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How is Japan's self-identification as a 'peace state' linked to its reluctance to admit refugees?

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Abstract

This study analyses the structure through which postwar Japan's peace-state identity has become linked to the reluctance to admit refugees, by examining three layers: memory politics, affective politics, and institutional securitisation. It demonstrates that victim-centered memory—rooted in the atomic-bomb experience—has entailed an attenuation of perpetrator memory and, via shame-avoidance and the myth of homogeneity, has constructed outsiders as threats and become embedded in administrative practice. Comparative analysis highlights the conditionality and plasticity of this structure, and the study advances the possibility of a shift from "peace as declaration" to "peace as practice" through the simultaneous reform of memory, discourse, and institutions.

103 words

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Abbreviations

AfD	Alternative für Deutschland (Alternative for Germany)
ATD	Alternatives to Detention (plural: ATDs)
CNN	Cable News Network (as in “CNN effect”)
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
DiD	Difference-in-Differences
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ICRRA	Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act (Japan)
ISA	Immigration Services Agency (Japan)
JAR	Japan Association for Refugees
JFBA	Japan Federation of Bar Associations
KPI	Key Performance Indicator (pl.: KPIs)
MOJ	Ministry of Justice (Japan)
NHK	Japan Broadcasting Corporation (Nippon Hōsō Kyōkai)
PKO	(UN) Peacekeeping Operation (pl.: PKOs)
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
U.S.	United States (of America)
e-Gov	e-Government (Japan’s e-Gov Law Search)

INTRODUCTION

On August 6 and 9, 1945, the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki engraved into postwar Japan a normative consciousness of "never repeating the tragedy of war," symbolised by the inscription on the cenotaph at Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park: "let all the souls here rest in peace, for we shall not repeat the evil" (City of Hiroshima, 2025). This victimisation experience became closely connected to the pacifism of Article 9 of the Constitution—renunciation of war, non-possession of armed forces, and denial of the right of belligerency—and has shaped Japan's self-identification as a "peace state" (Ministry of Defense, Japan, 2022; Ishikawa, 2023). At the same time, in the international arena, Article 9 has been linked to global appeals for the universalisation of peace norms, as exemplified by the Ten Fundamental Principles of the Hague Appeal for Peace (1999). However, Japan's refugee policy has been characterised by a dual structure described as "open wallet, closed doors" (Omata, 2015): active financial contributions to international humanitarian efforts on the one hand, and restrictive refugee admission at the domestic level on the other. The central question of this study, therefore, is: "How is Japan's self-identification as a 'peace state' linked to its reluctance to admit refugees?"

The problem-setting of this research stems from the author's personal experience of growing up in Hiroshima and engaging in the transmission of hibakusha testimonies, while simultaneously encountering, through dialogue with students from neighboring Asian countries, a palpable sense of hostility toward Japan rooted in its colonialism and aggression—topics largely absent from the author's education. From these encounters emerged the insight that postwar Japanese conceptions of peace may be grounded in an asymmetry between the emphasis on victimhood memory and the attenuation of perpetrator memory. Yet, this paper treats such an insight merely as a hypothetical point of departure, and proceeds to examine it through qualitative analysis based on primary sources, namely policy documents and media discourses.

This study interprets Japan's postwar restriction of refugee admissions as the outcome of the mutually reinforcing interaction among three layers: memory politics, affective politics, and institutional securitisation. First, Japan's victim-centered memory structure tends to be marked by the asymmetry of vivid victim recall and attenuated perpetrator recall (Benjamin, 1998). Commemorative practices and media representations promote the visibility of victimhood and the elicitation of empathy, yet these frameworks often render disasters as sudden occurrences while backgrounding the political causes and the power relations of

perpetration and victimisation—an alignment consistent with the *emergency imaginary* (Calhoun, 2010). Second, this framework, mediated by the avoidance of shame and the myth of homogeneity, can strengthen an affective politics that perceives outsiders as latent threats. Post-9/11 threat framings amplified such affect, creating fertile ground for projecting anxieties toward the unknown and unfamiliar onto refugees (Razum, Wenner, & Bozorgmehr, 2016). Third, such affect is translated into institutional stickiness through the securitisation process—via speech acts, as conceptualised by the Copenhagen School (Buzan et al., 1998), and via the embedding of practices into bureaucratic routines, as highlighted by the Paris School (Bigo). This has taken the form of strict adjudication, high evidentiary burdens, and detention-first approaches. Consequently, Japan's self-image as a "peace state" is reproduced in ways more congenial to the maintenance of domestic order than to the fulfillment of universal obligations of refugee protection.

On this basis, the paper presents the following working hypothesis: victim-centered memory reinforces obsessive nationalism through the avoidance of shame and the myth of homogeneity; this affect is translated into securitisation in discourse and bureaucratic practice, thereby reproducing restrictive refugee admission. Giddens (1991) conceives self-identity as a reflexively organised project, whereby identity is dynamically and negotiably reconstructed. Building on this malleability, and in light of Galtung's (2014) theory of peace, this paper explores both empirically and normatively the possibility of redefining Japan's self-understanding from "negative peace"-as non-war — to "positive peace," encompassing universal refugee protection.

The contribution of this study is threefold. First, it integrates the relationship between peace-state identity and refugee policy into a relational model that interweaves memory politics, affective politics, and institutional securitisation. Second, it reinterprets the historical development of Japan's institutional refugee practice from the perspective of the disjuncture between financial contributions and admission practices. Third, it links comparative implications with policy implications, presenting a normative route for re-situating universalist refugee protection at the core of peace practice.

The structure of this paper is as follows. Section 1 (literature review) surveys the scholarship on memory politics, affective politics, and securitisation, and introduces the proposed relational model. Section 2 (background) outlines the historical development of Japan's refugee regime and practices, clarifying the empirical reality of "open wallet, closed doors." Section 3 (discussion) elaborates the points of connection within the mechanism, examines alternative explanations (geography, labor demand, alliance politics), analyses conditionality

through comparative cases, and derives normative and policy implications for a shift from management to protection. The conclusion proposes reform principles that simultaneously reconfigure memory, discourse, and institutions, and identifies the conditions for moving from “peace as declaration” to “peace as practice.”

CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Foundations: Memory Politics and Peace Identity

Since the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, peace ideals such as "never repeat" and "the abolition of nuclear weapons" have been closely tied to Article 9 of the Constitution, reinforcing Japan's self-identification as a "war victim nation" (Yamazaki, 2019). Okuda (2010) points out that the collective memory supporting this self-identification was constructed and internalised as that of the "only nation to suffer atomic bombing." Gluck (2019) positions memory as a structure that is "constantly reconstructed by present political and historical contexts," thereby relativising the neutrality of historical narratives. Moreover, in the Pacific War, memories of victimhood and perpetration were diverse depending on the standpoint of Japanese soldiers or ordinary civilians, and no single narrative exists (Abe, 2025). The process by which memories of past wars and of victimhood/perpetration become arenas of political contestation and identity struggles is referred to as *memory politics*. John Dower (Professor Emeritus at Massachusetts Institute of Technology) has also pointed out that people distort and reconstruct memory according to convenience, suggesting that exhibitions, textbooks, and commemorative practices function as mediations through which a "desirable past" is retold (Chugoku Shimbun, 2015). In this theoretical light, Selden (2008) argues that Japanese historical revisionism—such as denial of the "comfort women" issue or official visits to the Yasukuni Shrine where wartime leaders are enshrined—and U.S. discourses justifying the atomic bombings are homologous as selective configurations of memory. Benjamin's (1998) theory of mutual recognition further highlights the dynamics of acknowledgment and denial over traumatic pasts, theorising how escape from perpetrator responsibility and self-justification shape national identity and policy preferences. On this basis, the working hypothesis is that memories of victimhood have shaped Japan's peace identity and, by extension, have shaped the normative orientation of its refugee policy.

