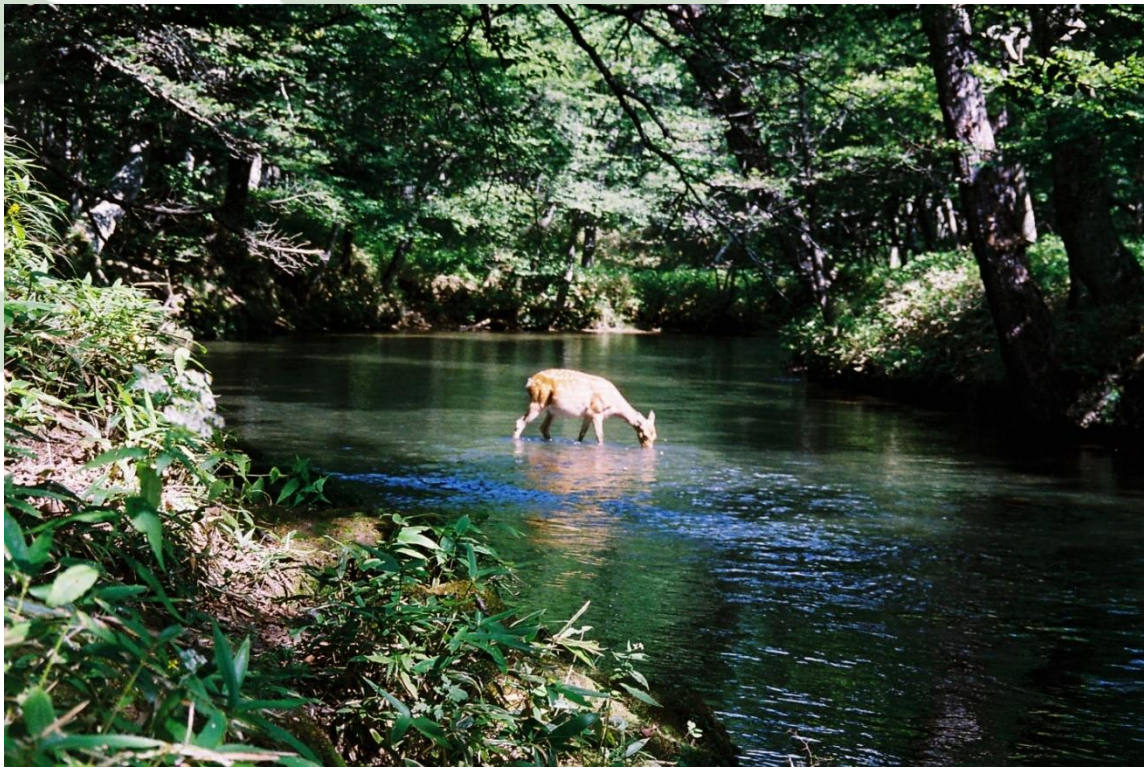


# THE UNITED STATES AND JAPAN IN GLOBAL CONTEXT: 2020



THE EDWIN O.  
**REISCHAUER CENTER**  
FOR EAST ASIAN STUDIES  
WASHINGTON D.C.

## **THE EDWIN O. REISCHAUER CENTER FOR EAST ASIAN STUDIES**

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Established in 1984, with the explicit support of the Reischauer family, the Edwin O. Reischauer Center for East Asian Studies at the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) actively supports the research and study of trans-Pacific and intra-Asian relations to advance mutual understanding between Northeast Asia and the United States.

The first Japanese-born and Japanese-speaking U.S. Ambassador to Japan, Edwin O. Reischauer (serv. 1961–66) later served as the center's Honorary Chair from its founding until 1990. His wife Haru Matsukata Reischauer followed as Honorary Chair from 1991 to 1998. They both exemplified the deep commitment that the Reischauer Center aspires to perpetuate in its scholarly and cultural activities today.



## Edwin O. Reischauer

October 15, 1910 – September 1, 1990





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## THE YEAR AT THE REISCHAUER CENTER

Thirty-six years has now passed since the foundation of the Reischauer Center in 1984. The world has changed tremendously, but US-Japan relations remain our core focus, as has been true since the foundation of our Center. As a former student of Edwin O. Reischauer myself, I have always believed that we owe it to his memory, and to the stability of global affairs, to retain that central concern.

We are a research institution, located in the capital of the United States, and our central intellectual commitment is to objective, non-partisan policy research. That is the spirit in which this Yearbook—entirely student-produced, and the oldest continuous US-Japan annual publication in the United States, is presented to its readers. The Yearbook is produced under the leadership of an accomplished policy-research scholar, Professor William Brooks. Following his Columbia University Ph.D. and his early teaching career at SAIS, Brooks began what was to become a distinguished U.S. government career, including fifteen years directing translations and in-house research at US Embassy Tokyo. We could not find a finer editor for this Yearbook.



*Dr. Calder and the Reischauer Policy Research Fellows  
celebrating the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of SAIS*

The Yearbook, however, is only part of the Reischauer Center’s research operation. That also includes a classical scholarly component, in which Coordinator Neave Denny plays an important administrative role, supported by Marina Dickson and, following their term as full-time researchers, Vivian Chen, Sam Frost, and Monica Weller. The classical research dimension of the

Center completed a major book and four monographs this year, while sponsoring 33 research-related events. It also engaged quietly in several long-term research projects that will bear fruit in the future.

Apart from the MA and MIPP students who prepared this Yearbook in expert fashion, our research staff also included a broad variety of other participants. There were ten Visiting Scholars from academic and professional backgrounds, including several from Japan; five post-graduate Reischauer Policy Research Fellows; four pre-doctoral fellows; and several undergraduate interns. We are deeply grateful for the contributions of all these researchers. Affiliated faculty also participated actively in Reischauer Center seminars, conferences, and working groups.

One major development for the Reischauer Center during this past year was the appointment of Ambassador David Shear as Senior Fellow, to complement the continuing senior advisory roles of Ambassador Rust Deming and Dr. William Brooks. Ambassador Shear, a well-known defense specialist with 32 years of diplomatic experience, served as Assistant Secretary of Defense for Asian and Pacific Security Affairs in the US Defense Department under President Barack Obama, following his tour as US Ambassador to Vietnam. Ambassador Shear, himself a SAIS graduate, teaches in the Japan Studies program at SAIS, in addition to his role as Senior Advisor to the Reischauer Center.



*Ambassador Shear speaking at the Reischauer Center's annual fall reception*

On the research side, one major development this past year was the publication of *Super Continent: The Logic of Eurasian Integration*. Produced with the strong support of our Reischauer Center research team, including Reischauer Fellows Evan Sankey, Rachel Xian, Jonathan Hall-Eastman, and Yuki Numata, as well as PhD candidates Yun Han and Jaehan Park, among others, this volume was published by Stanford University Press in May 2019. My second book exploring the political-economic transformation of the Eurasian continent and the surrounding Indo-Pacific seas, *Super Continent*, was also published in Japanese translation (November 2019), followed by a publication party hosted by Hungarian Ambassador to Japan, Norbert Palanovics, a former Reischauer Center Visiting Fellow. The book is also scheduled to be published in Chinese and Greek, and received the 2019 *Book of the Year in Politics Award* from the *Financial Times* of London. The Japanese translation also received the 2020 Okakura Tenshin Prize of the International Society for the East Asian Community in Japan.



*Dr. Calder with former Japanese Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda and Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Hungary Dr. Norbert Palanovics at the Hungarian Embassy in Japan celebrating “Super Continent’s” publication in Japanese*

The 33 research events at the Reischauer Center pursued three major themes. The most important, of course, was US-Japan relations. Former US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Danny Russel set a central, policy-relevant keynote in his Reischauer Memorial Lecture on “The US-Japan Alliance and America First: Coping with the Changing Indo-Pacific”.

Other major US-Japan events this past year included participation from myself and David Shear in the Tokyo sixtieth anniversary commemoration of the current US-Japan Security Treaty, keynoted by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in January 2020; as well as a major Reischauer Center conference on US-Japan sea-lane security issues in October 2020, generously supported by the Japan Foundation Center for Global Partnership. During the academic year, the Center sponsored seven individual US-Japan events, including a major US-Japan-Southeast Asia conference, organized by Ambassador Shear. Cybersecurity, Okinawa, and US-Japan trade relations were other major bilateral issues considered, with Reischauer Center Visiting Scholars and researchers from Japan providing important input.

A second central area of research focus this past year was the ongoing transformation of the Eurasian continent, with a special focus on the Indo-Pacific region. Indeed, the Reischauer Memorial Lecture by Daniel Russel in November 2019, dealing with the American policy response to emerging strategic challenges within Eurasia, marked the beginning of the Reischauer Center’s new Indo-Pacific Research Initiative. Across the academic year, the Center hosted nine events relating to the Indo-Pacific, including a publication lecture on *Super Continent*; a dialogue among senior former US diplomats on Afghanistan and East Asia; a seminar on India and Northeast Asian geopolitics; and a major conference on the US, Japan, and Southeast Asia.



*Dr. Calder and other panelists at the Afghanistan and East Asia dialogue*



A third research priority for the Reischauer Center this year was “Global Political Cities”. Reischauer Policy Research Fellows Evan Sankey, Rachel Xian, Yuki Numata, Marina Dickson, and Tom Ramage, together with interns Luke Chen and Mizuki Yamamoto, met weekly with Professor Calder in informal seminars, to debate the rising role in international affairs of global cities, including Washington, New York, Tokyo, and Beijing. This research will be published as *Global Political Cities: Actors and Arenas for Influence in International Relations*, by the Brookings Institution Press, in January 2021.

Two-thirds of the way through the 2019-2020 academic year, the COVID-19 pandemic exploded on Washington, D.C., in the course of its meteoric spread around the world. In the middle of March 2020, like most academic institutions worldwide, SAIS went virtual, and we convened the last ten events of our academic year online. Responding to the pandemic challenge, and drawing on the intellectual resources of our parent institution, Johns Hopkins University, the Reischauer Center launched an intensive research program on East Asia’s response to COVID-19, and the prospective global implications thereof. We created the Reischauer Center COVID 19 Policy Research Task Force, mobilizing our Reischauer Fellows and research interns, and issued three major research reports—in April 2020; June 2020; and August 2020. Each of these reports was accompanied by a webinar, one of which was presented on the internationally recognized Johns Hopkins University Coronavirus Resource Center website. The three webinars were also presented on YouTube, and drew reactions from around the world. Out of the COVID crisis came what I am gratified to say has been, over the past several months, one of the most innovative and policy-relevant research responses in the Reischauer Center’s history.

When I came to SAIS from a tenured position at Princeton University in the summer of 2003, I did not come to be another Washington pundit. I came to establish a serious, policy-research center in the nation’s capital. It gives me great personal satisfaction, even amidst the pressures of the continuing pandemic, to feel hopeful that my longstanding dream is at last, with the help of so many others, slowly coming to be.

