Analysis of Two Different Pacifist Concepts under the Second Abe Administration from a Role Theory Perspective

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This article examines a concept ‘pacifism’ described by Japanese prime minister and Liberal Democratic Party's (LDP) president Abe Shinzo and the New Komei Party's (NKP) leader Yamaguchi Natsuo through a lens of role theory to understand what roles they think Japan should play. First, how the concept ‘pacifism’ is used in statements (speeches, interviews, and remarks on the press) of Abe, Yamaguchi and other related materials, which are assumed to give a clue about their ideas of Japan's role in the world related to pacifism, is examined because this comparison enables to expose accord and discord between them. Second, national role conception or NRC (an actor’s subjective understanding of the country’s appropriate role in the world and the perception of domestic and foreign expectations) about Japan’s role and the worldview of each party is discussed in connection with the issue of the revision of the Japanese Constitution which stipulates a general framework of Japan's foreign policy. The LDP aims to play more proactive roles by revising the constitution and Abe dismisses the current constitution as it makes only ‘one-country pacifism’ possible. On the other hand, the NKP tries to maintain the constitution as it is to protect traditional non-military pacifism.

Keywords: Foreign policy, Security, the Japanese Constitution, The Liberal Democratic Party, The New Komei Party, Role theory

Introduction

This article attempts to clarify the difference in the concept of pacifism the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) to which prime minister Abe Shinzo belongs and the New Komei Party (NKP) have and how the latter affects the former in policy-making by analyzing statements (speeches, interviews, and remarks on the press) by political leaders of the two political parties. Although they have formed a coalition government since 1999 except for the Democratic Party of Japan’s ruling period (September 2009-December 2012), they have expressed different viewpoints on pacifism concepts on numerous occasions. The LDP pursues pacifism through amending the Japanese Constitution, namely Article 9, to expand the Self Defense Forces (SDF)’ roles and through countering China by force. By contrast, the NKP opposes the revision of Article 9, which will lead Japan to renounce its non-military pacifist stance, cornerstone of its foreign policy, since the end of the Second World War. This difference between the two coalition parties disturbs Abe’s plan to amend the constitution now regardless of the favorable situation for him where two-thirds seats (The Mainichi, 2016)¹ in the House of

¹ Achieving two-thirds majority votes in both chambers of the Diet is necessary to propose an amendment to the constitution. Next, the majority of the total votes in a national referendum are required.

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Representatives and the House of Councilors in the Diet were occupied by pro-revision camp composed of the LDP, the NKP (*The Japan Times*, 2016)\(^2\), and the Osaka Restoration Party for the first time as a result of the House of Councilors election in July 2016. Abe wants to revise Article 9 to facilitate the use of the defense capability and to deepen security ties with the United States (US) and other like-minded countries to counter perceived threats came from China and North Korea but he cannot complete this task because the NKP hinders it. The NKP is not against the amendment to the constitution itself or the existence of the SDF but the party is based on the Buddhist group named the Soka Gakkai (literally “Value Creating Society”) which supports non-military pacifism. Therefore, the impact on role formulation by the NKP cannot be ignored. As some researchers already indicate (Sakaki, 2015; Fisker-Nielsen, 2016; Akimoto, 2016), it can be said that the NKP is not just a junior coalition partner of the LDP but rather has largely taken the initiative in the debate of the amendment to the constitution and the security policies during the second Abe administration. To make this view more persuasive, it is necessary to consider in detail what the NKP has expected of the Abe government and how the latter has reacted. In this line of thought, this article explains the interactive process between the two parties by role theory as a theoretical framework in answering the question “how different notions do the LDP and the NKP have about Japan’s pacifism?”.

**Role Theory**

Role theory originates from social psychology and sociology. The evolving intersubjective process between a decision-maker and others shapes National Role Conception (NRC), which can be defined as such:

A national role conception includes the policy-makers’ own definitions of the general kinds of decisions, commitments, rules and actions suitable to their state, and of the functions, if any, their state should perform on a continuing basis in the international system or in subordinate regional systems. (Holsti, 1970, p. 245-246)

NRC consists not only of this ego-part but also of alter-part referring to expectations held by external actors (Le Prestre, 1997) and both affect formation of NRCs to generate specific role performances. In other words, decision-makers have to accommodate demands of both domestic and international actors and this social interaction (including confrontation) can induce role changes. If they fail in accommodating different roles, it will cause role conflict. It can be assumed that now Japan has had two main non-partisan NRCs in the postwar period: reliable security partner of the US and like-minded countries and non-military pacifist country.