2.2Institutionalisation of Atomic Bombing Memory: August Journalism, Commemorative Practices, and Narratives

The institutionalisation and reproduction of the "only atomic-bombed nation" frame can be sketched as follows. First, while estimates of human losses vary, approximately 140,000 people in Hiroshima and 70,000 in Nagasaki were dead by the end of 1945, and the sheer scale of civilian deaths from this "indiscriminate attack" has constituted the core of Japan's memory politics (NHK, n.d.). Second, in external narratives, the stepwise declassification of

U.S. archival documents since the 1960s has spurred debates over the decision-making process behind the bombings and the "atomic diplomacy" concerning relations with the Soviet Union (Burr, 2020). Third, domestically, wartime and peace-related reporting peaks every August in what is termed "August Journalism" (Yonekura, 2017; Ishikawa, 2023), alongside annual memorial ceremonies in Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the proliferation of municipal-level "peace declarations" (with recent estimates indicating 93.2% of municipalities have adopted such declarations) (Itō, 2025). These "media rituals/commemorative practices," through visual and embodied representations of suffering, have recursively organised the strong recall of victimisation—including atomic bombings, air raids, and kamikaze deaths. While such recursivity cultivates universal empathy, it simultaneously selects and arranges memories according to present political contexts (Gluck, 2019), thereby moralising a founding narrative of "reconstruction and peace won upon the sacrifice of the atomic dead," and connecting this to asymmetries of victim/perpetrator memory through circuits of recognition and denial (Benjamin, 1998). The following section examines how this asymmetry shapes domestic and international frictions of memory and informs policy preferences.

2.3 Asymmetry of Victim/Perpetrator Memory and Competitive Victimhood

Yoshida (2016) critiques the asymmetry wherein the memories of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are readily shared and transmitted, whereas memories of colonial rule and aggression in Asia remain relatively fragile—constituting a political source of historical friction with neighboring countries. Seaton (2007, 29–31) argues that states, while emphasising their suffering in official memory, allow counter-memories to reinforce a binary of "perpetrator = evil / victim = good," producing "memory rifts" of mutual dehumanisation and estrangement. The 1990s witnessed the resurgence of debates over war responsibility and memory practices. In 1993, Prime Minister Hosokawa Morihiro explicitly apologised for Japan's aggression, while Chief Cabinet Secretary Kōno Yōhei issued the "Kōno Statement" on the "comfort women" issue (Gluck, 2007). As the gaze of war memory expanded to include sexual violence and civilian suffering, Gluck (2007) described this as a "cauldron of memory." At the same time, Orr (2001) and Seaton (2007) noted that in domestic politics—peace movements, compensation debates, textbook controversies, and the Yasukuni issue—images of victimhood were mobilised as political resources. Abe (2025) analyses the narrative of the Gyokuon-hōsō (imperial rescript on surrender), showing how narratives of "denying

aggression" and "defeat for world peace" intertwined victim and perpetrator consciousness while fictionalising moral coherence. Specifically, Emperor Hirohito's address framed Japan's defeat as a voluntary act for world peace, imposing despair, resignation, and perpetrator awareness on loyal subjects, yet allowing them to remain victims vis-à-vis the U.S. as the obvious perpetrator. Domestically, this promoted a "purification of victimhood"; externally, it induced tendencies of responsibility avoidance. These dynamics further escalated into memory struggles through competitive victimhood (Gluck, 2019; Benjamin, 1998).

2.4 Postcolonial Melancholia and the Myth of Homogeneity

Gilroy's *Postcolonial Melancholia* (2006) offers a framework for understanding how failures in the "work of mourning" over imperial loss reproduce regressive and exclusionary orientations. While the disjunction between victim consciousness and perpetrator consciousness arises from Japan's particular historical experience, it is also a phenomenon common to other former empires. In the United Kingdom, for instance, with the premise of Western civilisational superiority, the refusal to conduct mourning as genuine remorse is transformed into imperial nostalgia as part of the national narrative. In Japan, the predominance of "victim consciousness" after 1945 left the mourning of colonialism (in Korea and Taiwan) and wartime aggression (in China and Southeast Asia) insufficient (Conrad, 2014). The victimhood narrative fused with the myth of ethnic and cultural homogeneity (Oguma, 2002), legitimising national integration during postwar reconstruction and the high-growth era (Igarashi, 2000). Against this backdrop of moral pacifism and antimilitarist self-image, the unresolved imperial past and insular closure combined to weaken both empathy for the suffering of refugees and recognition of continuity between imperial history and the present, reinforcing cultural and psychological boundaries (Horiuchi & Ono, 2023). Benjamin (2004), drawing on Freud's (1920) notion of "repetition compulsion," theorises that excessive identification with victimhood fosters the securitisation of the Other and blocks circuits of mutual recognition. As Keen (2012) argues, this tension is closely tied not only to the recognition of historical facts but also to the moral-emotional dynamics of shame avoidance and manipulation. Keen (2023) elaborates on the politics of shame and shamelessness, showing that denial and avoidance of shame reinforce mass defensive nationalism, and that the "politics of shame" resonates with the myth of homogeneity to intensify exclusion. As he wryly terms it the "golden age of shame," colonial

history should evoke ethical reflection and social responsibility. Yet, as Wodak (2021) notes through the notion of "shameless normalisation," leaders such as President Trump, by rejecting shame through slogans like "America First," transform shame into political capital, recasting citizens as those who should not feel shame. Thus, forgetting and ignoring colonial and wartime sins manifests as shamelessness, which in turn foments exclusionary politics (Keen, 2023, cited by English, 2023). Alongside postcolonial melancholia, this dynamic is reinforced by myths of cultural homogeneity and the politics of shame/shamelessness. Hage's (2003) concept of paranoid nationalism, analysing multicultural Australia, highlights how *worrying* is linked to the exclusion of others, wherein the state mythologises internal homogeneity and elevates border control and security obsessions as affective politics (Jakubowicz, 2023; Nakagawa, 2022). The "phantoms of empire"—postcolonial melancholia—thus intersect with defensive security reflexes, legitimising repressive governance as a moralised state of exception (Agamben, 2005) and scapegoating asylum seekers (Huysmans, 2006). Consequently, Japan's self-image as a "peace state" tends to operate in greater affinity with domestic order and stability than with universal inclusion (Horiuchi, 2023; Yoneyama, 1999).

