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# Changing Perceptions of Gun Control in Japanese Society

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## Abstract

Shock, anger, disbelief, the death of Former Prime Minister came as a shock to the world, none more surprised than Japan itself. Constrictive gun control and low violence rates have become part of the cultural identity in Japan. Often hailed in comparison to other countries for its strict gun control, the recent assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has sponsored renewed interest in Japanese gun control laws both in Japan and abroad. Some have hailed his death as proof of Japan's success in policy, others cite it as proof of law ineffectiveness. This begs the question, how is gun control viewed in the Japanese social climate? Japanese society's stance on gun control is in harmony with modern-day gun control laws, yet is there a historical precedent for this? In this paper, I examine the history of Japan's cultural history with gun control in order to argue that strict gun laws have resulted in Japanese society's perception of guns.

Shock, anger, disbelief, the death of Former Prime Minister came as a shock to the world, none more surprised than Japan itself. Constrictive gun control and low violence rates have become part of the cultural identity in Japan. Often hailed in comparison to other countries for its strict gun control, the recent assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has sponsored renewed interest in Japanese gun control laws both in Japan and abroad. Some have hailed his death as proof of Japan's success in policy, others cite it as proof of law ineffectiveness. This begs the question, how is gun control viewed in the Japanese social climate? Japanese society's stance on gun control is in harmony with modern-day gun control laws, yet is there a historical precedent for this? In this paper, I argue that strict gun laws have resulted in Japanese society's perception of guns.

Former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was promoting a junior fellow party candidate on a street near the Nara train station when he suddenly collapsed, bleeding heavily from a neck wound. Rushed the hospital, Abe was soon announced dead due to a gunshot wound to the neck on July 8<sup>th</sup> 2022. 41 year-old Tetsuya Yagami was arrested at the scene and charged with the murder of Shinzo Abe, confessing to his use of a homemade gun in the killing Abe motivated by Abe's relationship to a fundamentalist church who scammed his mother<sup>1</sup>. While responses to Abe's character are many, the Japanese people and officials only displayed acclamations of shock and "great anger"<sup>2</sup>. 37-year-old Ayane Kubota response to hearing of Abe's passing was "complete shock". She went on to state that "this is so un-Japanese...you never hear about gun violence here"<sup>3</sup>. 18-year-old Hijiri Mizokawa responded in similar fashion, exclaiming "It's so

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<sup>1</sup> Rich, Motoko, et al. "Shinzo Abe is Assassinated With a Handmade Gun, Shocking Nation." *The New York Times*. July 8, 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Rich & Motoko, "Shinzo Abe is Assassinated With a Handmade Gun, Shocking Nation."

<sup>3</sup> Rich & Motoko, "Shinzo Abe is Assassinated With a Handmade Gun, Shocking Nation."

scary”, “I still can’t believe this type of terror would happen in Japan”<sup>4</sup>. This immediate response of shock and fear along with continuing statements of disbelief are normal responses to shootings of this scale. What is unique was both participants utter shock that this violence happened in their home country. What does this say about Japan? This sentiment that gun violence is so uncommon, so under of, so hated that it is incomprehensible in Japan encompasses the stance of the Japanese people. A government and thus a society so committed to gun regulation that gun violence is simply “un-Japanese”.

This assassination comes at a tremulous time in Japan. With recovery from coronavirus and Japan's growing influence in the geopolitical sphere in response to rising threats from its neighbors China and Korea, Abe’s death has rattled the nation. Gun violence, especially against a political figure, was almost completely unheard of outside of the Yazuka prior to Former Prime Minister Abe’s death. As *The New York Times* clearly remarks “the public is unsettled by the possibility that the nation they assumed was safe may not be after all”<sup>5</sup>. This growing question of Japan’s safety ties neatly into the social consciousness of gun control. To further examine the Japanese stance on gun control, one must first examine Japan’s history of guns.

The first mention of guns in Japan come from the “Record of the Musket” (“Teppōki”), written in 1606 for Lord Tanegashima Hisatoki<sup>6</sup>. It states that “on the twenty-fifth day of the eighth lunar month of 1543” a battered shift of Portuguese carrying guns arrived at Tanegashima island. Immediately Lord Tokitaka Tanegashima(ancestor of Hisatoki) saw the potential in these weapons and bought the guns off of the Portuguese. He then proceeded to learn how to shoot and

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<sup>4</sup> Rich & Motoko, “Shinzo Abe is Assassinated With a Handmade Gun, Shocking Nation.”

