

POPULAR CULTURE AND FOREIGN POLICY
A STUDY OF FOUR MANGA BESTSELLERS OF THE 1990'S

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I. MANGA, POLITICS AND FOREIGN POLICY

1) *Manga and political problems : a multifaceted relationship*

In Japan, manga is a booming medium, both in terms of its output and the size and composition of a readership drawn from all age groups and social classes¹. It is thriving too because it can legitimately tackle every imaginable subject and is used as a means of communication by a hugely diverse range of political and social actors – from politicians to religious sects as well as major corporations and public-sector authorities. For this reason, manga is as deserving of the attention of political science as any other mass medium.

Politics appear in manga in many forms. From the beginning, manga was used to convey ideologies and political positions. When comics first appeared in Japan, at the end of the 1880s, the great reformer Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835-1901) saw them as “the only type of pictures capable of moving the world” (SCHODT 1983, p.42). His newspaper, *Jiji Shimpō*, campaigning for a new Japan, was the first to launch a weekly illustrated supplement, *Jiji Manga* (Manga News). In the 1920s, the illustrators of the *Nihon Mangaka Renmei* (League of proletarian illustrators) drew *rodo manga* (workers’ manga) or *kokumin manga* (people’s manga).

Nowadays, it is more the neo-nationalist right that uses manga successfully to spread its ideas. Furthermore, some politicians use manga as a personal promotional vehicle.²

Even if it is not serving a particular ideology, manga also plays a part in political debate in that, unlike French *bandes dessinées* or American comics, many series – especially those aimed at young adults (*seinen manga*) and the working population – draw their subject matter from current social issues or news items. This trend became all the more conspicuous since the 1980’s, with the emergence of what Sharon Kinsella calls “new adult manga”: “a new category of realistic adult manga series, frequently with new-conservative themes focusing on politics and economics and military autonomy” (KINSELLA, 2005).

In the 1990s alone, the list of manga that in some way influenced public opinion on controversial topics – including foreign policy – would be extremely long. As for foreign relations, this influence can be exercised in at least four ways.

- 1) By promoting, deliberately or not, a certain vision of Japanese and foreigners as having different sets of values or – very rarely – as sharing the same ideals. This kind of pervading and diffuse influence is exercised by almost all manga series, whatever their plot, especially the ones intended for children and teenagers (CHAPPUIS, 2006).
- 2) By promoting a definite vision of interaction between peoples, races, communities and nations – either a “realist” vision based on balance of forces or a “liberal” one based on mutual comprehension and the belief in “win-win” games.
- 3) By promoting specific agendas for Japanese foreign policy. Since the 90s, a growing number of series appeared whose plots are closely inspired by actual contemporary events, which openly call to action on concrete foreign policy issues, and whose authors deliberately stir virulent controversies as a mean to exercise political influence (the most

¹ In 2002, the manga industry has sold about 1,477 billion of magazines and books (about 11,6 for every Japanese, and more 36 per household (SHUPPAN KAGAKU KENKYUJO).

² Among others, the Prime minister Takeshita Noboru (1987-90) commissioned his manga biography: *Takeshita Noboru. Wakakihino chosen. Tanjo kara hatsutosen made* (Takashita Noboru, the challenge of youth. From his birth to his first election), Noriyaki Nagai (images) and Takeshi Imafuji (text), Tokyo, Seunsha, 1998.

famous and successful in this respect being the internationally renowned revisionist *mangaka*³ Kobayashi Yoshinori).

2) The fad for political manga since the 1990s and its significance

Editorial cartoons about politics have long been a regular feature on Japanese newspapers, but "with occasional exceptions, they offered no sustained political vision, no biting critique of the misuses of power and authority, no cosmopolitan world view" (DOWER in McNICOL, 2005). Political fiction scenarios – those in which the plot is set in political circles and politicians are the main characters – were very rare in manga. The notorious cynicism of the Japanese towards politics (CURTIS and STRONACH, 1992; FLANAGAN, 1991) and the stultifying boredom of a political life continually dominated by the Liberal Democrat party (LDP) did not make it an attractive subject. But the changes that have affected the party system since the 1990s, the splits, the turnarounds, the hopes for change raised and then dashed, the meteoric rise of some politicians followed by their rapid demise, then that of Koizumi Junichiro since 2001 – all this has made political life a fascinating show for the public, giving the *mangaka* ready-made, action-packed plots bursting with drama and suspense.