2.5 Paranoid Nationalism and Securitisation: Translation into Institutions and Discourses

This cultural xenophobia incorporates migrants and refugees into a *governmentality of unease*, forming the basis for justifying exclusion at institutional and policy levels (Bigo, 2002; Huysmans, 2006). Security studies—particularly the Paris and Copenhagen Schools—offer valuable frameworks for clarifying how this cultural exclusion is "securitised" and embedded in everyday practices and bureaucratic routines. According to Bigo's (2006) concept of the "field of security professionals," security is sustained not only through military means but also through bureaucratic mechanisms, professional networks, and everyday practices. Japan's Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act (ICRRA) institutionalises high evidentiary burdens on applicants and grants discretionary authority to immigration officers to distinguish "genuine" from "false" refugees, prioritising immigration control over protection (Japan, 1951). Exclusion thus becomes normalised as an organisational routine rather than an exception. In the Copenhagen School, securitisation theory highlights how political leaders' and media speech acts constitute refugees as existential threats, legitimising exceptional measures such as long-term detention and restrictive admission (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde, 1998; Huysmans, 2006; Ceyhan &

Tsoukala, 2002; Bourbeau, 2011). In Japan, the term *nanmin* ("refugee/asylum seeker") has been used since the Meiji period; until the early postwar years, *bōmeisha* (exiles) was more common. After 1945, meanings included "Japanese repatriates from Manchuria," "forced migrants due to Japan's invasion and defeat," and "economic destitutes" (Ichinokawa & Komori, 2007). Refugees were thus positioned both domestically and internationally until Japan began receiving Indochinese refugees in 1978, reframing refugees as a matter of international cooperation (Nakagawa, 2022; Shindo, n.d.). At a press conference following the 70th UN General Assembly in 2015, Prime Minister Abe stated that Japan must first address its demographic challenges (aging, low fertility, women's labor participation) before considering refugee admission (Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, 2015). M. G. Sheftall of Shizuoka University (cited in McCurry, 2015) remarked that invoking immigration as a solution to demographic crisis was "political suicide," yet this discourse was criticised as a framing to justify Japan's reluctance to admit refugees. Media portrayals of "bogus refugees," such as reporting on Nepali brokers, have reinforced public hostility and distrust by depicting refugees as system abusers or security risks (Omata, 2015). His formulation of "open wallet, closed doors" resonated with national imaginaries of Japan as a "family-state" and framed refugees as exceptional subjects requiring management beyond the ordinary political realm. By integrating the perspectives of both schools, refugee exclusion in Japan can be understood as a structure in which cultural exclusionism is translated into bureaucratic institutions and political discourses, thereby normalising "peace through exclusion." Indeed, given Japan's limited everyday contact with refugees, domestic experimental evidence shows that mere exposure to threat-framed reporting strengthens opposition to refugee admission. This indicates that "latent anxieties lacking concrete basis" sustain exclusionary preferences, giving stickiness to the chain of cultural prejudice, bureaucratic procedures, and exceptionalist policies (Horiuchi & Yoshikuni, 2018; Hashimoto, 2024). Thus, memory, institutions, and discourse operate synergistically, positioning refugees not as "rights-bearing subjects of protection" but as "potential threats to social order."

2.6 Normative Shifts and Just War-Oriented Pacifism

Orr (2001) highlights how the narrative of "victims as heroes" formed in postwar Japan mobilised anti-nuclear and peace movements while producing a kind of moral exceptionalism—framing Japan as the nation that "learned the lessons of war." After the Cold

War, the emphasis on shared values and human rights norms sometimes inclined toward a view of peace that prioritied public justice and justified the ethical use of force—that is, peace only has value when it aligns with justice, and war may be justified in the name of justice (Fujiwara, 2022; Bessho, n.d.). Japan's international contribution, initially criticised during the Gulf War for its "checkbook diplomacy" (USD 13.5 billion in financial aid without troop deployment), subsequently expanded to include personnel participation in PKOs, reflecting the pressure for more substantive involvement (Akimoto, 2005; Establishment Process, 2002). The Three Strategic Documents (2022) outlined plans to increase defense spending to 2% of GDP by 2027 and acquire counterstrike capabilities, while public opinion surveys in the same period showed majority support for defense buildup—indicating a redefinition of the peace-state identity at both policy and public levels (Government of Japan, 2022; Watanabe, 2023). This reflects the growing influence of political pacifism—or just-war pacifism—as described by Russell (1943–44): peace can coexist with militarism as long as violence is controlled by politics (Walzer, 2015). As Berger (1998) observes in "From Swords into Plowshares and Back," such discourse reverses the ends and means of peace, cloaking war under the rhetoric of peace while lowering its visible costs, thereby risking the prolongation and normalisation of war. This sits in tension with Galtung's (1969) concept of positive peace (Moyn, 2021). For example, the Bush administration justified its war in Afghanistan as "Operation Infinite Justice" (later changed to "Operation Enduring Freedom" for religious reasons), normalising military force by democracies as an instrument of justice and order (The White House, 2001). Similarly, Japan's 2013 "Proactive Contribution to Peace" articulated in its National Security Strategy, against the backdrop of worsening Taiwan and North Korea issues and Russia's invasion of Ukraine, left space for a pro-force interpretation through conditional collective self-defense (Cabinet Secretariat (Japan), 2013). Fujiwara (2022) criticises this as a form of conceptual pacifism that nominally proclaims peace while evading real security choices. Oliver (2017), in turn, critiques Japan's "carceral humanitarianism," whereby external humanitarianism coexists with restrictive detention and refugee rejection domestically. Narratives such as "bogus refugees" resonate with restrictive preferences, and Horiuchi & Ono (2018) empirically demonstrate how such threat framings sustain public hostility and indifference. In sum, the tension between the ends (inclusion, alleviation of structural violence) and the means (conditional acceptance of force) converges into policy preferences that prioritise domestic order over external inclusion, imparting institutional stickiness to refugee exclusion.

2.7 Theoretical Integration: Causal Chain from Atomic Memory to Refugee Reluctance

The relational model proposed in this study illustrates a pathway whereby victim-centered war memory, mediated by shame avoidance and the myth of homogeneity, strengthens paranoid nationalism, which is then translated into institutional and discursive securitisation, converging in restrictive refugee admission. Specifically, the victimhood framework centered on the "only atomic-bombed nation" curtails the work of mourning, reinforces a self-image of a "homogeneous national society," and inflates the emotional image of the refugee as an "external disruptor." Through bureaucratic and discursive translation, refugees are positioned not as "rights-bearing subjects of protection" but as "potential risks to order." This securitisation, under the logic of "prioritising public justice," fortifies political pacifism—or just-war pacifism—and resonates with Japan's "proactive contribution to peace." Accordingly, the multilayered linkage from victim memory, to homogeneity and shame, to affective politics, to institutional/discursive securitisation, and the norm of domestic-order prioritisation explains the tilt toward negative peace—peace as non-war and order preservation—rather than positive peace of universal inclusion and human security, thereby legitimising Japan's reluctance toward refugee admission.

2.8 Synthesis: Positioning of This Study and Research Gaps

Existing scholarship has separately elucidated the victim-centered memory structures of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the politics of shame regarding imperial pasts, the myth of homogeneity and paranoid nationalism, and securitisation in bureaucratic and discursive domains. At the same time, while institutional analyses of Japan's refugee policy—covering Indochinese admissions, ICRRA operations, restrictive third-country resettlement, the introduction of complementary protection after 2023, and detention/deportation controversies—are abundant, few studies have integratively tested, as a single causal model, how Japan's peace identity, rooted in atomic memory, is translated into selective empathy and exceptionalism through administrative operations and political discourse, resulting in ultra-low recognition rates and prolonged detention. Furthermore, the mechanisms generating differential treatment—such as rapid and generous responses to Ukrainian refugees versus strict practices toward applicants from Myanmar, the Middle East, and Africa—remain unexplained. How cultural proximity, geopolitics, and alliance politics intersect with frameworks of shame and homogeneity is an unresolved research frontier at the nexus of memory politics and securitisation studies. To address this gap, this study undertakes: (i) a

cross-sectional collection of commemorative practices, exhibitions, textbooks, and hibakusha testimonies representing victim memory; (ii) an analysis of speech acts in prime ministerial addresses, parliamentary debates, ministerial documents, and media reports; and (iii) an examination of operational practices such as recognition criteria.