Kent Calder  
Reischauer Center for East Asian Studies  
SAIS/Johns Hopkins University  
Washington, D.C.  
October 2020





THE EDWIN O.  
**REISCHAUER CENTER**  
FOR EAST ASIAN STUDIES

# Reischauer Center Seminar Series

<p><b>9/3/2019</b> 4:30 – 6:00 Rome 812</p>	<p><b>Dr. Jagannath Panda</b> Research Fellow and Center Coordinator Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses, Delhi, India</p>	<p><i>India and the Northeast Asian Geopolitics Equations</i></p>
<p><b>09/05/2019</b> 12:30 – 2:00 Rome 806</p>	<p><b>Reischauer Center and Japan Studies Welcome Back Luncheon</b></p>	<p><i>Reischauer Center and Japan Studies Members</i></p>
<p><b>9/11/2019</b> 4:30 – 6:00 Rome 806</p>	<p><b>Dr. Motohiro Tsuchiya</b> Professor, Keio University</p> <p><b>Dr. Dai Mochinaga</b> Keio Research Institute at SFC</p>	<p><i>Japan's Response to Cyber Threats: Mega Events and Beyond</i></p>
<p><b>9/17/2019</b> 12:00 – 1:45 Rome Auditorium</p>	<p><b>Dr. Kent Calder</b> Vice Dean for Faculty Affairs and International Cooperation Director, Reischauer Center</p>	<p><i>Super Continent: The Logic of Eurasian Integration</i></p>
<p><b>9/18/2019</b> 10:30 – 12:00 Rome Auditorium</p>	<p><b>Ambassador Earl Anthony Wayne</b> Diplomat in Residence at American University, Fellow at Wilson Center, CSIS and Atlantic Council, and former Assistant Secretary of State</p> <p><b>Ambassador James Cunningham</b> Senior Fellow at Atlantic Council, and former U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan, Israel, and the United Nations, and Consul General for Hong Kong and Macau</p> <p><b>Laurel Miller</b> Director of Asia at International Crisis Group and former U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan and former Senior Foreign Policy Expert at the RAND Cooperation</p> <p><b>Ambassador Ronald E. Neumann</b> President of American Academy of Diplomacy, former US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, US Ambassador to Afghanistan, Algeria, and Bahrain</p> <p><b>Rohullah Osmani</b> Asian Development Bank, NARO &amp; Visiting Scholar, Johns Hopkins University, SAIS, and former Director General of Afghanistan Civil Service Commission</p> <p><b>Vice Dean Kent Calder</b> Vice Dean for Faculty and International Research Cooperation at Johns Hopkins University, SAIS, and author of Super Continent: The Logic of Eurasian Integration</p>	<p><i>Avoiding Failure in Afghanistan: The Impact of U.S. Engagement on Security, Political Stability, and Economic Growth</i></p>

<p><b>9/18/2019</b> 4:30 – 6:00 Rome 806</p>	<p><b>Dr. William Brooks</b> Professor, Japan Studies Senior Scholar, Reischauer Center</p>	<p><i>Overcome Writers' Block and Other Specious Barriers! No More Excuses! Attend This Seminar!</i></p>
<p><b>9/26/2019</b> 12:30 – 2:00 Rome 806</p>	<p><b>Alfred Magleby</b> <i>Recent Consul General of Okinawa &amp; Director of Office of Program Management, US Embassy Riyadh</i> Department of State</p>	<p><i>Okinawa in the Context of a Foreign Service Officer</i></p>
<p><b>9/26/2019</b> 4:30 – 6:00 Rome 806</p>	<p><b>Dr. Narushige Michishita</b> Vice President/Professor National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS), Japan</p>	<p><i>The Rise of China and Japan's Response: Competition and Cooperation</i></p>
<p><b>9/30/2019</b> 4:30 – 6:00 Rome 812</p>	<p><b>Visiting Scholars</b></p>	<p><i>Visiting Scholar Research Seminar with Dr. Brooks</i></p>
<p><b>10/10/2019</b> 6:00 – 9:00 The Chastleton</p>	<p><b>Reischauer Members and Guests</b></p>	<p><i>Annual Reischauer Center Fall Reception</i></p>
<p><b>10/17/2019</b> 4:30 – 6:00 Rome 812</p>	<p><b>Dr. Zhiqun Zhu</b> Chair, Department of International Relations Bucknell University</p>	<p><i>Growing China-Israel Relations and Implications for the United States</i></p>
<p><b>10/25/2019</b> 3:30 – 5:00 Reischauer Suite</p>	<p><b>Reischauer Center Salutes SAIS 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary</b></p>	<p><i>All Faculty, Students and Staff Welcome</i></p>
<p><b>10/31/2019</b> 4:30 – 6:00 Rome 806</p>	<p><b>Dr. Sheila Smith</b> Director of Japan Affairs Council on Foreign Relations</p>	<p><i>Japan Rearmed – The Politics of Military Power</i></p>
<p><b>11/8/2019</b> 12:30 -2:00 BOB 500</p>	<p><b>Amy Jackson</b> Japan Representative, PHARMA Former Deputy Assistant U.S. Trade Representative for Japan and Korea</p>	<p><i>US-Japan Trade Relations: Where Do They Stand, and How Did They Get Here?</i></p>
<p><b>11/13/2019</b> 12:00 -1:30 Nitze 517</p>	<p><b>Dr. Ho-Fung Hung</b> Henry M. and Elizabeth P. Wiesenfeld Professor in Political Economy, Department of Sociology and SAIS at Johns Hopkins University</p>	<p><i>Chinese State Capitalism and Its Discontents in Hong Kong</i></p>

<p><b>11/19/2019</b> 3:00 – 5:00 Rome Auditorium</p>	<p><b>Daniel Russel</b> Former Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Vice President for International Security and Diplomacy, Asia Society Policy Institute</p>	<p><b>Reischauer Center Memorial Lecture</b> <i>The U.S.-Japan Alliance and America First: Coping with Changing the Indo-Pacific</i></p>
<p><b>12/09/2019</b> 4:30 – 6:00 Rome 806</p>	<p><b>Dr. Bill Overholt</b> Senior Research Fellow, Harvard Kennedy School</p>	<p><i>North Korea Peace? Nuclear War?</i></p>
<p><b>1/14/2020</b> 12:30 -2:00 Rome 806</p>	<p><b>Dr. Yuichi Hosoya</b> Professor of International Politics Keio University</p>	<p><i>Japan's Indo-Pacific Strategy in the Emerging US-China Rivalry</i></p>
<p><b>1/28/2020</b> 12:00 – 1:30 Rome 806</p>	<p><b>Reischauer Center and Japan Studies</b></p>	<p><b>Spring 2020 Welcome Back Luncheon</b></p>
<p><b>2/5/2020</b> 2:30 – 4:00 Rome 806</p>	<p><b>Dr. Dorjsuren Nanjin</b> Director of Mongolian Institute of Northeast Asian Security and Strategy (MINASS)</p>	<p><i>Implications for the Broader Security Mechanism in Northeast Asia: Role of Mongolia</i></p>
<p><b>2/11/2020</b> 12:30 – 2:00 Rome 812</p>	<p><b>Kimitoshi Hirasawa</b> Visiting Scholar, Reischauer Center</p>	<p><i>Will Trump Be Reelected?</i></p>
<p><b>2/26/2020</b> 3:00 – 5:00 Rome Auditorium</p>	<p><b>Dan Bob</b> Visiting Scholar, Reischauer Center</p> <p><b>Charles Boustany</b> Former L.A. Representative</p> <p><b>Emma Chanlett-Avery</b> Congressional Research Service</p> <p><b>Jennifer Hendrixson-White</b> House Foreign Affairs</p> <p><b>Ken Levinson, CEO</b> Washington International Trade Association, former trade advisor to Sen. Rockefeller</p> <p><b>Mieko Nakabayashi</b> Waseda University</p>	<p><i>U.S.-China Relations and Implications for Washington-Tokyo Ties: Congressional Perspectives</i></p>

<p><b>2/27/2019</b> 4:30 – 6:00 Rome 806</p>	<p><b>Dr. Yasuyuki Todo</b> Graduate School of Economics Waseda University</p>	<p><i>How Do the Decoupling between the US and China and between Japan and South Korea Affect the World Economy?</i></p>
<p><b>4/1/2020</b> 9:30 – 11:30 Webinar</p>	<p><b>Ms. Eri Sato</b> Visiting Scholar, Reischauer Center</p>	<p><i>A Comparison of Debt Management Policies between the U.S. and Japan</i></p>
<p><b>4/17/2020</b> 12:30-2:00 Webinar</p>	<p><b>Mr. Kunio Uehara</b> Visiting Scholar, Reischauer Center</p>	<p><i>Japan-Russia Defense Exchanges and Japan-U.S. Alliance</i></p>
<p><b>4/20/2020</b> 11:00 – 12:30 Webinar</p>	<p><b>Dr. Wonhyuk Lim</b> Professor, KDI School of Public Policy and Management</p> <p><b>Amb. David Shear</b> Senior Advisor &amp; Adjunct Professor, Reischauer Center</p> <p><b>Dr. Jeremy Shiffman</b> Professor, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health</p> <p><b>Dr. Kent Calder</b> Director, Reischauer Center</p>	<p><i>Grappling with COVID-19: Policy Lessons from East Asia</i></p>
<p><b>4/24/2020</b> 12:30 - 2:00 Webinar</p>	<p><b>Mr. Makoto Kuroyabu</b> Policy Research Fellow, Reischauer Center</p>	<p><i>The Big Change of Japanese Policy Making Process: Strengthening the Prime Minister's Office</i></p>
<p><b>5/01/2020</b> 12:30 - 2:00 Webinar</p>	<p><b>Mr. Satoshi Nakano</b> Policy Research Fellow, Reischauer Center</p>	<p><i>Reducing CO<sub>2</sub> Without Economic Depression</i></p>
<p><b>5/19/2020</b> 20:30 - 21:30 Webinar</p>	<p><b>Japan Studies MA, MIPP, PhD Students &amp; Reischauer Center Visiting Scholars</b></p>	<p><i>Japan Studies Graduation Party</i></p>



<p><b>6/3/2020</b> 11:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Webinar</p>	<p><b>Ms. Vivian Chen</b> Policy Research Fellow, Reischauer Center</p> <p><b>Mr. Sam Frost</b> Policy Research Fellow, Reischauer Center</p> <p><b>Ms. Monica Weller</b> Policy Research Fellow, Reischauer Center</p> <p><b>Ms. Ayane Nakano</b> Research Intern, Reischauer Center</p> <p><b>Mr. Evan Sankey</b> Analyst, Reischauer Center</p> <p><b>Ms. Neave Denny</b> Research Coordinator, Reischauer Center</p> <p><b>Amb. David Shear</b> Senior Advisor &amp; Adjunct Professor, Reischauer Center</p> <p><b>Dr. Kent Calder</b> Director, Reischauer Center</p>	<p><i>East Asia in the Post-COVID19 World: China and Beyond</i></p>
<p><b>6/8/2020</b> 2:00 – 3:00 Webinar</p>	<p><b>Ms. Emma Chanlett-Avery</b> Specialist in Asian Affairs, CSR</p> <p><b>Mr. Mark Manyin</b> Specialist in Asian Affairs, CSR</p>	<p><i>Congressional Research Service</i></p>
<p><b>7/17/2020</b> 10:30 - 12:00 Webinar</p>	<p><b>Dr. Kent Calder</b> Director, Reischauer Center</p> <p><b>Dr. Karl Jackson</b> C.V. Starr Distinguished Professor of Southeast Asia Studies, SAIS</p> <p><b>Dr. Nobuhiro Aizawa</b> Associate Professor of Cultural Studies, Kyushu University Japan Scholar, Wilson Center</p> <p><b>Amb. David Shear</b> Senior Advisor, Reischauer Center Adjunct Professor, SAIS</p>	<p><i>The U.S., Japan, and Southeast Asia in the Age of Great Power Competition: Cooperation in the Post-COVID</i></p>
<p><b>8/26/2020</b> 8:00 – 9:30 Webinar</p>	<p><b>Dr. Cinnamon Dornsife, SAIS</b> Former U.S. Ambassador Asian Development Bank; Senior Advisor, International Development Program, Johns Hopkins SAIS</p> <p><b>Mr. Keiichiro Nakazawa, JICA</b> Senior Vice President Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)</p> <p><b>Dr. Kent Calder</b> Director, Reischauer Center Johns Hopkins SAIS</p>	<p><i>East Asia Cooperation with the Developing World in the Age of COVID-19</i></p>



## Introduction

*Dr. William L. Brooks*

*The United States and Japan in Global Context: 2020* is a yearbook compiled from original research papers written by the students in a course of the same name in the School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) of Johns Hopkins University. The course is both a series of lectures on major themes in modern Japan's diplomatic history, as well as a research seminar in which the students research and write papers on one of the many aspects of U.S.-Japan relations in the context of a changing international environment.

