

Japan's Cold War nuclear decision-making: Improving upon competing theoretical perspectives

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Abstract

This paper investigates Japan's self-contradictory nuclear status, which has constituted a puzzle for international relations theorists and historians who have advanced several competing interpretations for this peculiar development. Adherents of the security model assert that Japan's general weakness vis-à-vis others in the region, or the availability of a credible security guarantor through its alliance with the United States, explains Tokyo's decision to forgo a homegrown nuclear deterrent. Recently, however, opponents of this view have instead favoured an ideational approach which focuses on the threat and identity perceptions of Japanese leaders. This article presents these two competing interpretations of the proliferation puzzle and applies them to Japan's postwar nuclear decision-making. The paper demonstrates the limits of the security model and then improves upon the ideational approach by incorporating the oft-overlooked two-level game assumption popular with foreign policy analysis scholars. In doing so, I recognise the importance of focusing on Japanese leaders rather than international systemic factors, but also acknowledge that these individuals play a two-level game. They must, in turn, not only contend with the public's antinuclear attitudes but also their nation's alliance with the United States—the cornerstone of postwar Japanese security policy.

Introduction

Observers often regard the Japanese Government's policy towards nuclear weapons as being mired with contradiction in two respects. First, leaders simultaneously profess a duty to lead the nuclear disarmament movement out of respect for the victims of the atomic bombings (*hibakusha*) against Hiroshima and Nagasaki, yet have refused to acknowledge the state's responsibility for their continued suffering.¹ Second, the United States—which ultimately dropped the atomic bombs on Japanese innocents—now provides the island nation with an extended nuclear deterrence guarantee at Tokyo's urging, in part to prevent their ally from developing atomic weapons of their own.² Scholars are thus presented with what appears at first glance to be a haphazard tapestry without any clear policy direction, nor impetus on the part of the Japanese Government to unravel it.

International relations literature, however, does suggest that Tokyo's situation is not an oddity in the realm of policymaking, and presents two competing theoretical interpretations of how states approach their nuclear decision-making. The security model focuses on the unitary actor assumption and presumes that security considerations are the deciding factor.³ In contrast, a classical ideational approach emphasises the threat and identity perceptions of leaders themselves.⁴ This article argues that

¹ Kusunoki Ayako, 'The Satō Cabinet and the Making of Japan's Non-Nuclear Policy', *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 15 (2008): 27, doi.org/10.1163/187656108793645806; Yuri Kase, 'The Costs and Benefits of Japan's Nuclearisation: An Insight into the 1968/70 Internal Report', *The Nonproliferation Review* 8, no. 2 (Summer 2001): 55, doi.org/10.1080/10736700108436850; Akiko Naono, "'Ban the Bomb! Redress the Damage!': The History of the Contentious Politics of Atomic Bomb Sufferers in Japan', *Asian Journal of Peacebuilding* 6, no. 2 (2018): 241.

² Ayako, 'The Satō Cabinet', 27; Kase, 'The Costs and Benefits', 55.

³ The 'security model' has its origins in the following work: Scott D. Sagan, 'Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons?: Three Models in Search of a Bomb', *International Security* 21, no. 3 (Winter 1996–1997): 54–86, doi.org/10.1162/isec.21.3.54.

⁴ Ideational approaches are reviewed at length in Kelly P. O'Reilly, *Nuclear Proliferation and the Psychology of Political Leadership: Beliefs, Motivations and Perceptions* (London: Routledge, 2014), 13–17, doi.org/10.4324/9780203704233.

an enriched ideational approach—which centres on divided decision-makers who work between international and domestic politics—better accounts for Japan’s nuclear policymaking than other theories.