And so there has been a spate of political fiction manga, published by the two powerhouses of mainstream manga industry (Shogakukan and Kodansha) and produced by some of the most famous Japanese *mangaka*. They are series aimed at a fairly sophisticated audience of working young men (*seinen manga*). Many have been successful, as is evidenced by their length. They all belong to the same genre – "realist fiction", which mixes fictitious heroes and real-life politicians, using their real names or barely disguised pseudonyms. They replicate exactly the Japanese institutions and party system – as well as those of some other countries, most noticeably the United States, and the political challenges tackled – including in foreign policies – are those of the moment when the series appear.

To this day, the five most important 'political fiction' series have been – in order of appearance – *Hyoden no torakuta* (Constituency tractor, 1989-2003)⁴, *Kaji Ryūsuke no gi* (Kaji Ryūsuke's duty, 1991-1998)⁵, *Sanctuary* (1990-1995)⁶, *Eagle. The Making of an Asian-American President* (1998-2001)⁷, and *Kunimitsu no matsuri* (Politics of Kunimitsu, 2001-2005)⁸. All these series deal with foreign policy as an important point on the political agenda, with *Sanctuary*, *Eagle*, and especially *Kaji Ryūsuke no gi*, putting a particular emphasis on it.

Others very successful series have been devoted entirely to foreign affairs, or Japan's place in the world, without being 'political fiction'. The most representative one is *Chinmoku no kantai* – also known as *Silent Service* – which ran from 1989 to 1996 in Kodansha weekly magazine *Morning*. *Silent Service* became so popular during the Gulf War that in 1991 it was debated in the Japanese Diet and subsequently adapted into a 3-hour radio drama aired on NHK, the public TV channel, which was then listened to by

³ *Mangaka* : manga illustrator.

⁴ Illustrations by Tsukasa Maekawa, storyline by Kenny Nabeshima, a political journalist. Publisher: Shogakukan. Launched in 1989 in *Big Comic Original*, transferred to *Shukan Post* in 1990. The hero is based on Oz awa Ichiro, the main architect of the political reshuffle in Japan at the beginning of the 1990.

⁵ By Kenshi Hirokane. Publisher: Kodansha. Serialized in *Mister Magazine*.

⁶ Illustrations by Ryoichi Ikegami, storyline by Okamura Yoshiyuki, alias Fumimura Sho. Publisher: Shogakukan. Serialized in *Big Comic Original*.

⁷ By Kawaguchi Kaiji. Publisher : Shogakukan. Serialized in *Big Comic*.

⁸ Illustrations by Masashi Asaki, storyline by Yuban Andoh. Publisher: Kodansha. Serialized in *Shukan Shonen Magajin*.

11% of the national population in the early morning hours. In its first year, only two series published in any Kôdansha manga magazine sold more copies than *Silent Service*, of which 2.2 million volumes had been sold by 1992 (KINSELLA, 2005). Ten years after the serialization ended, *Silent Service* still enjoys enduring popularity : in a 2006 poll, it ranked fifth (and third among men) among the series whose the Japanese fans would like to see live action adaptations⁹.

Another extremely successful series which directly concerns the relationship of Japan with foreign world is the opus of Kobayashi Yoshinori titled *Gômanisumu sengen* – which means roughly “Manifesto for a free and proud thinking”¹⁰. The series started in 1992 in the magazine *SPA!* - then moved in 1995 to the rightists biweekly political magazine *SAPIO*, and is still running. The series cover domestic social and political issues¹¹, and a broad ranges of very controversial topics touching foreign relations, such as Japanese military independence from the US (Kobayashi being the kind of Japanese nationalist which dislikes the Americans as much as the Chinese), call to Japan for assisting Taiwan’s independence from China, and – of course – Yasukuni Shrine. In 1998, Kobayashi vehemently debated in a provocatively revisionist way all the most polemical issues about Japan’s imperialist past and WW II (among others : Korean comfort women and the Rape of Nanking) in a three volumes supplement titled *Shin Gômanisumu Sengen Supesharu - Sensô Ron* (Neo-Gômanism Manifesto Special : On War)¹², which prompted indignant commentaries in leading overseas newspapers, including *The New York Times* and *Le Monde*. In 2000, another special issue, *Taiwan Ron* (On Taiwan), led to Kobayashi being denied entry to the island.

His provocative and nationalist posture elevated Kobayashi to the status of one of the most well known conservative author/commentators among the young generation in Japan, and made him a medias darling and a regular in many political TV talk-shows. In 2003, Kobayashi founded his own political magazine, *Washizumu*¹³ which offers an opinion space for other young conservative thinkers in Japan. As for now, Kobayashi is the best example of a *mangaka* turned real opinion leader.