This course in the lecture portion first reviews major trends in pre-war and post-war relations between Japan and United States, and then focuses on recent and current issues facing this relationship in the context of shifting geo-political balances, economic patterns, and domestic political agendas. In the research seminar portion, each student reports step-by-step on their research projects and then writes a publishable-quality original paper on a timely topic of U.S.-Japan policy relevance for inclusion in the yearbook.

The lecture-discussion part of the course gives special attention to such longer-range themes as the road to Pearl Harbor, the legacy of World War II, the postwar settlement, the roots of the U.S.-Japan security alliance, the period of economic and trade friction, Japan's growing role in the international community, and recent developments that have strengthened – or challenged – Japan's foreign relations. Specific issues include implications of China's rise as an economic, political, and maritime power, Japan's territorial disputes, the role of history in current diplomatic relations, U.S.-Japan cooperation on global and regional issues, the nuclear and missile threat from North Korea, the trend of Asia-Pacific economic integration, efforts to build a new regional architecture, the impact of growing nationalism in East Asia, and Japan's economic imprint in the U.S., Asia and the world.

The second half of the course segues into class discussions of current issues and oral reports by students on their respective research topics. Normally, students also spend a week in Japan doing first-hand research on their projects, but due to the coronavirus pandemic, the class trip this year was cancelled. Students did all their research in Washington, D.C. The result of the students' efforts is this book, a SAIS-published yearbook on U.S.-Japan relations, edited by the instructor.

Topics in the 2020 yearbook include the changing roles and missions of Japan's Self-Defense Forces, a report card of crisis-management cooperation between the U.S. and Japan, Japan's Arctic policy, implications of the Free and Open Indo-Pacific initiative, Abe's globetrotter diplomacy, Okinawa and the U.S. basing issue, trilateral cooperation on North Korea, Japan-North Korea relations, Japan's Iran policy, mega-trade deals and the creation of a regional architecture, U.S.-Japan technological cooperation, and Japan's cultural exports.

### **Year of Reiwa Becomes Year of the Pandemic**

The spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) infection across the globe—hitting Japan but clobbering the United States—was by far the overwhelming theme for 2020. The pandemic closed down Johns Hopkins in mid-March, forcing classes to be taught on-line, and unfortunately cancelling the annual class trip to Japan. The pandemic will not be the major focus of this yearbook, though addressed briefly in this introduction and tangentially in one paper, because it is still ravaging the globe at the time of this writing in late June-early July. It will definitely be fully assessed in next year's course on U.S.-Japan relations, however.

The pre-pandemic events that merit our attention include the installation of a new emperor in Japan along with a new reign era, *Reiwa*, for Japan's official calendar. In more political terms, all eyes last year and this spring were trained on the activities of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (2012-), as the papers in this yearbook will analyze. Abe's precedent-breaking policies are only matched by his tenaciousness in office. This August, Abe will become Japan's longest-serving prime minister, not counting his earlier term in office (2006-2007), and he overtakes the long tenure of his uncle Eisuke Sato (1964-1972).

For all the criticism of Abe's nationalistic views and association with right-wing conservatives, particularly the top members of the Japan Conference (*Nippon Kaigi*), Japan's largest right-wing group, Abe has distanced himself politically from that movement during his seven and a half-years in office. Though his basic views probably have not changed, as a prime minister, Abe, faced with tough issues to resolve, has evolved into a pragmatic realist, able to make political compromises and concessions that reflect the broader national interests of Japan and not necessarily ultra-right wing goals. Even his oft-stated goal to revise Article 9 of Japan's peace constitution has now become more of a lip-service than a do-or-die effort. On Yasukuni Shrine,

where Class-A war criminals are enshrined, Abe visited it once in 2013 to satisfy his conservative base, but he has stayed away from the controversial war-shrine ever since.

Abe's baptism by political fire came late in his term in office, namely the enormous challenge of crisis managing the COVID-19 pandemic that hit Japan's shores in January 2020. By the end of that month, there were only 14 confirmed new coronavirus cases. By March, approximately 1,000 persons were infected. By the end of June, when this essay was being written, coronavirus cases across the world had reached a chilling 10 million cases and almost 500,000 deaths. Even more unsettling, the U.S., where the virus has raged uncontrolled across the country, reached around 2.5 million cases with about 126,000 deaths, and is still rising. There is no sign of abatement. China, where COVID-19 had started, had seemingly tamed the killer virus, stabilizing at 83,500 cases and over 4,600 deaths, far down on the international scale. In Japan, regional surges, though, continue to add to the figures as areas reopened and people flocked to parks, beaches, eating and drinking establishments and other high-density locations.

In Japan on April 16, Abe declared a national emergency that went until the end of May, when it was lifted for parts of Japan. Tokyo and other hot spots were still under restrictions. Schools were closed down abruptly, but are now reopening. Based on the numbers, at least during the emergency period, the government's measures paid off. On July 7, 19,608 people in Japan were confirmed to have contacted COVID-19, with 979 dead – a relatively low number of infections and deaths compared to other advanced countries. The U.S., in stark contrast, had surpassed 3 million cases on July 7, with a record 60,000 new cases in one day, clearly a situation out of control. There are many reasons for the relatively low rate of infections in Japan, including such social norms as bowing instead of hand-shaking, the custom of wearing masks during the flu season, a high-level of personal hygiene, and a generally cooperative nature of the society when asked to observe anti-virus protocols.

Even though Japan's responses to the coronavirus were flawed and seen as too-little too-late, the low incidence of infections and deaths won international praise. Some observers even touted the "Japan Model," a cluster-based approach derived from studying the Chinese and the experience of dealing with an infected cruise ship that entered the port of Yokohama in February. Each infected cluster was tracked to its original source, and people with high transmissibility were

isolated and quarantined. For the approach to be effective, medical teams have to catch the infections early and seal off the infected areas.

But despite the relatively low number of infections, the Japanese public has remained unhappy with the government's seemingly piecemeal, trial-and-error approach. Such dissatisfaction ultimately cost Abe much of his popularity, with polls showing Cabinet support rates at record lows since Abe came into office in 2012. For example, according to the results of the *Asahi Shimbun* poll released on May 25, 2020, the approval rate for the Abe Cabinet plunged to a record-low 29 percent, mainly due to criticism over the prime minister's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic. A minor political scandal involving the promotion of a prosecutor seen as a government ally probably also affected the rating. The disapproval rate of the Cabinet jumped by 5 points to 52 percent of voters, according to the survey. Other polls had similar results.

### **Sixtieth Anniversary of the U.S.-Japan Alliance**

The U.S.-Japan Alliance remains the “cornerstone” of peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific in 2020, the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty. The Trump administration, despite the President's rumblings over the costs of supporting U.S. bases in Japan, has not made any fundamental changes in the robust military ties and security arrangements forged by generations of leaders in both countries. There has been a sudden push for Japan to dramatically increase its support as a host nation for the U.S. forces stationed in Japan, but negotiations for a new special measures agreement hopefully will whittle that amount down to a reasonable figure.

### **Overcoming Challenges to the Alliance**

Over the years, the alliance has met and overcome serious challenges, coming out stronger in the end. Still, there exist what might be called “active fault lines” in the alliance's otherwise solid foundation that threaten at times of crisis to crack open if left unattended. Two tragedies come to mind: the gang-rape of a schoolgirl by American military personnel in Okinawa in 1995, and the accidental sinking of the Ehime Maru, a fishery training ship full of high school kids by a U.S. Navy submarine off Hawaii in February 2001. Only strong leadership and decisive actions to make amends prevented these two serious incidents from escalating into a national crisis and undermining the very foundation of the bilateral relationship.



Another “stress test” for the alliance occurred during the administration of Democratic Party of Japan Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama (2009-2010), again centered on Okinawa. His government’s attempt to relocate a U.S. Marine base, MCAS Futenma, outside of Okinawa instead of to a spot in another part of the prefecture, broke a government-to-government agreement. Ultimately, Hatoyama, finding no place in Japan that was willing to accept the base, reverted to the original plan to relocate it to a spot in northern Okinawa. But damage to the alliance had been done, as well as to Okinawa’s trust in the central government, which had promised one thing and then delivered an undesirable other.

The issue of closing and relocating Futenma has become a symbol of Okinawa’s resistance to the excessive presence of the U.S. military in the prefecture, where over 70 percent of U.S. bases in Japan are located. The residents of Okinawa feel that basing decisions are always made “over our heads,” and they claim “discrimination” for having to bear a security burden that no other part of Japan will share. Sadly, the Okinawa problem remains an active fault line in the alliance that could crack open at any time.

In her perceptive paper on the Futenma relocation issue, **Kyoka Nakayama**, who hails from Okinawa, argues that the prefecture, even when it has a good case against the Henoko project, simply lacks enough bargaining power to influence the decision-making process at the central government level in the U.S. and Japan. The prefectural-wide referendum that took place in February 2019 showed that 72.2 percent of the voting population opposed the Henoko relocation project. That is seen by the prefectural government as the “will” of the people. In order to stop the project in favor of an option that suits both sides of the dispute, Okinawa needs to talk directly to Tokyo and Washington as equals, and show it is in their benefit to terminate the project that has been going on for over two decades. She sees four persuasive arguments to sway policymakers: the soft seabed that will require years of work to remedy, the ensuing damage to ecosystems in Oura Bay, rising sea levels due to climate change, and the questionable strategic importance of the project itself. Nakayama argues that if Okinawa will adopt a new strategy other than legal steps that lead nowhere, the prefecture could start a high-level review to return Futenma quickly, end the runway project at Henoko, and come up with a feasible alternative solution. Okinawa desperately needs friends in high levels in Washington to be receptive to those arguments, starting perhaps with the U.S. Congress. Incidentally, as of this writing in July, the Japanese press has

reported that some LDP lawmakers are talking about a review of the project. It remains to be seen whether this discussion gains traction.

### **Abe's Bold Security Agenda**

Prime Minister Abe's list of achievements in office must start with his precedent-breaking decisions on security and the resulting legislation affecting the defense of Japan and addressing the asymmetry of the Alliance.