CHAPTER 2: Methodology

This study adopts an interpretivist approach, centering on qualitative document analysis of government records and media discourses, while integrating process tracing with narrative and frame analysis to examine the causal chain linking victim memory, affective politics, securitisation of institutions and discourses, and restrictive refugee admission. Since the norms and emotions embedded in memory, narratives, and discourse (shame/shamelessness, the myth of homogeneity, securitising moves) are context-dependent and difficult to capture through statistical correlation, close interpretive reading of textual meaning is deemed appropriate (Yanow, 2000; Bowen, 2009). Research on securitisation and policy discourse has established designs for reconstructing causal pathways through systematic readings of primary documents and media reports (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde, 1998; Balzacq, 2011; Bennett and Checkel, 2015; Beach and Pedersen, 2019). This study draws on this accumulated methodological foundation (process tracing). For comparison of policy narratives and normative claims, it employs narrative policy analysis (Roe, 1994; Jones and McBeth, 2010) and frame analysis (Entman, 1993; Hajer, 1995).

The scope and sampling are as follows. The period covered is 2001–2025, encompassing post-9/11 securitisation and the 2023 revision introducing complementary protection. The corpus is divided into (i) policy documents (ICRRA-related laws, implementing regulations, operational guidelines, prime ministerial speeches, Diet proceedings, Ministry of Justice and Immigration Services Agency white papers), and (ii) media discourses (editorials and features of national newspapers, public broadcasting news and features, including “August Journalism”). Searches utilise the National Diet Library minutes search, e-Gov law database, the websites of the Prime Minister’s Office, Ministry of Justice, and Immigration Services Agency, UNHCR Data, and press databases (Factiva, G-Search, Nikkei Telecon), with combinations of terms such as refugee/peace/memory/victim consciousness / atomic bomb / proactive peace/refugee detention/security/myth of homogeneity / human rights protection. Selection criteria prioritise primary and original materials directly tied to policy turning points (government documents, laws, prime ministerial speeches), exclude secondary summaries or opinions, and ensure diversity of positions (governmental, critical, neutral). This design is consistent with established methodologies in securitisation studies and policy process research that trace institutional change on the basis of documents.

In terms of analytic procedure, paragraphs and utterances are used as coding units, manually indexed with major frames such as victimhood narrative/myth of homogeneity/shame–

shamelessness/threat–security/control vs. protection / just war discourse / evidentiary burden / non-refoulement and ATD / nationality neutrality (Schreier, 2012; Entman, 1993). Each fragment is organised into an evidentiary matrix specifying speaker, date, and source. Frame configurations (intensity, rephrasing, co-occurrence) are compared before and after critical turning points. Subsequently, synchrony with administrative circulars, guideline updates, and implementation references is verified through pattern matching and process tracing (Beach and Pedersen, 2019; Bennett and Checkel, 2015). Securitisation is judged to occur when the three elements—threat articulation, justification of exceptional measures, and audience acceptance (editorials, public opinion, institutionalisation)—are observed. For interpretation, the perspective of the governmentality of unease inherent in migration governance is also employed as a supplementary lens (Bigo, 2002). Competing narratives—protection as peace contribution versus domestic order first—are compared as linked chains of problem definition, causality, moral evaluation, and prescription.

The mechanism-testing design involves comparison across pre- and post-turning points. The hypothesised mechanism is: victim memory - affective politics (shame/homogeneity orientation/securitisation of threat) - securitisation - restrictive/selective admission. For each key turning point, a 12–24month observation window is used to trace (a) evocations of memory, (b) affective vocabulary and threat constructions, (c) simultaneous presence of the three securitisation elements, and (d) operational indicators of selectivity (fast-track rejection, deportation, detention/ATD, complementary protection standards), across a sequence from primary documents -administrative circulars - official explanations -editorials. Turning points include: 2010 introduction of third-country resettlement; 2013 declaration of “proactive contribution to peace”; 2015 prime ministerial keynote speeches (at the UN, etc.); 2018 revision of refugee recognition procedures; 2023 ICRRA revision introducing complementary protection; and Japan’s responses to Ukrainian refugees (2022–2024). Confounding factors (alliances, geopolitics, labor demand, demographics, security shocks) are coded as mediators or moderators only when explicitly referenced in contemporaneous primary documents and statistically correlated fluctuations are observable; they are not treated as independent determinants.

To ensure validity and reliability, three procedures are adopted: (i) triangulation across policy documents, media, and international organisations to judge whether descriptions converge, supplement, or contradict one another (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Bowen, 2009); (ii) auditability through the preservation of search logs, exclusion reasons, and codebooks, thereby ensuring an accessible audit trail; and (iii) negative case analysis and disconfirming

evidence collection (e.g., inclusive discourses, rapid refugee recognition, active use of ATDs) to avoid overgeneralisation and specify the boundary conditions of the mechanism (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, 2014). The limitations of this study are as follows: absence of primary fieldwork (interviews, participant observation) limits insight into micro-level practices; the corpus is skewed toward Japanese- and English-language sources, potentially underrepresenting subaltern voices; official media may downplay opposition or present imbalanced coverage, introducing information bias; comparative analysis is employed as an auxiliary rather than a strict most-similar-systems design; and economic, geographic, institutional capacity, and alliance variables cannot be statistically controlled in full. Accordingly, media reports are used only as clues to factual contexts, interpretation prioritises peer-reviewed research and primary policy documents, and external validity is located in theoretical generalisation rather than population inference (Gerring, 2007; Seawright and Gerring, 2008).

Regarding positionality and ethics, the author has personal experience in Hiroshima transmitting hibakusha testimonies, which cultivates sensitivity to the ethical implications of victim memory but may also generate desirability bias in interpretation. To mitigate this, reflective memos documenting interpretive decisions are maintained, and systematic collection of counter-evidence ensures neutrality through critical cross-reading (Finlay, 2002). Data are restricted to public and open sources, with attention to accurate citation and avoidance of unnecessary personal identification.

For comparative positioning, a small number of cases—Germany, the UK, Poland, Hungary, Israel, and Rwanda—are referenced to examine how memory practices (treatment of victimhood and perpetration) intersect with refugee policies, thereby estimating the conditionality of the proposed mechanism (under what conditions it is strengthened or weakened). Comparative analysis serves as a theoretical auxiliary line to indicate the scope and limits of the hypothesis, while the evidentiary weight remains on Japanese documentary evidence (Gerring, 2007; Seawright and Gerring, 2008).

Through these procedures, the causal chain from victim memory to affective politics to securitisation of institutions and discourses to restrictive refugee admission is rendered visible as linkages across documents and shifts in narrative forms. In doing so, this study provides a theoretically and empirically grounded answer to the central question: “How is Japan’s self-identification as a ‘peace state’ linked to its reluctance to admit refugees?”

