

# Representation of Remilitarization and Nationalism under Shinzo Abe's Regime at 'Kamen Rider Build Series'

Hamdan Nafiatur Rosyida \*

Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang, Jl. Raya Tlogomas 246, 65144 Malang, Indonesia

\*Corresponding Author. Tel +62-812-9733-2143  
Email: hamdannafiatur@umm.ac.id

## Abstract

*Through the television show Kamen Rider Build, Shinzo Abe, who was re-elected as prime minister of Japan for the term 2012–2020, attempted to reinterpret Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution. This study highlights the remilitarization and nationalism issue. This paragraph includes a demilitarization issue to do rid of the honor pacifist mentality that military troops adopted as a result of American pressure following Japan's humiliating defeat in World War II. Japan, which Abe ultimately labels an "abnormal country" since it lacks military troops, instead only possesses the Jietai/Japan Self Defense Force (JSDF) as a governmental security force. Abe builds on increased military power by increasing the military budget and relaxing the rules governing the JSDF through the reinterpretation of Article 9. This argument presents advantages and disadvantages, yet it backs right-wing politicians in the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). The US-Japan alliance was strengthened as a result, although tensions in the East Asian region grew. Through symbols and other aspects that appear utilizing representation theory, this political issue is depicted in the television series Kamen Rider Build, which Toei developed in 2017. Through this, it is possible to see that the Kamen Rider Build series is an allegory of the dynamics of the remilitarization debate during Shinzo Abe's administration through popular culture and successful nationalism ideology propaganda media to the larger Japanese community.*

**Keywords:** *Kamen Rider Build; Nationalism; Remilitarization; Shinzo Abe*

## 1. Introduction

Japan's win over the Allies in World War II was the second big step toward becoming a country on par with the West. As part of its efforts to build a positive image of the country, Japan puts all of its natural and human resources, including its popular culture, to work for the nation's growth in all material and immaterial fields (Akihiko, 2017). Since the end of World War II, the Japanese film business has grown quickly, even getting to the level of Hollywood. One reason for this is that big topics like the traumatic events of World War II, pacifism, and Japanese nationalism frequently serve as important themes in Japanese film and anime. Since they happened more than 50 years ago, the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the painful

memories of World War II, and the resistance against militarism have been major themes in manga, anime, and movies. Some examples are Osamu Tezuka's Tetsuwan Atom (Astro Boy), who was a peacemaker in the years after World War II, Hayao Miyazaki's early film Nausicaa: Valley of the Winds, and Studio Ghibli's Grave of the Fireflies, which talks about the pain and humanity caused by war. Together with the huge Godzilla monster, these images represent the holocaust of Japan caused by the atomic bomb, and they continue to be a symbol of pop culture.

In the years after World War II, the success of the Gojira/ゴジラ (Godzilla) movie series in 1954 had a direct effect on the growth of the special effects genre (*tokusatsu*) of monster and character movies in Japan. The Godzilla movie was

a hit right away all over the world. Several Japanese and American production groups also made movies about *kaiju* (monster) like *King-Kong vs. Godzilla* (1962), *King Ghidorah* (1964), and *Gamera* (1965). *Tokusatsu-kaiju* continues to be popular in Japan. (Tanter, 2009). One of the *Tsuburaya Company's* production companies started creating this kind of program. For example, *Super Massive*, which came out in 1957 and was about a giant character who covered his face to protect his identity, was the first show in the *Ultraman* series. Another movie company, *Senkosha Production*, also aired *Moonlight Mask (Gekko Kamen)* on October 19, 1958, was a show about a superhero who wore a mask and rode a motorbike (Kim, 2017). The series was created by Kohan Kawauchi, tell about a normal person who transforms into a superhero and battles threats to human life using an amulet or similar object. The amount of movies in this genre shows how popular it is, so the "*henshin-boom*", or the popularity of *tokusatsu* movies about superheroes who can change into other things, was born. During the "first *henshin boom*" era, which led to the creation of other *henshin-hero* shows like *Kamen Rider*, the idea of a human superhero becoming a hero, called a "*henshin hero*" at the time, was popular with people of all ages, from children to the old (Sugawa-Shimada, 2014).

Ishinomori Shotaro made the *Kamen Rider* metaseries of *tokusatsu* TV shows, movies, and books. It shows a *henshin-hero* fighting a *kaiju* playing a supervillain while riding an insect-shaped motorbike. In the first episode of *Kamen Rider Ichigo* (1971), tell a story about Takeshi Hongo as the main character, and his plan to get rid of the evil 'Shocker (シヨツカー) Organization' were shown. After that, Japanese movie theaters ruled the "*henshin-boom*" in the early 1970s. This had an effect on other superheroes and the action-adventure genre.

Particularly, *Kamen Rider* has a lot of fans all over the world, and it has had an effect on many forms of pop culture.

The story line of *Kamen Rider* series was divided into three periods as Japan's periodical time, Showa (1971–1987), Heisei (1992–2019), and Reiwa (2019-present). Even though the main reason for the main character turning into a cyborg was because he or she was being experimented on by aliens (in the Showa era) or because they were in a research center (in the Heisei era), the different themes in each series made the stories more captivating. *Kamen Rider* has been on for 50 years, so it's understandable that it's one of the most popular *tokusatsu* shows (Greenall, 2021).