I proceed in four respects and limit my discussion to the 1945–1972 period. First, the article draws on the existing nuclear politics literature to establish the two models used in this study, then differentiates itself from prior works by presenting an enriched ideational approach which incorporates the oft-neglected two-level game assumption. Second, it examines the history of the early Cold War period, situating Japanese leaders within their two-level game environment by noting their consistent preferences and adversarial relationship with what became the nationwide antinuclear movement. Third, it demonstrates the shortcomings of the security model by testing its assumptions against the realities of Japanese nuclear decision-making under the Sato Cabinet. Fourth, it presents the classical ideational approach’s account of Sato’s nuclear calculus before showcasing the added explanatory power of its enriched counterpart. While the influence of antinuclear sentiment and the government’s failed attempts to remedy these beliefs far surpassed that of strategic factors when accounting for Japan’s decision not to develop nuclear weapons, policymakers nonetheless chose to strengthen the US–Japan alliance. Ultimately, the paper supports the relegation of the security model to the dustbin of nuclear proliferation literature, as the explanatory power of an ideational approach—and even more so its enriched variant—is far superior.

Resolving theoretical models

Proponents of the security model on nuclear proliferation assert that states are unitary actors which exist within an anarchic international system, and only gain access to a viable nuclear deterrent if they face a fundamental military threat to their survival. This approach is derived from, though not entirely consistent with, the neorealist stream of international relations and maintains three of its core assumptions.⁵ First, states are unitary actors whose internal composition does not in any way explain how actors behave in international politics.⁶ Second, the international system within which these nations reside is inherently anarchical, insofar as it lacks a coercive, all-powerful world government that functions as the ‘ultimate arbiter’.⁷ Third, under these unfavourable systemic conditions, states must engage in ‘self-help behaviour’, seeking to ensure above all else their national security against potential external threats.⁸ Obtaining a viable nuclear deterrent ‘serve[s] as a logical means to an end’ in this regard, but there remain two pathways towards this outcome.⁹ States which possess sufficient material capabilities pursue a homegrown nuclear weapons program. In contrast, weaker nations suffer what they must, having no other option but to court a security guarantor and nestle themselves under their benefactor’s nuclear umbrella. Unfortunately, doing so comes with a price, as the weaker state is left perpetually unsettled over the credibility of their ally’s extended deterrence commitment.¹⁰ In summary, under the security model, nuclear proliferation is wholly determined by security considerations.

Scholars who favour a classical ideational approach, by contrast, focus instead on the threat and identity perceptions of leaders themselves, taking inspiration from a competing strand of international relations: constructivism. Adherents of this view challenge neorealism’s core assumptions in two fundamental respects. States are not unitary actors—there is a plethora of internal dynamics that could potentially

⁵ Andrew Futter, *The Politics of Nuclear Weapons* (London: SAGE Publications, 2015): 51, doi.org/10.4135/9781473917170; Maria Rost Rublee, *Nonproliferation Norms: Why States Choose Nuclear Restraint* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009), 6; Sagan, ‘Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons?’, 57. For more on the ‘consistency problem’, see O’Reilly, *Nuclear Proliferation*, 9–11; Rublee, *Nonproliferation Norms*, 8–10.

⁶ John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: Norton, 2001), 54; Kenneth Waltz, ‘The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory’, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18 (Spring 1988): 618–619, doi.org/10.2307/204817.

⁷ Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 30; Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (London: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1979), 112.

⁸ O’Reilly, *Nuclear Proliferation*, 8–9; Sagan, ‘Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons’, 57.

⁹ O’Reilly, *Nuclear Proliferation*, 8. See also Mike M. Mochizuki, ‘Japan Tests the Nuclear Taboo’, *The Nonproliferation Review* 14, no. 2 (2007): 310, doi.org/10.1080/10736700701379393; Sagan, ‘Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons’, 57.

¹⁰ Sagan, ‘Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons?’, 57.

influence nuclear decision-making—nor do they exist in an inherently anarchical system which presupposes them to behave in a self-help manner.¹¹ Indeed, by the constructivist view, ‘anarchy is what states make of it’, since how states view themselves and others within the international system dictates their subsequent behaviour.¹² The attitudes and threat perceptions of leaders—political-military elites who interact with the state’s security environment on its behalf—thus come to occupy a central position within ideational approaches to nuclear proliferation.¹³ Recognising this allows scholars of this persuasion to offer a ‘more sophisticated version of the realist hypothesis’, retaining the focus on security considerations but adding two intervening variables: the social construction of threats and leader’s conceptions of national identity.¹⁴ Under this reasoning, a state goes nuclear only when elites are oppositional nationalists who consider their state’s survival to be under threat, and for reasons of national pride pursue a homegrown nuclear deterrent to address this.¹⁵ In short, ‘decisions to go or not to go nuclear result not from the international structure, but rather from individual hearts’.¹⁶