<sup>5</sup> Rich & Motoko, “Shinzo Abe is Assassinated With a Handmade Gun, Shocking Nation.”

<sup>6</sup> Walthall, Anne. "Do Guns Have Gender?" *Recreating Japanese Men*, by Sabine FrÜhstÜck and Anne Walthall, U of California P, 2011, pp. 25-47. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctt1ppdhr.6](http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctt1ppdhr.6)

had “blacksmiths make copies” which he distributed to several warlords to curry their favor, leading to guns spreading throughout Japan<sup>7</sup>. However, this record is contested by historians as there is evidence that makeshift guns were first brought over from China after the invention of gunpowder. These early “guns” were simply poorly constructed and thus not widely utilized. Additionally, Satsuma guns were said to be introduced through various Europeans and Wakō, pirate marauder groups who raided the Chinese and Korean peninsula from the 13<sup>th</sup> century through the 16<sup>th</sup> century<sup>8</sup>. These guns introduced by the Wakō had shorted butts on the early muskets leading historians to believe they were manufactured in Southeast Asia, specifically Thailand by the Chinese. Regardless of whether the record is truthful in stating the first guns to set foot in Japan came from the Portuguese, it ultimately “helped to legitimize guns as prestige items to be exchanged among warlords”<sup>9</sup>.

Although they contain great potential for war, guns were not primarily used in military pursuits. Rather, guns were employed in ceremonies, hunting, as symbols of status & masculinity, and as gifts to forge alliances. Japan has a long cultural history with swords, bows and arrows, and various forms of martial arts. “Unlike in Europe or the Americas, in Japan guns supplemented rather than replaced the hawk and bow”<sup>10</sup>. Often when “teaching the appropriate attributes of manly behavior, manuals on gunmanship advocated mental preparation similar to that for other martial arts” of which has a long and still prevalent history in Japan. Due to this, “the early Tokugawa shoguns both modeled and exceeded definitions of warrior masculinity

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<sup>7</sup> Walthall, "Do Guns Have Gender?" *Recreating Japanese Men*, 25-47.

<sup>8</sup> “Wakō.” Encyclopedia Britannica. Encyclopedia Britannica, inc. Accessed November 29, 2022. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/wako>.

<sup>9</sup> Walthall, "Do Guns Have Gender?" *Recreating Japanese Men*, 25-47.

<sup>10</sup> Walthall, "Do Guns Have Gender?" *Recreating Japanese Men*, 25-47.

through their prowess at arms and uncover the different ways their successors contested and celebrated that legacy”<sup>11</sup>. It was said that “hand-to-hand combat represented the epitome of male-inflected bravery”, as it is “the sword, not the gun, [that] symbolized the soul of the samurai.”<sup>12</sup> Guns became symbols of self-representation with “guns figured in the skills through which they proved their manhood and in the practices, they used to construct their masculinity for public consumption”<sup>13</sup>. Guns were not used solely as tools of war and means of conquest, rather they had deep cultural ties to both one’s status and masculinity in Japan. Playing on its Neo-Confucianism roots, Japanese “secret texts deal with how to kill game, not wage war”<sup>14</sup>. Guns were utilized by Lords, Daimyo, foreigners, and occasionally spiritual leaders as gifts in order to gain allies and curry favors. An example of this is when “in 1552 shogun Ashikaga Yoshiteru wrote a letter to Yokose Narushige, a minor warlord in Kanto, offering him a gun in hopes of winning Yokose’s ally, the powerful Uesugi Kenshin, to his side”<sup>15</sup>. Similarly, Daimyo “vanguard carried guns on their shoulders wrapped in special cases, followed by spears and bows” when they “performed their duty of going from their castle town to Edo where they waited upon the shogun”<sup>16</sup>. Firearms were also used for ceremonial purposes as signs of wealth and power as well as symbols of respect for those departed. During the fiftieth anniversary of Hidetada’s official wife’s death in 1675, the celebration went on for days, “with retainers summoned to position guards at the castle gates armed with bows, guns, and spears”<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> Walthall, "Do Guns Have Gender?" *Recreating Japanese Men*, 25-47.