The *Kamen Rider* series is popular with kids because it shows superheroes fighting monsters, but it also has a hidden message that can be figured out by looking at the hidden symbols. According to Coogan, every superhero story can be interpreted as a metaphor for social issues (Coogan, 2006). As superhero films, *Kamen Rider* and other *Tokusatsu* send hidden messages to the audience, such as *Godzilla* exposing his suffering from a hydrogen bomb in *Lucky Dragon No. 5 (Daigo-go-Fukyūmaru)* incident in 1954 (Miyamoto, 2016). Furthermore, the story of *Kamen Rider* is also based on the horrible memories of World War II (Staite, 2021), which subsequently develops into propaganda (Abel, 2014). In particular, *Kamen Rider Ryūki's* conflicted reaction to the 9/11 catastrophe and the Bush administration's so-called War on Terror stands out in the *Kamen Rider* series (Staite, 2021), radical postwar resentment breaking by *Kamen Rider Fourze* (Kim, 2016), *Kamen Rider Gaim* serves as a representative of distinct Japanese views toward military force (Hermawan & Handaya, 2020), and so on. In this essay, *Kamen Rider Build* stands in for one of Japan's major problems: the rise of remilitarization and rising nationalism

under Prime Minister (PM) Shinzo Abe's regime.

Kamen Rider Build first aired in 2017, the same year that Japan's Prime Minister was re-elected in three times. This series shows Japan was being split into three areas by a huge wall because of alien attack. Every area had The Major is in charge to protect the civil and pursue the peace for the sake of areas, so they have no option to fight the alien by using military way. But two of the three mayors agree that the military is the key thing that will bring the territories back together to reclaim sovereignty, strengthen the region, and become independent in terms of defense and security. They work with 'Faust', an underground group that does research on human-weapon (later we say *Rider-system*) experiments, to make humanoid weapons for internal defense or to attack the next area. The Major is no hesitate to use money from the national budget to make the Rider-system work better. Since the alien attack is getting worse, every major is competing to protect the Rider-system. However, two majors have gone off the path and settled in other areas, which will lead to a civil war. When the Majors and Riders found out that Faust, who was hiding behind an alien mask, had betrayed them, they formed a group to fight the aliens. They know that improved armor is important to fight the aliens, but that teamwork is even more important (Toei, 2017).

The issues related with remilitarizing that happened during Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's time in office from 2012 to 2020 are shown in the story of Kamen Rider Build. During his time in power, Abe changed Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution (*nihonkokukendai kyū-jō*), which is the basis of the Japanese Constitution today. Article 9, which was written with the assistance of the US, indicates that Japan can't build army troops, which is a political problem for Japan as a sovereign country. One part

of the change that has been criticized by many groups is the idea of remilitarization through the creation of an army soldier. Abe, on the other hand, said that remilitarization was a way to build a sense of pride and give Japan, which was thought to be a strange country, back its right to rule itself (Surak, 2019).

A representational theory is necessary to address the issue of remilitarization. The movies are an example of a genre of widely consumed media known as "construction," and they have been widely distributed in audio-visual form. Films, TV shows, newspapers, radio shows, audio segments, etc. are just some of the many ways that ideas can be depicted. The media give the impression of being genuine, but they are a construct nonetheless. Select or choose what to display, omit or choose what to discard, and build, or depict decision making based on certain codes, are the three elements necessary for the construction of media. The connotative and denotative interpretations of a code are both integral to the system. Making something meaningful for other people is a significant behaviour. Indicating (giving meaning) is part of the process, and the media, with their wide reach and fleeting importance, can play a role in it. the cardiovascular system (Soules, 2015).

As a result, the process of expressing and disseminating meaning through the media is always reliant on the power of specific organisations. In other words, the idea of power is continuously present in media content (Aprinta, 2011). Under Shinzo Abe's leadership, the Kamen Rider Build series' treatment of the subject of remilitarization meets the requirements of Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution.

Representation theory can explain Kamen Rider Build's remilitarization. Stuart Hall said representation theory is about language-based meaning creation, that means cultures create and share meaning, therefore representation links

culture to meaning and language. Hall noted two kinds of representation, the *first* is a conceptual map or mental representation of many ideas. Mental perception creates abstracts. *Second*, language representation creates ideas. Mental abstractions must be translated into common English to link ideas to symbols. Social consensus means the meaning process is widely accepted (Hall, 1997).

Hall used three representational ways to explain social creation. (1) Mimetic language acts as a mirror to reflect all meanings and truths in the world. This way interprets the world's objects, people, concepts, and events. (2) The usual method of using words to convey our viewpoint. This method suggests a thoughtful strategy to using words to communicate. (3) The constructive method uses language to define the public, social personalities, and language. Sound, pictures, and photographs are used in this representation method. The symbolism of the sign gives it this meaning. Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic strategy and Michael Foucault's discursive method became the third approach (Hoed, 2014).

Representation works by linking ideas in our heads through words. This lets us connect real objects, people, or events to the imaginary world of non-real objects, people, and events. (fictional). Conceptual maps or mental models help us understand the world around us by setting up a chain of reactions between something and our conceptual map. The last step is to make a mental map using words or pictures that show what we think "something" is. Representation is the process of putting these three things together. The outputs of the representation process are mostly important because of mental representation. This paper will talk about the ideas of remilitarization vs. pacifism after World War II.