This article differentiates itself from these two schools of thought by presenting the enriched ideational approach as an alternative theoretical model more suited to the exceptional circumstances present in the Japanese case study. This model retains all of the core assumptions of its spiritual predecessor as noted above, adding only the oft-overlooked two-level game assumption popular with foreign policy analysis scholars.¹⁷ Rather than viewing elites as mere prisms through which states interact with the international system, they should be viewed as ‘divided decision-makers’. More to the point, these individuals work between international and domestic politics, continually striving to balance these oppositional forces in their day-to-day decision-making.¹⁸ The game is two-level because a policy choice that may be permissible on the international game-board and consistent with a leader’s worldview often faces opposition on the domestic game-board, clashing with the views of the masses.¹⁹ Focusing on both game-boards is pivotal in Japan’s case, since the legacies of the atomic bombings and the public’s resultant antinuclear attitudes weigh heavily upon policymakers in Tokyo.²⁰ Likewise, the enduring, dynastic nature of Japan’s conservative party’s (LDP) rule over the island nation permits one to assume reasonable consistency in the attitudes and policy preferences of leaders, rather than having to worry about these changing with new administrations.²¹ The sections that follow demonstrate the benefits of viewing Japanese nuclear decision-making through the paradigm of this paper’s enriched ideational approach. A vital foundation is to establish the consistent preferences of conservative Japanese leaders and their conflictual relationship with the ban-the-bomb movement.

¹¹ David Dessler and John Owen, ‘Constructivism and the Problem of Explanation: A Review Article’, *Perspectives on Politics* 3, no. 3 (September 2005): 597–598, doi.org/10.1017/S1537592705050371; Rublee, *Nonproliferation Norms*, 3; Sagan, ‘Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons?’, 63.

¹² Alexander Wendt, ‘Anarchy is what States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics’, *International Organization* 46, no. 2 (Spring 1992): 395, doi.org/10.1017/S0020818300027764. See also Hurd, ‘Constructivism’, 312–313.

¹³ O’Reilly, *Nuclear Proliferation*, 23; Rublee, *Nonproliferation Norms*, 14–15.

¹⁴ Rublee, *Nonproliferation Norms*, 15. See also Jacques E.C. Hymans, ‘Isotopes and Identity: Australia and the Nuclear Weapons Option, 1949–1999’, *The Nonproliferation Review* 7, no. 1 (2000): 2–3, doi.org/10.1080/10736700008436791; O’Reilly, *Nuclear Proliferation*, 15.

¹⁵ Hymans, ‘Isotopes and identity’, 2–3; Jacques E. C. Hymans, *The Psychology of Nuclear Proliferation: Identity, Emotions and Foreign Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 2; O’Reilly, *Nuclear Proliferation*, 15.

¹⁶ Hymans, *The Psychology of Nuclear Proliferation*, 1.

¹⁷ See, for example, Laura Neack, *The New Foreign Policy: Power Seeking in a Globalised Era* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008).

¹⁸ Ayako, ‘The Satō Cabinet’, 49; Neack, *The New Foreign Policy*, 6–7; Robert D. Putnam, ‘Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games’, *International Organisation* 42, no. 3 (Summer 1988): 434, doi.org/10.1017/S0020818300027697.

¹⁹ Putnam, ‘Diplomacy and Domestic Politics’, 434.

²⁰ See, for example, Ayako, ‘The Satō Cabinet’, 25–50; Rublee, *Nonproliferation Norms*, 92.

²¹ Etel Solingen, ‘The Perils of Prediction: Japan’s Once and Future Nuclear Status’, in *Forecasting Nuclear Proliferation in the 21st Century: Volume 2 – A Comparative Perspective*, ed. William C. Potter with Gaukhar Mukhatzhanova (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 142.