CHAPTER 3: Background: Japan's Refugee Policy

Japan's acceptance of refugees began with its accession to the 1951 Refugee Convention in 1981, prompted by the Indochinese refugee crisis, and the implementation of its domestic refugee system in 1982 (UNHCR, 1982). Thereafter, the number of applications remained low (ranging from several dozen to several hundred annually), until exceeding 10,000 for the first time in 2016 and approaching 20,000 in 2017 (ISA, 2017). During the COVID-19 period (2020–2022), applications declined sharply, but in recent years they have shown a recovery trend toward pre-pandemic levels (Kishida, 2025). In comparison with major host countries in 2023—such as the United States (60,000 resettled), Germany (approximately 130,000 first-instance protection grants), Egypt, Spain (approximately 50,000 first-instance protection grants), and Canada (50,000 resettled)—Japan's number of recognised refugees (303) remains remarkably low, evidencing a relatively restrictive stance in international comparison (Immigration Services Agency, 2024). When former UN High Commissioner for Refugees and current UN Secretary-General António Guterres visited Japan in 2005, he criticised Japan's recognition rate as "too low" and called for reform (Itō, 2014).

The low recognition rate in Japan is often attributed to the narrowness of criteria and their restrictive application. Refugee status determination is administered by the Immigration Services Agency under the Ministry of Justice, based on the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act (ICRRA) (MOJ/ISA, 2025). Chapter VII-2 of the Act (Refugee Recognition Procedures) tends to define persecution strictly as serious violations of life, body, or liberty, and practice has continued to demand strong evidence of individualised persecution even under conditions of generalised violence and indiscriminate attacks (ISA, 2023). As a result, while the Refugee Convention allows for recognition of conflict-induced displacement, Japan's restrictive interpretation often justifies non-recognition in cases where individualised persecution is difficult to prove (Cabinet Office, 2019).

According to the Immigration Services Agency of Japan (2025), there were 12,373 applications for refugee status in 2024. Of these, 176 were granted refugee status, while 5,117 were denied, with 45 of these receiving complementary protection. The complementary protection scheme, launched in December 2023, was institutionalised based on Japan's expedited response to those fleeing the war in Ukraine—reducing adjudication time from an average of three years to approximately three months, and granting one-year renewable residence and integration support. It provides an additional protection pathway for those not meeting the Refugee Convention definition but still in need of protection (MOJ/ISA, n.d.).

According to UNHCR Japan (2025), while Japan ranks fifth globally in financial contributions to UNHCR and the number of recognised refugees in 2024 was the third highest in its history, recognition numbers and practices remain restrictive compared to other countries.

Japan admitted 10,139 Indochinese refugees by 2005. However, its third-country resettlement program, introduced in 2010, has been criticised for imposing stringent requirements such as "adaptability to Japanese society" and "capacity for self-reliance," diverging from the original aim of protecting the most vulnerable (Hashimoto, 2024). Moreover, 86% of resettled refugees entered through routes outside the official framework, with critics noting bias toward granting status to local staff of government-related entities abroad (Rehm, 2024). Hashimoto (2024) further analyses the 2010 amendment introducing work permits for applicants after six months of pending adjudication, which was later judged by the government to have induced applications for economic purposes. This assessment led to the 2018 revision of refugee application rules (abolition of automatic work permits and fast-track rejection of "groundless" applications). At the same time, the expansion of programs such as *tokutei ginō* (Specified Skills) for skilled workers and complementary pathways for students deprived of education due to political upheavals broadened entry routes. Yet, these measures have been criticised for reinforcing structural bias by prioritising labor market needs over refugee protection (Hashimoto, 2024).

In terms of detention and deportation practices, the treatment of those avoiding deportation, prolonged detention, and access to medical care have been persistent points of criticism. Owing to the principle of non-refoulement, deportation to the country of origin is prohibited during refugee status procedures. As such, those subject to removal orders are placed in detention, but the discretionary nature of provisional release has raised concerns (House of Councillors Research Office, 2023). While the government argued that hunger strikes, escapes, and criminal incidents among detainees occurred because release was granted only on exceptional humanitarian or medical grounds, supporters of detainees contend that restrictions such as work bans contributed to these incidents (JFBA, 2020; Nagano Bar Association, 2020). As of 2020, among 3,103 deportation evaders, 466 had criminal records, and more than half of detainees were repeat applicants held for over a year (MOJ/ISA, 2021). The 2021 death of Wishma Sandamali, a Sri Lankan national, at the Nagoya Immigration Bureau—where her provisional release was denied despite health deterioration—highlighted problems of prolonged detention and inadequate medical care (Rehm, 2024). The 2023 amendments included progress in clarifying procedures, expanding complementary

protection, and establishing alternatives to detention. However, they also introduced exceptions to the suspension of deportation for third or subsequent applications (allowing deportation in the absence of "reasonable grounds") and criminal penalties for non-compliance with deportation orders, creating ongoing tensions with international human rights standards (MOJ/ISA, 2023).

In refugee adjudication, the principle of *benefit of the doubt* has been applied only superficially, and practices are criticised for being selectively filtered through geopolitical, diplomatic, alliance-related, and domestic security lenses (UNHCR, 2019). Japan's responses to Afghan, Myanmar, and Ukrainian displacement have correlated with its commitments to the international community and alliance politics (Japan Association for Refugees, 2024). Applicants' nationalities have diversified to 92, primarily from South Asia and Southeast Asia (Sri Lanka, Thailand, Turkey, India, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, as well as African countries). Yet, as of early 2024, more than 2,600 Ukrainians had been granted complementary protection, raising concerns of "selective humanitarianism" (Rehm, 2024; Kishida, 2025). Meanwhile, by adopting case-specific responses, refugee recognition has become more flexible since 2022: over half of recognised refugees have been Afghans, and 18 Yemenis—the highest to date—were granted refugee status through expedited procedures (Japan Association for Refugees, 2024). However, this selectivity reinforces a "politics of empathy" dependent on nationality and cultural proximity, exposing normative challenges to universalist protection (Kishida, 2025; Hashimoto, 2024). In practice, Ukrainians have received relatively swift access to residence and integration due to cultural and political sympathy, while many applicants from the Middle East and Africa continue to be detained for long periods as "security risks" (Immigration Services Agency of Japan, 2025). Although the complementary protection scheme represents progress in filling protection gaps under international human rights obligations, unlike for Ukrainians, the emergency measures following the Myanmar coup did not assume long-term social integration, raising doubts about the equality of international protection (MOJ/ISA, 2021–24).

In sum, Japan's refugee system faces four interrelated structural problems: (i) restrictive interpretation and application of recognition criteria, (ii) human rights concerns surrounding detention and deportation, (iii) linkage with labor migration policy, and (iv) selective empathy based on nationality and case-specific circumstances. At the same time, the establishment of complementary protection and improvements in procedural transparency constitute important advances. As a state party to the Refugee Convention, Japan should aim to restore normative consistency and international credibility.

CHAPTER 4: Discussion

This chapter examines the central question: How is Japan's self-identification as a 'peace state' linked to its reluctance to admit refugees?—by testing the working hypothesis (*victim memory → affective politics* (shame/homogeneity orientation / securitising threat) → *securitisation → restrictive/selective admission*) in the following order: (a) linkages among documents before and after turning points, (b) changes in frame configurations, (c) the simultaneous presence of the three elements (threat articulation, justification of exception, audience acceptance), and (d) translation into operational indicators. Following the standards of process tracing, we distinguish between necessary-condition evidence (hoop tests) and decisive evidence (smoking guns). The chapter proceeds by presenting, in turn, (a) the validity of the junctions, (b) interactions with alternative explanations, (c) conditionality derived from comparison, (d) normative and policy implications, and (e) boundary conditions and falsifiability.

