Chapter 3:

The Vietnam War, protest and national identity

The reaction to the Vietnam War in Japan reveals a country searching to determine its postwar identity – the values, ideals and practices to be abstracted and presented as a representation of the nation – and the ways to project that identity to the world. The response of the government, media, intellectuals, students and communities throughout Japan to the hostilities, brought into sharp relief the values that underpinned the postwar nation. The reaction gives us insights into the character of Japan’s political institutions, the nature of its international alliances, its relations with Asian neighbours, and the way in which nationality was being determined and projected. Strangely enough the politics surrounding the war revealed the limitations of the state as an institution through which ideas about national identity circulated; the war exposed the centrality of protest, activism and democratic renewal to conceptions of Japan’s postwar national identity that had been merely anticipated in the aftermath of 1960.

While the policies and rhetoric of the government were crucial to the way in which national identity was determined and articulated, it was certainly not the only text through which to decipher national identity. National identity was in many ways accidental – its symbolic imaginings were subject to the challenges and contradictions embodied in its performance. On the other hand, the efforts to define and articulate identity in spheres outside the state revealed that national identity was also strategic – its boundaries and references were cultivated and nurtured.

In the previous chapters I discussed the relationship between the people and the state in Japan and the way in which this was shaped by the Pacific War and the politics surrounding the US-Japan security treaty (Ampo). In both of these instances the state was seen to have betrayed the nation: the state had led the people into a disastrous war and subsequently flouted the democratic ideals and ratified a military pact with the United States. The protests of 1960 and 1970
ushered in a sense of despair with regard to parliamentary democracy and the institution of government, and displaced the state as a basis for democratic hope and national political renewal. The state’s position as the legitimate, effective and reliable foundation for the nation’s political culture was undermined. In its wake new ways of thinking about the people and democracy came onto the agenda that prioritized the importance of protest and resistance.

It is on this premise – the rethinking of center and periphery in a democratic political culture – that I will discuss the relationship between the people, as embodied in movements such as the anti-Vietnam War group Beheiren (The Japan Peace in Vietnam Committee), and national identity. The prioritizing of an active citizenry as the foundation of a national polity rather than the institutions of the state saw a shift in the way that national identity was imagined. The disavowal of the state brought into question who speaks for the nation, and highlighted the ways in which nationality was performed rather than simply invented or imagined.

The reaction to the Vietnam War revealed the prioritization of the ideals of peace and democracy and the importance of embodying these ideals. A crucial component of postwar identity - a lesson from the Pacific War - was that beliefs, convictions and ideals were to be incorporated and performed in everyday life. Through the protest that arose in response to the Vietnam War the ‘ordinary citizens,’ the new middle class, the ‘ethnically homogeneous’ people of Japan were looking to define the national agenda and Japan’s place within the postwar world. Beheiren was a central player in this political ferment as hopes, dreams and visions of nationality welled within its organization and activism. The themes of internationalism, democratic renewal and the re-integration of Japan into the modern world came to the fore to reveal the centring of protest in the search for postwar national identity.

Still active in their small office across the road from the JCP headquarters in Yoyogi, Tokyo, Beheiren may be surprised by my conflation of their movement with identity formation and national identity. They are proud of the influence that Beheiren had in Japanese society and politics but aware of its relatively small
membership and marginal position. As I noted in the proceeding chapter, Kurihara Kohei equates Beheiren with underground art movements and hippies of the 1960s rather than with the issue of national identity. But the two representations are not mutually exclusive. My impetus for including a movement that only manages a footnote in many histories of postwar Japan is two-fold. First, the individuals, ideals, and events that bring meaning to the national imaginary are as contingent as the nation itself. Second, with active citizens prioritized as the foundation of the national polity, movements such as Beheiren were able to perform nationality. Protest groups, as the self-proclaimed representatives of the people and democratic practice, took responsibility for imagining a national identity. In the wake of a responsive and responsible government we find a nation that is both accidentally and strategically imagined within the cultures of protest.

The Vietnam War and Japan

The escalation of hostilities in nearby Vietnam was the catalyst for widespread protest and activism in Japan. Thomas Havens has skillfully documented the reaction to the Vietnam War in Japan, the protests that developed, and the role that Japan played in the conflict.\(^1\) Havens highlights the political fervor of the period and the intensity of debates over Japan’s foreign policies, its relations with the US and its place in the Asian region. Likewise, Ishihara Moeki exposes the vehement opposition that emerged towards the United States with the onset of hostilities in Vietnam, a sense of antipathy that he believed impeded the objectivity of analysis in Japan.\(^2\) Both accounts reveal that Japan was not simply a passive observer to the hostilities and onlookers were always alert to the ways in which they might be implicated in the US aggression. It was this awareness that shaped activists understanding of the conflict. The role that Japan played brought into question the sanctity and independence of the Japanese government from US


control and highlighted its complicity in the war effort. In addition, with antipathy
towards the United States’ policies extending into the ranks of the LDP itself the
Satō government’s support for the US escalation of hostilities in Vietnam
exemplified to many critics of the government a wider trend of political inertia.

In February 1965, US planes began regular bombing raids over North Vietnam in
a massive escalation of military activities. The war had begun to escalate in the
first week of August 1964, when North Vietnamese torpedo boats were reported
to have attacked two US destroyers in the Gulf of Tonkin. Acting on the
resolution passed on August 7 by the US Senate (the so-called Tonkin Gulf
Resolution), authorizing increased military involvement, President Lyndon B.
Johnson ordered jets to South Vietnam and the retaliatory bombing of military
targets in the North. Over the course of the next few months ‘rolling thunder’
bombing raids were made over North Vietnam and the US began to build up its
land and sea forces in the South. On March 6, 1965, a brigade of American
Marines landed at Da Nang, south of the demilitarized zone (DMZ) that had
originally been set up at the time of partition in 1954. The Marines, the first US
combat ground-force units to serve in the country, brought the number in the US
military forces in Vietnam to some 27,000. By year's end American combat
strength was nearly 200,000.³

The US bombing sparked considerable interest in the media and there was popular
concern about the war in Japan. Leading journals and monthlies published special
supplements and photographic collections such as Okamura Akihiko’s This is
War in Vietnam,⁴ became best sellers for months after their release. Letters
published in the Asahi Shimbun and compiled by Maruyama Shizuo indicated
that, for the first half of 1965 not only was there widespread concern about the

³ Jayne Werner & David Hunt, (eds.) The American War in Vietnam, Southeast Asia Program,
Cornell University, New York, 1993.
⁴ Okamura Akihiko, Kore ga Betonamu Sensō da: Okamura Akihiko Shashinshū, Mainichi
Shimbunsha, Tokyo, 1965.
situation in Vietnam but consternation at the US approach. 5 90% of letters published in the paper betrayed a deep concern for the people of Vietnam and anger at the US policy. Maruyama indicates that most Japanese people believed strongly in self-determination for the Vietnamese and found it difficult to comprehend the motivations for US aggression. Maruyama’s conclusions were borne out in the Asahi polls of that year which expressed the widespread condemnation of the US agenda. In reaction to the question: do you support or oppose the bombings of North Vietnam by South Vietnam and American planes, just 4% gave their support, 21% made no reply or gave an alternative answer while 75% opposed the bombing. 6 A survey of public opinion carried out in March 1965 by the Mainichi Shinbun highlights yet another dimension of the public reaction to US aggression – a prior experience of war and fear of its recurrence. The survey posed the question: ‘What did you think when you heard of the US bombings of North Vietnam?’ The common answer was ‘possible war between America and communist China.’ Next came ‘I was reminded of the raids of Japan during the Pacific War’, followed by ‘the war might spread to Japan’ and ‘there might be nuclear war.’