The ever-growing importance of the two-level game

From the beginning of the postwar period, Japanese leaders demonstrated their desire to maintain and deepen Japan's relationship with the United States in two key respects. First, one would think given the widespread devastation wrought by the atomic bombings that American and Japanese leaders would have immediately rendered aid to its victims. However, the reality was much less idealistic. US authorities in occupied Japan fatefully decided to censor nearly all discussion of the atomic bombings, as unrestricted discourse may have incited 'public unrest' or challenged the popular narrative of the Japanese being the aggressors of the war, rather than victims of it.²² For reasons of political expediency, the conservative Japanese Government accepted no responsibility for the *hibakusha*, choosing instead to cooperate with the United States to conceal the extent of devastation caused by the bombings and their ongoing effects.²³ Second, Japanese elites soon came to see Japan's relationship with the United States as a means to an end in adopting the Yoshida Doctrine.²⁴ In effect, Japan would accept its lowly international standing, relying primarily on the United States for its defence and providing host-nation support to American forces based throughout the archipelago. Tokyo could then keep its defence capabilities at the minimum level necessary, pursue a pragmatic under-the-radar foreign policy, and focus its energies on postwar economic development. All told, it is clear that Japanese elites pinned their nation's prosperity on a productive relationship with the United States.

Domestic opposition to this chosen course was virtually non-existent, as it took until 1954 for public attitudes to shift towards antinuclearism. Indeed, originally the Japanese public neither hated the atomic bomb nor empathised with its victims. For those outside Hiroshima and Nagasaki, this terrifying weapon engendered feelings of awe rather than hatred towards the Americans, coming to symbolise the technological sophistication of the so-called barbarians whom the Japanese public was led to believe could be fought off with 'bamboo spears'.²⁵ At the same time, radiation exposure stigmatised the *hibakusha* within Japanese society, as they were thought to 'carry the curse of the bomb in their blood'.²⁶ Thus, an overwhelming majority of their fellow citizens paid no heed to them. As the occupation period ended in 1952 and the horrors of the bombings became widely apparent for the first time, public attitudes towards the atomic bomb markedly shifted—but only towards anti-Americanism, not antinuclearism.²⁷ The energies which gave rise to the nationwide ban-the-bomb movement came only in 1954 when Japanese fishermen were inadvertently exposed to radioactive fallout originating from the US Bikini Atoll thermonuclear test.²⁸ The event inspired the famous Japanese film *Gojira*—known internationally as *Godzilla*—which eloquently encapsulated the desperation of a civilian population ravaged by atomic weapons and contextualised radiation exposure as a concrete threat to everyday life.²⁹ These developments show how the two-level game discussed above was mostly absent from Japanese nuclear policymaking until 1954.

Following this period, antinuclear domestic forces came to play a decisive role and presented challenges for the Japanese Government. Tokyo was initially sympathetic towards the nationwide ban-the-bomb movement (*Gensuikyo*), whose demand to ban nuclear weapons was supported by an astonishing

²² John Dower, 'The Bombed: Hiroshimas and Nagasakis in Japanese Memory', in *Hiroshima in History and Memory*, ed. Michael J. Hogan (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 116–117; Glenn D. Hook, 'Evolution of the Anti-Nuclear Discourse in Japan', *Current Research on Peace and Violence* 10, no.1 (1987): 36–37, doi.org/10.1177/002234338402100305.

²³ Dower, 'The Bombed', 124–125; Hook, 'Evolution', 35.

²⁴ H. D. P. Envall, 'The "Abe Doctrine": Japan's New Regional Realism', *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 20, no. 1 (2020), doi.org/10.1093/irap/lcy014; Solingen, 'The Perils of Prediction', 136–137.

²⁵ Dower, 'The Bombed', 119–121; Rublee, *Nonproliferation Norms*, 55.

²⁶ Dower, 'The Bombed', 128. See also Naono, 'Atomic Bomb Sufferers', 224; Rublee, *Nonproliferation Norms*, 55.

²⁷ Dower, 'The Bombed', 134–135; Hook, 'Evolution', 37.

²⁸ Peter H. Brothers, 'Japan's Nuclear Nightmare: How the Bomb Became a Beast Called Godzilla', *Cineaste* 36, no. 3 (Summer 2011): 36; John Dower, 'Peace and Democracy in Two Systems: External Policy and Internal Conflict', in *Postwar Japan as History*, ed. Andrew Gordon (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 26.