Biddle (1986, p. 82) defines role conflict as the “concurrent appearance of two or more incompatible expectations for the behavior of a [state]”. Sakaki (2011, p. 31) distinguishes two main types of role conflicts: ego/alter role conflict when there is a divergence between ego-part and alter-part about a role conception and “endogenous role conflict” where the decision-maker faces different expectations of a role concept that are incompatible or extremely difficult to reconcile within the ego-part. If a compromise can be found, both role conflicts can be avoided. In this article, Japan is supposed to be a pluralist state in which ego-part consists not only of the Japanese government but also of the NKP to emphasize that the decision-maker has to find a meeting ground with important domestic actors. The interaction between the Abe administration and the NKP is interesting to observe because the two parties have different views on what Japan should do in the world and how roles should be played and thus it is possible that Abe’s NRCs are incompatible with the NKP’s ones.

\(^2\) The NKP argued to add clauses on the people’s privacy and right to a healthy environment to the constitution (*The Japan Times*, 2016).
The Abe Administration’s NRC

The LDP has advocated the amendment to the constitution drafted in 1946 under the US occupation era since 1955 when the political party was established. Abe is in this line of thought as he states that “constitutional revision has been among the fundamental thinking underlying the policies of the LDP ever since the party was founded” (Abe, 2017). He thinks that the constitution drafted by the Occupied Forces was unilateral and also does not suit the current era. As seen above he is especially averse to Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution in which it is stipulated that “land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized” (The Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, 1946), putting strong constraints on Japan’s security activity regardless of the fact that Japan is a member of the United Nations (UN) who has the right to both individual and collective self-defense as explicitly stated in Article 51 of the UN Convention. Also, the Supreme Court has not judged the SDF’s constitutionality yet. Abe’s viewpoint is that such constraint deprives Japan of a fundamental right of an independent country. Abe’s desire to change the 2nd clause of Article 9 is clear in the LDP’s draft of its new constitution in April 2012 (Fisker-Nielsen, 2016) in which Article 9 explicitly clarifies that the constitution does not prevent Japan from having a right to “self-defense” including collective self-defense in the name of “peace and security of international society”, by “National Defense Forces” (Liberal Democratic Constitutional Reform Promotion Headquarters, 2012). The 2012 draft indicates that the new forces can theoretically participate in combats around the world with the US, Japan’s ally, unless the Diet disallows the activity. During a snap election in December 2014, he reconfirmed his intention to revise the constitution and erase the military restrictions (Carr & Wallis, 2016).

Leaders’ images of the appropriate direction or functions of their country in the world are included in NRC (Holsti, 1970, pp. 245-246). As such, it is assumed that Japan’s contribution must be reinforced by making laws and building institutions. Abe’s desire of the enactment of the law allowing the exercise of collective self-defense reflects his concern that the country’s continued self-imposed ban on exercising its right to collective self-defense will adversely affect the Japan-US alliance. In the present state of affairs, for example, coming to the aid of an ally under attack is considered beyond the “minimum necessary” use of force permitted by the conventional interpretation of the pacifist constitution. Therefore, the second Abe administration focuses on reinforcing the role of a reliable security ally. Feeling the duty to perform the role, Abe expressed his dissatisfaction with the current situation. He clearly states that he does not aim to follow traditional pacifism, criticizing it as the “one-country pacifism” because of its inward-looking focus on Japan’s peace and security (Abe, 2014a). He perceives a need to make Japanese pacifism more proactive, which does not avoid involvement in armed conflicts under any circumstances.

This NRC requires the reinforcement of relations with the US. To do so, the removal of the geographic limitations of the SDF activities and the enlargement of their activities are important. Abe stresses his desire to utilize the new security-related laws as seen below to carve out more proactive roles for Japan, in the “Asia-Pacific and beyond” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2015). Abe’s statements emphasize the US presence as a deterrent to stabilize the Asia-Pacific region and express doubt about the effectiveness of an exclusively defensive security policy. The strict ban on overseas deployment of the SDF is a source of tension with the US, which could lead to loss of trust from the US. Taking up a case where the Japanese refugees who fled a conflict were rescued by the US in international waters near Japan, Abe questioned current constitutional interpretation:
“Even in such cases, unless the Japanese nationals themselves were attacked, the Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) could not defend the U.S. vessels transporting the Japanese nationals” (Abe, 2014b).