In July 2014, the Abe government adopted a bold security agenda that included a reinterpretation of the Constitution to allow Japan the limited use of the right of collective self-defense (CSD). The landmark decision on CSD, in particular, has led to the most significant redefining of the security treaty since 1960. This was accompanied by the first revision of the U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation Guidelines in seventeen years. In 2015, the Abe administration introduced to the Diet a set of security legislation that together with the new bilateral guidelines allows the U.S.-Japan alliance to operate "seamlessly" and expand Japan's supportive role significantly in a contingency without geographical limits. Prime Minister Abe's efforts removed some of the constraints – or asymmetries -- that had hampered the operation of the security arrangements during an emergency situation directly threatening Japan, and made the alliance more of an "equal partnership." Now, if U.S. forces are attacked in a Japan-related situation, the Self-Defense Forces have the authority to come to their aid, something they could not do before. New security legislation allows SDF personnel on United Nations PKO missions to rescue civilians, such as those working for nongovernmental organizations, and assist soldiers of foreign militaries who are in danger.

Abe's successful state visit to the U.S. in late April 2015 impressed Washington for both his efforts to reposition Japan as a global partner through new security cooperation guidelines, as well as to seek reconciliation with the U.S. over World War II – as succinctly stated in his eloquent speech to the U.S. Congress in which he expressed "remorse" and "penitence" for the war. He also visited Pearl Harbor with then-President Obama, to lay a wreath for those U.S. personnel killed in that Dec. 7, 1941 attack. One can now say that in bilateral terms, Abe has brought closure to the unhappy legacy of World War II in the Asia-Pacific.

## **Viability of the U.S.-Japan Alliance**

The United States and Japan have built a solid and durable alliance based on mutual friendship, trust, shared values, and a convergence of national interests. But alliance building has not been easy: there were times when the relationship faced serious challenges. Conversely, there were times of benign neglect, the so-called periods of alliance “drift”, such as after the collapse of the Soviet Union when Japan, used to keeping out of East-West rivalries during the Cold War, found itself unable to meet new U.S. expectations of it during the turmoil of the 1990s. Japan learned from this bitter experience, and, as a result, changed its security posture during the second Gulf conflict – the Iraq War in the mid-2000s – when it responded by dispatching forces – “boots on the ground” – for non-combat service. Sometimes, the catalyst for Japan’s security response and a redefining of the alliance was a direct threat, such as North Korea’s nuclear and missile tests in the late 1990s. North Korea continues to demand constant attention from the U.S. and Japan in their security arrangements. Recently, the stimulus has been regional instability, such as China’s expansionist maritime activities in the East and South China Seas, as well as the game of chicken, still going on in 2020, played by Chinese and Japanese naval forces around the disputed Senkaku Islands claimed by both countries.

## **Shinzo-Donald Relationship**

Prime Minister Abe is one of the few leaders in the international community to have built a durable personal relationship with President Donald Trump. As of late 2019, Abe had met in person with President Trump 14 times and had a total of 33 teleconferences with him. Even before Mr. Trump took office, Abe visited Trump Tower in New York City to meet with the president-elect. As part of that personal relationship, Abe has offered his advice to the President on many occasions, including North Korea and Iran issues. Mr. Trump often refers to Abe as his friend.

The two national leaders also have played golf together a total of five times. Ironically, the previous time for the leaders of Japan and the United States to deepen their ties through golf was in the 1960s, when Abe’s grandfather Nobusuke Kishi was prime minister and Dwight D. Eisenhower was U.S. president. One can assume that the Shinzo-Donald relationship has served to override the centrifugal impact of prickly trade and security policies under the Trump administration that could have chipped away at still rock-solid bilateral ties. Despite trade friction that has now seemed to have abated for a while, as well as differences over approaches to Iran and China, the U.S.-Japan Alliance has yet to suffer any serious damage.

In sum, the alliance over the years was able at critical junctures essentially to reinvent itself, by the two governments redefining the security treaty and its arrangements to meet the exigencies of the times, allowing the U.S. to realign its security posture and force structure in the region, and Japan to reconfigure its roles and missions, always within the constraints of its peace Constitution. Japan's increasing willingness to adjust its strategies has been a key factor in preventing the U.S.-Japan security treaty from becoming a "relic of the Cold War." That process continued during the period under Obama when the U.S. "rebalanced" its security posture toward Asia to meet the rise of China as a maritime power and the explosion of asymmetrical threats from terrorists and other non-state actors. It remains fixed today, with the U.S. forces, hand-in-hand with the SDF, addressing the North Korea threat and China's assertive maritime activities. For Japan, its security policy changes allow it to become a potential major actor in the international security sphere. And Japan's new "strategic partnerships" with other American friends and allies, starting with Australia, are also moving it into the untested waters of multilateral security arrangements.

In their excellent paper on the roles and missions of the Self Defense Forces (SDF), co-authors **Charles Kissling, Michael Kuiper, and Toshi Nakanishi** demonstrate just how the U.S. and Japan are adjusting their security arrangements to meet the times, keeping the Alliance "alive." They present a finely detailed case study about how Japan is now responding to growing threats to the homeland by developing an amphibious assault unit that would be able to take back one or more of Japan's remote southern islands in the event of an invasion.

There are many ways for the two allies to cooperate both in a military situation as well as in a natural disaster. Based on the premise that a crisis is the litmus test of any alliance, **Neave Denny** in her insightful paper offers case studies of the various times that the United States and Japan have had to do just that. While the 1990s, beginning with the first Gulf War, when Japan could not respond with anything but a financial contribution, Denny examines the various other situations the two countries as allies have faced. The second Gulf War, after 9/11, found Japan, under Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, much more responsive, sending SDF troops to Iraq for logistical support to the U.S.-led multinational forces operating there. In later encounters, Denny gives the SDF and the U.S. forces in Japan high marks for their coordinated responses to the 2011 massive earthquake and tsunami in northern Japan, known broadly as Operation Tomodachi. But current efforts to coordinate a response to the coronavirus pandemic in 2020 have been spotty if

not inadequate. This may be more the fault of the U.S. than Japan, but in tackling the COVID-19 problem, the two countries seem to be on parallel tracks.

### **Korean Peninsula Off-Limits to Japan**

With North Korea continuing to develop a nuclear and missile arsenal capable of obliterating South Korea and Japan, one would think that such an existential threat would compel the two countries to cooperate with their mutual ally, the U.S., in coordinating a strategy that would lead eventually to peace on the Korean Peninsula. Not so; for South Korea and Japan in recent years have only been escalating their feud, centered on hotly contested historical issues, claims to sovereignty over the Liancourt Rocks, which are administered by South Korea, a bitter trade “war”, and a long list of other incidents, such as a radar-locking encounter between a South Korean aircraft and a Japanese vessel.

It is no surprise then that relations are about as strained as they ever have been since normalization of ties in 1965. According to a poll jointly conducted by Japan’s *Yomiuri Shimbun* and South Korea’s *Hankook Ilbo*, 84% of Japanese respondents and 91% of South Korean respondents said the current bilateral relationship is “bad.” The poll began in 1995, but the figure for Japanese respondents was the third-worst, while that for South Korea was the worst. The majority of respondents in both countries answered that they cannot trust each other (*The Japan News*, June 11, 2020). At this point, there is nothing significant going on between the two countries to alleviate the situation. Against this background, and the complexity of U.S. and South Korean summit diplomacy with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, **Lizhong Yang** with great precision explores the difficulty of the U.S., South Korea, and Japan of solidifying a common stance toward the North Korean threat, which Kim Jong-un will not be able to pick apart and play one party against the other.

Trilateral cooperation is absolutely essential if Kim Jong-un’s nuclear ambitions are to be dealt with by a combination of military readiness and diplomatic acumen focused on denuclearizing North Korea. The role of China, both as a growing strategic competitor in East Asia and as a potential cooperator in propelling North Korea toward a negotiated settlement of the nuclear and missile problem, must not be overlooked. While trilateral cooperation right now has been sidelined for a while, it could return if one or more of the following scenarios take place: North Korea holds another nuclear test or launches an ICBM over Japan; serious talks with the

North on denuclearization begin; or the U.S. plays a mediator's role, or at least puts pressure on South Korea and Japan to mend their strained ties, as President Obama, as "facilitator-in-chief", did with Abe and Park Geun-hye in March 2014.

Currently, though, President Trump has been aloof during the series of spats between Japan and South Korea. The possibility of President Moon and Prime Minister Abe finding common ground to repair ties on their own seems slim. Such a situation, in strategic terms, only, trilateral cooperation has been marred by difficulties in Japan - South Korea relations, which plays of the DPRK, as well as possibly China and even Russia. Such difficulties typically arise when domestic politics in South Korea and Japan fuse with nationalistic sentiment over sensitive historical issues and territorial claims. Domestic political change, such as a change in the South Korean presidency from a conservative-leaning to a liberal-leaning one can introduce different perceptions and policies towards North Korea or even regional threats. The same problem can exist in the United States, as with the Trump administration, which is not always on the same page with Japan or even South Korea in dealing with the North Korean threat.

Yang in his paper proposes strengthening coordination among the U.S., South Korea, and Japan, so that all three countries share the same perceptions of the DPRK threat and agree to a similar approach. Free-lancing will not be allowed. Yang also calls for a return to some form of multilateral talks in bringing back the North to the negotiating table and there addressing the denuclearization issue. But first, the U.S. must assert its leadership by discreetly but proactively nudging South Korea and Japan to begin to mend their now severely strained ties.

What about the notion of Japan pursuing its own course with North Korea in addressing both bilateral issues, such as the abduction of Japanese nationals, and the nuclear and missile threat? **Yu Young Kim** in her perceptive look at postwar relations between Japan and North Korea, notes that the bilateral abductee issue has become a non-starter in engaging Pyongyang in any kind of talks, let alone the kind of summit meeting with Kim Jong-un that Abe would like to have. There also is little trust that Pyongyang will keep its promises anyway, given its track record of renegeing or backing out of agreements.

Kim explains that the Abe administration so far has been taking a hard-nose stance toward North Korea: making the resolution of the abduction issue as a top priority, consolidating a strong defense to meet the missile threat, including missile defense, and maintaining strong economic



sanctions. Abe will not likely ease its “maximum pressure” policy unless there is a real chance of meaningful progress in reducing the North Korean threat.

Meanwhile, while Pyongyang would like to acquire massive economic assistance from Japan, the subject of earlier negotiations, the Kim Jong-un regime has been ignoring Abe’s suggestion to meet without preconditions. To break that deadlock, the Japanese government should consider a new approach, perhaps a dual-track one that separates the abduction issue from other political and diplomatic issues. The Japanese International Red Cross Society and the Red Cross Society of the DPRK might pursue the abduction issue, while Tokyo and Pyongyang negotiate other bilateral issues, including the direct threat that North Korean missiles pose to Japan.