²⁹ Brothers, 'Japan's Nuclear Nightmare', 36–40; Hook, 'Evolution', 37–38; Naono, 'Atomic Bomb Sufferers', 226–227.

32 million members of the Japanese public and the atomic bomb victims themselves.³⁰ This honeymoon period quickly came to an abrupt end, however, as the question of whether or not Japan should revise the US–Japan security treaty pitted the conservative government against the predominantly leftist *Gensuikyo*.³¹ The movement's opposition to the alliance's renewal forced Japanese leaders to tear the nationwide movement apart, exploiting inherent political and ideological differences among the groups which comprised it and crippling it for more than a decade.³² In hindsight, the government was not left unscathed by this debacle, for prime minister Nobuske Kishi was forced to resign due to the undemocratic means he used to ram through the US–Japan alliance's strengthening provisions. For one, millions of Japanese did indeed support *Gensuikyo*'s stance on the treaty. For another, he used police to forcibly remove opposition party members from the Japanese Diet (Parliament) so the reforms could be adopted 'unopposed'.³³ In short, the Japanese public's newfound antinuclear attitudes forced the government to play the two-level game.

Taking the immediate postwar period as a whole, it remains clear that an enriched ideational approach provides the best account of Japanese nuclear decision-making in two respects. First, the security model fails to capture the sheer complexities of these developments, as its insistence upon the unitary actor assumption obfuscates the internal dynamics pivotal to the leader's strategy. Second, although focusing on the threat and identity perceptions of Japanese elites does yield better results, their 'political intimacy' with the United States warrants further investigation, as it bewilders even current constructivist explanations.³⁴ Indeed, rather than seeing the US–Japan alliance as merely transactional, leaders displayed a 'pervasive sense of dependence' on Washington, oddly identifying with their 'recent conqueror'.³⁵ If pressed, the government almost always found some way to ingratiate themselves to their counterparts, even when public opposition to the relationship was at its peak, often using secret agreements to bypass this downward pressure on the two-level game.³⁶ For instance, in the case above, Kishi concluded one such deal which made the continued transit of US nuclear weapons through Japanese ports—occurring since 1953—not subject to the alliance's prior consultation arrangements.³⁷ In doing so, Japanese leaders could plausibly deny the existence of these routine nuclear transits and their American counterparts could continue this vital practice unhindered.³⁸ This case demonstrates how fusing the two-level game assumption into an ideational approach provides the most compelling account of Japanese nuclear decision-making in this period, and this is also the case for the Sato Cabinet era.

Failings of the security model

The security model struggles to account for Japan's nuclear decision-making during the Sato Cabinet period (1964–1972). Recall that under the conditions of an anarchical, self-help system, states facing an existential—even nuclear—threat to their survival must secure access to a nuclear deterrent. Japan undeniably faced such a threat after China crossed the nuclear Rubicon in 1964, and had to react in kind.³⁹ The government commissioned a series of 'unofficial' cost–benefit analysis studies to investigate the viability of a homegrown nuclear weapons program.⁴⁰ These studies concluded that due to its small size and high population density, Japan was extremely vulnerable to atomic attack and

³⁰ Downer, 'The Bombed', 137; Downer, 'Peace and Democracy', 26; Hook, 'Evolution', 35–37; Naono, 'Atomic Bomb Sufferers', 224–241.

³¹ Hook, 'Evolution', 38; Naono, 'Atomic Bomb Sufferers', 228.

³² Downer, 'Peace and Democracy', 26; Hook, 'Evolution', 38–39; Naono, 'Atomic Bomb Sufferers', 228–231.

³³ Masakatsu Ota, quoted in Rublee, *Nonproliferation Norms*, 59.

³⁴ Rublee, *Nonproliferation Norms*, 95.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 97.

³⁶ Masakatsu Ota, 'Conceptual Twist of Japanese Nuclear Policy: Its Ambivalence and Coherence Under the U.S. Umbrella', *Journal for Peace and Nuclear Disarmament* 1, no. 1 (2018): 193–208, doi.org/10.1080/25751654.2018.1459286; Rublee, *Nonproliferation Norms*, 94–97.