Abe reinterpreted Japan’s constitution to allow for collective self-defense in July 2014 by the cabinet decision to have Japan play a more active role mainly with the US. His statements highlight the necessity for Japan to share the security burden if Japan desires to be regarded as a reliable security partner in the region and the world. Abe expects that changing a decades-old interpretation of the constitution has a huge implication for Japan’s foreign policy as a whole, regionally and globally, either inside the Japan-US alliance or outside it. However, the main reason for Abe’s desire of the US presence in East Asia derives from his doubt of non-military pacifist NRC because the international security-related climate is deteriorating resulting from the rise of China (Abe, 2014c). From the beginning of the Abe administration, it has maintained the idea that China, which has increased its defense expenditures annually by more than 10 percent since 1989, is a threat and Japan has to strengthen the defense capability to deter China (Abe, 2013). In addition to suggest a plan to station official workers in the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands in the East China Sea for which Japan and China claimed the territorial right just before he became a prime minister in December 2012 (The Japan Times, 2012), Abe decided to launch an earnest defense buildup program, with particular weight given to the Nansei Islands, which form a chain of islands from Kyushu to Taiwan. Abe showed his determination “to defend fully people’s lives, our territory, and our beautiful ocean” (Abe, 2012) and this determination is motivated by his sense of danger that “the security of Japan is not someone else’s problem; it is a crisis that exists right there and now” (Abe, 2012). His statements also revealed that deterrents such as the Japan Coast Guard and the SDF play important roles. As a consequence, to counterbalance China’s increasing relative power, the second Abe administration increased Japan’s defense budget in 2013, for the first time in more than a decade and it reached the largest amount in the postwar period in 2015 and 2016 (Hughes, 2017). Abe (2012) also proposed the idea of the “Democratic Security Diamond” related to his China policy. The objective is to form a diamond among Japan, Australia, India, and Hawaii (the US) to cope with China.

Perception of the threat to Japan’s security and the willingness to cope with it appear in Abe’s statements related to the reliable security partner NRC. His determination to play the role was reflected in his speech to the US Congress during his visit to the US about security-related laws:

In Japan we are working hard to enhance the legislative foundations for our security. [...] These enhanced legislative foundations should make the cooperation between the U.S. military and Japan’s Self Defense Forces even stronger, and the alliance still more solid, providing credible deterrence for the peace in the region. This reform is the first of its kind and a sweeping one in our postwar history. We will achieve this by this coming summer. (Abe, 2015a)

His willingness to expand and clarify Japan’s security roles led to the enactment of the subsequent bundle of laws. Abe legislated security-related laws in the Diet in September 2015 and they took effect in March 2016. The Diet revised 10 security-related laws (Akimoto, 2016, p. 143), the most significant ones being the following: The Law on Response to Contingencies enables Japan to exercise collective self-defense under certain conditions explained below; the Law to Ensure Security in Contingencies Significantly Affecting Japan,
which replaced the 1999 Regional Contingencies Law, was intended to strengthen the SDF’s backup support for the US and other partner countries outside combat zones; the International Peace Support Law eliminates the need for Japan to enact separate laws for each SDF dispatch providing logistical support to foreign forces in UN-authorized missions, and the revised PKO Law allows the SDF to use weapon besides the defense of SDF personnel, for instance to protect other civilians and the UN personnel. In addition, the law enables the dispatch of the SDF not only in Peace Keeping Operation (PKO) but also in other international peace cooperation activities (Hughes, 2016, p. 143; Akimoto, 2016, p. 143). The revision of PKO-related laws means Abe’s desire of peace keeping activities with countries other than the US worldwide under the UN framework as he said in the North Atlantic Council:

First, Japan enacted a series of Peace and Security legislations. Our International Peace Cooperation Act was revised to allow Japanese Peace Cooperation personnel to adapt to diversifying U.N. PKOs, thus broadening the range of activities in which Japan could participate. Under this new legal framework, Japan can and will further expand its contributions to U.N. PKOs. (Abe, 2015b)

However, the revised PKO law retains five PKO principles. If fighting were to break out, the SDF would have to halt their activities and withdraw. The laws thus deny participation in activities involving the use of force and would still not authorize the dispatch in situations such as the Vietnam War and the 2001 Afghanistan War even at the request of the US (Akimoto, 2016, pp. 156-157).