### **Arctic Meltdown**

Climate change is ravaging the world, and those nations supposedly bound by the Paris Agreement, simply do not have the political will nor are up to the task of making the drastic changes needed to seriously reduce the emissions of greenhouse gases that are destroying the global environment. Meanwhile, the world keeps getting hotter and weather patterns more unpredictable and even dangerous. The “tipping point” may about to be reached. The Arctic in May saw its highest temperatures since 1958 (*Washington Post*, May 15, 2020). In Siberia, raging fires, now an annual event, arrived earlier this year and are three times as large as they were the year before. The Arctic region itself is warming now at three times the global average, with no end in sight. Sea levels as a result are rising due to ice melt, and greenhouse gases are pouring into the atmosphere from the organic carbon stored in Arctic soil being unfrozen and the ocean losing ice.

The Paris Climate Agreement or COP21, adopted in Paris, France, in December 2015, is in trouble. The Agreement, which replaced the Kyoto Protocol, an earlier international treaty, entered into force on November 4, 2016, and as of today, has been signed by 197 countries and ratified by 187. But the United States, by order of President Trump in 2017, pulled out of the Agreement, claiming that it was damaging the U.S. economy and job market.

This year, the ratifying countries of the Paris Agreement were responsible to submit new plans that would update and improve the one each had submitted in 2015. In late March, while the coronavirus pandemic spread across East Asia, Japan became the first advanced economy to submit its new plan. Except there was nothing new in it at all. Japan said it would effectively

stick to the target it set five years ago, which was to reduce its emissions by 26 percent from 2013 levels. This was disappointing for a country that is the world's fifth-largest emitter of planet-warming greenhouse gases. What Japan does to reduce its emissions is vital to the world's overall efforts to stave off the worst effects of climate change. The World Resources Institute said bluntly that Japan's unchanged target "puts the world on a more dangerous trajectory." (New York Times, April 1, 2020; <https://www.env.go.jp/press/files/jp/113675.pdf>)

In reality, countries seem more interested in the commercial benefits that might be reaped as the polar icecaps melt. In her well-researched and persuasive paper comparing the Arctic policies of Japan, which is not an Arctic nation, and the U.S., which is, **Madeline Wiltse** gives higher marks to Japan under the Abe administration for continuing Japan's multifaceted and carefully structured approach to the region that includes environmental research, commercial interests, and a security consciousness. The U.S.'s approach on the other is rather disjointed and one could say disinterested, compared to other Arctic countries. Though there is ample room for the two countries to cooperate closely on joint approaches to the region, neither country seems poised to do so at this time.

In stark contrast, Japan and the United States since at least 2017 have been working cooperatively to fashion a joint vision of the Indo-Pacific, the most dynamic region of the world. In a highly informative paper, **Yu Inagaki** compares the Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategies (FOIP) of Japan and the U.S. and measures the effectiveness of the new regional initiatives. Originating in Japan and then duplicated in part by the U.S, the FOIP was devised as a means of reducing the economic and political influence of China and its Belt-and-Road Initiative (BRI). Incorporating India into the initiative, the Indo-Pacific (formerly the Asia-Pacific region) has become an important strategic region for both the U.S. and Japan. In this context, the FOIP plays a role in shaping the Indo-Pacific as a new strategic space and facilitating multilateral policy coordination. With that, Australia, India, and Southeast Asian countries have also put a greater policy focus on the Indo-Pacific. On the other hand, from the perspective of hegemony, Inagaki concludes that the FOIP as a strategy has not succeeded in curbing Chinese influence in the region. He reasons that this is because the United States is primarily focused on China as an adversary, while other countries, including Japan, are prioritizing the maintenance of a stable multilateral order. There is concern in Japan that the U.S.-China rivalry is edging toward the potential of open

conflict in the future. Can the FOIP change that dynamic toward “engagement” with China, or will the “Thucydides Trap” continue to be the dominant narrative for the future of U.S.-China relations?

### **Abe’s Globetrotting Diplomacy**

As of the end of 2019, Prime Minister Abe had traveled to 80 different countries since coming into office in late 2012. The globetrotting prime minister has flown a distance equivalent to going around the earth about 38 times. This was part of a long-term strategic diplomacy focused on the whole world – Abe’s globalism – and not just on bilateral relations with major countries. He has paid special attention to regions of strategic importance, such as the Middle East, where he has tried to insert himself into the various ongoing international dialogues, including the Iran issue. He has also prioritized Africa, a continent targeted for financial assistance, infrastructure investment, and trade promotion. Much of Abe’s bilateral energy has gone also into forging good personal ties with Russia’s Putin, in the hopes of resolving the vexing territorial issue and finally signing a peace treaty with that country.

In his excellent overview of Abe’s diplomacy, **Zian He** tracks the Prime Minister’s official travel across the globe and assesses the efficacy of those efforts. In addition to Abe’s diplomacy toward the Middle East, Africa, and Russia, He examines his summit diplomacy with China, energy diplomacy and security ties with Australia, and still vibrant UN-centered diplomacy. Naturally, Abe’s managing of relations with the U.S. gets high marks. But Abe’s diplomacy falters when it comes to improving seriously damaged ties with South Korea, opening any kind of talks with North Korea, and even getting relations with China back on track through summit diplomacy (President Xi’s symbolic visit to Japan has been postponed or maybe even cancelled due to the pandemic. China’s legal actions toward Hong Kong could even derail the visit.).

### **Can Japan’s Long Relationship with Iran Pay Off?**

Japan is one of the few democratic nations with long-standing ties to Iran. The two nations marked 90 years in 2019 since the establishment of diplomatic relations. Even after the Iranian revolution in 1979, Japan was able to keep its ties with Iran, which remained one of its main Middle East suppliers of oil. In addition to oil imports, Japan’s long-standing ties with Iran have been based on investments, and strong personal contacts. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, however, Japan’s

increasing concerns about Iran's nuclear ambitions led to strained relations, and cutbacks of oil imports and investments. Following the U.S.' lead and United Nations resolutions, Japan imposed sanctions on Iran.

With the 2015 nuclear deal (JCPOA) between Iran and six major countries and removal of sanctions, Japanese investors flooded back into the Iranian market and oil shipments to Japan flowed again. **Amber Murakami-Fester** in her excellent paper reveals how Japan has had to walk a policy tightrope between Iran and the U.S., starting with the oil crises in the 1970s. Pressure from the George W. Bush administration, for example, forced Japan to pull out of a coveted Azedegan oil field development project. More recently, the U.S.'s withdrawal from the JCPOA has forced Japan to wean itself from Iranian oil, but Tokyo remains reluctant to sever political and economic ties, and even welcomed President Rouhani to Japan last December. Abe then briefed Trump by phone afterward, continuing his tightrope balancing act.

### **Incredible Shrinking Japan: Can the Trend Be Reversed?**

The Japanese government has known since the 1990s that the country's population was aging faster and faster and that fewer babies were being born every year. For many years, there was much talk about the problem, but little done to reverse the trend. Now Japan is in a demographic crisis, with the total population shrinking at an alarming rate. More than 20 percent of Japan's population is over 65 years old, the highest proportion in the world. By 2030, one in every three people will be 65 or older, and one in five people 75-plus years old. The birth rate in 2019 reached a record low. The estimated number of babies born in the country in 2019 fell to 864,000 -- the lowest since records began in 1899 -- according to [a report](#) by the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare. New and existing measures to stave off the seemingly inevitable demographic crisis have been mainly palliative steps so far.

In his fine paper on this alarming problem, **Zhanping Ling** first provides a brief background on the demographic crisis as it arose. He then discusses the causes of the rapidly aging population and declining birthrates, followed by a look at the policies in place to deal with the crisis. Are there economic reasons underlying the interrelated problem? And will overcoming these factors ameliorate the demographic issues? What are the social factors that impede the efforts to boost population growth; why are cultural sentiments going in the opposite direction that government policies want them to go, and would efforts to change popular attitudes that discourage

marriage and having children increase chances to boost the fertility rate? Finally, what are the limitations of government policies to ameliorate the current demographic situation, and could these out-of-reach dimensions be the reason why there has been a languid response from the implementation of the policies? The paper examines attempts by the Japanese government from the 1990s until the current Abe administration to help women and households to balance work and family life. Have these policies and measures correctly addressed the problems and what might be done in the future to further buttress current policies? Read Ling's paper to find out.

### **Towards a Regional Architecture**

Until about a decade ago, Japan was averse to the concept of regional trade agreements, preferring instead to sign dozens of bilateral free-trade agreements (FTAs) and economic partnership agreements (EPAs). The experience of the long, exhausting negotiations with the U.S. and other countries to forge the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) agreement in 2015, however, seems to have changed Tokyo's mindset and the administration under Prime Minister Abe has now become a fan of mega-free trade deals, according to **Guo Chen** in her absorbing paper. She notes that in addition to the TPP, renegotiated under the leadership of Abe into the 11-member CPTPP, the Japanese government has also been actively promoting another regional trade framework, the 16-member Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). Tokyo seems to have concluded that the future of the global economy and Japan's own economic fortunes now depend on such regional blocs. Realizing that Japan's economy needs structural reforms that multilateral trade deals would force Japan to carry out, and eager not to play a strategic role on the world stage, Prime Minister Abe has been pressuring his government to jump on the multilateral trade bandwagon that will create high-standard free-trade agreements that even trade-rule outliers like China can eventually join.

Chen also notes that Abe, in pushing for a TPP agreement, especially wanted to structurally reform Japan's dying agricultural sector. Japan's agriculture production is still dominated by small-scale family farms thanks to rigid regulations dating back to the Occupation and a powerful agricultural lobby wanting to protect its own interests. Japanese farm products are noted for their high quality, but they remain much more expensive than internationally-traded farm goods. Japan's comparative advantage has long ago shifted from labor-intensive goods, as in the agricultural sector, to high-tech manufactured goods. Japanese farmers are elderly and are often

part-timers. The sector produces only about 1.5 percent of GDP. As a result, Japan imports most of its food, including much of it from the U.S.

As a developed country, Japan's increasing reliance on regional and global value chains calls for a set of common rules that integrates many of its regional or global trade partners. Moreover, Japan's economic competition with China for markets requires strategic considerations. Much of its trade policy then has evolved into a concerted effort to counter China's economic influence in the region and other parts of the world. Initially, Japan was dragged kicking and screaming into the TPP negotiation at the urging of its ally, the U.S. under the Obama administration. But in the process of trying to persuade domestic forces unwilling to liberalize the farm market and other sectors, the Abe administration realized how important the TPP would be for Japan's own economic interests. Abe thus was willing to take the lead after the U.S.'s sudden withdrawal and reconstitute the TPP as the 11-member CPTPP. There was also the factor of Japan's concern about China's becoming the potential leader of a future regional trade order, like the RCEP, and setting its own rules.

As a comprehensive trade agreement, TPP (and later CPTPP) contains both market assessment (reducing trade barriers) and rules such as environmental protection and labor standards. Being proposed by both China and Japan, the RCEP is subjected to their divergent visions. The standards are not as high as the CPTPP. While Japan is looking for TPP-like high-standards, China calls for more flexibility in the terms and in that context is gaining support from developing countries. Despite different visions, both countries are willing to cooperate in bringing a quick conclusion to the negotiations, but India's reluctance and recent withdrawal from talks, however, have brought much uncertainty about the outcome. On the other hand, the U.S., under the Trump administration, has rejected multilateralism (or globalization) and remains content with signing bilateral trade deals, some half-baked. The new bilateral agreement with Japan is a weak arrangement. Should Trump not be reelected, Japan is ready to urge the U.S. under the new administration to come back into the TPP fold.