It is worth noting that the triumph of these series is not confined to Japan. *Eagle* and *Sanctuary* have been successfully translated into English, French, German, and Korean, and *Kaji Ryûsuke no gi* in Korean. Only Kobayashi remains an outcast – and proud to be one : *On Taiwan* is his only piece of work translated in a foreign language.

The size of this corpus making it impossible to treat it as a whole in a short time, I shall restrict myself here to the study of *Silent Service*, *Sanctuary*, *Eagle*, and *Kaji Ryûsuke no gi*, and to the easiest way of approach – the content analysis. I chose not to include Kobayashi’s *Gômanisumu sengen* in this study because it does not qualify as “graphic narration” work.¹⁴

II. THE CONTAINER: FOREIGN RELATIONS SCRIPTED IN MANGA PLOTS

⁹ <http://nekketsu.wordpress.com/2006/04/05/oricon-live-action/> (2006, September 9)

¹⁰ *Gômanisumu* is a neologism coming from the English expression « [I] go my [way] ». The title is translated in English as “Haughtiness-ism Manifesto”, or “Arrogant-ism Manifesto”.

¹¹ Among others Aum Shinrikyo sect, which took reprisals by trying to assassinate the author.

¹² Publisher : Gentosha.

¹³ A coinage consisting of *washi*, a colloquial word for “I”, and *-ism*, roughly translated as “My own principle”.

¹⁴ Kobayashi uses very powerful “graphics”, but no “narration”, since he does not follow any fictional plot.

All these series are deliberately intended for conveying a political message about the place of Japan in the world; *Kaji Ryūsuke no gi* tackle at length such concrete issues as APEC meetings, French nuclear testing and skirmishes between Japanese Coast Guard and North Korean spy boats. Nevertheless, their success is ultimately linked to them being outstanding manga works with exciting plots, good (and sometimes fantastic) drawing, and all the ingredients that the Japanese readers want to find in any manga on the first place – whatever its subject.

1) Chinmoku no kantai / Silent Service : how to change the world order by hijacking a nuclear submarine

Kaieda Shirô is the second-in-command on a secret Japanese-built submarine jointly operated by Japan and the United States. Enraged by the racist arrogance of the Americans, he rebels and takes the control of the ship. He re-names it *Yamato* – the name of the first Japanese State – and declares it an independent country.

In the face of the world, Kaieda proclaims his goal: to convince the United Nations to set up a high-tech “silent fleet” (*chinmoku no kantai*) of submarines as an independent force strong enough to bring peace to the humankind by striking back at any country which provokes war, and to force all the States to renounce nuclear weapons.

Kaieda announces that he will pilot the *Yamato* all the way to New York and plead his cause directly to UN General Assembly. To the great annoyance of the American government, the Japanese government recognizes the “Yamato State” and endorses Kaieda’s ideals by offering to incorporate all the Japanese Self-Defence Forces into the UN blue helmeted forces. “Boutros”, the UN Secretary General, also floats the idea of a “world government” which would operate the “silent fleet” for the benefit of the humankind.

The US Navy goes all-out to sink the *Yamato*. Most of the 16 volumes of the series are devoted to non-stop and well-documented undersea battles, which the *Yamato* handily wins. The ship approaches New York harbour, where five submarines from UK, France, Russia, China and India have been sent as reinforcement to Americans. But when a fleet of US anti-submarines helicopters pounces upon the *Yamato*, the foreign submarines – whose crews has been enthused by the charismatic Kaieda – unexpectedly surface to protect it.

Kaieda speaks at the UN General Assembly – only to be struck in the head by a bullet after finishing. While he lies unconscious in a hospital bed, the Assembly votes to set up a preparatory commission for the organization of a world government, while rejecting the creation of a “silent fleet”. But the multinational fleet of six submarines then proclaims itself “independent” in order to pursue Kaieda ideals under the command of his best friend Fukamachi...

2) Sanctuary: how to save Japan in a globalizing world by using yakuza

Two young Japanese escapees from the hell of the Cambodian genocide have taken it upon themselves to rouse a Japan that is complacent in its prosperity and paralysed by the gerontocracy, to enable it to face up to the threats of globalisation. One of them, Asami Chiaki, became secretary to an LDP senator and operates in the political world, while the other, Hojo Akira, has taken over as head of one of the major Japanese mafia families. In the end, the LDP, under pressure from young iconoclasts and rocked by scandal, loses its majority. A coalition government is formed with neo-conservatives who

have broken away from the LDP, a splinter socialist party group, and two former opposition parties¹⁵. The series concludes just as this government asks the Diet to vote on a constitutional reform bill that will transform the political system.