5.1 Validity of the Causal Mechanism: Three "Junctions"

Across the key turning points (2010 / 2013 / 2015 / 2018 / 2023 / 2022–24), and on the basis of an evidentiary matrix (with speaker, date, and source), three junctions were identified. First, regarding the conjunction of asymmetric memory and the myth of homogeneity, the institutionalisation of victim-centered atomic-bomb memory—represented by the seasonality of victim recall in "August journalism," commemorative practices, atomic-bomb exhibits, and peace education—has been coupled with the relative attenuation of perpetrator memory, thereby strengthening the problem-definition frame of *purified victimhood / preservation of domestic order* (hoop test). When connected to the postwar reconstruction narrative (national integration and high economic growth) and linked to the myth of a "culturally and ethnically homogeneous national society," this constellation functions as an exclusionary device that hampers empathy and solidarity with others, and is congenial to the securitising portrayal of outsiders as threats. As a result, the cost of shifting toward deviation- and threat-oriented frames is lowered (Entman 1993; Hajer 1995).

Second, with respect to shame-avoidance/denial, the failure of mutual recognition induces over-identification with victimhood and drives projection onto the Other (securitising threat) (Benjamin 2014). Through the vocabulary of *bogus refugees*, *public security deterioration*, and *administrative efficiency*, this affective framework amplifies "deviation/threat" frames in domestic discourse and becomes a justificatory resource for the state of exception (long-term

detention, restrictive implementation) (hoop test). Through this re-encoding, universalist obligations—as a peace state and a party to the Refugee Convention—are displaced by the defense of domestic order. Emphases on “public order/security” in prime ministerial speeches, Diet deliberations, and media coverage supply justificatory propositions for exception as speech acts (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998; Balzacq 2011).
Regarding audience demand, in moments where editorials, public opinion, and administrative circulars/guideline revisions synchronise, the simultaneous presence of the three elements permits a determination that securitisation has occurred (smoking gun). In particular, the strict implementation of the ICRRA, the high evidentiary burden for individualised persecution, and administrative discretion in immigration practice fix control as an organisational routine, indicating the entrenchment of *control over protection* in the repertoire of means (Tarumoto 2019).
As to the selective translation into operational indicators, the lengthening of adjudication periods, limited use of ATD (alternatives to detention), and nationality biases in complementary protection are observed as the administrative translation of frames (hoop test). At turning points where the simultaneous presence of the three elements overlaps with co-directional changes in operational indicators, the mechanistic consistency of the causal chain can be confirmed (smoking gun).

5.2 Scrutinising Alternative Explanations: Not Sufficient Causes but Interactions

Commonly cited alternatives in refugee policy—geographic distance, labor markets/demographics, alliances, and geopolitics—do not singly determine outcomes as sufficient causes (Rehm 2024; Tarumoto 2018).
First, geographic remoteness (Japan as a “buffer zone” from conflicts) only lowers the base rate of inflows; Canada’s resettlement program—admitting more than 50,000 refugees in 2023 despite remoteness—constitutes a counterexample. In Japan, therefore, *checkbook diplomacy* functions as a justificatory resource for the externalisation of refugees.
Second, the practical operations of Technical Intern Training / Specified Skilled Worker schemes and complementary protection are linked to labor demand and management logics, making institutional selection likely (Liu-Farrer 2025; Aycock & Hashimoto 2021).
Third, alliances and geopolitics—under the banner of “value solidarity”—distort preferences and, as seen in the swift and generous responses to Ukraine (and also to Myanmar/Afghanistan) contrasted with stricter practices elsewhere, intensify tensions with

nationality neutrality; visibility and the orientation of domestic discourse amplify these effects (hoop test) (Rehm 2024; JAR 2024).

Fourth, legal culture and media pluralism function as institutional buffers that amplify or dampen policy translation even under similar affective stimuli (Hallin & Mancini 2004). Combined with Japan's strict implementation and high evidentiary burdens, policy discourse that emphasises "social harmony" can reinforce exclusionary attitudes via deviation/threat frames. In sum, alternative factors operate as mediators (externalisation/selection) and moderators (value-solidarity bias) that, through interaction with the memory–affect–homogeneity framework, strengthen the stickiness of institutional exclusion.

5.3 Comparative Implications: Conditionality and Plasticity

The effects of collective memory on refugee policy bifurcate through interactions among memory content (victim-centered vs. perpetrator responsibility), institutional buffers (judicial review, independent adjudication, media pluralism), elite discourse (threat vs. empathy frames), and shocks (security, economic, geopolitical). We illustrate this conditionality/plasticity in three types: *exclusion-driven* (Central/Eastern Europe, the UK, Israel), *inclusion-driven* (Germany), and *political capitalisation of victimhood* (Rwanda).

For exclusion-driven cases: in Central/Eastern Europe (Poland, Hungary), victim narratives drawing on German occupation and Communism justified structural refusal of EU burden-sharing after the 2015 refugee crisis (found to be in breach of EU law in April 2020) (Court of Justice of the European Union 2020). In the UK, under the victim-populist soil of Brexit-era "they are taking from us," offshore processing (the Rwanda scheme) emerged (O'Toole 2018). In Israel, the sharpening of Holocaust victim memory connects to security primacy; the Infiltration Prevention Law functions as a moral warrant to justify strengthened detention and deportation of African asylum seekers (Kimelman 2016; Reuters 2018). The commonality is that victim discourse couples with security frames and, where institutional buffers are weak (administrative discretion, fast-track procedures, detention), promotes exception.

By contrast, Germany's institutionalisation of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*—education, memorialisation, legal frameworks—has served as normative capital for a *Moralstaat*, helping to drive the admission of over 1.2 million refugees in 2015–2016 (Gallegos 2023). Simultaneously, it spurred reactive mobilisation by far-right parties such as AfD; Björn Höcke (AfD, Thuringia) referred to the Holocaust Memorial as a "memorial of shame,"

signaling an attempt to relatisise Holocaust memory (Reuters 2017). Exclusionary nationalism is here linked to the reconfiguration of memory calling for an end to a “culture of guilt,” which, by relativising perpetrator responsibility, reconstructs victim consciousness (Reuters 2017). Federalism, judicial review, and strong media pluralism have partially restrained the policy translation of such affective framings. The conditional proposition is thus: institutionalised perpetrator memory can foster inclusion, but absent strong buffers it remains vulnerable to exclusionary backlashes during shocks.

In Rwanda, victimhood has been mobilised as political capital. State control of the 1994 genocide memory and a homogeneous “Rwandan” national narrative underpin regime legitimacy and activist foreign policy (PKO deployment, regional refugee responses) (Reyntjens 2013; Rever 2018). While victim narratives function as moral capital to sustain surface peace, inconvenient perpetrator aspects—such as involvement in massacres in eastern Congo camps—are marginalised; weak media pluralism limits discursive competition (Terry 2017; Lischer 2005). This case shows victim/perpetrator positions as redistributable political resources, with institutional design (who controls memory) crucially shaping policy trajectories (inclusion vs. repression) (Freedom House 2025). Emphasis on one’s “unique sacrifice” tends to prompt preemptive exclusion (casting others as potential perpetrators) to avert future victimisation (Bartov 2023).

