



Institute of Chinese Studies

# WEDNESDAY SEMINAR

*The Politics of Pacifism:  
The Yoshida Doctrine in  
Post-War Japan*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Speaker:  
**Akshat Mayne**

26 June 2024

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Speaker:** Mr. Akshat Mayne, Doctoral Scholar, Japanese Studies, Centre for East Asian Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

**Chair:** Prof. Srabani Roy Choudhary, Professor, Japanese Studies, Centre for East Asian Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

**Date:** 26 June 2024

**Venue:** Zoom Webinar

- The seminar featured Mr. Akshat Mayne, who examined the institutionalisation of pacifism in post-war Japan, arguing that it was not an inherently Japanese concept and was imposed by the Americans. The Chair, Prof. Srabani Roy Choudhary highlighted the relevance of pacifism and the Yoshida Doctrine in facilitating Japan's economic recovery and foreign policy orientation.
- Mr. Mayne traced the philosophical origins of Pacifism to Europe, especially in the post-World War I context, and contended that there was no existing Pacifist tradition in Japan before 1945. It was a strategic imposition, brought in through Article IX of the US-drafted constitution, under the orders of General Douglas MacArthur, the Supreme Commander Allied Powers (SCAP).
- The speaker analysed how pacifism shaped Japan's defence posture through various prime ministerial tenures. Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru's emphasis on economic reconstruction while relying on the US for security came to be known as the Yoshida Doctrine. This approach limited Japan's military capacity while allowing for rapid economic development.
- The speaker traced the shifts in Japan's approach to the US-Japan Security Treaty through the leadership tenures of Kishi Nobusuke and Sato Eisaku. While Kishi sought revisions to reduce US dominance, Sato emphasised reclaiming Okinawa while projecting Japan as a pacifist yet responsible international actor. These leaders sought greater autonomy while preserving the pacifist framework.
- With Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro, the possibility of Japanese rearmament surfaced more prominently. His tenure was defined by the tension between a desire to

assume a greater security role and the domestic and constitutional constraints of pacifism. The US' Guam Doctrine further pushed Japan to reconsider its dependence on American military support.

- The Gulf War in 1991 marked a critical point for Japan's pacifist identity, as it faced pressure to contribute militarily. Japan's response — monetary support without troop deployment — highlighted the limitations of the Yoshida Doctrine. This episode exposed vulnerabilities in Japan's pacifist stance and reflected a growing need to redefine its international role.
- Concluding the presentation, Mr. Mayne argued that by the 1990s, cracks in the Yoshida Doctrine began to appear more prominently. Successive leaders like Koizumi Junichiro and Abe Shinzō adopted stances which eventually became “proactive pacifism” (*sekkyokuteki heiwashugi*), reflecting a recalibration of pacifism in light of evolving regional and global security challenges.

**Disclaimer:** This is a summary produced for purposes of dissemination and for generating wider discussion. All views expressed here should be understood to be those of the speakers and individual participants, and not necessarily of the Institute of Chinese Studies. Since this is a summary, it cannot be used for citation without confirming with the speaker(s).