The American bombing of North Vietnam was extremely unpopular in Japan. People could identify with the helplessness of the Vietnamese people and they were swamped with images and reports of American aggression for much of the war. Journalists such as Honda Katsuichi of the Asahi Shinbun sent regular reports back from the war zone and writer Kaikō Takeshi and film director Oshima Nagisa also made trips to Vietnam reporting back on the situation. The images of death and destruction from the B-52s flying over the North were a ready reminder of the air raids over Japanese cities 20 years before. These writers played on an emotional identification with the Vietnamese people - their fear,

despair, and agony were the emotions that fiction writer and journalist Kaikō Takeshi, and many others of his generation, recalled from their own experience.\(^8\)

One report, produced by Ushiyama Jinichi and screened on Nihon Television on May 9 1965, was so graphic in its depiction of the torture and murder of Vietnamese children that its screening became the subject of controversy. The broadcaster, NHK, cancelled later screenings citing the inappropriateness of the images for national television, but many within the media defended the report for depicting the reality of war.\(^9\) Oshima Nagisa defended the broadcast and applauded people like Kaikō Takeshi and Okamura Akihiko for remaining in Vietnam for long periods and operating independently of the US military. According to Oshima the work of these journalists and the images emanating from nearby Vietnam challenged the pacifist sensibilities of many Japanese.

The involvement in Vietnam saw a shift in Japan’s intellectual and popular engagement with the United States. After reaching an all time high with the popularity of the Kennedy administration and the Japanese speaking Ambassador Reischauer, the onset of the war in Vietnam saw popular opinion towards the United States plummet. Ishida Takeshi, in his recent publication *Rethinking Social Science* draws attention to the altered perceptions that Japanese intellectuals held towards the United States with the onset of the Vietnam War. He notes that, as a matter of principle he refused to visit the United States during this period and that the Vietnam War reminded him of Japan’s aggression in Manchuria during 1937–45. Ishida represents the Vietnam War as the great equalizer, the misdemeanor that brought Pearl Harbor into perspective, and thus assuaged the collective

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\(^7\) Maruyama Shizuo, ‘Japanese opinion and the Vietnam War.’


conscience of Japan.\textsuperscript{10} From the antiwar perspective the US actions in Vietnam highlighted once again that political values were at the mercy of a pragmatic government and that the US government readily ‘reversed course’ on political principles, as MacArthur had done with regard to Japanese democracy in the Occupation Period. Tsurumi Shunsuke, who like many leading members of Beheiren, had studied and lived in the United States, spoke of his distrust of the US stating: ‘Nowhere can I recognize the America I knew in the America that has been pursuing this filthy war for more than ten years.’\textsuperscript{11}

In a recent account Ishihara Moeki indicates that scholars and the press were prone to sensationalize the war and focused on the Vietnamese purely as the victims of American aggression, thereby betraying a latent anti-Americanism. The ‘moralist position’ (dōtoku tachiba) taken up by scholars, writes Ishihara, disregarded the terrorist activities of the Vietnamese guerilla fighters and failed to take into account the Cold War tensions.\textsuperscript{12} The problem with this criticism is that it fails to heed the nature of discontent in Japan. The domestic political culture and the nature of the US alliance were the issues that underpinned the opposition to the war. The events unfolding graphically illustrated that the nation had been betrayed by the US alliance and betrayed by a government that was allowing this quasi-colonial relationship to continue. The ‘anti-American’ sentiment identified by Ishihara was based not so much upon a latent antipathy towards the US but on a situation that saw Japan once again complicit in war.

Within the ranks of the LDP unease with regard to the developments in Vietnam and consternation at the American approach were suppressed behind the veil of steadfast support. As Michael Schaller indicates the Ikeda and Satō governments


\textsuperscript{12} Ishihara Moeki, ‘Sengo Bōeirongi ni miru Nihon chishikijin no hatsugen.’
were ambivalent about the United States’ endeavors in Vietnam, believing that Asian problems required Asian solutions, but they were keen to placate the United States. While Satō indicated that the war was at odds with his personal convictions Vietnam provided him with an opportunity to prove his support for the United States and achieve two of his primary goals. First, heading off future trade conflicts with the United States, and second, regaining control over Okinawa which had been occupied by the US military since the end of the Pacific War. With this in mind Satō paved the way for Japan to assist in the war effort by liberally interpreting the security treaty and showing unwavering support for the United States policy in Vietnam.

Despite the fact that Japan did not send troops into Vietnam it was far from neutral. With the Cold War raging Satō gave his full support to the Johnson administration and enforced Japan’s position in the US camp. This was no more evident than in the back peddling on earlier promises with regard to the security treaty. In 1960 Prime Minister Kishi had assured the public that Japan could veto American requests concerning the bases during prior consultation and that the treaty was limited to the Far East, which he placed north of the Philippines. In order to circumvent this and accommodate the US military in 1965, the Satō cabinet yielded to Washington’s interpretation of the treaty, downplayed the importance of prior consultation, and redefined the ‘Far East’ as south of the Philippines. In so doing Satō had given the US Military greater autonomy in the region and had ensured that Japan was powerless with regard to the use of American bases on Japanese territory. In addition the LDP contributed considerable amounts of money to the campaign in Vietnam and maintained steadfast support for the United States’ agenda.


While the terms of the relationship and the resentment towards US actions made the governments’ position unpopular, it was the antipathy that simmered beneath the friendly veneer between the two countries that makes the unquestioning support surprising. The unwavering support for the US was offered despite the fact that Japanese policy makers and politicians were undermined or even deceived in their dealings with the United States over this period. There were a number of examples of this. First, in spite of the fact that Japan was the ally closest to the war zone and the home of US bases, the Johnson administration failed to consult Japan on any aspect of the US military campaign in early 1965.\(^\text{15}\) Second, the Japanese government was dealt a blow again in 1968 when President Johnson suddenly indicated that he would not stand for a second term of office without consulting or even informing Prime Minister Satō who had invested his political career in backing the policies of the Johnson administration. The enormity of this lapse was emphasized by the fact that Johnson’s resignation almost took Satō out of office.\(^\text{16}\) Finally, the so-called ‘Nixon Shocks’ and the renewal of US/China relations, beginning in 1971 when Henry Kissinger initiated secret meetings with China, provided another illustration of the lack of communication in relations. On this occasion Satō indicated his concern stating in January 1972: ‘the drastic changes in the world position put Japan in a difficult international situation. [A sense of] uneasiness [and] irritation are pervasive among the Japanese people.’\(^\text{17}\) Despite the often frosty relations with the United States the government’s policy did not change and Japan maintained steadfast support for its Pacific ally.

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\(^{15}\) While the aerial bombing initiated in February 1965 was discussed with US allies such as Australia, New Zealand and Canada it came as a complete shock to Japan. See Havens, *Fire Across the Sea*; Michael Schaller, *Altered States: The United States and Japan Since the Occupation*.

\(^{16}\) Japanese journalists and Opposition Parties were prompt in calling for his resignation. One editorialist wrote: ‘Sato should admit his own mistakes with the same courage as the President and retire from the Prime Ministership.’ Quoted in Havens, *Fire Across the Sea*, 157.

The bipolarity of the Cold War world and the conservative pragmatism of the Japanese government underpinned the approach to the United States. The Ikeda government had embraced a ‘low posture’ political position in the wake of 1960 Ampo and, to the chagrin of both the US and antiwar activists, Satō seemed unwilling to take a firm position in international diplomacy.\(^{18}\) According to John Dower, ‘because the country was so thoroughly subordinated to the United States militarily and diplomatically, it really had no foreign policy of its own.’\(^{19}\) Other critics have suggested that the ‘no foreign policy’ stance represented an astute reading of the Cold War political and economic environment – Japan spent little on defence while spending freely on economic reconstruction and development.\(^{20}\) Playing the role of the dependent and subordinate ally paved the way for a decade of double-digit economic growth. Nevertheless, while the government kowtowed to economic pragmatism and an inert conservatism\(^{21}\) – while it refused to speak for the nation – Japan remained complicit in the hostilities in Vietnam.

The bases and facilities on the mainland and Okinawa, provided under the terms of the security treaty, were integral to the US war effort.\(^{22}\) Okinawa was one of the ports from which the US launched direct military exercises into Indo-China, and bases throughout Japan were used for sustaining the war effort in Vietnam. Graffiti plastered on the walls of Shinjuku Station, through which aircraft fuel

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\(^{20}\) Gerald Curtis notes that a theme in postwar foreign policy has been ‘a minimalist strategy’ in dealing with foreign policy issues. See Gerald C. Curtis, *Japan’s Foreign Policy: After the Cold War, Coping with Change*, Studies of the East Asia Institute, Columbia University, M.E. Sharpe, New York, 1993, xv.