<sup>12</sup> Walthall, "Do Guns Have Gender?" *Recreating Japanese Men*, 25-47.

<sup>13</sup> Walthall, "Do Guns Have Gender?" *Recreating Japanese Men*, 25-47.

<sup>14</sup> Walthall, "Do Guns Have Gender?" *Recreating Japanese Men*, 25-47.

<sup>15</sup> Walthall, "Do Guns Have Gender?" *Recreating Japanese Men*, 25-47.

<sup>16</sup> Walthall, "Do Guns Have Gender?" *Recreating Japanese Men*, 25-47.

<sup>17</sup> Walthall, "Do Guns Have Gender?" *Recreating Japanese Men*, 25-47.

Despite the lack of gun control laws at the time, guns were held majority by the government elite who regulated gun control by dictating the use and manufacturing of guns. The first gun control law to be established in Japan was in 1588 with Emperor Hideyoshi Toyotomi's "sword hunt" which banned civilians owning swords and firearms. He stated that "the possession of unnecessary implements makes difficult the collection of taxes and tends to foment uprisings" as the reasoning behind this law<sup>18</sup>. This is the first example seen in Japan of non-possession policy in gun control law, setting the standard for strict gun control and the ideology that guns are for the elite only not the peasantry in the government. Guns were "treated as rarities of great value" by the elite, "enhance[ing] their owners' prestige and contributed to a cultural symbol of masculinity for the elite". In contrast guns held "in quantity [by] foot soldiers" instead "marked their bearers' low status"<sup>19</sup>. As such, Emperor Hideyoshi deemed commoners unfit to carry such pieces of status, instead choosing to melt all of the seized guns into a statue of himself. Despite its intentions, this "sword hunt" set the stage for strict gun control policy for Japan's history. Later on, the Tokugawa Shogunate expanded gun control during the Tokugawa period 1603-1867.

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<sup>18</sup> 1993 Asia Pacific Law Review, City Polytechnic of Hong Kong; David B. Kopel. Originally published as *2 Asia Pac. L. Rev.* 26-52 (1993), <https://guncite.com/journals/dkjgc.html#fn3>

<sup>19</sup> Walthall, "Do Guns Have Gender?" *Recreating Japanese Men*, 25-47.

Year   Regulation/Decree

- 1629: The use of guns for the control of pests was permitted upon submission of a written declaration that the gun would be used properly.
- 1645: The use of guns in Edo (Tokyo) was prohibited except by gun officials.
- 1662: The possession of guns other than by hunters was prohibited. Hunters were registered and prohibited from renting out guns to others.
- 1676: Crackdowns on illegal gun possessors would be conducted.
- 1685: Persons who turned in or reported shooters of illegal guns would be rewarded.
- 1687: Villages without hunters were allowed to rent guns.
- 1717: Even hunters were prohibited from possessing guns in Edo and its outskirts. Guns could be rented for pest control for limited periods.
- 1729: The rental conditions imposed in 1717 were tightened: the gun rental period would be for one year, a rental document would have to be submitted annually, and the number of boars and deer taken in the previous year had to be reported.<sup>5</sup>

Source: “Firearms-Control Legislation & Policy.” Law Library of Congress, Global Legal

Research Directorate, February 2013.

<https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/ll/llglrd/2013417226/2013417226.pdf>

The next piece of gun control legislation came about in 1872 when the Meiji Government promoted new gun control regulation. In this new regulation “only licensed merchants were allowed to sell guns (excluding military guns)” essentially limiting gun ownership to hunters in order to “prevent bad people from playing with guns”<sup>20</sup>. Soon after in 1899, gun and explosives were merged into one law the “Firearms and Explosives Control Law” which was later revised in 1910 to include government licensure of firearms and government control of transport of guns and explosives<sup>21</sup>. At this point in history, while Japanese civilians could own guns, they were

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<sup>20</sup> “Firearms-Control Legislation & Policy.” Law Library of Congress, Global Legal Research Directorate, February 2013.

<https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/ll/llglrd/2013417226/2013417226.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> “Firearms-Control Legislation & Policy”, 2013

heavily regulated in regards to transportation and type. Nevertheless, between 1910 to 1945, Japanese civilians had the most freedom to own firearms in Japanese history. This however, was not to last.