During the American rule of Japan from 1945 to 1952, when Douglas

MacArthur was in charge of the SCAP, most of Japan's Constitution was written by American officials. This constitution replaces the Meiji Constitution, which is blamed for Japan's aggressive behaviour in Asia. Because of this, it was thought important to make changes and make this the best legal foundation for the country to date. The content of this constitution became the basis for foreign cooperation policies and the issue of Japanese demilitarisation. It said that Japan did not recognise the existence of war and the use of military weapons to settle international conflicts. This constitution was called the "Peace Constitution" or the "Pacifist Constitution" because it was based on the idea that war and the use of military weapons to settle international conflicts were wrong (Dower, 1999). Because the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings made it harder to go to war and get weapons, Japan was allowed to have the JSDF to protect its sovereignty and territorial integrity, but not for military reasons (Schlichtmann, 2009).

The constitution defined the cultural norms of modern Japanese society, which are heavily affected by Shinto beliefs, suggesting that the general public valued peace and frowned upon violence. Abe initiated talks to change Article 9 after reevaluating Japan's history previous to the JSDF's inception. When American guards stationed in Japan retreated to Korea during the Korean War in 1950, this phrase took on a new meaning. After McArthur requested Prime Minister Yoshida's assistance in replacing the army, Yoshida established the National Police Reserve, which was made up of 75,000 ex-members of the Japanese Imperial Army. This force eventually morphed into the Japanese Self-Defense Force. Therefore, despite opposition from opposing parties and society at large, it is permitted to create defensive combat soldiers.

In the early 1990s, the United States put pressure on Prime Minister Nakasone to reinterpret the JSDF's role so



that it could help the United States maintain the security of its coastline roughly 1,000 miles from Honshu Island. Thirdly, Prime Minister Kaifu and Foreign Minister Miyazawa reinterpreted the constitution during the Gulf War to allow the JSDF to participate in military actions outside Japan on behalf of the United Nations in reaction to American criticism of Japan's apathy in maintaining international peace. The term '*kenpou henshen*' is used to describe the repeated changes to the law (Juwana, 1992).

In 2012, Abe initiated a reinterpretation of Article 9 that viewed a limitation against purely offensive powers. As a result, the argument for *Komeitō*, an LDP coalition ally, to rewrite Article 9 in light of the current situation is strengthened. (Martin, 2014). In 2017, when Abe won his third election, he was adamant about keeping the changes to Article 9. He did this by getting the support of the Japanese nationalist party. This was because of the tensions over the nuclear issue with North Korea and the huge influence of China's foreign policy, which will be announced at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. Under Shinzo Abe's leadership, the way people in Japan think about politics has become more pro-opposite. Japan's new name, "abnormal country," which means a country without military forces, is based on its constitution. The conservative Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), whose leader is Abe, blew this term out of the water. Abe wants to make Japan a "normal state" that is "absolutely sovereign" when it comes to protecting national security, getting rid of threats, and sending combat troops outside of Japanese territory as the constitution says. Politicians and nationalist groups also used this reason to push for remilitarization to improve Japan's defence status quo (Akihiko, 2017).

However, the Basic Policy on National Defense, adopted by the National Defense Council and Cabinet in May 1957,

is at opposition with demilitarization. Maintaining social order, building a defense force, and implementing the Japanese-American security actions that form the foundation of Japanese defense are all part of the plan to support peace efforts and lay the groundwork for national defense. The new Japan-American Security Agreement, *Shin Nichibei Anzen Houyaku*, was signed, marking the culmination of these efforts and setting forth guidelines for the execution of demilitarization. The United States agreed to provide a security guarantee against Japan during the Cold War as part of the Yoshida Doctrine in return for the use of a Japanese base. Occupation of Okinawa by U.S. forces has an impact on Japan's high public budget absorbed for these operations costs and increases risks should Japan be called upon to engage in American hostilities like the Persian Gulf War or a nuclear war with North Korea. And so, on September 28, 2014, during the 187th session of the Diet, Abe gave his policy speech stressing national defense by gradually reducing financial burdens in Japan's partnership with the United States (Oros, 2017).

The Japanese conservative faction supported Abe's speech, whose implementation of remilitarization was exactly proportional to the revival of the Tennoism philosophy, which the SCAP had banned in the Japan's Constitution. Despite this, the Tenno/Emperor charism continues to exist as a social ideology (*shakai ideoroji*). Regarding remilitarization, Maruyama interpreted that this type of nationalism in Japanese society must be fulfilled. It shows that nationalism is not in conflict with *shakai ideoroji*, the foundation of the Japanese Imperial Institution, despite the fact that the United States has been stripped of this ideology at the state and national levels (Surajaya, 2018). Thus, the change to Article 9 of Japan's Constitution is still necessary so that Japan can grow its military and

develop its military force overseas, despite the fact that the country can protect itself from foreign threats even without the amendment (Oros, 2017).

This issue was shown in the Kamen Rider Build series, which aired for the first time from September 3, 2017 to August 26, 2018 (Toei (a), 2017). Since 2000, this is the nineteenth season of Kamen Rider Heisei. This story begins with the prologue to Japanese astronauts' success. Ten years ago, the Japanese conducted a landing mission on Mars, where they brought back a mysterious box called the Pandora Box, which was the cause of the Skywall disaster, namely the appearance of a very thick and tall stone wall, causing the Japanese territory to split into three territories: Seito to the west, Hokuto to the north, and Touto to the east. Each region has its own administration and security forces; Hokuto promotes social welfare, Seito economic prosperity, and Touto the tranquility of the people. However, these three areas compete for control of other regional capitals, resulting in the fragmentation of the nation.