Implications: (i) victim orientation can heighten exclusion but remains plastic via institutional buffers and discursive direction; (ii) institutionalised perpetrator responsibility promotes inclusion, yet resilience under shock depends on buffer strength; (iii) the same mnemonic materials yield divergent policy paths depending on institutionalisation and affective organisation. For Japan, the core levers of plasticity lie in recalibrating the weight of victim-centered memory and the design of discursive competition (institutionalising mutual-recognition exhibits and corrective reporting), alongside strengthening buffers such as courts, independent review, and media pluralism. Not denial of victimhood but its universalisation (work-through) can re-situate norms and internalise nationality-neutral protection principles institutionally.

5.4 Japan’s Two-Layered Structure: The Disjuncture between Universalist Declaration and Practice

This section presents (A) legal norms and legitimation, (B) institutional design and policy instruments, and (C) political incentives through sequences of pre/post turning-point

document linkages → the three elements → operational indicators.

(A) Legal norms and legitimation. While Article 9 and peace-state discourse are recursively invoked as universalist pacifism, the weak institutionalisation of perpetrator memory generates dual accountability—domestic legitimation of public order versus external rhetoric of universalist pacifism and humanitarian obligation—where the latter in practice guides operational choices (hoop test). Prime ministerial speeches and Diet debates supply exception-justifying propositions via the vocabulary of *order/security/bogusness* (speech acts), and audience alignment is confirmed through the reception in editorials and commentaries (simultaneous presence of the three elements).

(B) Institutional design and means selection. High evidentiary burdens, detention-first with limited ATD, and discretionary implementation of complementary protection are repeatedly arranged as a repertoire privileging *control over protection* (Tarumoto 2019). In the 2018 and 2023 procedural reform episodes, complementary protection (2023) and procedural transparency constitute advances; however, insufficient internalisation of higher-order principles (e.g., explicit codification of the *benefit of the doubt*, stronger independent review, ATD as a default) meant that the visibility of security/bogus frames was accompanied by circular/guideline updates translating into selective operational outcomes (adjudication times, long-detention ratios, nationality biases) (smoking gun). The temporal proximity of victim recall during "August journalism" and policy deliberation strengthens the synchrony among memory, order discourse, and means selection (pattern matching).

(C) Political incentives. The low electoral payoff for admitting refugees incentivises blame avoidance and quiet politics, with financial contributions and third-country assistance functioning as substitute performances (hoop test). Consequently, selective empathy dependent on nationality and geopolitical proximity persists, in tension with the principle of nationality neutrality. Altogether, Japan's two-layered structure—declaration (universal) / practice (order)—is explicable through the trinity of (A) norm focus, (B) stickiness of means selection, and (C) political incentives.

5.5 Normative and Policy Implications: Conditions for a Shift from Management to Protection

Drawing on the methodology's KPIs (median adjudication time / ATD ratio/recognition & complementary-protection rates/nationality bias / long-detention rate / corrective-reporting ratio), five monitorable intervention axes are proposed.

First, re-situating memory. Juxtapose victim memory with perpetrator memory, colonial history, and harms in neighboring regions, and institutionalise mutual-recognition perspectives in memorial sites, textbooks, and civic dialogues to bridge the narrative of the "only atomic-bombed nation" to a universal sensitivity to suffering (Benjamin 1998; Oppenheim 2021).

Second, discursive intervention. Regularly disclose the product of *empirical incidence* × *media frequency* for threat frames such as "bogus" and "security risk," institutionalise corrective reporting and security fact-checking, and ensure permanent visibility of claimant narratives—re-encoding shame-avoidance into ethical responsibility (Keen 2023).

Third, institutional reform. Codify the *benefit of the doubt*, clarify the reasonable-fear standard, strengthen the authority of the independent review body, make ATD the rule with rigorous judicial oversight, and ensure nationality-neutral operation of complementary protection (Hashimoto 2024; Rehm 2024). Publish KPIs annually to ensure operational accountability.

Fourth, exit from selective humanitarianism. Functionally separate labor/education entry routes from the asylum system, decoupling protection criteria from labor-market fit. Provide integration support equitably to refugees and complementary-protection holders and evaluate outcomes using integration indicators (employment, education, language proficiency, residential stability).

Fifth, narrative reconfiguration (top-framing). As suggested by the Pyae Lyan Aung case (the Myanmar footballer whose three-finger salute protesting the junta drew attention and who was recognised as a refugee in Japan) (Kaminotake and Toritani 2021), prime-ministerial repetition of a frame such as "protection as a distinctively Japanese contribution to peace," synchronised across public communication, education, memorial practice, and institutional reform—and coupled with visible integration outcomes—can generate electoral incentives. Taken together, these interventions align with Galtung's notion of positive peace (reduction of structural violence) and offer a realistic route to expand the radius of inclusion without undermining domestic order (Akimoto 2025).

5.6 Falsifiability and Boundary Conditions: What Can Be Generalised?

Because this study relies on interpretive analysis of a single case, its generalisation is bounded by two conditions: (i) the nature of the shock (the ratio between *domestic direct harm*—endogenous large-scale disasters/war—and *externalised perpetration*, which

structures mnemonic asymmetry); and (ii) institutional plasticity (the strength of buffers—independent review, judicial control, media pluralism—that dampen the policy translation of affective politics). To test the extension of the theory, we posit the following hypotheses:

H1. Municipalities with stronger institutionalisation of victim memory remain less receptive to refugees/complementary protection, controlling for covariates.

H2. Individuals with higher exposure to mutual-recognition exhibits/education are more supportive of universalist protection.

H3. Exposure to threat frames such as "bogus refugees" strengthens opposition to admission, with effects amplified among those with strong homogeneity orientations.

H4. Stronger judicial review and independent review authority reduce detention dependence and increase the nationality neutrality of complementary protection.

H5. After empowering independent review and introducing time limits, the median length of detention declines and nationality biases narrow.

H6. Municipalities introducing mutual-recognition exhibits see increases in universalist-attitude scores before–after. Methods combine municipal panel DiD/event studies, individual-level experiments, administrative before–after comparisons (adjudication time, ATD, detention, nationality bias), and qualitative interviews.

5.7 Synthesis: From Victimhood to the Universal—Redefining Peace Identity

This study has identified the causal chain—victim-centered memory politics → affective politics (myth of homogeneity / shame / securitising threat) → securitisation → restrictive admission—as a sequence observable through pre/post turning-point document linkages, the simultaneous presence of the three elements, and the selective translation into operational indicators. The central claim is that Japan's reluctance to admit refugees is not the product of "ill will" or simple bureaucratism, but rather the consequence of memory politics linking with the myth of homogeneity and the politics of shame, and translating into *control-over-protection* choices within the institutional field. Since 2013, *proactive contribution to peace* has, through the coupling of victim narratives with political pacifism, advanced a redefinition of the peace state that prioritises domestic order via limited acceptance of force. While the swift response to Ukrainian displacement is laudable, the *CNN effect* risks marginalising protection for those fleeing less visible crises (Orr 2001; Koichi 2022; House of Councillors of Japan 2016).

To mitigate this normative risk and avoid selective empathy, concrete steps include: the

universalisation of memory through *work-through* (juxtaposing victim memory with perpetrator memory, mutual recognition, and universal duties of protection, and embedding these in institutions and discourse); discursive reconfiguration (juxtaposing perpetrator memory in commemorations/exhibits/textbooks; rendering threat frames transparent; permanently visualising claimant narratives); and codifying principles (benefit of the doubt, ATD as default, strengthened independent review, nationality-neutral operation)—advancing all three layers simultaneously so that the shift "from management to protection" can be verified by KPIs. Through policy–memory feedback, successful admission and integration can, in turn, recast victim memory as universal ethics.