In the wake of WWII, the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers “disarmed Japanese servicemen and issued several arms control directives in 1945 in order to safeguard against any possible danger that might arise from arms possessed by civilians”<sup>22</sup>. This in turn led to the Japanese government (on orders of the US) issuing “the Imperial Ordinance Concerning the Prohibition of the Possession of Guns and Other Arms” in 1946 “which banned the possession of firearms and swords by private citizens in principle, though the possession of hunting guns and artistic swords was allowed under license”<sup>23</sup>. “The 1950 Order Concerning Firearms and Swords” simply added on to these existing regulations broadening “the exceptions to the general ban on the possession of guns and swords”<sup>24</sup>. At this time, concerns over the reactions of the Japanese people to US occupation was at large and the United States was unwilling to allow the Japanese people weapons that could be utilized to hurt American soldiers. This resulted in several years of no-tolerance policy towards firearm possession among both the military and the general population. These early post-war regulations came to a head when the Japanese government was heavily pressured by the United States to pass the 1958 Swords & Firearms Possession Control Laws (overhauls in 1993, 95, 08). This law essentially states that Japanese citizens do not have the right to bear arms as well as provides regulation on the making and distributing of firearms. Under this law “a firearm is defined as any handgun, military rifle, machine gun, large caliber gun, hunting gun, or other guns which uses gunpowder and which

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<sup>22</sup> “Firearms-Control Legislation & Policy”, 2013

<sup>23</sup> “Firearms-Control Legislation & Policy”, 2013

<sup>24</sup> “Firearms-Control Legislation & Policy”, 2013



discharges metal bullets, or any air gun which discharges metal bullets”<sup>25</sup>. This law heavily regulates not only the manufacturing and distributions of firearms, but also scrutinizes Japanese citizen ownership of guns. The Sword & Firearms Possession Control Laws is still the primary law in Japan today for gun control. Based on Japanese History of gun control legislation, this law is not anything unexpected. From the first “Sword Hunt” law to now, Japan has maintained strict control over gun manufacturing and civilian firearm ownership rights.

Increased regulation of guns grew to become synonymous with the peace and prosperity of post-war Japan. During WWII, Japan took up weapons for its imperialism ambition, increased gun control law post-occupation changed the Japanese perspective on gun as they became synonyms with the war and scene as tools for harm. In an age of hard-won peace, why would the Japanese people want less regulation on a tool with the potential to destroy the peace. “People assume that peace is always going to exist and when you have a culture like that you don't really feel the need to arm yourself or have an object that disrupts that peace” states BBC journalist Anthony Berteaux<sup>26</sup>. Exposure to everyday violence creates a culture of fear and tolerance. When gun violence is an expected outcome and police usage of guns is seen as “glamorous “, people are unwilling to give up guns as a source of protection against like-minded weapons. As such, with a strong sense of community and bolstered by Japan’s low Crime rates, the Japanese people have a low tolerance for guns. Rather than seeing guns as a tool for protection, they are instead viewed as a source of destruction. Prime Minister Kishida calling it an “despicable

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<sup>25</sup> Alleman, Mark. “The Japanese Firearm and Sword Possession Control Law: Translators Introduction.” 2002 Pacific Rim Law & Policy Journal Association, 2002.  
<https://www.hoplophobia.info/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/THE-JAPANESE-FIREARM-AND-SWORD-POSSESSION-CONTROL-LAW.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> Low, Harry. “How Japan Has Almost Eradicated Gun Crime.” BBC News. BBC, January 6, 2017. <https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-38365729>.

outrageous act” repeatedly in his Press Conference on immediately after hearing of the passing of Shinzo Abe<sup>27</sup>. Additionally citing it as “an act of cowardly barbarism”<sup>28</sup>. Whereas in the Tokugawa period guns were viewed as a symbol of pride and masculinity for the elite, now they are viewed as a disgraceful act of barbarianism. This change in perception is in part due to the fact that guns are no longer seen as tools of protection and power, rather guns are now seen as disrupting the hard-earned peace of post WWII Japan. In their article “How Japan Has Almost Eradicated Gun Crime There” BBC journalist states there is an “almost taboo level of rejection of guns” in Japan<sup>29</sup>. Japan has a culture of no tolerance towards not only gun violence but also gun possession due to its long history of strict gun control law. As such, it is no wonder Japanese Society advocated for strict gun control when it is all they have ever known.