At the same time, the young *yakuza* unites the world of organised crime around his ideals. Without relinquishing their traditional activities, the gangs convert to legal companies, invoicing for their services in the usual way.¹⁶ They even make their members go back to college to improve their skills and regain their pride and self-confidence. The *yakuza* move abroad – to help “develop” Siberia –, paving the way for Japan’s successful inclusion in the globalisation process.

3) Eagle : how to become US president by advocating the Japanese pacifist principle

Kenneth Yamaoka is a third-generation Japanese American. He too has been through hell: during the Vietnam War, where his older brother was killed, he himself was gravely wounded after having committed the horrific act of killing a pregnant woman. He marries the daughter of a prominent WASP family and is elected senator of New York. As an unknown outsider, he joins the race to be selected as the democrat candidate to succeed Clinton, challenging the arch-favourite, Vice-President Al “Noah” (Gore¹⁷).

Yamaoka makes it through the primary elections owing to his charisma, purity of heart, strength of convictions, a great deal of ability at the spin game, and his fair share of dirty tricks. At the Democrat Convention, in a neck-and-neck situation, he wins by tricking the Clintons into believing that he is going to take Hillary on his ticket – then teaming with Noah. In the race for presidency against an old Republican political hand close to the military-industrial lobby, Yamaoka wins against all odds, by campaigning for a peaceful world in which the USA will stop using force overseas and against racial prejudice.

Meanwhile, a family drama is developing around Takashi Jo, a young Japanese journalist who is Yamaoka’s illegitimate son, his adoptive daughter Rachel, the idyll between the two young people, Yamaoka’s legitimate son Alex who is fuming in his father’s shadow, the wife who doesn’t want a bastard from Japan joining the clan, etc.

4) Kaji Ryūsuke no gi: how to become Japan’s Prime minister by advocating a nationalist foreign policy (and bedding many women)

The young Kaji Ryūsuke inherits a “Minseito” (alias LDP) seat in a rural constituency. The narrative follows, in real-time (1991-98), his career from his first election, and the changes that affected the Japanese political scene and party system in the meantime. To spice it up, the author, Hirokane Kenshi, adds subplots borrowed from various *seinen manga* universes: geopolitical thrillers, detective stories and “romance + sex” series. Thanks to his “sincerity”, “charm”, political courage, skilful manoeuvring, and a bit of luck, Kaji rises from government spokesman to Vice-minister for foreign affairs, Defence minister, Foreign affairs minister, and Prime minister by the end of the series.

¹⁵ All these events happened in real facts in Japan in 1993-94. The coalition government quickly collapsed, but at the moment when *Sanctuary* ended serialization, another coalition resembling the one in the manga was seemingly able to topple the LDP.

¹⁶ Here, Ikegami merely caricatures (barely) the way the big Japanese mafia families adapted after the first law against organised crime was introduced in 1992.

¹⁷ Pronounced “goah” in Japanese.

Kaji's career is thus centred on foreign affairs more than domestic issues. Hirokane closely follows the real diplomatic agenda. At times he uses thriller-type twists and turns to highlight the problems that Japan is facing. The hero is taken prisoner by the Khmer Rouges after the UN peacekeeping force, including Japanese soldiers, went to Cambodia (manga and real time: 1992). As tension rise with Pyongyang, he deals with the kidnapping of Japanese fishermen by North Koreans, then he is himself kidnapped (manga time: 1996), then he foils one attempt by North-Koreans to hijack a Japanese ship carrying plutonium¹⁸ (manga time: 1997). But most events are as realistic as possible. Hirokane re-uses every major international event concerning Japan almost immediately in his plot – such as the UN peacekeeping mission in Cambodia (1992-93), French nuclear tests in the South-Pacific under Jacques Chirac ("Pollac") in 1995, the APEC Summit at Osaka and the violent protest in Okinawa against the US military bases (1996), and many others.

On the same vein, Hirokane closely follows the political domestic agenda (especially elections) and his work ends – as does *Sanctuary* – with a bipartisan political realignment pitting the conservatives "faint-hearted" on the international scene vs. the reformist brave-hearts. This configuration is exactly what Ichiro Ozawa, the man behind the first stage of political change at the beginning of the 1990s, and a hawk in foreign affairs just like Kaji, had in mind.¹⁹

III. VIEW OF THE ROLE OF JAPAN IN THE WORLD ORDER

Despite being "bigger than life" or downright cranky and aberrant, all these plots convey a fairly concrete message about foreign policy. This message is basically in tune with the rising nationalism of the 90s – but sometimes in a roundabout way, whose ambiguity mirrors the state of a nation balancing between two opposite visions of itself – at a time when Japan is struggling to redefine her national post-war identity imbued with pacifism.