\(^{21}\) Hidaka Rokuro suggests that political values that were being sacrificed to the ideology of ‘economism.’ See Hidaka Rokuro, *The Price of Affluence: Dilemmas of Contemporary Japan*, Kodansha International, Tokyo, 1984, pp. 63-78.

\(^{22}\) American Ambassador to Japan from November 1966 to July 1969 U. Alexis Johnson indicated the importance of Japan stating: ‘Japan was vital to our effort in Vietnam. It provided ports, repair and building facilities, supply dumps, stop over points for aircraft and hospitals for badly wounded soldiers.’ Quoted in Havens, *Fire Across the Sea*, 85.
was transported daily – ‘Vietnam is just over this wall’ - graphically illustrated the connection.

Of course, both the LDP and the opposition parties paid lip service to the slogans of ‘peace and democracy’ throughout this period. Despite the developments in Vietnam, Prime Minister Satō introduced his ‘Three Non-nuclear Principles’ in 1967 in order to highlight the proximity between the government and the antinuclear movement. It was announced to the consternation of anti-war activists. But the JCP seemed no more reliable. The communists maintained a prominent position within the anti-nuclear organization *Gensuikyō* (Japan Council Against the Atomic and Hydrogen Bomb) despite being unwilling to contravene their relationship with the Chinese Communist Party and endorse the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. The rhetorical posturing of the political parties is indicative of the strength of the antiwar sentiment but they were consistently subordinated to the notions of ‘realist politics’ and the restrictions of Cold War alliances. The Vietnam War and the reaction of the government seemed to underline the gulf between the people and the state and brought into question whether the state was willing, or equipped to, speak for the nation in the international arena.

It is important to note here that the sustenance of strong relations with the US and support for the war in Vietnam was not considered a *fait accompli*. The anomaly of 1970 as an enclosure act on the 1960s – as the predetermined future shaping the political and social landscape of the period – was that 1970 provided a site at which to embark upon a new political direction. It was not just with regard to protest and political activism that 1970 operated as a beacon for hope and optimism. The late 1960s were awash with discussion about the possibility of

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24 In 1961 Ikeyama Jūrō and Maeno Ryō left the JCP because it failed to condemn the use of nuclear weapons; in 1962 delegates walked out when the JCP failed to criticize the Soviets over testing; and in March 1963 the Chairman of the *Gensuikyo* resigned over the Council’s inability to criticize all nuclear testing. See Japan Quarterly, ‘The Socialists and Communist China’, *Japan Quarterly*, Asahi Shimbun, Tokyo, Vol. 5, No. 4 October 1963, 409; see also, Ōe Kenzaburō, *Hiroshima Notes*, David Swain & Toshi Yonezawa (trans.), Marion Boyars, New York, 1988.
forging a new direction in foreign policy and reconsidering Japan’s place in the world. In this context it is worth discussing some of the visions that swamped political journals and magazines during this period. With many lamented the inertia of the government they sought to actively nurture a sense of nationality outside, and in many cases in opposition, to the state.

Participating in the 1965 symposium, ‘Hopes for 1970,’ Marxist scholar Ōuchi Hyōe questioned how it was possible that Japan had not paid war reparations and did not have a peace treaty with China. The war in Vietnam made him reflect again on the issue of war and responsibility and he identified 1970 as an opportunity to secure a new direction in Japan’s foreign policy and take responsibility for Japan’s place in Asia.

It has been 100 years since the Meiji Restoration when Japan was able to secure independence through the endeavours of enlightenment. This was a reason for happiness and pride. With the loss of the Pacific War this pride was lost. But, we deserved it. Since that time Japan has achieved a great deal. So how is it possible that there have been no reparations or apology, and certainly no peace agreement with China? Can we really take it for granted that shying away from responsibility for the war is feasible?25

According to Ōuchi the military nature of relations between Japan and the US undermined the possibility of reconciliation with China, of moving beyond the veil of war, taking responsibility for the past, and negotiating directly with Asian countries rather than hiding under the US defense umbrella.

Fukuda Kan’ichi also drew attention to this underlying concern and the wider implications of Japan’s response to the Vietnam War, noting:

The failure of the Japanese government to arrive at an independent understanding of the situation in Vietnam is closely related to the basic assumptions of its foreign policy. Postwar Japanese diplomacy has been

completely devoid of both the vision and the determination, which might enable Japan to assume the role of a peacemaker in Asia.\(^{26}\)

The ideas expressed by Oūchi and Fukuda point to a wider trend in the intellectual and political terrain of this period – a struggle to determine the nature of Japan’s postwar emergence on the world stage. Corresponding with the 1964 Olympics, economic success and industrial expansion, the Vietnam War brought the issue of identity and postwar political values firmly onto the agenda.

Just prior to the escalation of hostilities, Kōsaka Masataka lamented the fact that a national vision was absent from the postwar political terrain. ‘Foreign scholars,’ writes Kōsaka ‘usually find it puzzling that postwar Japan has been able to achieve such a miraculously high rate of economic growth while apparently lacking in national purpose.’\(^{27}\) For men such as Kōsaka, a Japan that lacked a political vision also lacked identity.\(^{28}\) Similarly, from the perspective of antiwar activists, the government appeared unable to forge an independent and accountable foreign policy position that did not simply reflect their subservience to United States directives. The Vietnam War illustrated the true nature of the US-Japan relationship and the collusion of the Japanese government in the military alliance.

Even the figures associated with the nationalist right decried the gulf between the nation and the policies of the Sato administration in 1965; they opposed the policies of the government and were critical of Japan’s democratic institutions. In articles published during 1965 people such as Etō Jun and Ōi Kai claimed that the notion of ‘Japanese democracy,’ which had been warmly embraced in the postwar years, was a myth that subjugated the true essence of Japanese culture and


\(^{27}\) See ‘Japan as a Maritime Nation,’ *Chuō Kōron*, September 1964.

These men were the protagonists of reactionary politics, but their pleas were not so much expressions of national pride, or the return to authoritarianism so much as expressions of loss. They did not incite a rising tide of patriotism rather they decried a loss of identity and pleaded for its renewal. Literary critic, Etō Jun, writes: ‘We Japanese must become aware of the fact that modernization threatens us with the loss of our homeland and our past, with the consequent loss of our identity as a nation.’

Noguchi Yūichi also published on the question of national identity in early 1965 but unlike Etō Jun, his endeavour was not to mourn its loss but to direct its re-emergence. He wrote that the economic pride emerging over the course of the 1960s could be, if taken out of the hands of the elite’s, harnessed for the establishment of a genuinely democratic and peaceful Japan. According to Noguchi an economically strong Japan that pursued the ideals of economic rationality, autonomy and equality could help to liberate the third world from its economic woes, re-establish links with China and ‘work actively for peace and political independence.’ ‘Our primary task for the future,’ writes Noguchi, ‘is not simply to criticize whatever the power elite advocates, but to create a new type of popular nationalism which can cope with economic nationalism and undermine its tendency to shore up the power of the ruling class.’

In discussions held in 1968 between Sophia University Professor Mushakoji Kinhide and Hidaka Rokurō on the ‘1970 question’ similar sentiments were expressed as the two reflected on the ‘big power-consciousness’ that was being nurtured in Japan under the guise of the governments’ ‘economics first’ policies.

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The two lamented the fact the Japan was beholden to the United States and that the ‘prior consultation’ clause that underpinned the 1960 security treaty was practically meaningless. But it was the issue of Japan’s place in the Asia-Pacific and the role that Japan was playing in the containment of China that emerged as their primary concern. The maintenance of US bases in Okinawa and the prospect of relations with the US being strengthened in 1970 were seen to inhibit the sentiment of the people and the hopes for an autonomous, pacifist position in international relations. Beheiren member and political scientist, Hidaka Rokurō, stated:

A 1970 security treaty cannot but become the most fundamental of the various options that we have. Other methods to reduce the danger attending the security treaty, such as admission of China to the UN, restrictions on the use of nuclear arms in the Asian region, and a proposal for, and materialization of, disarmament are conceivable. But, under the present conditions, those methods have all been contained by the security treaty-centered approach that the conservative government has pushed rather than corrected.