What is it about Japanese culture allows for such controlling gun restriction? “Japan has the socially-accepted and internalized restraints on individual behavior”, where this be constraints due to need for conformity or authoritarian restrictions<sup>30</sup>. The social controls of Japan do more to impact low gun possession rates than any jail sentence. As an American historian states, “authority was a "given", taken for granted as an unalienable part of the natural order”<sup>31</sup>. There are no riots over the rights of the people to own guns as the people believe they don’t have the authority to make those decisions. Only the highest authority, the government, can make

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<sup>27</sup> “Press Conference by Prime Minister Kishida on the Passing of Former Prime Minister Abe Shinzo.” Prime Minister's Office of Japan, July 8, 2022.

[https://japan.kantei.go.jp/101\\_kishida/statement/202207/00004.html](https://japan.kantei.go.jp/101_kishida/statement/202207/00004.html)

<sup>28</sup> Rich, Motoko, et al. “Shinzo Abe is Assassinated With a Handmade Gun, Shocking Nation.” *The New York Times*. July 8, 2022.

<sup>29</sup> Low, “How Japan Has Almost Eradicated Gun Crime.”

<sup>30</sup> 1993 *Asia Pacific Law Review*, 2 *Asia Pac. L. Rev.* 26-52

<sup>31</sup> 1993 *Asia Pacific Law Review*, 2 *Asia Pac. L. Rev.* 26-52

these decisions, as is the historic precedent. The Japanese people respect the authority of the police and government; thus, they accept gun control laws as simply another facet of widespread government control and societal acceptance. In addition to this, the cultural ideology of uniformity and conformity also plays a large role in allowing for and encouraging controlling gun restriction. Deviant behavior has large social consequences for both one's career and family. The concept of shaming one's family or community through engaging in criminal behavior is too large a risk for the average person. This "sublimation of individual desires to the greater good, the pressure to conform, and internalized willingness to do so" allows Japanese culture to support restrictive gun control laws enforced by the government<sup>32</sup>.

In the Japan of Today, ownership of guns is highly limited. Personal gun ownership rates per 100 people in Japan average around 0.26% from 2011 to 2019<sup>33</sup>. "Basically, people don't have guns or think having a gun is an important thing to do unless they're into hunting or shooting clay pigeons, which are about the only reasons you could be authorized to have a gun unless you're a policeman," Andrew Gordon, a professor of history at Harvard University who specializes in modern Japan, told TIME<sup>34</sup>. The complex process needed in order to obtain a firearm in Japan highlights the government's stance on gun control and Japan's social view of guns. Guns are to be respected and cautious of, used for a purpose and never violence. In Japan, "people who wish to own firearms must go through a stringent background check, including clearance by a doctor, and declare information about family members". Additionally, "they must

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<sup>32</sup> 1993 *Asia Pacific Law Review*, 2 *Asia Pac. L. Rev.* 26-52

<sup>33</sup> Alpers, Philip. "Guns in Japan - Firearms, Gun Law and Gun Control." *Gun Law and Policy: Firearms and armed violence, country by country*, n.d. <https://www.gunpolicy.org/firearms/region/japan>.

<sup>34</sup> Kohli, Anisha. "What to Know about How Rare Gun Violence Is in Japan." *Time*. *Time Magazine*, July 10, 2022. <https://time.com/6195409/japan-gun-control-regulation/>.

also pass tests to show they know how to use guns correctly “yet despite the rigorous process, “passing those hurdles will allow a license holder to shoot at clay targets[,] hunting requires an additional license”<sup>35</sup>. “The test and all-day lecture are held once a month” with the “lecture almost always requires that the licensee take a full day off from work--not a highly regarded activity by Japanese employers” furthering the difficulty of obtaining a gun by adding social and financial consequences<sup>36</sup>. The difficulty of obtaining gun ownership licensure ensures that even the few Japanese citizens who desired to own guns, are often held back by social obligations or red tape.

