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# Defending culture, defining politics: Conservatism and the ideological politics of rearmament in postwar Japan

A hybrid *u:japan* lecture by Karin Narita

Thursday  
2024-04-25  
18<sup>00</sup>~19<sup>30</sup>



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Japan has long been known for its commitment to a pacifist foreign policy as stipulated in Article 9 of the post-World War II constitution. Despite some opposition, for much of Japan's postwar history there has been a mainstream foreign policy consensus to maintain a security treaty with the United States and limit rearmament. In the years since the end of the Cold War, however, there has been a concerted movement urging constitutional revision in order to legalize militarisation. This project has been driven by younger, more radical conservatives at odds with the moderate conservative establishment.

This talk examines the rise of a hawkish foreign policy ideology in post-World War II Japan and traces the intellectual underpinnings of this movement. These ideas can be traced to the (re)emergence of a reactionary and culturally

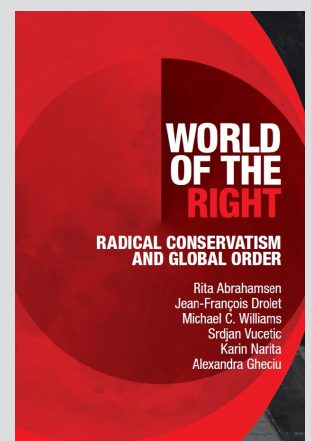
traditionalist conservatism which styled itself as the 'New Right' (Shin-Uyoku) at the height of Japan's postwar economic power. This intellectual movement located the source of social malaise in Japan's political and cultural reliance on the US. What ensued was a hawkish position regarding the role of the Japanese state in international politics, vis-à-vis the pacifist consensus.

First, drawing on the discourse of conservative political commentators and ideologues, I demonstrate that the arguments for state power, sovereignty, and rearmament are entrenched in a culturally particularistic logic. Second, I show the alliances and divergence among varying ideological factions and their interlocutors that make up the politics of rearmament on the Japanese Right.



## Karin Narita

is a postdoctoral Research Associate in Japanese Politics and International Relations at the School of East Asian Studies, University of Sheffield. Her main research focus is the intellectual history of the Global Right and she is particularly interested in right-wing ideologies in the Asia-Pacific. She previously taught political theory and international relations at Queen Mary University of London, where she received her PhD, and at King's College London. Her research has appeared in *Millennium*, *International Political Sociology* and elsewhere, and her co-authored monograph *Globalizing the Right* is forthcoming with Cambridge University Press.



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