In his 1968 essay Ishida Takeshi also depicted the determination of the nation around pacifism and democracy as an important task facing Japan in the 1960s. Ishida saw the economic growth of Japan as facilitating a sense of purpose and pride in the nation but the articulation of national identity, the fabric of the nation, resided elsewhere – in the political and social spheres. Discussing the ‘false and real images of nationalism’ in 1968 Ishida outlined the competing claims on the national imaginary during the period. In many ways they replicate the positions that I have already outlined - the revival of a prewar nation as espoused by Etō Jun; and a sense of national identity that eschews the state and embodies the pacifist ideals of the postwar constitution. Ishida referred to the latter as ‘peace as

33 The US failed to consult Japan on a number of military operations in the 1960s, not the least of which was the decision to initiate a bombing campaign in Vietnam in 1965.

34 Hidaka Rokurō, ‘1970 nen no gimon,’ 34.
a national task,’ and was wary of the nationalism that he identified as being inherent in the government’s subservience to the United States. The government’s commitment to bringing the postwar period to an end, wrote Ishida, is founded upon directing the sense of national pride ‘towards the strengthening of the Self Defense Forces, recognizing the security treaty, and accepting the nuclear bases by wiping out memories of the misery caused by the Pacific War and recalling the “glorious past” of the post Meiji era.’  With the Meiji Centenary in the foreground and the postwar generation coming of age Ishida saw the task of remembering war and defining national identity as crucial.

Like Ishida Takeshi, Oda Makoto supported the economic development of Japan and the project of national reconstruction that had been initiated but he indicated that national identity needed to be forged outside the sphere of the state.  Oda saw the project of modernity and reconstruction as an important means through which to liberate the people from the hardships of the 1950s. He decried the states’ ‘aimless pursuit of prosperity’ (mumokuhyō no han’ei) and the concurrent cultural romanticism of intellectuals such as Etō Jun and others. In reference to the romanticism of Kamishima Jirō and his support for Sōka Gakkai (Value Creation Society), the lay organization of a Buddhist sect, Oda writes:

Many who praise the Self-Defence Forces and the Sōka Gakkai also complain about the excessive ‘Americanisation’ of daily life in Japan, by which they mean an overemphasis on materialism…Actually, many of the problems in Japan’s society stem from its low standard of living and from the fact that Japanese lack the American’s respect for the individual’s inalienable rights.

37 Oda Makoto, ‘“Nanshi” no shisō,’ 33.
Oda believed that these men placed too much emphasis on the ‘public good’ (kōjōtai) over the rights of the individual. He challenged their recourse to cultural ‘romanticism’ and their prioritization of the ‘public good’ identifying it as an angry response to the states’ ‘aimless pursuit of prosperity.’ According to Oda the attempt by people on the political left and right to define and invigorate national identity and meaning in the ‘public good’ was both problematic and misrepresented the character of the postwar nation. Oda believed that Japanese national identity, a sense of identity common to the defeated axis powers, was based on the experience of war and pacifist ideals. The state was able to facilitate this identity through Article 9 of the constitution, an article renouncing war and conscription, but it was not the facilitator of the identity. ‘Japan’s nationalism,’ [writes Oda, optimistically]

has two characteristics. One is the private first concept, a notion which by definition cannot be based on the romantic idea of sacrificing oneself for the public good … The other characteristic is a pacifism derived from the people’s wartime experiences of meaningless sacrifices and meaningless death.  

The ideals of Ishida Takeshi and Oda Makoto indicate once again that the notion of pacifism was crucial to all sides of politics during this period. The experience of defeat in war and the destruction of the atomic bombings brought pacifism onto the agenda as a unique feature of Japan’s postwar identity. As I have already noted, the conservative government also paid lip service to pacifist political values but was seen to betray them during the Vietnam War. This betrayal gave further impetus and purpose to the anti-war activists. The notion that pacifism was being betrayed in 1965 – the notion that the nation was being betrayed - was inscribed into the activist mentality of Ishida and Oda. Identity could not be taken for granted, it had to be embraced and enacted in everyday life.

38 Oda Makoto, “‘Nanshi’ no shisō,” 29.
The understanding of postwar national identity articulated by both Ishida and Oda drew attention to the underlying ambiguity and even precariousness of national identity in the 1960s. In both accounts a sense of national identity emerged that oscillated between a tangible ideal such as pacifism - a characteristic or attribute of identity - and a more abstract notion of individual self-discovery and the performance of democratic subjectivity - a process. According to both men the two things were inseparable. For Ishida they came together in the ‘task of peace,’ while for Oda the confluence of identities, characteristics and process were expressed in the ideas such as ‘making democracy our own.’ The attributes of postwar Japanese identity and the process of its articulation were integrally entwined.

**Beheiren: Forging a national identity through protest**

The onset of hostilities in Vietnam sparked protest because it brought to light the working nature of the security treaty with the United States and the complicity of the Japanese government in the US military strategy in East Asia. But the antipathy coalescing within the political culture of the 1960s went well beyond opposition to government policy. In 1965 the government ostensibly ignored popular sentiment with regard to Vietnam and also seemed unwilling to enunciate a clear national position in the international arena. Intellectuals on all sides of the political spectrum saw the politics surrounding the Vietnam War as an indication that the Japanese government was unwilling to speak for the nation; the state of postwar Japan was an empty vessel unable and unwilling to represent the sentiment of the people. It is in the context of this inertia, coupled with a sense of purpose and resolve among activists, that the foundations of Japan’s democracy were being established outside the auspices of parliamentary democracy. The movements against the war found a voice through new, autonomous, spheres of political expression, and emerged as the proponents of a postwar identity.

As I have already indicated, one of the lessons drawn from the Pacific War, and reinforced during 1960 *Ampo*, was the importance of speaking out and of taking responsibility for political decisions. The Vietnam War confirmed a suspicion born in 1960 that parliamentary democracy could not be trusted as a foundation for postwar Japan, and progressive intellectuals searched for new forms of expression. Many looked towards protest movements and ‘civil society’ to fill the void and in 1965 there was considerable optimism with regard to the cultures of protest. The rapid development of the cities, the dramatic shift in the population away from rural areas and the changes in education, all facilitated the formation of activist groups and new political alliances. The formation of these movements and the ideals upon which they operated indicates that the task facing activists was far more than simply to challenge the policies of the government. With a variety of groups claiming to represent ‘the people,’ and an increasingly vibrant civil society, the Vietnam War emerged as an important issue around which to garner a commitment to activism.

Soon after the Rolling Thunder bombings began over Vietnam, *Sōhyō* (Japan Labour Unions General Council) organised a rally in Tokyo and demanded that the US withdraw. In late March *Gensuikyō* (Japan Council against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs) sent a delegation to the American embassy to deliver a note of protest to President Johnson. In April, a group of scholars whom Ishihara Moeki labels the ‘Iwanami progressives,’ namely the publishers of journals *Sekai* (a monthly publication that espoused a commitment to peace and democracy in its

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editorials) appealed to Johnson to end the war.\textsuperscript{41} The petition, signed by scholars including Nobel Prize winning physicist Yukawa Hideki, political scientist Maruyama Masao and literary critic Katō Shūichi, contained three main points. First, ‘we demand that the Japanese government make it clear’ to all that ‘it will not sanction the use of American military bases in Japan for combat operations. Second, ‘we demand that the Japanese government request the United States to immediately cease its bombing of North Vietnam.’ And third, ‘we demand that the Japanese government ask’ the combatants ‘to effect a suspension of hostilities and open diplomatic negotiations which include the South Vietnam National Liberation Front.’\textsuperscript{42} In late April Professor Emeritus at Tokyo University and leading Marxist economist Ōuchi Hyōe, and Oda Makoto, addressed a similar petition to Prime Minister Satō, on behalf of ninety two academic, literary and cultural figures appealing for Japan to take action.