This cautious stance is mirrored by the police force who carry small personal handguns. Police take an overly cautious approach towards firearms with “one poster on police walls orders: 'Don't take it out of the holster, don't put your finger on the trigger, don't point it at people’<sup>37</sup>. This stance is backed by police action as “in an average year, the entire Tokyo police force only fires a half-dozen or so shots”<sup>38</sup>. As opposed to American police, the Japanese police force do not rely on their guns as a weapon to maintain order. “The official Japanese police culture discourages use or glamorization of guns” with many viewing “guns [are] for cowards, and that real men fought with the martial arts”, tying back to the code of the ex-Samurai who joined the National Police Agency in response to feudalism's decline<sup>39</sup>. This culture of caution rather than glamour towards guns is further emphasized by police reliance on police sticks and

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<sup>35</sup> “Japan's Tight Gun Laws Add to Shock over Abe's Assassination: The Asahi Shimbun: Breaking News, Japan News and Analysis.” The Asahi Shimbun, July 9, 2022. <https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/14665149>.

<sup>36</sup> 1993 Asia Pacific Law Review, 2 *Asia Pac. L. Rev.* 26-52

<sup>37</sup> 1993 Asia Pacific Law Review, 2 *Asia Pac. L. Rev.* 26-52

<sup>38</sup> 1993 Asia Pacific Law Review, 2 *Asia Pac. L. Rev.* 26-52

<sup>39</sup> 1993 Asia Pacific Law Review, 2 *Asia Pac. L. Rev.* 26-52

martial arts prowess. Police are trained for “60 hours on firearms compared to 90 hours on judo, and another 90 on *kendo* (fencing with sticks)” with up to “sixty percent of officers rank in one of the top judo brackets”<sup>40</sup>. This ensures police are trained in less violent forms of crowd control and containment with emphasis and pride placed on older forms of martial arts techniques.

Removing reliance on guns as a means of control due to poor physical training. The fact that the Japanese police are trained so thoroughly in the use of a weapon they will likely never use only highlights the caution and respect given to firearm usage in police culture. “If you ask people, ‘Where are there guns in Japan?’ they would say, ‘Well the policemen have guns, but they don’t usually use them’” instead, police maintain control through social customs of respecting authority<sup>41</sup>. While some American may see this as ineffective in maintaining order, evidence shows that with “the police being disarmed, criminals reciprocate” resulting in low rates of gun related crimes<sup>42</sup>. Police set a precedent, guns are not tolerance for violent use, reflecting the zero-tolerance stance of the Japanese government and communicate this to the public.

Gun control in Japan is a multifaceted approach bolstered by strict ownership licensure, heavy social penalties for criminal activity, historical precedence, and respect for authority. Japan’s history with guns dates back from the early 1500s and maintains a non-possession policy towards peasant gun ownership throughout its history. This history of the multifaceted use of guns and the remaining vestige of the Samurai code places guns as something to be respected and cautious of, used for a purpose and never violence. However, after WWII, increased gun control laws post-occupation changed the Japanese perspective on gun control as guns became

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<sup>40</sup> 1993 Asia Pacific Law Review, 2 *Asia Pac. L. Rev.* 26-52

<sup>41</sup> Kohli, Anisha. “What to Know about How Rare Gun Violence Is in Japan.” Time. Time Magazine, July 10, 2022. <https://time.com/6195409/japan-gun-control-regulation/>.

<sup>42</sup> 1993 Asia Pacific Law Review, 2 *Asia Pac. L. Rev.* 26-52

synonyms with the war and seen as tools for harm. This mentality is similarly reflected in modern complex licensure requirements and police non-reliance on handguns, as opposed to the traditional martial arts for maintaining peace. The average Japanese person has never had the right by law to maintain gun ownership until recently, as such Japanese society views strict gun control laws as normal due to their historic precedent of controlling gun control laws.

Furthermore, the societal norm of respecting authority and threat of community shunning removes any desire to obtain guns for the average civilian. These themes in Japanese society cumulate into the view that gun violence is simply “un-Japanese”. While the death of Former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has caused many to question the effectiveness of gun control laws, it has also reconfirmed Japan’s stance towards gun control. Guns are viewed as a tool that can easily destroy Japan’s hard-earned peace and thus must be controlled and only utilized when necessary, by figures of authority. As such, I have argued that strict gun laws have resulted in Japanese society’s perception of guns.

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