The Hokuto region, led by Prime Minister Tajimi Yoshiko, has been successful with its childcare programs and agricultural policies, while the Seito region, led by Prime Minister Mido Masakuni, has been criticized for its intention to rebuild economic stability with Japanese technology first. Nonetheless, these two regions possess enormous military might. In contrast to Touto, who was comparatively moderate under Prime Minister Himuro Taizan and insisted on employing the Security Forces to protect his domain (*jietai*), these three regions were unable to combine to execute Japan's administration. Even still, portions of the Pandora Box panel are guarded by Kamen Rider as an army soldier and Guardian (regional security forces) in order to maintain military balance, avoid political dominance, and maintain regional security

against other regions that are attempting to seize the panel.

Kiryuu Sento, a young scientist in his twenties, is the protagonist and Kamen Rider Build. He is employed by the Advanced Physics Laboratory of the government-owned Touto Institute to study the mystery of the Pandora Box panel, which is the source of calamity in Japan. Within the Touto Institute is the stronghold of Faust, a demonic organization that conducts human experiments to transform humans into monsters. Additionally, Faust created Project Build, the Rider System with the highest level of defense. Also, there was espionage by Namba Children, i.e., orphaned children brainwashed and indoctrinated by Namba Industry to become spies, with the goal of stealing development data for the Kamen Rider Build Project to be sold to other regions in order to start a big conflict. In Japan, one of the institution's senior officials partnered with the CEO of the corporation Namba Heavy Industry.

This incidence was uncovered by Himuro Gentoku, Assistant to Prime Minister Touto, the son of Himuro Taizan, Minister of the Touto Region and government executive. Nevertheless, it was too late when Hokuto waged war on Touto by sent Kamen Rider Grease and Guardian to take Touto's panel; fortunately, Hokuto lost, but Touto's banishment to Gentoku was the result. Hokuto realized after his loss that his territory had been invaded by Kamen Rider Rogue and the Guardian from the Seito region, notably Gentoku, who had defected and sought to exact revenge on Touto. This drives Kamen Riders from the Touhoku and Houkoku regions to collaborate against their counterparts from the Seito region. However, a narrative twist occurred when Himuro Taizan, who strongly advocated for his old pacifist government system, was assassinated by his enemy, rousing Gentoku to institute martial law in Touto's government.

After a protracted battle, it is revealed that behind all of this is a mastermind named Evolt, an extraterrestrial from Mars who can assume the identities of the Minister of the Seito area and the CEO of Namba Heavy Industries, Namba Jusaburo, and whose objective is to destroy the world and create a new universe. Since then, Kamen Riders from the three regions have fought together against Evolt, and in the end, they discover that the purpose of this conflict is to build a new world without the Skywall and Pandora Box (TV Asahi, 2017).

The *Kamen Rider Build* series raises remilitarization and Japanese security in the Shinzo Abe era through the use of symbols, textual language, and multiple other factors. As the title implies, the intention of '*Build*' in Kamen Rider Build is to merge the conceptions of military consciousness from the three regions of Japan, which are comprised of various conservative and nationalist factions, in order to construct a peaceful, completely sovereign Japan.

## 2. Methods

This research approach is qualitative and using Textual Analysis research. This study seeks to provide a comprehensive overview of the political security review and popular culture in looking at Japan's remilitarization in Article 9 of the 1947 Constitution. This study's data collection techniques are three ways: documentation, observation, and literature study. Documentation is done by collecting all 49 episodes of the Kamen Rider Build series and then watching and listening to the stories' series. Furthermore, the observation process is to obtain the desired data by (1) determining the objectives of the observations to obtain the values and issues of remilitarization in the film series, (2) determining the time and duration by the objectives of the observation, and (3) finding and

classifying data following the purpose of observation. The data obtained were clarified using literature study through journals, books, internet articles and secondary sources whose validity tested.

The data analysis technique used is through 4 stages: (1) data reduction, by classifying primary data according to the scene related to the objective of the observation, (2) the interpretation stage is searching for data related to the issue of remilitarization in the form of text, clothing, naming of characters, and so on in the Kamen Rider Build series. The selected data are given meaning through a semiological process, which correlates to mental representation in the form of remilitarization during Abe's reign (3) the analysis stage, which is to validate the interpreted data classified based on facts and political history of Japanese remilitarization related to Article 9 of the 1947 Constitution (4) conclusion, to obtain a summary representation of the discourse on the remilitarization of Japan during the reign of Shinzo Abe.

This study employs an interpretation-based qualitative methodology. Interpretation, also known as *Verstehen* (understanding), is a key component of qualitative research. It is "multi-method," encompassing the gathering and application of a range of empirical materials and methodologies, emphasizes both the objective nature of behavior and its subjective meanings, including the accounts of individuals of their attitudes, motivations, behavior, events, and situations, what people say and do in particular settings, such as institutions in social and temporal contexts. Because of this, it might be categorized as an interpretative science according to Weber (Aspers & Corte, 2019). Documentary research is one strategy in the qualitative method for investigating historical data to investigate data sources that are more reliable and consistent with the text. It is essential to glean as much

information about the document from the text itself as possible, but it is also crucial to understand how and why it was created and how it was received. Examining documents without taking into account the fact that they are social and historical creations would be pointless. For the same reasons, documents must also be understood in relation to their author(s) and, to the extent that this is known, their intended goals, in other words to relate the *text* to its *context* (McCulloch, 2004).