1) Sanctuary (1990-95)

1-1. A lesson from the realist school of international relations...

From the point of view of international relations, *Sanctuary* definitely belongs to the realist school. The threat of globalisation, described as a ruthless clash between nations, lies at the core of Ikegami's work. The international game is not only a confrontation between states, but also a struggle among races. The Japanese are all the more aware of this sad, but inescapable reality, as they are convinced of their superiority over the other Asian races –as Asami, the young politician hero, bluntly admits in the face of the American female Vice-President Bisset. For the sake of political correctness, Ikegami has

¹⁸ These events are serialized in 1994, 1996 and 1997. They did not happen in real facts, but during this period, beginning with the death of Kim Il-sung in 1994, tension continuously rose around North Korea, skirmishes occurred on sea, and a public opinion campaign gradually began about the disappearance of some Japanese citizens on the premise that they could have been abducted by North Korean agents (which proved to be true thereafter).

¹⁹ In actual fact, at the time when *Kaji Yusuke no gi*, Ozawa has failed, but eight years latter, the party system he dreamed of almost became a reality, with Koizumi's LDP as the brave-hearted and the Democratic Party of Japan as the other (if only because of its lack of cohesiveness).

his hero state that the challenge of the future is to create a world "in which all nations, with their levels of development, their histories, cultures, traditions and pride will be able to have the feeling they exist". But Asami only expands this theme once, for the sole benefit of Bisset. Furthermore, he confesses he does not know how to address this challenge, which only leaves for the time being the option of confrontation.

As Asami explains to his first handful of followers, this confrontation is a deadly challenge for Japan. Japan is a tiny island nation and the Japanese are a too rich nation, too complacent and overprotected, that forgot their national values. They are loath to leave their country and the Japanese leaders are so afraid of foreigners that they all hide when Bisset invites herself without being announced in order to open of the Japanese market to American cars. As a consequence, Japan is destined to "become the target for the rest of the world"²⁰ and is not prepared to take up the challenge: "If that were to happen today, Japan would be overwhelmed instantly".

The self-imposed mission of the two heroes is to reform Japan in order to make the nation strong enough to survive. Their strategy is to dramatically confront the Japanese with the foreign threat by completely opening the Japanese market, and by allowing immigrants to compete with the Japanese for jobs. By doing so, the Japanese would be forced to fight, even to get a job. "Young Japanese people will have to find a way to survive", and by doing so, they will return to the "fundamental principles of the Japanese people" and rediscover "the national character traits."²¹ And if they don't, as Asami says, "they are not worth to be saved".

1-2. ... firmly rooted in the Japanese tradition

This strategy is nothing new. Asami duplicates that of the young Japanese leaders who overthrew the Tokugawa shogunate when Japan was threatened by Western powers in the middle of 19th century : open Japan to foreigners, and reform her to build "a rich country and strong army" (*fukoku kyôhei*) in order to take up the challenge from abroad. At the time when *Sanctuary* was serialized, the economic crisis had engineered a "Meiji boom" among the intellectuals and the medias; Ikegami's work surfed to success on this trend. The slogan of the first group of politicians gathered around Asami is "A rich country and a strong people": for the sake of political correctness in a Japan that officially renounced war after its defeat in 1945, Ikegami replaced "army" by the more democratic "people" – but his true message is all the more clear as the alter ego of Asami is "reforming" the yakuza underworld in order to put mafia's brutal strength to the service of the nation.

Also firmly rooted in the Japanese tradition are the "fundamental national principles" according to Asami. The hero lists them for the benefit of Vice-President Bisset – who is so dazzled by this revelation that she falls straight into his arms (despite being the mistress of President Clinton) and stops putting pressure on Japan about American cars. First among them is the group spirit fostered by the school system. Bisset is puzzled at the idea that "all the Japanese schoolchildren are doing the same thing at the same time", but Asami emphasises that the children are obviously happy, because "the Japanese are people who find their joys and their goals for life in the place allocated to them by the system". This group spirit is the most basic element of Japanese nationalist ideology.

²⁰ All citations are translated from French versions of the series and might not be exactly the same in the American ones.

²¹ This strategy of violent confrontation with a mortal danger, to rediscover the "national principles" is the same as in *GTO*, a *shonen* series from the same period whose subject matter is also Japan's decline in the face of globalisation – albeit in a burlesque style set in the school milieu (BOUISSOU, 2003).