Japan's strategy also suggests that the U.S. should pay more attention to how the RCEP negotiations develop. A successful RCEP coupled with a successful CPTPP would create blocs that exclude the U.S. So, if Washington is really serious about strengthening the U.S. economy, it should forgo its protectionist approach that is isolating the U.S. economy and hurting U.S. interests.

It is too much to expect such a change of heart from the current administration, but the next president would seem to be willing to bring the U.S. back to the negotiating tables of the various mega-trade deals that the current one has forsaken.

### **Technological Cooperation between Japan and the U.S.**

U.S.-Japan cooperation in science and technology has a long, productive history. Under the auspices of the U.S.-Japan Science and Technology Agreement, the United States and Japan have collaborated for over 25 years on scientific research in areas such as new energy technologies, emergency management, supercomputing, and critical materials. In April 2014, President Obama and Prime Minister Abe announced a 10-year extension of that agreement. Defense technology cooperation, too, is another robust area that is developing.

In that context, **Mariko Togashi** explores in her well-researched paper Japan's economic statecraft as it applies to the technology cooperation field, placing the focus on the United States. She posits the question: How should Japan strategically enhance technology cooperation with the U.S.? She explains that the technology field is a unique source of power in the context of economic statecraft, noting that historically, U.S.-Japan technology cooperation played a crucial role in the development of Japan's international competitiveness in manufactured goods. Based on six case studies in three categories of technology cooperation (defense, commercial, and crisis response), Togashi's paper sees much room for improvement. There is ample room, for example, for deeper technology cooperation in the commercial area, such as next generation computer technology or in medical research. She notes that competition, if managed well, may be the key to successful cooperation. In order to enhance the strategic importance of U.S.-Japan technology cooperation, Japan should (1) strengthen technology alliances with the U.S., (2) deepen cross-discipline dialogue, and (3) enhance mutual competitiveness.

### **Japan Exports its Pop Culture to Improve Its Image and Boost the Economy**

Japan today is a major exporter of its popular culture -- cinema, cuisine, television programs, anime, manga, video games, music, fashion, and food -- much of which retain traditional cultural aspects that add to their popular appeal. Cultural exports are also for Japan important strategic goods designed to brand the Japan image, boost the economy, and satisfy a political goal of improving Japan's image abroad. As early as the 1970s, during the high growth period, Japan

was already exporting cultural goods, such as translations of its traditional and modern literature, and world-class cinema, which served to the pursuit of international economic and cultural influence as early as the 1970s. After entering the 21st century, Japan once again regards the cultural industry as one of its core competitiveness. **Rui Rong**'s well-researched paper analyzes and evaluates the effectiveness of Japan's cultural exports in shaping international public opinion about Japan. There are two parts to the current cultural export strategy: one is media-based, pop-culture centered cultural products, and another is the traditional people-to-people cultural exchange programs that probe deeper into Japan's traditions. In addition, Rong's paper examines the pluses and minuses of the Japanese government's recent improvements in its cultural export strategy and offers policy prescriptions. The paper closes with a comparison of the cultural outputs of neighboring countries South Korea and China.

Taken as a whole, the collection of papers in this yearbook shows a Japan that is beginning to reemerge in the international economy as a major player, is gaining ground as a leader in mega-trade deals and the creation of a regional architecture for the Indo-Pacific, has enhanced its defense capabilities to the extent that Japan can stand shoulder-to-shoulder with its ally the U.S. in meeting contingencies in the region that target Japan, and has boosted the "Japan brand" by exporting cultural goods across the globe. But there are weaknesses as well as challenges that Japan must face up to. The demographic crisis brought on by a super-aging population where fewer babies are being born seems to lack a solution. It still cannot get along with its potential ally South Korea, with a series of escalating disputes mainly over historical issues derailing trilateral cooperation with the U.S. over the North Korean threat. And Tokyo still cannot resolve a U.S. basing issue in Okinawa that goes back to 1996! There is indeed much for the U.S. and Japan to do, as well, in crisis management coordination, as seen by the COVID-19 pandemic, an apparent slackening of cooperation on technological matters, and dealing with regional hotspots, such as Iran and other parts of the Middle East. The 2021 yearbook will continue to probe into such issues and more, so stay tuned.



## **Cut the Gordian Knot to Resolve the Okinawa Basing Issue**

### **Futenma Base Relocation and Henoko Runway Construction**

*Kyoka Nakayama*

#### **Introduction**

For over two decades, Okinawa has been waiting for the relocation of Marine Corps Air Station Futenma, and the return of its land, as promised by an agreement between the U.S. and Japanese governments in 1996. Today, the base, which is in a heavily populated area of Okinawa, remains open, and the U.S.' relocation promise remains unfulfilled.

The helicopter function of Futenma Air Station, by that agreement, was supposed to be located to Henoko, a district in Nago City, located in a less populated area of northern Okinawa. Other functions of that base involving large aircraft have already been moved to a base in Kyushu. Both governments continue to state that this location for the Futenma Replacement Facility (FRF) is the only solution to this outstanding issue. Okinawa continues to oppose the project at Henoko of creating a new permanent base, which the island prefecture is totally against.

There have been several relocation plans agreed to and then dropped since 1996, mostly due to local opposition. The latest relocation plan, the product of a compromise, involves the construction of two 1,800-meter V-shaped runways on 160 hectares of land and reclaimed land in shallow bay waters off Henoko Point.<sup>i</sup> Though the agreement was long ago, the actual construction project, starting with an enormous amount of soil being dumped into the seawater at the site, only started in 2017. It soon ran into political and technical snags. despite the persistent opposition of the Okinawa prefectural government as well as the local population: first, Okinawa's legal fight to stop the project, and second, protest activities by groups of Okinawans. Okinawans complain that the decision-making process and planning was completely bilateral, with Okinawa excluded from the Tokyo-Washington negotiations.

Okinawa has been demanding that the Futenma base be moved off the island outright, and the FRF project at Henoko be scrapped.<sup>ii</sup> The prefectural government's hardline position under the last two governors, involving numerous court cases, has been backed by a prefecture-wide referendum on February 24, 2019. According to the Okinawa prefectural government, the turnout

rate was 52.5 percent, and the result showed 72.2 percent of Okinawa voters opposed the Henoko project.<sup>iii</sup> Okinawa's efforts to close Futenma and stop the Henoko project have all been unsuccessful. With negotiations not working, the central government and Okinawa have been taking legal actions over the land reclamation, suing each other back and forth, and both claiming the other's activities regarding the construction project are illegal.<sup>iv</sup>

The Japanese government considers the U.S. military presence on Okinawa as a national security matter as if Okinawa has nothing to do with it. There are no serious negotiations going on with the prefecture to review past decisions on the basing issue. Both Tokyo and Washington maintain that the construction of a replacement facility is the result of a government-to-government agreement, and that the prefectural government has no part in that process. In this paper, I, as a resident of Okinawa, seek to raise public awareness of the Futenma/Henoko issue from all perspectives, including Okinawa's. The paper also will analyze Okinawa's negotiation strategy to stop the ongoing construction and offer suggestions that might lead to a resolution of the problem. My research has revealed four main problems with the project that Okinawa should stress: the soft seabed, damage to ecosystems, rising sea levels, and the question of whether U.S. Marines even belong in Okinawa. If the Okinawa prefecture puts these four issues into a comprehensive negotiation strategy, there is a possibility of convincing the other side to close Futenma without completing the Henoko dual runways.

### **The History of US-Japan-Okinawa Relationship**

Okinawa has hosted large scale U.S. military bases since the end of the Pacific War. The majority of the local population was able to survive the postwar period thanks to the U.S. military occupation, which lasted until 1972 when the Ryukyu Islands were returned to Japan. A great number of small landowners whose property was seized for military use received rent payments as compensation. Many Okinawans worked at the bases or provided services to them, and local merchants near bases benefited from the spending of U.S. military personnel. In fact, the base-related revenue in the Okinawan economy was 51.5 percent in 1957.<sup>v</sup> Even with this economic dependency, anti-base opposition was always present in Okinawa, stemming from a strong anti-war sentiment that built up after the population was decimated by the 1945 Battle of Okinawa. When the San Francisco Peace Treaty was signed in 1951 and the Occupation ended a year later, Japan was able to regain independence, but Okinawa was left under U.S. occupation as a virtual

colony. This status allowed the United States Civil Administration of the Ryukyu Islands or "USCAR" to forcibly take land for the purpose of base augmentation.<sup>vi</sup>

The situation dramatically changed with two horrible incidents in 1955 and 1959, respectively. In 1955, a 6-year-old girl was raped and murdered, and the body was found in a dumpster inside of the Kadena Air Force Base. The offender was sent back to the U.S., and justice was not delivered to the victim's family nor the people in Okinawa.<sup>vii</sup> One week after the incident, an American soldier raped a 9-year-old girl. Looking through newspapers from that time, incidents and accidents involving American soldiers seemed to be happening almost every day.<sup>viii</sup> In 1959, a U.S. fighter aircraft crashed into an elementary school near Futenma Air Station. The tragic results of this accident were 18 deaths and 210 injuries, most of whom were second graders. The pilot was able to eject and parachute safely.<sup>ix</sup> This tragedy intensified the anti-base sentiment in Okinawa, and protests increased in frequency and size. In order to prevent Okinawa from completely revolting against the U.S. military presence and severely damaging the fledgling security relationship between the U.S. and Japan, Washington and Tokyo agreed to negotiate to end the U.S. occupation of Okinawa and return the islands to Japanese sovereignty.<sup>x</sup>

Okinawans expected that the U.S. military presence would be reduced during the reversion process, but they were soon to be disappointed. Washington only promised to treat the bases in Okinawa the same way as the ones in mainland Japan, and Okinawa remained host to a disproportionately heavy military presence, then occupying about 20 percent of the land-mass. Over time, MCAS Futenma became symbolic of the over-presence of the U.S. military. The base is located in a crowded urban residential area of Ginowan City, replete with noise from the planes and helicopters, frequent incidents, and the high risk of helicopter accidents, one of which happened in 2004 at a university close to the base. There are currently about 3,000 Marines at the base as of May 2020. Futenma used to have as its main functions, helicopters, airlift, and aerial refueling services. But now, only MV-22 Ospreys and some helicopters remain.<sup>xi</sup> The heavy aircraft have been moved to Iwakuni in Kyushu. Other aircraft not stationed at Futenma are temporarily allowed to land there, taking advantage of the long runway.

Since Okinawa was returned to Japan, the central government has provided enormous subsidies to Okinawa as development aid, seeking to close the gap in income and education levels from mainland Japan, as well as providing funding for infrastructure. In addition, Okinawa's own

economy has been growing. Currently, the “base economy” or Okinawa’s dependence on the U.S. bases is only about 5% of its GDP. Okinawa’s drive to have an independent economy seems to be heading in the right direction.

For two decades after reversion, there were no significant incidents that would mobilize a large-scale opposition movement. In September 1995, however, a 12-year-old girl was kidnapped and gang-raped by three U.S. servicemen. This heinous incident not only rocked Okinawa, but it also became a national issue, creating a crisis in U.S.-Japan relations. Of immediate concern, also, was the contentious issue of the Okinawan police’s lack of jurisdiction over base-related incidents because the U.S. forces are given extraterritoriality by the U.S.-Japan Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA).<sup>xii</sup> As local outrage surged, Okinawans came together for a mammoth protest with 85,000 participants, calling for the removal of bases from the island prefecture.<sup>xiii</sup> Thanks to mainland Japan’s media coverage, the protest mood spread across Japan, and the incident created a major crisis in U.S.-Japan relations.