In this study, *Kamen Rider Build* series is a primary source of data, whereas websites, journals, books, and other materials that are pertinent to the study are secondary sources. The period constraint is 2013–2018, when Japan was governed by Abe's leadership in his first regime. The material limitation is around the remilitarization agenda Abe initiated to rebuild the ideology of nationalism.

The data analysis method is composed of five coding processes by Creswell: (1) reading the complete text; (2) breaking the text into different segments; (3) classifying segments by coding; (4) removing redundancy and overlapping data to produce patterns/themes; and (5) changing the code into a theme (Creswell, 2008). In this study, 49 episodes of the *Kamen Rider Build* series will be examined by researchers as a thorough reading of the text, which will then be divided into numerous segments. Following the coding process, the section produced three main themes: nationalism, remilitarization, and abnormal country. Data is then sorted to remove duplicates and data relevant to the issue is determined. Furthermore, the data analysis is consistent with the subject matter and is connected to the representation theory used.

### 3. Result and Discussion

#### 3.1 Subsection

##### 3.1.1 Ideology of *Fukoku Kyouhei* (Strong Country in a Strong Army)

First, convey Prime Minister Abe's aspirations regarding the Meiji Government's catchphrase, *fukoku kyōhei* (a strong country in a strong army). *The Kamen Rider Build* series depicts the ideological clash between Himuro Taizan as Prime Minister Touto and his son, Himuro Gentoku, Prime Minister Touto's secretary. Himuro Taizan is defined as a moderate government politician who prioritizes discussions to achieve the unification of the three Japanese regions. Taizan attempts to reduce conflict by not bolstering the troops called *Guardian*, as doing so would drive the Hokuto and Seito areas to compete to produce more critical military personnel. Taizan focuses economic strategies to enhance the quality of life of its citizens, who have suffered since the Skywall disaster (Episode 7, minutes 13.25-13.36).

Contrary, the conservatives mind's Gentoku seeks to unite Japan's territory by arming the *Guardian* troops to defend the Touto region against other regions' attacks (Episode 8, 03.32-04.03). Gentaro goes clandestinely and collaborates with Nanba Heavy Industries, a Japanese industrial conglomerate, to develop a underground organization named *Faust*, with the goal of bolstering the *Guardian* through scientific studies. They created a weapon known as the *Rider System*, an army to defend regional security and conquer neighboring regions (Episode 9, minutes 07.00-07.38). Gentoku desires to unite the three Skywall-divided territories, thereby establishing an official and sovereign government, through the use of the *Rider System* (Episode 9, minutes 15.22-15.49). Gentoku did not hesitate to damage his father in order to become a temporary prime minister, and he pursued his desire by invading neighboring regions (Episode 20, 15.44-16.42 minutes).



The political ideas and aspiration of the conservative Gentoku character to increase state security through the military symbolize the Japanese government during the Shinzo Abe era, which is rife with remilitarization. Shinzo Abe is the Japanese prime minister with the longest term, spanning from 2012 to 2020, about eight years. Abe was born into an aristocratic family; her father Shintaro Abe served as foreign minister from 1982 to 1986 and was a leading candidate for prime minister in 1987. His father was also an LDP politician for the Seiwa Politician-Analysis Council, a pro-classical economy, nationalist, and conservative faction backed by the Japan Business Federation. Abe inherited his conservative views from his maternal grandfather, Nobusuke Kishi, former prime minister of Japan from 1957 to 1960 and founder of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). Kishi was imprisoned as a Class A war-crime suspect for his brutal rule of the Japanese puppet state Manchukuo in Northeast China in the pre-war era. In his book titled *Utsukushii Kuni e* (Toward a Beautiful Country), Abe is appalled by those who believe Kishi to be a war criminal, rather than a nationalist figure. Abe's conservative and pro-right-wing ideas are influenced by his personal connection to Kishi (Samuels, 2001). Therefore, Abe's aim is "an end to the postwar system" (*rejimu*) and "regaining independence" (*dokuritsu no kaifuku*) (Pyle, 2018).

Abe is a member of a political dynasty whose forebears conducted the Meiji Restoration. Abe was entrenched in the elite political history of Japan; his father, grandpa, and great-uncle all served as prime minister. However, his maternal grandfather, Nobusuke Kishi, influenced Abe's nationalist outlook. Abe's desire to "take back Japan" (*Nippon o torimodosu*) and end the US-led order of subordination (Pyle, 2018).

Abe was elected as prime minister in 2006 with foreign policy objectives that

diverge from the post-war rule. He embraced the government system of former Prime Minister Koizumi (2001-2006), which adheres to a hard-line politician, which has an effect on Sino-Japanese-Korean tensions. Abe supported Koizumi during JSDF operations outside of Japan in 2001, when troops were deployed to Iraq. After being elected the first Prime Minister of Japan in 2006, Abe took controversial steps with right-wing parties to alter a controversial new history textbook and to support a bill that encourages nationalism and patriotism among Japanese youth. In addition, several cabinet members were implicated in a party scandal that resulted in the LDP's popularity plummeting, therefore he resigned in September 2007. However, in 2012 Abe won his second election and announced a plan to amend Article 9 of the Constitution (Christensen, 2015).