³⁷ Ota, 'Conceptual Twist', 199–200.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Kase, 'The Costs and Benefits', 56–57; Ota, 'Conceptual Twist', 200.

⁴⁰ Kase, 'The Costs and Benefits', 56–62; Rublee, *Nonproliferation Norms*, 63–64.

lacked a viable nuclear test site, significantly decreasing the credibility of a nuclear deterrent.⁴¹ The reports reasoned that Tokyo could overcome these technical barriers—not to mention the substantial financial costs—for the sake of national interest and ending the country’s perpetual dependence on another power.⁴² By the prevailing realist logic, however, going nuclear was never a choice. Indeed, Japan proved itself to be an exception: it opted not to develop atomic weapons, despite facing numerous hostile nuclear adversaries (China being only the latest) and having the capabilities to do so.⁴³ The explanatory power of the ‘threat plus capability equals nuclear weapons acquisition’ formula fundamental to the security model is, therefore, lacking.

Factoring in the presence of an American-provided security guarantee could potentially redeem the realist account—as it was crucial to Japan’s nuclear decision-making—but even then doubts remain. Although (under the strictest interpretation of the security model) this variable should only come into play when states do not have the capability to develop nuclear weapons of their own, studies commissioned by the government nonetheless found it essential. For these studies, China’s nuclearisation posed an either-or choice: Japan could go nuclear and risk undermining the US–Japan relationship, or choose to strengthen it instead by relying more heavily on the US nuclear umbrella.⁴⁴ The reports ultimately reaffirmed Tokyo’s faith in America’s defence commitments, and scholars have since cited it as the most persuasive reason for Japan’s nuclear abstention.⁴⁵ Of course, the veracity of this conclusion should not go unchallenged, as it fails to account for the anxious behaviour exhibited by Japanese elites. Even after securing an ‘ironclad’ extended nuclear deterrence guarantee in 1965, Japanese prime minister Eisaku Sato still felt he needed to be reaffirmed of its existence numerous times during his tenure.⁴⁶ Likewise, there are multiple accounts of Japanese policymakers ‘gnashing their teeth’ over the unreliability of the US extended deterrent and longing for the day when Tokyo would acquire nuclear weapons of its own.⁴⁷ Once again, this article finds the security model to be ineffectual, for it alone cannot account for the persistence of Japanese leaders’ nuclear anxieties, nor the ‘sub-optimal’ path of dependence they had taken.

Enriching the classical ideational perspective

Turning instead to a classical ideational approach—which emphasises the threat and identity perceptions of Japanese leaders themselves—provides a better analysis. As discussed previously, only states headed by leaders of ‘oppositional nationalist’ temperament—those who both perceive an existential threat to their nation’s security and feel that they can confront this threat alone—develop a homegrown nuclear deterrent. Sato arguably fulfilled both criteria: like many of the Japanese elite, he was alarmed by China’s nuclearisation and would sooner be damned than admit that his proud nation was weak.⁴⁸ Consequently, he initially favoured the nuclear option when he came into office; however, he subsequently reversed course.⁴⁹ The operative question is why? One answer focuses on the construction of Japan’s postwar national identity and reconceptualisation of security along the lines of the Yoshida Doctrine introduced above. Japanese elites were conditioned to reject the self-help principle and take pride in their nation’s economic and diplomatic strength.⁵⁰ However, by the time the government’s studies were written, Japan’s economic power had exceeded all expectations, and going

⁴¹ Mark Fitzpatrick, *Asia’s Latent Nuclear Powers: Japan, South Korea and Taiwan* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 67; Kase, ‘The Costs and Benefits’, 59–63.

⁴² Fitzpatrick, *Asia’s Latent*, 67; Kase, ‘The Costs and Benefits’, 59; Rublee, *Nonproliferation Norms*, 87–88.

⁴³ Rublee, *Nonproliferation Norms*, 86–88.

⁴⁴ Kase, ‘The Costs and Benefits’, 59–62; Rublee, *Nonproliferation Norms*, 63–64.

⁴⁵ Fintan Hoey, ‘Japan and Extended Nuclear Deterrence: Security and Non-proliferation’, *Journal of Strategic Studies* 39, no. 4 (2016): 15, doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2016.1168010; Kase, ‘The Costs and Benefits’, 64; Ota, ‘Conceptual Twist’, 203.