A month later, in November 1995, Tokyo and Washington established the joint Special Action Committee on Okinawa (SACO). The purpose of a committee establishment was to reduce the burden of the people of Okinawa and strengthen the Japan-U.S. alliance. The committee agreed to return Futenma and several other U.S. facilities in Okinawa.<sup>xiv</sup> It was a balancing act, for regional security in Asia was then uncertain, particularly with the Taiwan Strait Crisis going on. Consequently, neither Tokyo nor Washington wanted to seriously reduce the U.S. military presence in strategically important Okinawa, which served as a deterrent toward China further endangering the security of Taiwan by its missile testing. However, the decision to return Futenma was conditioned on relocating part of its function to another part of Okinawa, which from the start did not sit well with the island residents.

SACO’s work centered around possible relocation sites for the Marines and the facilities. The potential locations being seriously discussed at different times were Guam, Hawaii, Kadena Air Force Base, a remote island of Okinawa, mainland Japan, and Camp Schwab at Henoko. In April 1996, when the SACO interim report was released, Futenma was slated to be returned in five to seven years. This included a plan to develop additional facilities at the Kadena base to absorb a portion of Futenma’s functions. Other functions were to be transferred to Iwakuni Air Base in

Kyushu. Another plan was to establish a U.S.-Japan study team on emergency use of facilities in the event of a contingency.<sup>xv</sup>

After experts from Tokyo and Washington gave consideration to the contents of the interim report, the SACO final report was released in December 1996.<sup>xvi</sup> The committee ended up rejecting the Kadena option, citing the technical issues of managing the Air Force's fighter aircrafts and the Marines' helicopters at the same airport.<sup>xvii</sup> Both governments also mentioned the problem of anti-base sentiment in Kadena over noise and environmental issues. The SACO final report concluded that the relocation site would be constructed "off the east coast of Okinawa" but the exact relocation site was not specified. Yet, everyone who was involved in the case was aware of the high probability that 'off the east coast of Okinawa' meant near Camp Schwab in Henoko, Nago City.<sup>xviii</sup>

After surveys of a number of prospective sites, Nago emerged as the best location. An immediate reaction to the announcement of that was the formation of a broad-based anti-heliport group. The heliport, they argued, would not only defile pristine Oura Bay, but it would also increase the chances of military-related crimes. A petition denouncing the construction plans and calling for a referendum was swiftly organized, with signatures obtained from half of Nago's eligible voters. Nago Mayor Higa Tetsuya added his support for a referendum. As the anti-heliport group was increasingly garnering support, an opposing group, made up principally of local businessmen, began to present an alternative argument. They contended that a new heliport would bring with it economic opportunities that would significantly benefit the residents of Nago. The business community calculated the cost and benefit of building an offshore runway off Camp Schwab. They concluded that as long as companies based in Okinawa could be involved in the construction, and locals would benefit from the base economy, the project was acceptable.

On December 21, 1997, Nago City held a non-binding referendum on the construction of an offshore heliport envisaged as the replacement for MCAS Futenma. Even though over 50% of the residents rejected the plan in the referendum, Tetsuya Higa, mayor of Nago, indicated that he would accept the government's plan to build a sea-based heliport there for use by the U.S. military. Higa informed Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto of his decision during a meeting at the Official Residence. He then resigned for making the decision. Following such a decision by Higa, Okinawa Governor Masahide Ota publicly opposed the Henoko construction and fought with the Hashimoto

administration over the very presence of U.S. bases on Okinawa until he was defeated in an election by Keiichi Inamine in 1998.

Soon after, Inamine approved the construction with specific conditions. The Nago mayor concurred. Said conditions included joint civil-military use of the airport, with a 15-year limit on use by the U.S. military and five other specific conditions.<sup>xix</sup> This simultaneous approval by the governor and mayor is how the Ministry of Defense currently legitimizes the ongoing construction.

Due to wrangling for years within Okinawa and between Okinawa and the central government, accompanied by protests at the construction site, the project remained stalled for years. The situation rapidly changed in 2004, when a U.S. Marine corps helicopter crashed into the campus of Okinawa International University adjacent to the Futenma base.<sup>xx</sup> Even though the accident took place outside the base, local firefighters, police, and university employees were barred from the site by U.S. soldiers. One building was heavily damaged by fire, and the school ended up replacing it with a new \$7 million building partially paid for by the Japanese government.<sup>xxi</sup> This accident brought up the same issue of the lack of jurisdiction over base-related incidents and accidents as the rape case in 1995, and again mass protests erupted questioning the presence of U.S. bases in Okinawa.

In 2006, in an effort to contain the political opposition as well as the growing protest movement, Tokyo and Washington reached another agreement that included the Futenma/Henoko issue. Under the agreement, the Henoko runways would be ready by 2014. In addition, 8,000 Marines would be relocated from Okinawa to Guam.<sup>xxii</sup> However, the majority of towns and villages on the island remained opposed to the Henoko project, demanding that the relocation site be outside of Okinawa. In 2010, an estimated 90,000 people participated in a massive protest, demanding the 2006 agreement be scrapped.<sup>xxiii</sup> Meanwhile, wrangling between Tokyo and Okinawa continued over the legality of the relocation project. Compromise remained elusive.

Despite the 2006 agreement on base realignment in Okinawa, nothing happened regarding the base relocation and the promise to send Marines elsewhere. In 2009, however, just when it seemed that some progress might finally be made in resolving the issue, the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) lost the general election, ushering in rule by the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), a liberal party that campaigned on moving Futenma outside of Okinawa.

DPJ Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama spent most of his short term in office (2009-2010) trying to make good on his promise to Okinawa to relocate Futenma elsewhere. He failed in his effort when no other part of Japan wanted to accept the base. He resigned over that issue, as well as a personal scandal. His successor, Naoto Kan, was too wrapped up in a crisis with China over the disputed Senkaku Islands and then with the massive earthquake in northern Japan to tackle the problem left by Hatoyama.

In April 2012, while DPJ Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda was in office, Tokyo and Washington reached another agreement to alleviate the burden on Okinawa. The U.S. agreed to relocate 9,000 Marines, of which 5,000 would go to Guam, 1,500 to Hawaii, and 2,500 to Australia on a rotational basis, as soon as the receiving facilities are ready.<sup>xxiv</sup> Even so, about 10,000 Marines would still remain in Okinawa. Under the new plan, the total cost of closing Futenma and transferring the 9,000 Marines off Okinawa would be about \$8.6 billion, with the Japanese government paying about \$3.1 billion to facilitate the moves. Still unresolved was the issue of establishing a replacement for Futenma. Henoko remained the sole option. U.S. Marines would leave Futenma as soon as suitable facilities on Guam and elsewhere were completed. Unfortunately, the U.S. Congress has denied the funds dedicated to the base realignment, which means that the Marines are all still in Okinawa.<sup>xxv</sup>

Understanding the difficulty of negotiating with Tokyo, now back under LDP rule with Shinzo Abe as of December 2012, Okinawa Governor Hirokazu Nakaima approved a landfill proposal by the Japanese government to permit the construction of new military facilities in Henoko to replace Futenma.<sup>xxvi</sup> This was based on the assumption that Tokyo and Washington would never return Futenma nor reduce the presence of the Marines if the Henoko project continued to be blocked. Okinawa as a whole could be better off giving up Henoko to secure the removal of Futenma base, rather than fighting indefinitely for the unreachable goal of moving it 'out of Okinawa'. The Ministry of Defense soon began the first seabed boring survey in Henoko waters to assess the feasibility of building the V-shaped runways.

In December 2014, Takeshi Onaga, who campaigned on opposing the Henoko relocation, defeated Nakaima. He officially revoked the land reclamation permit needed for continued construction work that Nakaima had authorized to the Ministry of Defense.<sup>xxvii</sup> Even without the permit from the Okinawa prefectural government, the construction began in 2017.<sup>xxviii</sup> Governor

Onaga had taken administrative, legal, and political tactics to delay the construction totaling five lawsuit cases against Tokyo. Little was accomplished by his hardline stance.

Following Onaga's untimely death in 2018, Denny Tamaki was elected to be his successor and remains the current governor as of May 2020. Governor Tamaki has argued for the relocation site to be outside of Okinawa, and he has taken legal steps to try to halt the ongoing construction.<sup>xxix</sup> In February 2019, a prefecture-wide referendum found 72 percent of the prefecture opposed to the project. Since the referendum is non-binding, the central government forged ahead with the landfill phase of the Henoko project. Okinawa's current efforts are largely limited to administrative disputes with Tokyo, in addition to ineffective opposition activities like blocking trucks heading for the site at Henoko.

Analyzing the history of the Tokyo-Washington-Okinawa relationship, Okinawa's opposition to the Futenma relocation issue is taken seriously only when a significant incident occurs on the island. The 1995 rape incident forced Washington to agree to return MCAS Futenma but conditioned on a relocation site on Okinawa. The 2004 helicopter accident pushed both governments to agree on a plan to reclaim land off the tip of Henoko Point for the construction of an alternative facility with a V-shaped runway. With landfill now being poured into the shallow waters off Henoko, it may already be too late to reverse course. With Governor Tamaki's hardline stance, it seems unrealistic to assume that Okinawa will either change its mind to allow the project to continue, or conversely, to convince the U.S. to give up on it. The political dynamics at work in Tokyo, Washington, and Okinawa mitigate against compromise or rational solutions. Tokyo and Washington remain committed to upholding the status quo without serious regard for the will of the residents of Okinawa. Only strong leadership at the top could overcome such a hurdle.

### **Okinawa's Weakness in Bargaining Power**

Okinawa has sought entry into the process of reducing the U.S. military presence in Okinawa but each time, it has been rebuffed. It has been told that base-related negotiations only involve Washington and Tokyo, not the prefecture. Being so excluded, it seems that only a serious incident or accident in Okinawa can move the two central governments to make concessions. Due to this negotiating set-up, Okinawa lacks bargaining power. Thus, Tokyo can ignore Okinawa's demands with impunity and exclusively focus on what Washington seeks. A relative bargaining power is one of the most significant analytical tools in negotiation; it defines whether a party can



play hard or soft, in order to aim for its maximum gain.<sup>xxx</sup> Previously stated, Tokyo does not deem it necessary to take Okinawa's demands into consideration in order to move things forward with Washington. Decisions are made there, making strategic considerations the priority. In terms of the two-decade Futenma relocation dispute, mostly between Tokyo and Okinawa, the central government seems convinced it can refuse Okinawa's demand to have a strong say in resolving the issue without serious consequence. Indeed, in terms of the legal toolbox at the governor's disposal, each measure to halt the project has been ultimately rejected by the courts.

The upper hand of Tokyo comes from the weaknesses of Okinawa's BATNA (best alternative to a negotiated agreement). BATNA is the point at which negotiators should walk away from the negotiation because beyond that point an alternative option would become the better choice.<sup>xxx</sup> Simply said, Okinawa does not have alternatives or a walk-away point in the negotiation because Okinawa was not involved in the decision-making processes. Okinawa's ultimate objective is to terminate the base relocation to Henoko, which can be considered as an act of outside spoilers by Tokyo and Washington.