The second leadership of Abe is aligned with *Nippon Kaigi* (Japan Conference), the largest right-wing organization in Japan, which is passionately ultranationalist. Their vast number of members influences the executive and legislative votes in Japan. Based on the Tokyo Tribunal's view of history as a fundamental problem, they intend to amend the country's current constitution and alter its postwar national consciousness. (Akihiko, 2017). *Nippon Kaigi* is a conservative organization whose major objective is to restore Japan's glory through the monarchy. Therefore, *Nippon Kaigi* supported the amendment of Article 9. The nationalism reflected Japan's military might (*fukoku kyouhei*), consequently pacifist ideology was viewed as a destroyer of Japanese nationalism. They refer to themselves as nationalists and label politicians, intellectuals, journalists, and even imperial members "traitors to the nation." With its prohibition on the formation of military forces, the Japanese Constitution is viewed by conservative lawmakers as a denial of

political liberties (Surak, 2019). Many LDP politicians have dreamed for and desired revisions to this article over the past six decades, and Abe is the most likely figure to make it happen. In order to accomplish this objective, the LDP amended 103 provisions that diminish individual rights protection, emphasize the significance of public order, qualify fundamental liberties, and emphasize the emperor's relevance to the nation (Koll, 2019). This action makes Abe a controversial figure in society, and he has many detractors, yet politicians adore him.

Gentoku symbolizes Shinzo Abe, who hails from a political family; his father, Himuro Taizan, is the prime minister of the Touto region. Shadowing by Taizan, Gentoku is slated to become the next premier. However, Gentoku's conservative ideals were at conflict with his father's governing approach, which emphasized economic development and harmony among the people, as Shintaro Abe did. Gentoku insists on being pro-military by enhancing the Guardian's armaments, just as Abe did in 2014 when he increased the military budget and modified Article 9. Gentoku accuses his father of being a traitor to the nation due to his inability to combine Hokuto, Seito, and Touto, all of whom insulted the state. Gentoku's depiction as prime minister represents the ambitions of numerous conservative politicians, particularly certain prime ministers such as Nakasone and Koizumi, who stress nationalism above all else by attempting to modify the constitution against opposition from many parties. In spite of this, both parties had the opportunity to expand the definition of SDF, which can conduct operations abroad, by arming them in violation of Article 9. At the end of the story, Gentoku as prime minister of the Touto region defeated Seito and Hokuto and united the three regions, similar to the cabinet's decision on 1 July 2014, in which Abe and the Komeito party interpreted Article 9 to

mean that the SDF would be armed to protect the right to life of the Japanese people, protect against threats and attacks from other countries, and protect against attacks against the country that has a close relationship with Japan (Koll, 2019). Although this has been criticized by the opposition and neighboring nations including as South Korea and China for provoking war, conservative LDP lawmakers consider their aspirations, such as the creation of complete state sovereignty by Gentoku, to have been partially realized. Abe's agenda aimed to deepen the US Alliance by allowing Japan to lend military support to the US and East Asian nations when Japan was not directly under attack (Pyle, 2018).

### ***3.1.2 LDP under Abe's Regime as Political Party that Support Remilitarization***

Second, represent the political activity of LDP to reinforce military through political donation. Gentoku's efforts to boost Touto's military work in tandem with Nanba Heavy Industries to reinforce the Guardian through the Faust organization. Gentoku's ambitions is not just based on his conservative beliefs; he is also aware that the Hokuto region has shifted funds from the state welfare budget to the military budget (Episode 16, minutes 12.52-13.37). Sadly, President Director Nanba is a crafty individual; he also works in secret with Hokuto and Seito to expand the Rider System in their respective regions. Nanba is a conservative businessman who desires to create the most potent military weapon capable of defeating nuclear power (Episode 14, minutes 05.14-05.39). Nobody, including the three prime ministers, dared to challenge Nanba because he utilized his large firm to conceal weapons transactions and then used the profits to bribe the government (Episode 12, minutes 01.18-02.38). In addition, he put large cash into

the Faust organization for scientific investigations with the intent of creating military weaponry that would be utilized to win wars by invading other regions (Episode 15, minutes 04.39-04.48). The collaboration between Nanba and Gentoku was short-lived since Nanba relied solely on the genius scientist Touto to build military weaponry. After obtaining the weapon's blueprint, he betrayed Gentoku and sold it to Hokuto and Seito, who used it to surpass Touto's abilities with their Rider System (Episode 10, 20.05-20.50 minutes).

To fulfill his goal, President Nanba attempts to push Gentoku and Tajimi, Prime Minister Hokuto, against each other so that they will declare war on Touto (Episode 16, 21.30-22.04). Hokuto controls the Touto region with his Rider System, causing immense political, economic, and infrastructure destruction (Episode 17, minutes 00.34-00.54). Ultimately, this dire circumstance compelled Taizan to employ the Rider System as a military weapon against the invasion (Episode 17, minutes 01.59-02.22). Due to the never-ending battle, Taizan advocated negotiating a ceasefire, despite Tajimi's rejection of this plan, which led to Hokuto's defeat (Episode 21, minutes 10.14-10.33). Hokuto's defeat provided Seito with the opportunity to invade Hokuto and host Tajima (Episode 22, minutes 22.33-23.10). Nanba simultaneously became PM Seito and declared war on Touto (Episode 23, minutes 05.36-05.36); he even armed Guardian Touto as a Seito army and turned him into a Hard Guardian (Episode 29, minutes 04.05-04.52).