In addition to these prominent voices of opposition was the Anti-war Youth Committee (Hansen Seinen Iinkai) known as Hansen. Hansen was forged from within the youth sections of the Japan Socialist Party and the Labor Union, Sōhyō. It stood as an alliance of ‘workers and students’ independent of Zengakuren (national federation of student self governing associations) and paraded the vague principles of ‘independence, originality and unity,’ making it one of the organizations associated with the New Left. Hansen had emerged in opposition to the normalization treaty with Korea that was signed in August 1965, believing that through the treaty South Korea was being brought within the web of a Japan-US military alliance. The onset of the Vietnam War brought the military dimensions of the strategic alliance into sharp relief and thus Hansen fought on the dual causes of terminating the Japan-ROK Treaty and opposing the war in Vietnam. By 1969 there were 490 separate organizations identifying themselves under the umbrella of Hansen with over 20,000 members nationally. The greatest number was from Kaiho-ha (Liberation Faction), a group that had also emerged

\textsuperscript{41} See Ishihara Moeki, ‘Sengo Bōeirongi ni miru Nihon chishikijin no hatsugen,’ 64-65.
\textsuperscript{42} ‘Betonamu mondai ni kanshi nihon seifu ni annai suru,’ Sekai, April 1965, pp. 58-61.
from within the JSP, but Hansen attracted students from many factions and the links with the mainstream Party remained tenuous. In fact soon after its emergence the links with the Socialist Party were all but severed.\textsuperscript{43}

Outside this sphere of intellectual and organized protest Iida Momo notes that smaller demonstrations were occurring around Tokyo as people expressed their opposition to the war and emulated the demonstrations occurring throughout the world. He wrote that ‘on March 19 a group of five citizens, calling themselves WFP (Walk For Peace), walked from Hibiya Park to the American Embassy’\textsuperscript{44}

And just days later hundreds ‘spontaneously’ began protesting around Tokyo Station and outside Shibuya Station in Tokyo as antipathy towards the US campaign boiled over into street demonstrations.

Beheiren was one movement founded upon this sense of spontaneity and individual responsibility, traversing the political terrain between Hansen, the JCP and ‘average citizens.’ It was a group initiated when political scientist Takatabake Michitoshi approached Tsurumi Shunsuke while he was working with artists at the Gallery of \textit{Bungei Shunjū}, about the possibility of forming a group to protest the military developments in Vietnam and the complicity of the Japanese government. In early April they met formerly at \textit{Hongō Gakushi Kaikan} with other people interested in participating and decided on a course of action.

Together they decided to ask Oda Makoto, who had shot to prominence with his book \textit{Nan Demo Mite Yaro}\textsuperscript{45} (I’ll give anything a look) and played a leading role in the petition of the intellectuals just weeks before, to head the movement. He was living in Osaka at the time but made his way up to Tokyo to meet with

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{44} Iida Momo, ‘Shimin minshushugi undo no ronri to shinri,’ (\textit{Gendai no Me}, August 1965) \textit{Betonamu ni Heiwa o! Shinmin Rengō, Shiryō: ‘Beheiren’ undō}, Kawade Shobō Shinsha, Vol. 1, Tokyo, 1974, 25. \textit{Gendai no Me} (Eye on the Times) was a small publication carrying articles by young writers as well as alternative comment. It was often critical of the Japan Communist Party.
\item \textsuperscript{45} Oda Makoto, \textit{Nan Demo Mite Yaro}, Kawade Shobō, Tokyo, 1961.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Tsurumi and Takabatake and get the movement started. Sitting in a coffee shop close to Shimbashi Station, they decided on the date for the inaugural demonstration and arranged for a flyer to promote the protest. The name Betonamu ni Heiwa o, Shimin Bunka Dantai Rengō (Peace in Vietnam Citizens Cultural Committee Alliance) or Beheiren, was also decided upon. Tsurumi Shunsuke notes that, at the same time an associate at The Humanities Institute in Kyoto (Kyodai Jinbun Kagaku Kenkyūjo) also expressed an interest in starting a Beheiren group and independently shortened the name to Betonamu ni Heiwa o! Shimin Rengō (Citizens Alliance for Peace in Vietnam). It was this name that was eventually taken up by all of the Beheiren groups as they popped up ‘spontaneously’ around the country.46

Beheiren, boasting a number of prominent intellectuals, writers, directors, artists, Marxists, popular personalities and of course, ‘ordinary citizens’, was an important player in these cultures of protest. Beheiren represented a broad spectrum of opinion aligned together in search of political renewal and change in Japan – what Oda Makoto deemed a ‘cultural revolution.’ Its formation in 1965 was significant because through its structure, style and approach to political activism, it was able to traverse the key national issues of postwar Japan. Through countless articles in journals and magazines such as Asahi Jānaru, Gendai no me, Shisō no kagaku, and Sekai, as well as Beheiren Nyūsu which was inaugurated in October 1965, participants in Beheiren sought to challenge the cultural, political and social mores of postwar Japan. Beheiren reflected upon and brought meaning to Japan’s war experience, Japan’s international relations and obligations, the

political ferment and protest, the ‘lifestyle revolution’ of the 1960s, and the project of reconstruction and community, in a political culture where the nation had been divested of meaning. The ideal of developing new spheres through which to be politically active, bringing meaning to notions of civil society, and defining the character of democracy and autonomy, underpinned the formation of Beheiren.

Below I will illustrate that in opposing the Vietnam War, activists of Beheiren sought to embody and live a sense of national identity that resided within the ideals of Japanese citizenship, protest, activism, responsibility and community. Through the dual processes of developing new forms of political expression and organization, and engaging Japan in international forums, groups such as Beheiren sought to bring concrete form to the ideal of autonomy and activism, and perform postwar national identity.

i. Beheiren: New forms of political expression

Implicit within the formation of Beheiren was both a rejection of existing organizations and political activism and the nurturing of new notions of individuality and autonomy within protest. Imagining a new basis for democratic practice was implicit within its structure and activism.

Less than a month after the beginning of the war in Vietnam Oda Makoto, Tsurumi Shunsuke and Takabatake Michitoshi began preparing for the first Beheiren rally to be held in Shimizudani Park in Tokyo. It took place on April 24 1965, attracting about 1500 demonstrators, and was promoted with fliers calling for all people to participate and outlining the general character of the movement being established. One flyer titled ‘Bring peace to Vietnam’ read:

We are average citizens.
As average citizens we are office workers, primary school teachers, engineers, reporters, florists, novelists, and students of English. In other words, you! the reader of this pamphlet.

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47 Irokawa Daikichi, The Age of Hirohito: In Search of Modern Japan, translated by Mikiso Hane
The one thing that we want to say is this: Bring peace to Vietnam! Now, throughout Japan and throughout the world, even in America, many citizens are making this same plea. Please, listen to this voice.48

As the flyer indicates everyone was encouraged to take part in Beheiren, and civic associations were invited to use the name Beheiren if they accepted the three aims: peace in Vietnam, self-determination for the Vietnamese and an end to Japan’s complicity in the war. Beheiren prided itself on its decentralised and largely unstructured character. Takabatake Michitoshi, speaking not as a founding member but as ‘a single voice in a larger movement,’ notes that Beheiren was an evolving project rather than simply a movement of people or an anti-war organization.49 Takabatake was reticent about tracing a single genealogy of Beheiren, seeing it instead as a ‘flowering of individual sensibility’ and an intermediary or facilitator of self-expression. Beheiren’s history and politics was as many and varied as the people who identified themselves within it. In a speech entitled ‘Me in Beheiren’ he conceded that his analysis of the movement may seem ‘vague’ but notes that its ‘unstructured’ and ‘spontaneous’ nature was also the beauty of Beheiren. In fact as a movement of people embracing the ‘spirit of the ronin,’50 wrote Takabatake, Beheiren represented a valuable step in Japan’s reformation. Tsurumi Yoshiyuki, cousin of Beheiren’s founder Tsurumi Shunsuke, called Beheiren an ‘action oriented movement whose success is based on the spontaneity of its individual members.’51

Likewise Tsurumi Shunsuke saw Beheiren as a torrent of water and each participant as a separate and readily definable drop that makes the river flow. In

50 Rōnin were the ‘master less samurai’ of pre Meiji Japan. In the 20th century it was a word used to refer to students who had failed the university entrance exam and were preparing to try again the following year.
his introduction to Beheiren’s collected works he wrote: ‘I, as a single drop in the river that is Beheiren, will write about the things that I have seen. But it does not carry any more weight than the many other drops.’ In an intellectual approach that bore resemblance to the Science of Thought Group and the activism of the Voiceless Voices in 1960, Beheiren encouraged participants to take individual responsibility and to define protest for themselves. The emphasis was placed upon the nature of the movement and the philosophy that underpinned it rather than simply the issues that were being confronted.