Because of their "national character, the Japanese are superior to the other nations. This superiority is reflected in that of their leaders. The American President Bill Clinton is portrayed as a rather indolent man paired with Bisset, a strong, dominating woman who is his Vice-President and his mistress altogether.²² Their couple embodies the hedonist, unprincipled individualism that represents the basis of contemporary western culture for the benefit of the Japanese readers. The Russian leaders, Zamyatin and Sokorov, are two men of the shadows, cold and ruthless: they display no human feelings, and the one has no hesitation in eliminating the other in favour of the better option offered to him by Asami. In Japan, by way of contrast, Asami and Hojo are two passionate, sincere men supported by loving women who know their place, are bound by an unwavering friendship.²³

Similarly, in *Eagle*, the pure-blooded Japanese hero stands out from all the other protagonists for his charisma rooted in passion, humaneness, and warm heart.

2) Silent Service (1989-96) and Eagle (1998-2001)

2-1. A liberal approach to international relations...

In *Eagle* as in *Sanctuary*, the political debate is about globalisation and the new world order – as seen from the United States, but through the very Japanese eyes of both Kenneth Yamaoka and his out-of-wedlock son, Takashi Jo – and those of the author. For these three pairs of Japanese eyes, globalisation seems in no way to threaten America's power, as if, seen from Japan, this power went without saying under any circumstances. During the political debate between Kenneth Yamaoka and his competitors, the only questions that arise are those of whether the USA must adopt a restrictive immigration policy and whether they are going to control the new global order by force or other means.

It is no surprise that Yamaoka – being both a pure-blooded Japanese and a traumatised Vietnam veteran – advocates humane, constructive solutions to world's problems. He advocates giving generous aid to help the immigrants' home countries to develop, while controlling American borders but not closing them, because America is a nation of immigrant. And, despite the protests of his fellow democrats and spin doctors, he stubbornly advocates reducing America's military presence overseas and instead working with the community of nations to tackle the problems that fuel conflicts. And – as unlikely as it may seem – the hero is charismatic and media-savvy enough to convince a majority of voters to follow this obviously "liberal" path.

Thus, it seems that Yamaoka teaches a "liberal" lesson in international relations that is the exact opposite to the one given by *Sanctuary*. In the same vein, Kaieda, the hero of *Silent Service*, intends to bring peace to the world – albeit by the somewhat different mean of high-tech military force in the hands of pure-hearted, charismatic Japanese men able to convert their foreign brothers-in-arms to their noble cause.

2-2. ... but a self-serving one for Japan...

One must not forget that in *Eagle*, those who are supposed to embrace this "liberal" way in foreign relations are the Americans – and those who urge them to do so are the Japanese. *Eagle's* lesson is intended for United States, and the teachers are Japanese,

²² Bill and Hillary are depicted exactly in the same derogatory way in *Eagle*. Obviously, although Kawaguchi seems as "liberal" as Ikegami is "realist", they share the same ideal of a macho leadership.

²³ In China, there is no visible political leader, but large family clans and ambitious youngsters: China has not entered the era of democracy.

who says to the US : "Be kind to the world and you'll benefit from it !". Since the US are the most important partner for Japan – be it for diplomacy, defence or economy – this means basically: "Remember that the best way to have a good partnership is respect and cooperation, not pressure"... Kaieda and his high-tech *Silent Service* teach them the same lesson, in a somewhat more brutal manner.

The Japanese are the best qualified people in the world for giving this lesson to the United States. They are legitimately entitled to do so because they have suffered at the hands of Americans more than any other nation, and because so much suffering converted them into a "peace loving people". After their defeat in the Second World War, the Japanese have rebuilt their battered national identity around a new image of themselves – that of "peace loving people" – symbolized by the Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution (BOUISSOU and SADRIA, 1997). As a consequence, Japan shaped a new role for herself on the world stage: the role of a Christ-like nation which "died, raised from the ashes of defeat and re-born", whose mission is to show the way to a peaceful future for the whole human kind.