The Kamen Rider Build series reflects Japan's motives and efforts to elevate the topic of national security. North Korea performed a large ballistic missile test in December 2012, just prior to Abe's inauguration as prime minister, and a nuclear weapons test in 2013. Simultaneously, China expanded its

military forces by sending government ships to Senkaku Island, a dispute zone between Japan and China. This incident prompted Abe to modify the interpretation of the right to collective self-defense under the constitution (Akihiko, 2017). The majority of LDP members support Abe's policies, which enjoy strong backing from the Japanese Business Federation (*Keidanren*). *Keidanren* is an economic group that makes the largest political contributions to the LDP and throughout history, despite being rejected by the DPJ in 2009 (The Japan Times, 2005). In 2014, however, upon the return to power of Prime Minister Abe Shinzo, *Keidanren* began to strengthen its political collaboration. Since then, *Keidanren* has urged its member firms and organizations to make annual political contributions under the guise of reviewing each party's policies (Nippon.com, 2019).

Accordingly, *Keidanren* and other significant corporations, such as Toray Industries, Hitachi, Toyota Motor, and Nissan, increased their political contributions to the LDP. Instead, banking organizations, which had ceased political contributions following the use of taxpayer funds for the government bailout, resumed contributions to the LDP three years ago. Under the guise of "contributions from individual individuals," public utility firms that provide power also make political contributions to the ruling party through their linked enterprises or board members.

However, the donations from businesses and organizations are used to implement the LDP's work agenda. In addition to the long connection between *Keidanren* and the LDP, it is no secret that *Keidanren* supports Abe's values. One of them is cooperation in developing Mitsubishi Heavy Industries' first Japanese submarine powered by lithium-ion batteries. In March of 2020, the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force employed it for the first time. In 2005, *Keidanren* formally supported the LDP in the 2006

prime ministerial election for the first time in its history, citing "previous events" between the nation's most prominent business group and the dominating LDP. In this timeline, Japan was successfully governed by the Koizumi administration, Abe was one of the next prime ministerial candidates, and the pro-Koizumi *Keidanren* group welcomed him (The Japan Times, 2005).

Abe intends to amend Article 9 in order to reinterpret the existing Act that prevents Japan from getting involved in international disputes and from establishing an army, navy, and air force. In addition, Japan is prohibited from possessing offensive military weapons, ICBMs, nuclear weapons, aircraft carriers, or bomber fleets. However, it does not prevent the proliferation of maximum-defense submarines, AEGIS-equipped destroyers, helicopter carriers, and fighter aircraft. Therefore, the SDF can be an extension of the national police force, whose job is to safeguard the home and not threaten foreign countries. However, since 1955, the LDP has endeavored to alter the context of Article 9 so as to reject the use of war as an international conflict, but not its internal application to preserve law and order, as is the case with the national police. This idea was endorsed by the opposition parties, the Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), the Japan Communist Party, and the Japan Socialist Party, when they joined the LDP alliance, and even included a clause to give weaponry to the JSDF (Saaler, 2016).

In 2007, Abe declared that the Japanese constitution did not forbid the ownership of nuclear weapons and that they were tactical weapons. The National Diet adopted military legislation on September 18, 2015, allowing the SDF to defend Japanese allies in international operations in accordance with the Japanese constitution. However, the SDF will not defend allies that will harm Japan's defenses. Since World War II, this is the

fullest interpretation of its defense law. Since 2016, Japan's Legislation for Peace and Security has stated that the SDF has the right to safeguard people's lives and livelihoods and to strengthen the Japan-US partnership in advancing regional and international security and peace. Abe established 2020 as the deadline for amending Article 9, and since then, Japan has become increasingly active on the issue of remilitarization, such as activating its first marine unit since World War II, the Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade, on 7 April 2018, which trained to fight invaders and secure Japan's islands. In the same year, the Ministry of Defense increased the minimum age to join the JSDF from 26 to 32 in an effort to reduce the size of the force in response to the dropping birth rate. At the same time, for the first time in Japan's history, the British unit of the Honorable Artillery Company (HAC) practiced alongside Japanese GSDF personnel as non-American foreign soldiers conducting military drills (Ministry of Defense of UK, 2018). Japan and the United States Army conducted the largest military exercise surrounding Japan to date from 29 October to 2 November 2018 as part of the annual Keen Sword. It consisted of 57 thousand sailors, marines, and airmen. There were 47,000 personnel of the JSDF and 10,000 members of the U.S. Armed Forces. Also participating were a naval supply ship and a frigate of the Royal Canadian Navy. Air combat, ballistic missile defense, and amphibious landings were simulated. In March 2019, the Ministry of Defense formed its first regional cyber protection unit in the Western Army of the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force (JGSDF) to protect defense communications from cyber-attacks, such as for soldiers stationed on isolated islands without established secure lines. Then, continue developing supersonic glide bombs to bolster the defense of Japan's distant islands, especially the Senkaku Islands, in support of the Amphibious



Rapid Deployment Brigade. China recently experienced escalating tensions (Woody, 2018).

Furthermore, the 2019 Defense Budget would allocate \$57 million for the research and development of hypersonic missiles. In March of 2020, Defense Minister Takeshi Iwaya revealed intentions to deploy Type 12 surface-to-ship missiles. The missiles, with a range of 300 kilometers, will be employed to defend the southern Ryukyu Islands while 1,000-kilometer-range glide missiles are developed (Ministry of Defense, 2020).