Oda Makoto also played a crucial role in shaping the nature and scope of the movement. Oda drew upon notions of ‘victim and victimiser’ and the ‘web of complicity’ and responsibility that faced each individual, thereby highlighting the centrality of individual subjectivity to Beheiren’s activism. In order to explicate his ideas Oda discussed the ‘intertwining web of complicity’ that the US-Japan security treaty cast over the people of Japan, America and Asia, and the compromising position in which they were placed. He argued that every individual had to acknowledge their complicity in the mechanisms of authority and power and take responsibility for their actions. ‘Our position is typified by that of the Japanese workers on an Okinawan air base,’ [writes Oda]

> Whenever they try to strike they find themselves facing a bayonet, and from this point of view they are entirely in the position of victims; but at the same time if you ask what they are actually doing you find out that they are loading bombs on B52s. This symbolises the position of the people of Japan, and to some extent the people of the world. For example American soldiers are victims in so far as they have been drafted by the US government, but at the same time they are sent to Vietnam where they act as oppressors.

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This circular relationship between the individual’s role as both the victim and victimiser is a consistent theme in his political essays, fiction and activism. The ‘binding web of complicity’ provided a philosophical means of deconstructing the place of the individual within political culture and defining a sphere in which each individual could identity their political subjectivity. The examples employed by Oda were blunt, but instrumental in identifying the position of the individual as both victim and victimiser. Reflecting back upon the experience of the Pacific War we find that society is implicated in the agenda of the state and that the notion that Japan was deceived by the state, that society was led into war, denies the underlying complicity of society. It is the sense of complicity and responsibility that drove the activism of Beheiren.

In a recent publication on Beheiren, Oda notes that it was a movement in which intellectuals got their hands dirty. Beheiren was formed not as an intellectual movement or a forum for political discussion, but as a group that facilitated activism and protest. This idea of intellectuals engaging actively in political concerns was borne out by reports on the first Beheiren rally in 1965. The report in the Asahi Shimbun was titled ‘Yesterday’s men of culture demo’ and reported on the protest held in Shimizudani Park, where novelists Kaikō Takeshi and Oda Makoto joined with ordinary citizens. ‘Walking towards Shimbashi they urged onlookers to join them calling “participate as ordinary citizens,”’ reported the Asahi.

It was with these activist ideals in mind that Oda launched the second demonstration to be held on May 22 1965. Flyers, carrying the names of Beheiren’s prominent participants such as film director Shinoda Masahiro and novelist Kaikō Takeshi as well as ‘ordinary citizens,’ called upon participants to


56 Asahi Shimbun, April 25 1965.
‘raise your cry as an individual Japanese concerned about Vietnam, as an individual human being.’\textsuperscript{57} Beheiren activists were driven by the sense that they represented the beliefs of the people and they were keen to elicit action to back up their antiwar convictions. Tsurumi Shunsuke points to survey results published in various Japanese newspapers to highlight the strong correlation between the activities of Beheiren and popular opinion in Japan. He states:

\begin{quote}
It appears from the surveys carried out by the Asahi and Mainichi newspapers that we can identify with the people of Vietnam. We can safely say that the thoughts of average Japanese citizens are reflected in the activism of Beheiren.\textsuperscript{58}
\end{quote}

Implicit in this statement is the belief that ‘the people’ had embraced both pacifism and the ideal of activism as it was embodied in Beheiren. It denotes a confluence of the people of the nation with a commitment to expressing their political convictions, the emergence of an autonomous citizenry.

Yet another pamphlet signed by both Oda Makoto and Takabatake Michitoshi called upon onlookers to join the fray of protest and elicited the memory of Koe Naki Koe no Kai (the Voice of the Voiceless Voices Association),\textsuperscript{59} the protesters that had emerged during the demonstrations of 1960. Placards carried on the streets of Japan through the 1960s carried the name Koe Naki as well as the words freedom (jiyū), independence (dokuritsu) and peace (heiwa). As they made their way along the streets towards Shimbashi, a site that had been the centre of demonstrations five years earlier, the Beheiren demonstrators elicited the memory of past protest by drawing on the legitimacy and efficacy of 1960 Ampo.

Yet, while they developed links with groups such as Koe Naki, Beheiren struggled to distance itself from the politics and demonstrations of 1960 Ampo. The

\textsuperscript{58} Tsurumi Shunsuke, ‘Beheiren to ha nani ka: Beheiren no shisō,’ in Oda Makoto (ed.), Shimin Undō to wa Nani ka, Tokuma Shoten, Tokyo, 1968, pp. 6-12.
\textsuperscript{59} ‘Dai nikai betonamu kōgi demo no oshirase,’ Betonamu ni Heiwa o! Shimin Rengō, Shiryō: ‘Beheiren’ Undō, 15.
philosophy that underpinned the movement was determined in direct relationship to both the success and failure of 1960 Ampo – the success of unaffiliated movements and the failure of parliamentary democracy. Implicit within the stress upon cultural revolution and nurturing individual political subjectivity (shutaisei) was a challenge to the existing political parties; Beheiren endeavoured to forge a space for political activism and representation outside the auspices of the existing political apparatus. The engagement of Oda Makoto as leader is perhaps the clearest illustration of the ambivalence felt towards the organized Left and the institutions of democracy in Japan. Takabatake Michitoshi stated:

Our inclination towards concrete action sprang from latent dissatisfaction with the bureaucratic and doctrinaire character of the domestic political parties and the organised left wing ... We asked Oda Makoto, the popular novelist, to head Beheiren because he had done nothing in the 1960 struggle against the security pact.  

Oda Makoto, who had travelled to the United States in the late 1950s as a Fulbright scholar at Harvard University, and travelled throughout the US and Europe before his return to Japan in 1960, represented the main focal point for Beheiren. He was an enthusiastic and charismatic leader and the fictional accounts of his travels were widely read. Oda came to Beheiren with a very strong desire to forge a new space for protest and activism in a scene that he felt was curtailed by the major opposition parties. He eschewed the ideological agenda of the partisan left and believed strongly in the freedom of the individual and the importance of participation and activism. In an article published just after Beheiren’s first demonstration Oda noted the importance of developing new styles of ‘anti-establishment’ activism that were centred upon the individual rather than a ‘public good.’  

He identified the Shimizudani Park demonstration of May, where activists carried placards such as ‘unaffiliated individuals,’ as a prime example of

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61 Oda Makoto, ‘Futsu no shimin no dekiru koto: kô to watashi no mondai,’ (Nihon Dokusho
the new style. In an article titled ‘What average citizens can do’ he analyzed the difference between activism before and after the Pacific War and the importance of circumventing the existing institutional structures that were impeding the nature and scope of activism. ‘The major differences between prewar and more recent activism cannot be ignored,’ he writes, ‘and until we come to face these differences head on activism will not be able to muster much potency.’

The ideas emanating from Beheiren activists problematised the political orientation of the left political parties in Japan by undermining the notion of ‘revolution’ and a utopian vision of the future; the menacing circularity of the victim/victimiser dichotomy within each individual problematised the very notion of ‘freedom.’ In an interview with Ampo Oda states: ‘it’s a kind of eternal revolution ... when you think you have cut yourself off from the position of the oppressor, then you find out that you are still in the position of the oppressor.’ Freedom is thus an anachronism. In this sense Oda Makoto was grappling with the same problems as Sartre in *The Age of Reason* in his endeavour to define a universal ‘totality’. In the work of Sartre the individual is forced to think of himself as free, beyond the world of things into which he is projected, and beyond any definitions that may be posed upon him. For Oda, this freedom could be lived by radicalizing the everyday and rejecting the system that is binding the individual in a ‘web of complicity.’ Oda tailored this position to the ideal of democracy arguing in his 1968 essay ‘Man as rebel’, that the most concrete form of direct democracy is resistance.