⁴⁶ Ayako, ‘The Satō Cabinet’, 31–32; Hoey, ‘Japan and Extended’, 7–8.

⁴⁷ Rublee, *Nonproliferation Norms*, 88.

⁴⁸ Ota, ‘Conceptual Twist’, 200; Solingen, ‘The Perils of Prediction’, 140–142.

⁴⁹ Hoey, ‘Japan and Extended’, 8–10; Solingen, ‘The Perils of Prediction’, 140–142.

⁵⁰ Rublee, *Nonproliferation Norms*, 97; Solingen, ‘The Perils of Prediction’, 140–142.

nuclear would have squandered any future gains and thus undermined the Yoshida Doctrine.⁵¹ This 'skewed' perception of costs and benefits towards economic and reputational loss—as opposed to considerations over raw military strength—ultimately doomed Sato's nuclear ambitions, for he could not wrest his country from the identity it had made for itself.⁵² Overall, then, a classical ideational approach—one that focuses on the identity rather than security drivers behind nuclear decision-making—better accounts for Japan's choices under the Sato Cabinet.

In keeping with the thesis of this paper, investigating the two-level game Japanese leaders played at this time greatly enhances the strength of an ideational perspective. Government studies identified the public's nuclear 'allergy' as an additional constraining factor upon decision-making, warning that any moves towards an independent nuclear deterrent would inflame domestic opposition and in turn undermine Japan's national security from within.⁵³ Of course, this conclusion was not news to the Sato Cabinet, which had previously devised an ingenious two-pronged plan to belittle the opposition.⁵⁴ First, the government would criticise the basis for antinuclear sentiment by invoking the nuclear allergy metaphor which framed the public's attitude as an 'unusual' reaction to what was otherwise a perfectly harmless 'agent'.⁵⁵ In using this discursive choice, the government rejected the causal link between the experience of being atom-bombed and Japan's so-called 'special responsibility' to strive for nuclear abolition, stressing the importance of atomic weapons for the defence of Japan.⁵⁶ Second, the government opted to gradually expose the public to the 'nuclear allergen' by incrementally increasing the number of port calls made by US naval vessels suspected of carrying atomic weapons.⁵⁷ Therefore, through a combination of oppositional rhetoric and gradual exposure, the conservative government sought to make the nuclear allergy a thing of the past, clearing the way for a homegrown atomic deterrent; their need to do so demonstrates the shortcomings of the security model and the classical ideational approach.

The two-level game can make the best-made plans go awry, however, as attempts by policymakers to put their ideas into practice spectacularly backfired, entrenching antinuclear sentiment even further than otherwise would have been the case. Gradually exposing the Japanese public to the nuclear allergen proved counterproductive, as the first such visit by the US nuclear carrier *Enterprise* in 1968 produced an overwhelmingly negative reaction.⁵⁸ Thousands took to the streets in protests over three days, and what remained of the once-nationwide ban-the-bomb movement denounced the government's deepening reliance on nuclear weapons, leaving the Sato Cabinet understandably terrified of further social unrest.⁵⁹ Around this time, Sato also attempted to start a national discussion concerning the validity of Japan not producing, possessing, or introducing nuclear weapons.⁶⁰ His very utterance of these cardinal Japanese values ironically rekindled public support for what are now known as the Three Non-Nuclear Principles, which he subsequently adopted unamended out of fear of losing his position.⁶¹ Ultimately, antinuclear attitudes—and the government's failed attempts to change these beliefs—undeniably had a powerful influence on Japan's nuclear decision-making under the Sato Cabinet, in keeping with the paper's enriched ideational approach.

Sato's subsequent actions speak to the integrity of this conclusion, as he realised he was indeed playing a two-level game and therefore had to balance corrosive public sentiments against the need to ensure the continued viability of the US extended nuclear deterrent. Coming to regret his off-the-cuff remarks

⁵¹ Kase, 'The Costs and Benefits', 59–62; Rublee, *Nonproliferation Norms*, 65–66.

⁵² Rublee, *Nonproliferation Norms*, 65–66; Solingen, 'The Perils of Prediction', 140–142.