As a country with regional conflicts with other East Asian nations, Japan must increase its military to ensure regional stability. The massive state military budget cannot be funded by state taxes; but, political contributions from Heavy Industries or *Keidanren* will assist in achieving this objective. In the Kamen Rider Build series, the manufacturing company Nanba Heavy Industries donates new funding to the Faust group representing *Keidanren*, which offers political donations to the LDP party and the Japanese government (Japan Press Weekly, 2018). Both provide military support in order to establish a strong military territory. Since it is a symbiotic mutualism, the long-standing relationship between the government and corporate federations is not uncommon in politics. The government needs funding to pursue its political objective; in exchange, it offers *Keidanren* policies that facilitate its corporate development, like as tax reductions.

### **3.1.3 Pursuing Abe's Dream: Japan as Normal Country**

Third, disclose Abe's dream on "Normal Country" and Japan's nationalism. Abe's objective since his election in 2012 has been to revive the grandeur of the Meiji Government's catchphrase, *fukoku kyouhei*. Abe, however, interpreted this statement to

mean not completely arming the military to invade other regions, but rather utilizing political capital to create a robust economy and constitutional reform.

Therefore, all of Abe's cabinet teams collaborate to achieve this objective, as restoring Japan's status as a growing, healthy, and competitive economy is essential to achieving national objectives. On the domestic level, Abe strives to foster a population that is patriotic, self-reliant, and intelligent, so that constitutional revision can serve as a symbol and catalyst for greater national unity and comprehension of Japan. If this is achieved, Abe will be able to restore Japan to a normal, sovereign nation (Surak, 2019). Japan nationalism is founded on *kokutai*, the concept of a national polity that was central to Japanese ideology throughout the duration of the conflict. After World War II, the relationship between the state and the people was viewed as becoming more nationalistic. Despite the Postwar Constitution's main wording appears to invite a civic interpretation, this has led to an ethnic nationalist image of the country (Söderman, 2022).

Gentoku, Nanba, and Tajimi's sentiments towards the invasion of the region are an example of state resiliency in protecting its sovereignty. These three individuals believe that the only way to restore Japan's grandeur is through coercion and imperialism (Episode 12, minutes 18.01-18.45). If Tajimi boosts the military budget, Gentoku and Nanba will implement Faust as a means to expedite the fulfillment of their objectives (Episode 33, 08.52-09.40 minutes). The three of them utilize the Rider System as a military force, but Touto's project construct is the most advanced. The concept "use the military to construct a country" derives from the verb "build" (Episode 9, minutes 01.11-01.13) (Toei, 2017). However, this phrase has a dual meaning: to defend or attack the nation (Episode 20, minutes

10.58-11.33). In contrast to the enemy disguised as Mido, Prime Minister Seito maintained that state sovereignty might be attained by demilitarization by disarming the Guardian/sophisticated jietai's weapons (Episode 42, 10.51-11.56 minutes). However, demilitarization can be accomplished if all regions lack military forces (Episode 45, minutes 10.00-10.10). Nevertheless, there are disagreements with the nationalist. They believe that Japan must remilitarize and develop nuclear capabilities in order to reclaim its dignity and autonomy. Former Japanese Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi advocated, on a radical level, for the elimination of Article 9 so that Japan could defend itself independently without U.S. military action. This objective was nearly reached in 2014; the Japanese government accepted a reinterpretation of this article through Article 96 and set a deadline of 2020 for the constitutional JSDF. This interpretation permits Japan to utilize its collective JSDF authority and, in certain circumstances, to engage in military action if its allies are attacked. However, the opposition continues to believe that Abe is employing radical methods and threatening Japanese democracy. Abe utilized his legislative flair in 2017 to expedite the vote on the new Anti-Terrorism Bill, which classified 250 acts that posed a threat to the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. There is a subplot to Abe's main objective, which is to 'normalize' Japan by revising the constitution and forming a comprehensive military, which was the essence of the amendment to Article 9 of the 1947 Constitution, namely to maintain military forces' position to strengthen Japanese guard against foreign countries, despite opposition from many neighboring countries, primarily its former colonies such as South Korea and China. Due to worries that China's position has reached the Pacific region, only the United States supports this amendment (Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, 2014).

This series demonstrates that the only way to construct a normal state as a kind of nationalism is through military. Project Build and the Faust organization are state militarized instruments established in response to foreign attacks by Gentoku's agenda. The term "Build" in the title of Kamen Rider Build means "to construct a new country," which corresponds to the story's concern with national security. Remilitarization is a manifestation of Abe's and other right-wing politicians' aspirations to establish a normal and ideal state that has been awaited for over a century. The term Build can also relate to Abe's utmost acclaim as the only Japanese prime minister who nearly succeeded in amending the country's constitution. Through this, Kamen Rider Build asks the people to support Abe's vision for Japan's sovereign future and engage in national progress.

#### **4. Conclusions**

The Kamen Rider Build series highlights the topic of Japan's remilitarization during the reign of Shinzo Abe. To recreate a normal state with complete sovereignty in the political, economic, and military, and to restore the lost spirit of nationalism as a result of the Pacifist Constitution, the Abe administration has prioritized remilitarization. Through the Kamen Rider Build series, Abe's agenda regarding the reinterpretation of Article 9 to restore Japan's pride is implicitly communicated to the Japanese audience. However, it is difficult to attain this aim due to the divergent viewpoints of nationalists and moderates, who both desire a sovereign and secure state but have distinct perspectives and outcomes. Through this series, the Kamen Rider series attempts to change the audience's perception of the nationalism achieved through military dominance before World War II. In the future, trilateral political tensions between

Japan, China, and South Korea can be explored from a security perspective due to widen the scope of Japanese studies.

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