In a similar vein Iida Momo saw in Beheiren, and the other sporadic demonstrations occurring though out Tokyo in 1965, a ray of hope in an otherwise inept political Left and rejoiced in the individuality and spontaneity of the citizens

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*Shimbun, May 17 1965), Shiryō: Beheiren Undō, 10-13.*


64 Oda Makoto, ‘Hanransha toshite no ningen,’ *Chūō Kōron*, October 1968, pp. 45-56.
involved (shimin kojin no jihatsu teki shutaisei). ‘These “self starting” concerned citizens are representative of a spontaneous form of activism,’ writes Iida, ‘that has emerged where national activism (kokumin undō) and unified struggle (kyōdō soshiki) have been shown to be inept.’\textsuperscript{65} The plurality within Beheiren meant that many activists were affiliated with the JCP during this period, but their agenda posed a significant threat to the position of the Communist Party. Their ideas about citizenship and democracy challenged an intellectual culture in which Marxism was the orthodoxy, and they disputed the centrality of the JCP to political protest and activism. With the formation of Beheiren and Hansen it was not simply the policies of the state but the character of Japanese politics, and the agenda of the old left, that came under attack.\textsuperscript{66}

Mutō Ichiyō saw Beheiren as a movement that opened up a political and social sphere outside the state and one that epitomized the new symbolic form of citizenship, or civil society (shimin shakai) of 1960s Japan. In an article about Beheiren, Mutō stressed the limitations of rationalism and parliamentary democracy as the foundation of the nation’s political culture and indicated that Beheiren could bring meaning to the empty ideals of peace and democracy.\textsuperscript{67} The established political parties responded to these suggestions with derision and made pleas for unity in the anti-war struggle. In the May 1965 issue of the Communist Party organ Akahata, Sasaki Tokumatsu wrote: ‘Participants in Beheiren are the same as workers. All are carrying placards calling on the US to get out of Vietnam and all have begun marching for peace.’\textsuperscript{68}

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\item \textsuperscript{65} Iida Momo, ‘Shimin minshushugi undō no ronri to shinri’
\item \textsuperscript{66} For example Matsushita Keiichi writes ‘[Citizens’ movements represent] a new political trend that seeks genuine popular sovereignty and democracy, with full citizen participation in government as an antidote to the weakness of established political parties, labor unions, and the various radical groups.’ Matsushita Keiichi, ‘Citizen Participation in Historical Perspective’ (1971), in Koschmann (ed.) Authority and the Individual in Japan: Citizen Protest in Historical Perspective, University of Tokyo Press, Japan, 1978, 172.
\item \textsuperscript{67} Mutō Ichiyō, ‘Beheiren undō no shisō,’ in Oda Makoto (ed.) Beheiren to wa Nani ka: Ningen no Genri ni Tatta Hansen no Kōdō o, Chikuma Shoten, Tokyo, 1969, pp. 82-99.
\item \textsuperscript{68} Sasaki Tokumatsu (Akahata, 23 May, 1965) quoted in Ishihara Moeki, ‘Sengo bōeirongi ni miru Nihon chishikijin no hatsugen – Betonamu hansen tōsō to chishikijin no sekinin,’ Jiyū, August
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the belief that Beheiren was yet another renegade force that would undermine the strength of the progressive forces in Japan. His criticisms represented a call for unity behind the established left but disguised the huge gulf that had emerged in the antiwar movement in Japan. Other critics more supportive of citizens’ movements were cautious about disavowing parliamentary democracy and questioned the accountability of groups such as Beheiren.\(^6^9\)

In an effort to challenge the critics and establish historical precedent Takabatake Michitoshi compared Beheiren with the non-church movement in Japanese Christianity led by Uchimura Kanzō (1861-1930).\(^7^0\) Writing at the end of the nineteenth century Uchimura Kanzō rejected the institutional approach of the Catholic Church and advocated a non-sectarian approach to religion that presented Japan with a malleable and geographically specific system of belief. Most importantly the non-church movement did not directly oppose the mainstream/Western church, it simply challenged the boundaries of the existing institutions. Uchimura refused to commit himself to either pole of tense confrontation or tacit acceptance of existing institutions seeking instead ‘a new frontier of intellectual transformation.’\(^7^1\) Drawing on this ideal Takabatake depicted Beheiren, and citizens movements more generally, as an alternative to the state rather than as a direct opponent – a movement that sought to establish a new space not just for political activism but for philosophy and identity. Within this framework Beheiren was ‘operating in a struggle against all orthodox organizations whether conservative or reformist, sharing a spirit that places the

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\(^6^9\) For example, Yamada Munemutsu, ‘Ichigatsu gosan Mutō Ichiyō ronbun e,’ \(Shisō no Kagaku\), March 1967, pp. 98-100.

\(^7^0\) Takabatake Michitoshi, ‘Citizens’ movements: organizing the spontaneous,’ in Victor Koschmann (ed.), \(Authority and the Individual in Japan: Citizen Protest in Historical Perspective\), pp. 189-199.

individual above the organization.’ Through Beheiren the political culture of Japan was being challenged and renegotiated in the same way that Uchimura sought to challenge the dictates of the Western church hierarchy in the Meiji and Taisho periods.

While Uchimura’s anti-institutional approach to identity provided a useful tool for Beheiren, there is a second reason why Takabatake might turn to Uchimura Kanzō in order to define Beheiren – he provided an historical link that could be located within Japan and one that gave ‘Western’ ideas a Japanese frame of reference. Like Uchimura and his brand of Christianity, Beheiren was able to embrace ‘Western’ institutions and ideas such as democracy within an indigenous framework. The transformation of Japanese politics was happening from within – it was not a foreign threat but a process of national reform. In a similar vein Tsurumi Shunsuke later referred to citizens’ movements such as Beheiren within the context of Japanese political and social history, ascribing Beheiren a tradition and genealogy located domestically rather than within western political philosophy. Tsurumi likened citizens’ movements to the so called ‘circle groups’ that were rooted in the village tradition of the pre-Meiji period, stating:

In general, a circle is a small, voluntary and temporary community, meeting at regular intervals in pursuit of a common interest ... it tenaciously pursues a specific issue and may achieve partial victories solely through its independence of political parties, since it thus has greater appeal for the public at large and can solicit support from a wider sphere.  

This definition saw him aligned with Tanigawa Gan, one of the founding members of the Kyūshū based Circle Village movement in the late 1950s which sought to foster community and autonomy. As with other intellectuals and

72 Takabatake Michitoshi, ‘Citizens’ Movements: Organising the Spontaneous,’ 196.
74 The influence of Tanigawa Gan on protest is discussed in Mikami Osamu, 1960 nen dai ron,
activists Tsurumi’s endeavor was not only to define the character of citizens’ movements but to characterize the ‘traditional Japanese’ village within the framework of democratic activism – to recast Japanese history outside the frame of organized structures and institutions, fascism and war.\(^7^5\)

In contrast to Takabatake and Tsurumi, Oda Makoto was reluctant to draw upon Japanese tradition or history in the early formation of Beheiren, advocating instead a ‘new history’ and a new Japan.\(^7^6\) Nevertheless Oda also emphasized the importance of a consciousness shift rather than simply another opposition movement. And he saw 1960s Japan as ripe for democratic renewal and the enunciation of nationality within new spheres of autonomous political activism.

**ii. Beheiren: Japan in the world**

The claims to represent the people and the stress upon national renewal, social change and new alliances and movements are indicative of the way in which Beheiren sought to embody the new nationality, to perform a national identity. The final thrust of this endeavour was to engage Japan internationally. Locating the nation within international networks was fervently pursued during this period. The point of engagement – the ways in which Japan communicated with the world – provided a means by which to determine the health and accountability of Japan’s own institutions and practices. After the unaccountability of Japan during the 1930s engaging Japan in the world was deemed crucial. Concern with Japan’s international identity was omnipresent.

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In 1965 Oda emphasized the important opportunity that Beheiren had been afforded to bring Japan into a wider network of citizens activism and protest and established links with many people who became active in the anti-Vietnam War struggle. His humanist position saw him drawing on the work of people such as Sartre who visited Japan at the invitation of Beheiren in 1967, as well as civil rights activists in the United States.\(^\text{77}\) Having lived in the US, Oda was at the forefront of establishing links internationally and emphasizing the global scope of the protest and activism. Just prior to the formation of Beheiren he was trying to establish an English language journal titled ‘Japan Speaks.’ while the publication never got off the ground its very title is illustrative of his commitment to giving Japanese democratic movements a voice internationally. Oda spent much of his life trying to articulate his vision of Japan to the world and played a leading role in the publication of the English language periodical *Ampo: A Report from the New Left in Japan* in 1969.\(^\text{78}\) Oda sought to express his sense of a truly postwar national identity.