Overall, Abe’s NRCs reveal that the need for a transformation of the concept of pacifism is present in Abe’s mind, both in the Japan-US alliance and in the UN PKO. Abe seeks to build up the image of Japan considered influential in the world and not bound to the constitution drafted about 70 years ago.

Once again, however, the ultimatum objective of expansion of the SDF’s activity is for Japan to survive in a changed security environment where China is becoming a threat more than ever. This stance is exemplified in the following speech in which Abe claims:

I perceive that precisely by having the ability to respond to every possible situation and developing legal system which enables such responses, deterrence will be enhanced, and thus conflict will be prevented and Japan’s embroilment in war will be eliminated. (Abe, 2014b)

Thus, it is clear that Abe’s conception of pacifism does not adhere to the non-military principle and can justify the use of force if necessary.

The NKP’s NRCs and the Implication

The NKP presents itself as the defender of traditional pacifism representing those in the population who are reluctant to accept the stance of Abe’s security policy (Pugliese, 2015, p. 107). The NKP influences the administration’s foreign policy not to deviate from postwar pacifism because if the NKP leaves the ruling coalition, the LDP will lose the important electoral support from the Soka Gakkai (Yakushiji, 2014). The analysis related to the NKP focuses on the statements of Yamaguchi Natsuo, its Chief Representative since September 2009. As exemplified by his following declaration, the NKP seeks to maintain the constitution based on the concept of the defense-only policy: “The constitution only allows the exercise of the minimum necessary force for self-defense” (Yamaguchi, 2012). Yamaguchi shared with the Abe administration the conviction that the security environment Japan faces is “becoming increasingly challenging” because of North Korea’s missile

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4 See the website of Cabinet Office: http://www.pko.go.jp/pko_e/faq/faq.html.
development. He agreed with the notion that deterrent by security-related laws gives “material weight to Japan’s peace diplomacy, serving to drive it forward” (Yamaguchi, 2015). However, the NKP has consistently demanded that Japanese international contribution be based on non-military means as the past governments did. The following comment of Yamaguchi indicates: “We stand firm on the point that we should conduct international coordination, cooperation and contribution, while giving heed to the successive governments’ basic policy”. He went on to say,

the governments have held a stance that the spirit of the constitution is that Japan does not use force overseas. The SDF has been used for humanitarian aid or disaster relief. Any attempts or consideration should be the extension of that stance and within that boundary. (Yamaguchi, 2013a)

In other words, the NKP neither intends to ignore international needs nor adhere to “one-country pacifism” but tries to respond to them as much as possible in the framework of the existing constitutional restraint. The reason is to alleviate the concern of neighboring countries, suffering from Japan’s invasion and colonization.

As for the exercise of collective self-defense right, the NKP succeeded in imposing limitations on the government’s initiatives to protect role conception of non-militarist Japan. The SDF’s use of force is still contested and it has not been correctly implemented yet. In the case of the adoption of the new interpretation of collective self-defense in July 2014, the NKP compromised with the LDP on the reinterpretation after a tough debate between the two parties (Fisker-Nielsen, 2016) even though Yamaguchi opposed the reinterpretation, saying: “If we suddenly change the interpretation, it would harm the domestic and international trust which Japan has forged over the years” (Yamaguchi, 2013b). At first glance, it seems that the Abe government overcame the opposition of the NKP, but it braked the exercise of collective self-defense to firmly maintain the role of Japanese forces focused exclusively on the defense of Japan. In fact, Abe had to stress after the reinterpretation that collective self-defense cannot yet be exercised to defend another country. This is the outcome of the NKP’s proscription after consultations with the LDP. After the cabinet decision, Yamaguchi indicated how he was proud of his success in preventing Abe from deviating from previous administrations in terms of the interpretation of Article 9 at the NKP convention in Kumamoto prefecture (Yamaguchi, 2014a). Abe’s response to the interrogation in the Diet concerning the potential change of interpretation of Article 9 is formulated as such:

The measures that the Constitution of Japan permits are only self-defense measures for the purpose of ensuring Japan’s survival and protecting its people. Japan will continue not to engage in the use of force for the purpose of defending foreign countries. (Abe, 2014d)

Likewise, collective self-defense stipulated in security-related laws legislated in September 2015 was limited to help a country with close ties to Japan against which armed aggression was directed and when it results in a threat to “Japan’s survival and poses a clear danger to fundamentally overturn people’s right to life, liberty and pursuit of happiness” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014). In this interpretation, collective self-defense is thus limited to the situation in which Japan and Japanese people are under direct threat. In addition, the right can only be used after it is clear that no other means are available to respond to it (Sakaki, 2015, p. 18; Nakanishi, 2015, p. 413).

Regarding that the laws also stipulated the deployment of the SDF overseas to support multinational forces, either inside and outside PKO without making a special law each time, Yamaguchi assured in an interview with the party organ newspaper Komei Shimbun that in addition to five PKO principles, the SDF could only be sent
overseas if their deployment was justified “under international law” and the dispatch will only be “validated through a UN resolution” with “prior Diet authorization” every time. Yamaguchi emphasized the safety of SDF personnel as he said:

“The support activities of Japanese forces must remain separate and distinct from multinational troops engaged in the use of force as that would be unconstitutional, which is why the former will not be permitted to operate in areas in which fighting is currently taking place. (Yamaguchi, 2015)"

The NKP is not rigidly ideological or insular. Rather, it helped the government establish a legal base for the SDF to be able to provide logistic support, or reconstruction and humanitarian support under the constitutional framework in the world other than the place where there are combat activities so that the principle of an exclusively defense-oriented security policy remains intact. Similarly, with respect to the government’s decision to ease previous restrictions on weapon exports to facilitate joint weapons development with the US and like-minded countries, the NKP demanded a fixed limit on the policy by ensuring transparency with an annual report which contained information about what kind of defense equipment was approved for exporting (Komeito, 2014a). Yamaguchi questioned the government in the Diet in March 2014 about the revision of the three principles of arms exports when he declared that:

“I want the government to uphold the ideal of a peace-loving nation and make a fixed limit on the exports so that it will not be unrestricted. [...] I also want the government to consider providing structures such as making decision-making mechanism for [arms export] to serve to decide and explain its security policy transparency. (Yamaguchi, 2014b)"

As is the case with collective self-defense, it can be said that the NKP’s demand was consistently taken into account as Abe promised in his speech that the defense equipment Japan would export was not for war but for non-military purposes, such as “rescue, transportation, vigilance, surveillance, and minesweeping” under scrutiny (Abe, 2014e). This is the same in the case of the state secrecy law enacted in November 2013, which aims to prevent leakage of information related to diplomacy, defense, and anti-terrorism with a strengthened penalty, targeting official workers, academics, journalists, or others (Maslow, 2016, pp. 200-201). While Abe said in the LDP’s party convention in January 2014 that

important secrets should be safeguarded to protect the people from terrorists and spies. This is a common sense in the world. Due to this law, more and more necessary and important information to protect the people’s life would enter Japan. (Abe, 2014f)

The NKP insisted that the “right to know” and “freedom of press” be stipulated in the law and journalists should be removed from target of penalty in principle and then this opinion was approved (Nihon Keizai Shimbun, 2013). In addition to providing that they are considered enough, the Abe government also acknowledged the need to establish a standing Information Monitoring Assessment Committee in the Diet which too the NKP demanded to put information under democratic scrutiny so that the Japanese are well-informed (Komeito, 2014b).

As for the constitutional amendment, there is scarcely any consensus between the two parties as to which part of the constitution needs to be revised and how to proceed with it. The NKP is open to discuss constitutional changes and is even thinking they are necessary such as adding clauses on the people’s privacy and right to a healthy environment. However, changes should not depart from the stance that Japan is a pacifist country based on non-militarism (Fisker-Nielsen, 2016). The NKP opposes any amendment to the constitution
which allows collective self-defense, which will lead to dilute war-renouncing aspect of Article 9. Yamaguchi warned against the LDP’s move, hinting at the dissolution of the coalition: “The Constitution is an extremely important law of the state. In discussions of this issue, the future of the coalition government should be taken into account” (Yamaguchi, 2013c).