This image is clearly conjured up in *Eagle* through the character of the Japanese single mother of Takashi Jo. She is a young girl from Okinawa, where one of the most ferocious battles of the Pacific War took place. She meets Kenneth who is making a stopover in the island on his way to the battlefield in Vietnam. They fall in love and make it – once – on top of a very ancient Okinawan tomb. Hence the young Jo... Kenneth promises to come back. But after he is gravely wounded in Vietnam, he decides to become President of the United States for building a peaceful world. Since marrying a rich WASP heiress is a necessary first step towards this noble goal, the young Japanese girl renounces Kenneth to let him fulfil his mission. By doing so, she "gives her life for him and for the sake of humankind"; at first, her sacrifice is only symbolic, but in the end, she becomes a real Christ-like figure when she is murdered on the order of Kenneth's powerful stepfather, who fears that she could be an embarrassment if her story is unearthed by the media. In a similar vein, Kaieda also "gives his life for the sake of humankind": like Jesus Christ, he goes unafraid to New York – the very den of The (American) Beast – knowing that the enemy lies in ambush to get him. As the Christ, he is killed but doesn't die; he only goes into a coma (which makes it possible for him to some day "rise from the death"), while his "disciples" get ready to preach the Gospel according to the Submariner to the world.

The message is crystal-clear: the Japanese – being at the same time a) an ancient people full of wisdom (the old Okinawan tomb) b) a nation that "suffered the martyrdom" (Hiroshima), and c) a nation of brave high-tech samurais – are the chosen people which will guide the humankind to a better, peaceful future

Consequently, as "liberal" as the lesson in international relations given by Kawaguchi in *Eagle* seems to be, it is also a "realistic" way of praising Japan and criticizing the United States. And *Silent Service*, despite the importance given to the UN and to "peace making", does not qualify unquestionably as "liberal", since Kaieda is a warrior whose ultimate success is based on military prowess as much as charisma.²⁴

2-3. ...and an ambiguous mix of leftist and rightist ideas

Silent Service harbours the same ambiguity that Zachary Chandler discovered by deciphering the sub-text of the enormously popular sci-fi *Gundam* anime television series, running since 1979 and is still doing well (CHANDLER 2002). *Gundam's* Japanese hero(es) piloting giant anthropomorphic war machines (the *Gundam*) and their comrades in arms battle entities reminiscent of European fascism. They hate war and dream of peace. Since

²⁴ Yamaoka himself cynically manipulates violence at one point, by provoking the American racist groups into staging riots – in order to scare the public opinion and gain sympathy for his campaign.

Gundam kept running for more than twenty years, its message somewhat kept changing, and is a times contradictory. But it became clearer during the 90s, at a time when the series ran parallel to *Silent Service* and Japan openly engaged in the strengthening of her armed forces while steadily enlarging their missions. In the episode titled *The Endless Waltz* (1997), the world politicians succeed in establishing a pacifist "Earth Sphere Unified Nation", clearly reminiscent of the UN. But as the ESUN is in the process of disarming by destroying its *Gundam* arsenal, a new threat appears – and the reluctant warriors must go back to the battlefield. The message is at the same time about the futility of pacifism and the futility – but inevitability – of war.

Silent Service's message is more or less the same. On the one hand, Kawaguchi asserts that war is bad, and that humankind longs for peace and security. On the other hand, the only way to make peace and security prevail is by the use of superior force in the hand of pure-hearted heroes. And Japan, which combines proved military ability and pacifism rooted in suffering and sacrifice, can assume this mission more legitimately than any other nation.

This ambiguity of Kawaguchi's message results in raging polemics about his work within the international community of manga and anime fans.²⁵ Some accuse him of being a fascist heir to the Japanese military regime, while others laud him as a true pacifist. The truth is that his work mirrors the evolving Japanese public opinion of the 90s standing at a crossroad. During the 90s, Japan was struggling – once again – with her identity problem. Her post-war identity as "peace loving people", embedded into her pacifist Constitution, was weakening in face of the failure of post Cold War naive "liberalism", anxiety linked to the protracted economic crisis, North Korean missile threat and the growing power of China, the coming to age of a new generation of leaders, and the crumbling of the Japan Socialist Party – the main proponent of pacifism on the political stage. At the same time, the Japanese remained attached to and proud of the pacifist ideal, which makes their country unique; they were not ready to embrace any kind of brutal "realism". The best possible symbolic way out of this dilemma was to "fuse" the two conflicting trends in order not to choose. Around the middle of the 90s, the word *kyôsei* (symbiosis) became very fashionable both on the right and on the left of the political spectrum as a way to define the ideal international order as seen from Japan: to create a world "in which all nations, with their levels of development, their histories, cultures, traditions and pride will be able to have the feeling they exist" – as Asami from *Sanctuary* explains to a soon-to-be-his lover Vice-President Bisset. In the same vein, Kawaguchi fuses the "samurai spirit", the pacifist ideal, and the high-tech prowess of his country in order to define Japan's place in the confusing new post-Cold War order.