To borrow Gandhi's words, "there is no path to peace; peace is the way"—Mahatma Gandhi—and the universalisation of asylum as the starting point releases postwar Japan's victim memory from enclosure and converts it into the practice of universalist solidarity (Daum 2019). Thus, peace identity can move from an exclusionary peace—prioritising internal order and relying on selective empathy—to a positive peace centered on refugee protection and the reduction of structural violence. These implications show that the theoretical framework proposed here can be operationalised across memory (juxtaposition and mutual recognition) – discourse (reconfiguring affect) – institutions (codifying principles) to concretise the shift from "peace as declaration" to "peace as practice." The findings delimit, under specified conditions, how the asymmetry of victim/perpetrator recall introduced in the Introduction translates into institutional practice, providing a foundation for future comparative and intervention research.

CONCLUSIONS

Following World War II, Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution made the renunciation of war, non-possession of armed forces, and denial of belligerency the core of pacifism. Entering the twenty-first century, however, the banner of a "proactive contribution to peace" in the security domain indicates that Japan's peace identity has evolved. As a state party to the Refugee Convention, Japan has formally fulfilled its treaty obligations while maintaining a restrained posture toward refugee admission and foregrounding financial contributions—hence the moniker "open wallet, closed doors" (Omata, 2015). While the atomic-bomb experiences of Hiroshima and Nagasaki have emphasised peace as "a world that does not wage war again," they have also tended to blindside the perspective of universal asylum that lies at the core of positive peace.

This study has presented a theoretical framework linking memory politics, affective politics, and securitisation to address the question, "How is Japan's self-identification as a 'peace state' linked to its reluctance to admit refugees?" It has tested this framework through qualitative analysis grounded in policy documents and media discourse. The main findings can be summarised in four points.

First, Japan's reluctance to admit refugees is linked not merely to institutional rigidity or administrative capacity constraints but to a victim-centered postwar memory structure. The narrative of the "only atomic-bombed nation," grounded in the catastrophe of the bombings, normatively supports the peace-state identity while simultaneously attenuating perpetrator memory and institutionalising mnemonic asymmetry. This asymmetry restricts empathy and imagination toward outsiders and strengthens the tendency to position others as "potential threats marked by difference" rather than as entities continuous with "us." The recursive reproduction of memory thus shapes a peace identity more congenial to maintaining domestic order than to universal inclusion.

Second, this memory structure is translated into policy preferences via affective politics. In particular, the avoidance and denial of "shame," together with an emphasis on cultural homogeneity, resonate deeply with national identity and foster the accumulation of exclusionary affects. Since 9/11, international discourses on terrorism and domestic reporting on "bogus refugees" have amplified this affective base, strengthening the portrayal of refugees not as "subjects of protection" but as "security risks" or "abusers" of the system. When victim-centered memory conjoins with the myth of homogeneity, the securitising

construction of the outsider as threat can be accomplished at very low cost, rendering exceptional measures (detention, stringent adjudication) politically easy to justify.

Third, the affective framework becomes entrenched as securitisation through institutions and bureaucratic practice. Beyond speech acts by political leaders and media, as emphasised by the Copenhagen School, the embedding of routines in everyday bureaucracy—highlighted by the Paris School—has been conspicuous in Japan's refugee regime. Concretely, the ICRRA's high evidentiary burdens, long-term detention, and nationality-biased operation of complementary protection fix *control over protection* as an organisational routine and strengthen the stickiness of exclusion institutionally. The seasonality of August journalism and its synchrony with policy deliberation provide "decisive evidence" of the mutually reinforcing operation of memory, discourse, and institutions. Moreover, alternative explanations such as geographic distance, labor demand, and alliance politics, when coupled with the victim-centered framework, amplify externalisation and selective humanitarianism, imparting stickiness to a policy preference for domestic-order primacy.

Fourth, comparative analysis reveals conditionality and plasticity in the Japanese case. Patterns in which victim memory connects to exclusionary policy are observable, as in the United Kingdom and Israel, but cases such as Germany demonstrate that institutionalising perpetrator responsibility can drive inclusive policy. Rwanda's case shows the political capitalisation of victim narratives, simultaneously driving inclusion and exclusion. These comparisons suggest that Japan's victim-centered memory is also redirectable: whether it tilts toward exclusion or is bridged to universal duties of protection depends heavily on institutional buffers (judicial review, independent adjudication bodies, media pluralism), the configuration of memory (juxtaposing victimhood with perpetration), and the directional framing of elite discourse.

Viewed through the lens of "life politics," in which moral and ethical issues of personal and national identity become inescapable under conditions of global interdependence, the key lies in the simultaneous reconfiguration of memory, discourse, and institutions (Giddens 1990; 1998). This is not a mere assertion of legal obligation but a normative implication of expanding cosmopolitan concern. This study advances three normative implications.

First, the reconfiguration of memory. Without denying victim memory, it should be juxtaposed with perpetrator memory and the suffering of neighboring countries; by institutionalising mutual-recognition approaches in commemoration, education, and exhibitions, the narrative of the "only atomic-bombed nation" can be reframed into a universal sensitivity to suffering.

Second, discursive intervention. By making visible the ratio of empirical incidence to reporting frequency for threat/deviation frames and by permanently presenting claimant narratives, shame-avoidance and denial can be re-encoded as ethical responsibility, dismantling the foundations of exclusionary affects.

Third, institutional reform. Explicitly codifying the *benefit of the doubt*, making alternatives to detention the rule, strengthening independent review, and ensuring nationality-neutral operation of complementary protection are necessary to re-center protection in the legal framework.

Fourth, narrative reconfiguration. With prime ministerial leadership repeatedly articulating a new top-frame—*asylum as a distinctively Japanese contribution to peace*—and synchronising public communication with institutional reform, refugee admission should be positioned at the core of the nation's peace practice. These steps accord with Galtung's notion of *positive peace* (reduction of structural violence) and constitute the shortest path to correcting the two-layer structure of "open wallet, closed doors."

In conclusion, Japan's reluctance to admit refugees is not a matter of administrative technique alone but a structural product of mutually reinforcing memory politics, affective politics, and institutional securitisation. So long as the peace-state identity relies on victim-centered memory, it will remain in affinity with exclusionary pacifism. Yet, through simultaneous interventions—universalising memory, reforming institutions (codifying principles), and reconfiguring narratives and discourse—the peace identity can shift from *peace as declaration* to *peace as practice*. This study's theoretical and empirical contribution lies in bridging the divide between peace studies and refugee studies and in elucidating the concrete mechanisms by which memory politics becomes embedded in policy implementation.

As Japan approaches the eightieth year since the end of the war, it is necessary not to fix the peace-state identity in victim consciousness but to engage in continuous self-reflection, universalise the category of victims, and internalise international protection responsibilities as the practice of a peace state. Refugee protection must be redefined not as an "external burden" but as an act of practicing peace beyond the maintenance of internal order. Only then can Japan's peace identity move beyond order maintenance through exclusion and evolve toward positive peace through inclusion—fulfilling the pledge inscribed on the cenotaph in Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park: "let all the souls here rest in peace, for we shall not repeat the evil."

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