Instead, the NKP argues for Kaken (literally adding new elements to the constitution) to Article 9. This is the position defended by the party as it appears in Yamaguchi’s interview: “70 years has passed since the constitution was enacted. If there is appropriate value in a new constitution, I believe an approach of adding onto existing provisions is valid”, asking Abe to leave the current clauses of Article 9. Also, Yamaguchi argued for vigorous debate in both houses of parliament on the constitutional amendment as he said

a [constitutional amendment] is not something that the Diet can achieve as it pleases by simply garnering two-thirds of votes in the upper and lower houses. […] In the Diet, the main opposition party and others have to be included in widespread agreement… (Yamaguchi, 2017a)

While Abe perceives amending Article 9 of primary importance, Yamaguchi believes it is not a priority because the public opinion has not evolved to the point of readily accepting a revision of the constitution that will weaken non-military pacifist country NRC. Yamaguchi said in an interview with Reuters that “what is vital is to make sincere efforts to respond steadfastly to the people’s expectations”, recalling the LDP and the NKP lost power from 2009 to 2012. He also said “people are not calling for a change in the constitution as something that hinders their livelihoods” (Yamaguchi, 2017b). In other words, Yamaguchi wants Abe to notice that the constituents are chiefly interested in issues that affect their daily life, not with nationalism or security. Considering the difficulty to meet the requirement of the amendment and the strong aversion within the Japanese public against changing the constitution, especially Article 9, the NKP believes it is tough to do so.

As Abe is aware that adherence to the amendment will cause role conflict with the NKP over the reliable security partner and non-military pacifism NRCs, he tones down his push for constitutional revisions. He expects it will be a laborious and politically risky task to convince the NKP given the possibility of the dissolution of the coalition. Thus, Abe acknowledged the importance of the debate across the parties and decided to adopt the NKP’s idea of Kaken, which is unlikely to expand the SDF’s scope of operation. He does not explicitly say the LDP dropped its 2012 draft altogether but he virtually sealed it. Abe changed his objective from revising Article 9 just to add new sentences or clause which stipulates the existence of the SDF to end the long-time debate whether the SDF is constitutional or not. His stance is revealed in the following quotations:

Gaining a two-thirds approval in both houses of the Diet is in itself not so easy to begin with, and not achieved without difficulty. First of all, I want to prioritize consideration of the contents so that the LDP proposal becomes one regarding which we can hold constructive discussions that transcend the lines between the ruling and opposition parties. (Abe, 2017)

Arranging an environment where all SDF personnel can fulfill their duties with strong pride is the responsibility of politicians living in the present […] I am determined to fully carry out my duty. (Abe, 2018)

Exclusively defensive security policy was maintained until the end of 2018. The LDP wanted to draw up new National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPGs) for 2019 and beyond which included a variety of ideas for example the SDF’s acquisition of capability to attack enemy bases (Asahi Shimbun, 2018) but the NKP consistently questioned the necessity of it (Komeito, 2013). The NKP continued to emphasize exclusively
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defensive security policy to ensure that Japan would not wage war again (Fisker-Nielsen, 2016) and the position is respected well by the Abe administration. Finally the capability was not be included in the NDPGs.

Abe shows that he does not intend to put into question Japan’s pacifism. Its role performance is based on security-related laws that do not send the SDF abroad to exercise collective self-defense and that maintains the five PKO principles. Abe also accepted not to proceed with his original intention of an amendment to the constitution. Therefore, it can be said that his role performance is generally consistent with conventional non-military pacifist country role conception.