This comfortable ambiguity proved to be untenable in face of the harsh reality of the new world order. At the beginning of the 21st century, the Japanese leaders openly chose the "realist" way by reinforcing ever more the Japan-US military cooperation, sending forces to Afghanistan and Iraq, and starting the process of revising the pacifist Constitution. The neo-nationalism steadily gained ground in Japanese public. Successful *mangaka* are very good at following public opinion: Kawaguchi's most recent works – *Zipang* and *Spirit of the Sun* – are centred on Japan, not the world stage, and the pacifist rhetoric is clearly secondary to "realism".

²⁵ For an example, see <http://forums.animesuki.com/showthread.php?t=20650&page=7>

3) Kaji Ryūsuke no gi (1991-98): neo-nationalist agenda in manga

The plot of this series, if not devoid of episodes touching domestic politics (elections, debate about the fiscal system, and so on), is mostly devoted to foreign affairs. The hero climbs to power as spokesman for the government, then Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs, then Minister of Defence, then Prime Minister.

Most of the plot is devoted to defence and foreign affairs. The message – either sub-textual or clearly stated by the hero – is as follows.

1) It is time for Japan to assert herself on the world stage, to gain respect and make her voice heard, to be able to protect herself by military means when needed, and to defend her national interest without fear. The Japanese leaders must no more kowtow before China and dare to object to the Americans if necessary, without endangering the precious Japan-US partnership. Japan must stop extending Official Development Aid to every country that is not duly grateful for it, beginning with China. Army must be strengthened, liberated from the tutelage of politicians, and granted both more autonomy and respect.

2) The main impediments to this programme are the political establishment – be it the parochial and timorous old conservative guard, the sectarian pacifist left and the unprincipled centrist parties; the media, which are outrageously biased and “whose comments are worth no more than housewives’ gossips” (*shufu no idobatakaigi*); the Americans, who prefer a timorous and obedient Japan; and – last but not least the “common people” (*kokumin*), whose chief characteristic is that it “does not understand” (the challenges, the constraints of real life...). Bold, charismatic new leaders like Kaji Ryūsuke must guide Japan towards these goals.

3) As for details, Japan must:

a) Resolutely use force against any threat from North Korea, even at the price of loss of lives, and even if this use of force does not exactly follow the too strict rules of engagement imposed to the Self Defence Forces by a timorous Diet. As soon as 1994, Hirokane dares to have a North Korean boat sunk by Japanese Navy in his manga – something that finally happened in 2002.

b) Resolutely confront China about the past, deny the war crimes “fabricated by Chinese propaganda”: this proud stance will gain Japan the respect of Chinese leaders.

c) Show to South Korean that they are “Asian brothers”, but do not let them forget that they are only little brothers.

d) Stick to Japan-US alliance and do not bend to local opposition to American military bases. But do not hesitate to criticize Washington if necessary: once again, this proud stance will gain respect.

e) Send blue-helmeted troops abroad even if it is dangerous. In case of direct threat against Japan, do not hesitate to send secret agents for covert operations in close cooperation with the US forces.

e) Pursue the quest for a permanent seat at the UN Security Council by proudly asserting what makes Japan a different kind of power: the love for peace and the refusal to use nuclear weapon on the one hand, the willingness to assume all the responsibilities of a great power – including the military ones under the name of “collective self-defence” – on the other.

f) Amend the Constitution to legalize the right to “collective self-defence”.

These policies are strikingly similar to those advocated by the neo-nationalist wing of the LDP at the time when the series started, and whose large part has been realized since then. *Kaji Ryūsuke no gi* appears like a deliberate attempt to promote the neo-nationalist and revisionist agenda by using a piece of work by a renowned *mangaka*.

CONCLUSION

Published in the same decade, aimed at the same readership of young adults and having met with the same success, these four series offer to political scientists a large and coherent corpus of more than thirty thousands pages²⁶. It should be analysed with reference to the Japanese public's major shift in attitude towards politics and foreign policy which has taken place since the 80s with the rise of Japanese neo-nationalism, changes in the US-Japan security partnership, and the gradual broadening of the scope of missions for the Japanese Self-Defence Forces.

There are three ways of studying these series. The easiest one is to analyze the content of the message – as we did in this presentation. The second one must be to study manga as a mean of political communication by bringing to light the specificity of the impact upon the reader's mind that is achieved by the narratives and expressive techniques peculiar to the graphic narration, in comparison with other mass media. The third one would be to determine how the political message is consumed by the readers, and to measure its influence on public opinion through polls conducted among the manga readers. Unfortunately, as far as we know, only one poll has been conducted, on a very limited scale, among the readers of *Gundam* (CHANDLER 2002)

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²⁶ Fortunately enough, an expert reader can go through one page of manga in less than one second...

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