⁵³ Fitzpatrick, *Asia's Latent Nuclear Powers*, 57; Hoey, 'Japan and Extended Nuclear Deterrence', 10.

⁵⁴ Glenn D. Hook, 'The Nuclearisation of Language: Nuclear Allergy as Political Metaphor', *Journal of Peace Research* 21, no. 3 (1984): 259–275; Hook, 'Evolution', 40–41.

⁵⁵ Hook, 'The Nuclearisation of Language', 266.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 269.

⁵⁷ Ayako, 'The Satō Cabinet', 47; Hook, 'The Nuclearisation of Language', 259.

⁵⁸ Ayako, 'The Satō Cabinet', 47; Hook, 'The Nuclearisation of Language', 272; Naono, 'Atomic Bomb Sufferers', 236–237.

⁵⁹ Ayako, 'The Satō Cabinet', 47; Hook, 'The Nuclearisation of Language', 272; Naono, 'Atomic Bomb Sufferers', 236–237.

⁶⁰ Hoey, 'Japan and Extended Nuclear Deterrence', 10; Kase, 'The Costs and Benefits', 59.

⁶¹ Ayako, 'The Satō Cabinet', 39; Hoey, 'Japan and Extended Nuclear Deterrence', 10; Kase, 'The Costs and Benefits', 59.

which inspired the Three Non-Nuclear Principles, Sato decided to nullify them by making them contingent upon Japan's reliance on the US extended nuclear deterrent.⁶² Washington's ability to provide said deterrent, however, was hampered by Sato's pledge to refrain from introducing US nuclear weapons into Japan, the third of the Three Non-Nuclear Principles, which he never intended to uphold.⁶³ Secret agreements ensured that the Americans would continue bringing these ordnances into Japan as a matter of routine, sustaining a practice favoured by conservative leaders since 1953.⁶⁴ While antinuclear attitudes may have changed the means employed by the government, the ends they pursued during this formative period remained the same as they strengthened the nation's relationship with the United States above all else.

Conclusion

This article has argued that an enriched ideational approach focused on 'divided decision-makers' who work between international and domestic politics more persuasively accounts for Japan's nuclear policymaking in the Cold War era than other theoretical alternatives. The article began by establishing two competing theoretical perspectives on nuclear proliferation which existed in the current literature and then added a third, enriching the ideational approach and tailoring it to Japanese conditions. Following this, it turned to Japan's postwar history, contextualising decision-makers' consistent policy preferences and the development of the two-level game environment they found themselves situated within. Subsequently, it presented two of the security model's explanations for Japan's nuclear forbearance during the Sato Cabinet period—lack of relative power vis-a-vis its neighbours and the existence of a US-provided security guarantee—ultimately concluding that neither explanation is compelling in and of itself. Lastly, the article presented the traditional ideational approach on the issue, before demonstrating the potential benefits of enriching it through examining the two-level game decision-making environment Japanese leaders were contending with at the time. Overall, the paper concurs with those who deem it necessary to discard the security model on nuclear proliferation, as its explanatory power is found lacking when compared to newer ideational-centric approaches.

On a final note, it would be wise to return to the opening premise of this article: the haphazard tapestry scholars encounter when reviewing Japan's nuclear policy. In hindsight, Tokyo's nuclear ambiguity is not an aberration as initially assumed, but rather the product of a complex two-level game decision-making process. The competing priorities of Japan's leaders—their desire to survive politically, manage the public's antinuclear attitudes, and secure their country in an increasingly adversarial environment—clashed between 1945 and 1972, producing a nuclear policy with only one true constant: the nation's relationship with the United States must be strengthened above all else.

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⁶² Ayako, 'The Satō Cabinet', 42; Downer, 'Peace and Democracy', 30; Hoey, 'Japan and Extended Nuclear Deterrence', 9–10.

⁶³ Ayako, 'The Satō Cabinet', 49; Downer, 'Peace and Democracy', 30; Hoey, 'Japan and Extended Nuclear Deterrence', 13.

⁶⁴ Ayako, 'The Satō Cabinet', 49; Downer, 'Peace and Democracy', 30; Hoey, 'Japan and Extended Nuclear Deterrence', 13.

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