As for the relations with China too, there is a schism between the LDP and the NKP. While Abe does not hide its sense of danger, it is not shared by the NKP. Also, while Yamaguchi understands the importance of the US in security terms, he does not show enthusiasm in forming a security coalition with the US, Australia, and India to deter China. He may think that the idea of China’s threat and the containment will adversely affect Japan-China relations. Instead, he has consistently argued the importance of top-level meetings between Japanese and Chinese political leaders to defuse strained regional environment since the beginning of the second Abe administration (BBC, 2013; The Japan Times, 2018). It does not mean that the NKP lacks concern about China’s maritime expansion but it argues that dialogue and communication should be given preference over deterrent to avoid any contingencies resulting from distrust and miscommunication. The NKP expected Abe to implement a foreign policy which could convince China that he would not fundamentally change Japan’s pacifist NRC. For example, Yamaguchi does not support to strengthen control over the Senkaku Islands not to incur China’s distrust. He was opposed to Abe’s campaign pledge in the December 2012 general election to dispatch Japanese official workers in the islands. His viewpoint on this issue that the territorial dispute should be handled carefully appears clearly in his declaration in a meeting held in the US: “Having Japanese government employees stationed on the Senkaku Islands for the moment is not something we think that we ought to do” (Yamaguchi, 2013d). Yamaguchi suggested shelving the Senkaku issue for a while to leave the solution to a future generation (Yamaguchi, 2013e). This viewpoint is close to the tacit agreement allegedly concluded in the process of the normalization of diplomatic relations in 1972 (Hosaka & Togo, 2012). In this line of thought, Abe postponed the implementation to station official workers in the islands indefinitely, shelving the territorial dispute as the NKP demanded.

Yamaguchi suggested the creation of a “crisis management system” to avert a maritime clash between Japan and China over the islands and argued that the two countries should cooperate in fields where they can agree, for example on something such as an environmental issue, to build trust (Yamaguchi, 2013d). In this way, Yamaguchi suggested solutions for regional issues related to China by building trust, not counterbalancing. This kind of mechanism was adopted in May 2018 when Abe and Chinese prime minister Li Keqiang agreed to establish a mechanism for their naval vessels to communicate at sea to avert maritime incidents, to establish a hotline between both countries’ defense authorities and to hold regular meetings between their defense officials every year although it did not cover the territorial waters around the Senkakus (Reuters, 2018). Thus, so far, it can be said Abe acknowledges the NKP’s expectation and considers these points in his foreign policy. Pressure from the ego-part NKP to strictly adhere to a dialogue prevents Abe from escalating military tension with China. Despite Abe’s concern for China’s increasing military presence, his behaviors reflected the NKP’s preference to promote dialogue and communication.
Conclusion

This research reveals that regarding the Abe administration’s and the NKP’s statements and role performances, there is consistency between the set of Japan’s roles that Abe intends to fulfill and the expectations of the NKP. The NKP is critically important to Japanese security policy direction. Abe makes utmost efforts to downplay the worries and to persuade the NKP that his initiatives do not mean that Japan will adopt aggressive policies. The Abe administration-NKP relationship in the ruling coalition reveals that political leaders’ roles can show inconsistencies not only with those of powerful alter-parts like the US and China but also within the ego-part. Due to the NKP, the issue on the amendment to the constitution was narrowed down to Kaken and the SDF’s military activity is still severely limited because any dramatic moves in the direction of militarization faced strong opposition that will jeopardize the existence of the coalition. So far, the NKP influences Abe’s foreign policy by encouraging some policies and discouraging others. Since it is difficult to get the NKP to agree on the expansion of the SDF, he had to accept to implement a security policy with various constraints. The NKP succeeded in putting a brake on the government’s creation of a fait accompli now and in the future by specifying what it can and cannot do in new laws. The principle that the SDF’s activity is only for Japan’s defense remains in place.

The analysis of the statements of the NKP reveals that there was role conflict within the coalition government and the NKP overwhelmed the LDP in it. Abe’s role performance to respect existing norms and values in the Japanese Constitution is consistent with the NKP’s expectations to a considerable degree. He tries to change Japan’s NRC by causing as little role inconsistency as possible because he is aware that disregarding the NKP’s demands could lead to role conflict that could end the coalition government. This led Abe to continually reiterate that he puts importance on the exclusively defensive security policy, civilian control, non-military international contribution and diplomacy in his foreign policy.

The analysis of statements proves that the two parties have quite a different view of Japan’s reliable security partner and pacifism-related NRCs. The NKP agrees on the necessity of increasing international contribution with the US and like-minded countries but not to the extent to use force beyond individual self-defense. The NKP’s pacifism imposes more various constraints on the government than the LDP’s pacifism. As a result, Abe is unlikely to revise the constitution in the direction of the 2012 draft during his office term. His initiative ended up just adding a few new elements to the constitution which the NKP had supported.

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