The United States was also wracked by protest against the war during this period, and Oda went to some lengths to ensure that antiwar activism in Japan was not construed as anti-Americanism.\(^\text{79}\) He stressed the affinity between ‘average Japanese citizens’ and their counterparts in the United States and was keen to


establish cultural and personal exchanges between the anti-war voices in both countries. The technological developments of the 1960s, the growth of the Japanese economy and the concurrent changes in communication appeared to facilitate the hopes that Oda had for the new movement. Oda related telephone conversations with friends in the United States and the organization of a united front with the second Beheiren demonstration to coincide with protest action occurring around the world. He wrote:

Probably for the first time in history demonstrations will occur [throughout the world] on the same day. In the West and in Asia, in four countries around the world, and ‘average citizens’ will march with the same objectives in mind.\(^{80}\)

Oda also suggested that the events could inspire the formation of an America-Japan Citizens Treaty.\(^{81}\) The antiwar movements represented a basis from which to launch not only an antiwar campaign but also a campaign to rejuvenate the nation’s political institutions and speak to the world. The title of a conference held in the summer of 1968 in Kyoto -‘International Peoples Conference Against War and for Fundamental Social Change’ (\(Hansen to kakumei ni kansuru kokusai kaigi\))\(^{82}\) - denoted the centrality of political change and renewal and saw many civil rights activists visiting Japan and discussing issues concerning war, citizenship and activism. Ishida Takeshi notes that despite his reticence towards the United States and his refusal to travel there, ‘through anti-Vietnam War activism I was able to forge new alliances with like-minded American intellectuals.’ Ishida highlighted the conferences held by Beheiren in 1966, the Japan-America Citizens’ Conference, as a forum through which relations with US

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\(^{80}\) Oda Makoto, ‘Futsu no shimin no dekiru koto,’ 13.


\(^{82}\) Though it is not a completely accurate translation the organizers used both the English and the Japanese conference names. A direct translation of the Japanese title would be ‘International Conference Against War and for Revolution.’ There was some controversy over rendering
were re-evaluated, old alliances re-thought and new friendships developed.\textsuperscript{83} Tsurumi Shunsuke also nurtured strong ties with American intellectuals particularly those involved in the anti-Vietnam War struggle such as Howard Zinn, David Dellinger, Joan Baez and Gary Snyder.

The desire to express a sense of national identity was no more evident than in the campaigns launched in 1965 to place a full-page advertisement in the *New York Times*. The initiative, launched by prominent Vietnam correspondent and novelist Kaikō Takeshi, clearly illustrated the endeavour to engage the United States in a new way and revealed some of the values that Japanese activists sought to bring to the international movement. Kaikō was reluctant to participate in the monthly demonstrations of Beheiren, holding placards and walking the streets, but he was keen to participate in the antiwar effort and wrote passionately about the situation in Vietnam.\textsuperscript{84} The advertisement titled ‘Can bombs bring peace to Vietnam? An appeal from citizens of Japan’ reads:

\begin{quote}
America’s best friends in Asia are the one hundred million people of Japan … In the Orient, we have never seen a horse eating carrots when set upon with a club. Bullets have been fired and blood shed. The time has come to lay down the club and gather about the conference table … we believe that the United States should, as a great nation, dare to make this move, that it will in the long run prove an honor. What we admire in America is its tradition of democracy and magnanimity.\textsuperscript{85}
\end{quote}

This statement expresses ideals that formed the templates of Japan’s postwar political culture. It makes recourse to the friendship established with Japan’s former foes, the United States, and reflects a genuine belief that the end of the war in the Pacific and the occupation by the United States ushered in a fundamental change in Japan’s political and social institutions. The statement denotes *kakumei* as ‘fundamental social change’ rather than ‘revolution.’

\textsuperscript{84} Quoted in Oda Makoto, *Beheiren Kaikoroku de wa nai Kaiko*, 35.
‘Japanese citizens’ desire to protect and promote the political values set down in
the postwar constitution. Finally, the statement makes recourse to the wartime
propaganda of the Japanese State. During the war the phrase ‘ichioku,’ ‘the one
hundred million’, provided an overriding impression of harmony and
homogeneity that laid the foundation for Japan’s wartime aggression (‘One
hundred million hearts beating as one’; ‘the one hundred million as one family’).
In wartime Japan it evoked the sense of common purpose and solidarity, despite
the fact that the population was closer to seventy million.\(^{86}\) By 1965, with the
population finally reaching the ‘ichioku’ mark, Beheiren activists brought the
phrase back into circulation, co-opting the propaganda of the state for their own
antiwar purposes. There could be no clearer way to depict the fundamental shift
that had occurred in Japanese society. From this position the Japanese activists
had something to teach America and the advertisement provided a clear indication
of this.

> Japanese learned a bitter lesson from fifteen years of fighting on the
> Chinese mainland: weapons alone are of no avail in winning the minds
> and allegiance of any people.\(^{87}\)

In 1967 the anti-Vietnam War activists in Japan once again appealed to the
citizens of America through a newspaper advertisement. On this occasion the one
page advertisement in the Los Angeles Times read: ‘An appeal from Citizens of
Japan and the Voice of Hiroshima’ and carried the words ‘don’t kill’ (殺すな) in
Japanese script across the top. The characters were designed by artist Okamoto
Tarō, an important figure in the Yomiuri Independent art group and an artist who
sought to give Japan, and Japanese contemporary art in particular, a voice in the
international arena. Okamoto maintained a philosophy akin to Beheiren’s ideals
of political renewal and articulating a postwar identity and was keen to


\(^{86}\) This is discussed in John Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War*,

‘reconstruct the Japanese art world’ and to ‘communicate the raw power of contemporary Japan.’ 88 The advertisement also carried the brief antiwar statements of ‘average citizens;’ the voice of a pacifist and active Japan appealing to America.

**Conclusion**

There were clearly competing claims to national identity and multiple ways in which the nation is defined, negotiated and contested in the mid 1960s in Japan. The voices of Etō Jun and Mishima Yukio on the right of the political spectrum were indicative of the fact that Beheiren did not monopolize the political agenda or have complete control over the way in which the nation was represented. What is important is that Beheiren was playing an elemental role in creating new sites for expressions of citizenship, autonomy and identity. The state, the apparent facilitator of the national imaginary, was radically displaced as cultures of protest emerged as the sites for transmitting and negotiating the shape of Japan’s postwar political reconstruction. Beheiren tapped into the energy of protest in 1965 to launch a movement of ‘fundamental social change and renewal’ in Japan; it represented an amalgam of streams seeping through the vast networks of individuals and groups.

The way in which Beheiren positioned itself within the politics of the 1960s brings us back to the question: Who speaks for the nation?

Beheiren determined its shape and political philosophy in order to facilitate new conceptions of democratic practice in Japan, and its members swamped journals with the ideals and agendas that underpinned its formation. Beheiren’s attempts to define the shape of the political landscape was, in this sense, strategic. And yet, the circumstances of its emergence – the Vietnam War, 1960 *Ampo*, anticipation of 1970 – were beyond its control. In fact, the very notion of a group of antiwar activists seeking to shape and articulate a national imaginary seems unlikely. The

production of national identity seemed to be occurring on the run, it was accidental.

The apparent instability and fluidity of the identity that was being forged in Japan was further compounded by the nature of the imagining itself. Identity had to be performed in 1960s Japan through the confluence of characteristics such as pacifism and the process of democracy. In many ways Beheiren saw the project of determining the nature of protest and bringing concrete meaning to the notions of autonomy, activism and responsibility, as synonymous with defining the national imaginary. Thus the very ideas that Beheiren projected were never set in stone, they existed only in their enactment and thus remained in a constant state of flux. The following chapters bear this ambiguity out more clearly, drawing attention not only to the important role that Beheiren activists played in the 1960s but also the competing claims on determining and contesting the nature of protest, democracy and the national imaginary.