a few examples, there are brief shots of Prime Minister Koizumi speaking in general terms, but no serious and sustained interview with anyone advocating change. Must this video waste time showing President George W. Bush welcoming his pet, and then show Chalmers Johnson—never one to mince words—suggesting that Koizumi is a lapdog for the United States? Similarly, Kang Man-Gil, President of Sangji University in South Korea, downplays the threat from North Korea in a brief comment, but there is no mention of the fact that North Korea has kidnapped Japanese civilians, fired a rocket over Japan's air space, and allowed their ships to enter Japanese waters. There is much discussion of how the "people" must defend the present constitution from the "government," but no explanation of the fact that constitutional amendments happen only after the people's representatives (the Diet) and a public vote give their approval. Finally, Junkerman's Japanese

and Arab commentators bitterly criticize Japan's decision to send a small unit of non-combat troops to Iraq, but there is no attempt to refute the argument that Japan—despite its economic power—cannot hope to have a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council until it is clearly able to contribute to UN peacekeeping missions.

Whatever my personal opinion, I prefer teaching materials that force my students to come to grips with different points of view. Indeed, I believe my current delightful classes of young men and women will be turned off by any argument, regardless of its merits, that they perceive as too one-sided. Junkerman's video is thus powerfully idealistic, but it does not (to continue my awful metaphor) show us the full fabric of current Japanese society. I sincerely wish it had. ■

NOTES

1. There are a number of books and articles on the framing of the Constitution. Places to start include Charles L. Kades, "The American Role in Revising Japan's Imperial Constitution," *Political Science Quarterly* (Summer 1989); Glenn D. Hook and Gavan McCormack, *Japan's Contested Constitution: Documents and Analysis* (Routledge, 2001); Koseki Shoichi, *The Birth of Japan's Postwar Constitution*, Ray A. Moore Translator (Westview, 1988); Ray A. Moore and Donald L. Robinson, *Partners for Democracy: Crafting the New Japanese State* (Oxford, 2002); and the Moore and Robinson, *The Constitution of Japan: A Documentary History of its Framing and Adoption, 1945–1947*, a CD-Rom available from The Association of Asian Studies.

PETER K. FROST is the Frederick L. Schuman Professor of International Studies Emeritus, Williams College, and Visiting Professor of International Studies at the University of Mississippi's Croft Institute.

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