Spoilers in negotiations are those leaders and parties who believe the new agreement/structure threatens their power, world view, and their interests.<sup>xxx</sup> Oftentimes spoilers are those who are excluded from the negotiation process, and they seek either to alter the process or turn over the existing decision. Spoilers are often associated with civil war peace agreements, where such actors are willing to use violence to undermine the government's decision. Spoilers can take any form of organization, society, or group that actively seeks to hinder, delay, or undermine the implementation of a negotiated outcome. Their efforts to do so are often lengthy and difficult, as they are usually excluded from diplomatic channels and do not possess much bargaining power.

Okinawa, adopting the role of the spoiler, has worked long and hard to influence the negotiations of the central government on the Futenma relocation issue. As the spoiler, Okinawa has launched a number of lawsuits against the central government in desperate efforts to block the landfill at Henoko. The problem is that such spoiling activities are only effective in delaying the construction project for a short period of time. That said, in order to influence either Tokyo, Washington, or both to reconsider the 2006 base realignment agreement, Okinawa needs to look beyond just having more talks with Tokyo. Moreover, Okinawa needs to convince both

governments that the prefectural government is no longer an outsider but instead, it should be treated as an important actor in the negotiation process for the sake of balancing the interests of the U.S.-Japan security relationship and those of the prefecture.

Okinawa has been limited in capacity building as it has dealt with the basing issue mostly at the local level. It is thus extremely important and beneficial for Okinawa, as the weak party, to seek support for its efforts in the international community. William Zartman, a leading scholar in the field of Conflict Management, notes that borrowing power from various third parties is one of the ways for small parties to improve their bargaining power.<sup>xxxiii</sup> Individual bargaining powers can multiply when integrated, and such a coalition's bargaining powers can become equal or even stronger than that of the most powerful actor in the negotiation.

An example of "borrowing a bargaining power" can be seen in large-scale international negotiations, where parties create alliances and coalitions with those whose BATNAs are similar to theirs. For example, environmental negotiations have traditionally been centered on great powers with the ability to make decisions. However, the countries that are most affected by the negative consequences of global warming are those that had been excluded from the decision-making process. In the COP21 negotiations, the small island developing states (SIDS) solved such a dilemma by building coalitions with other developing countries, scientific institutions, and nongovernmental organizations.<sup>xxxiv</sup> The alliance led by the SIDS improved its bargaining power and was able to influence the previously discussed solutions by developed countries.

This is one of the most fundamental tactics that can be generalized in any negotiation; weaker parties can combine their resources in order to increase their bargaining power. That said, Okinawa should learn to do so in its efforts to put aside the 2006 agreement and revisit the base relocation issue afresh. What Okinawa lacks at this moment, is further support from countries and organizations to a level that Washington and Tokyo cannot ignore it any longer. In particular, Okinawa can benefit from channeling its voice through environmental organizations, think-tanks, and well-known scholars both in the U.S. and Japan, as well as in other countries.

### **Washington Enjoys Greater Power in Negotiations with Tokyo**

Another important approach that Okinawa should consider in order to influence US-Japan negotiations on the basing issue is to communicate directly with Washington. This is because

Washington enjoys a greater bargaining power compared to that of Tokyo—part of the reason why Okinawa’s negotiation strategy aimed at Tokyo has not worked. The simple fact that the Japanese government is willing to bear the whole cost of the Henoko construction project can be interpreted as showing Tokyo’s weakness in negotiations.<sup>xxxv</sup> In fact, all of the possible relocation sites for the Futenma base except for Henoko were rejected for the reasons that prioritized the interests of the U.S.

The weakness of Japan in influencing the basing issues in Okinawa comes mainly from its dependency on the Alliance for Japan’s security. Due to Article 9 of the Constitution, Japan is prohibited from having war-making potential, so in technical terms, the Self-Defense Force is not legally an army. That is why the current prime minister, Shinzo Abe, wants to revise Article 9 to stipulate the existence of an armed force in Japan.

Despite its constitutional limitations, the Self-Defense Force (SDF) today ranks 5<sup>th</sup> in military capabilities, ranging from military strength to defense spending to logistics. This tally takes into account Japan’s 152 special mission aircraft, a formidable Navy fleet of 40 destroyers, 3,130 armored vehicles, 1,004 tanks and 119 attack helicopters.<sup>xxxvi</sup> Even with such strong military capabilities, the SDF’s overseas activities are severely limited due to Article 9. For instance, the operations of the SDF, until a recent reinterpretation of Article 9, was completely self-defensive in nature and those forces could not come to the aid of Japan’s ally the U.S., if attacked. Now, after the reinterpretation, the SDF is allowed to come to the aid of the U.S., but only in a regional contingency setting.

Given the constraint in the Japanese military capabilities, Japan benefits from hosting the U.S. military bases on its territory to assist in the defense of Japan, enhance bilateral cooperation, and act as a deterrence against aggression in the region. Having said that, Tokyo is more so dependent on the U.S.-Japan security alliance than Washington is, which translates into Tokyo’s weaker BATNAs. According to one analyst, intra-alliance negotiations over issues and military plans, the party with less dependency on the alliance enjoys more bargaining power.<sup>xxxvii</sup> To apply his theory to the base relocation issue, Washington obviously has more bargaining power than Tokyo. In that context, then, Okinawa’s persistent efforts to engage and influence the central government by negotiating only with its officials and taking domestic legal actions are most likely

to be ineffective. Okinawa should instead find an effective way to reach out directly to policy-making levels in Washington in order to make its voice heard.

One of the potential ways to influence Washington or at least enable visitors to access key officials and legislators is through the Okinawa Prefectural Office in Washington D.C. The main responsibilities of this office include supporting the governor's visits to the United States, gathering information regarding U.S. base issues, and disseminating information in the U.S. about the situation in Okinawa.<sup>xxxviii</sup> The current and previous governors have visited Washington at least once a year to transmit their messages to movers and shakers in the Capitol. The office coordinates meetings with officials of the State Department and the Pentagon, members of Congress, researchers at think tanks, and relevant academics. The main focus is to express the views of the people of Okinawa on such issues as the construction of the V-shaped runway at Henoko.

In this way, the office has been working to build cooperative relationships with policymakers, as well as security experts in Washington, while exchanging views regarding negotiating strategies. The problem is that the office is limited in capacity, with only three employees and no actual meeting room.<sup>xxxix</sup> Being unable to organize official meetings and more importantly, frequent unofficial meetings with senior professionals in the area, Okinawa has been missing tremendous opportunities. The interaction with U.S. policymakers is the most influential and prospective strategy that Okinawa can currently work on, though it is a long-term approach. The office needs to expand its size to be able to accommodate visitors with and without appointments so that Okinawa's voice can reach a greater number of influential people in Washington. Relationship building at any point is extremely important for Okinawa to insert itself into the official and unofficial conversations and in that way work for an outcome in the base negotiations more beneficial to Okinawa's interests.

Depending on how well Okinawa can reset the narrative at the top of the policy pyramid in Washington, there is a chance to persuade policymakers to reconsider the relocation plan. If, for example, a review of the Henoko project concludes that the proposed dual runways provide little advantage to U.S. strategic interests, and such reconsideration concludes the Henoko construction to be disadvantageous to Washington, Washington might seek alternative solutions. According to one theorist, another way for small parties to increase their power in negotiations is by borrowing power from the stronger target itself.<sup>xl</sup> Okinawa could perhaps reframe the Henoko project issue

as Washington's problem, arguing that the new runways would not provide as much benefit to U.S. interests as previous administrations have concluded. If technical and scientific arguments backed by substantial facts and data are added, Okinawa's case could gain traction in Washington.

There are four arguments that could show how flawed the Henoko project is: the soft seabed, the damage to ecosystems, the rising sea levels, and the question of how strategically important the presence of Marines on the island is. By inserting these arguments into the conversation about Okinawa in Washington policy circles, Okinawa could gain momentum in persuading the U.S. government to reconsider the relocation plan. The goal of this strategy would be to have Futenma returned as soon as possible, and the project to build the runways at Henoko abandoned.

### **Soft Seabed**

Although the Henoko project has been years in the making, it was only revealed to the public recently that the seabed at the site is not suitable for construction. Environmental organizations and other anti-base groups had been arguing that for a decade, but the surrounding ocean floor is softer than originally understood. It is often referred to as a "Mayonnaise seabed" where for up to 90-meters, the sea bottom is too soft to sustain any building.<sup>xli</sup> The existence of weak subsoil in the bay was detected in a drilling survey conducted between 2014 and 2016. Even so, the central government plowed ahead with the land reclamation project in December 2018 without publicly acknowledging the finding that would eventually prove to be a major setback.

The Ministry of Defense announced in December 2019 that 77,000 piles would be needed to fix this mayonnaise floor to sustain the runways.<sup>xlii</sup> Due to this complication as well as many other additional procedures, the construction is now projected to be completed by the late 2030s, far beyond the original date of 2022. The estimated cost of the construction by the Defense Ministry also tripled from 350 billion yen (\$3.2 billion) in 2013 to 930 billion yen (\$8.6 billion) in 2019. Furthermore, Okinawa Prefecture predicts the cost will balloon to 2.55 trillion yen (\$23 billion) in the end.<sup>xliii</sup>

As mentioned above, the central government is supposed to cover all of the expenses regarding the Henoko project. Thus, a financial argument would not work to coerce Washington

to terminate it. However, the soft seabed could potentially cause a landfill collapse that would result in the destruction of the runways above. When the massive earthquake in 2011 hit northern Japan, the parking lot of Tokyo Disneyland was flooded with large pools of standing water due to ground liquefaction. This was due to the soft seabed and the landfill over it when the parking lot was made. Considering the frequency of earthquakes in Japan, a construction that entails the probability of partial or even total destruction of the facility should raise concern among U.S. policy makers.

This is a relatively new revelation that only a limited number of experts realize. The general public has not yet fully understood the technical argument yet. From my conversations with officials from the State Department and the Defense Department, I found that many were unaware of the seriousness of the matter.<sup>xliv</sup> Following the acknowledgement of the soft seabed by the Ministry of Defense, landfill operations were temporarily stopped for the purpose of further assessment. Everything is currently postponed due to Covid-19 cases among construction workers (as of May 2020). There is no time like the present to encourage Washington to reconsider the project before shoring up the seabed.

### **Damage to Ecosystems**

Another issue that Okinawa can remind Washington and environmental organizations of is the delicacy of the ecosystems in Oura Bay. Like many other Pacific islands, Okinawa has a large number of endangered species that need to be protected from further human activities. According to the Okinawan prefectural government, 5,800 species inhabit the sea area around the construction site, of which 262 are endangered species.<sup>xlv</sup> All nineteen environmental organizations in Japan, including the Ecological Society of Japan, have released statements warning about the negative consequences to the ecosystems.<sup>xlvi</sup>

In 2003, a coalition of Japanese and American environmental groups and three individual Japanese citizens together filed a lawsuit against the U.S. Defense Department regarding the environmental consequences on the construction.<sup>xlvii</sup> Their claim is based on the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, which requires federal agencies to consider the effects of their undertakings on historic properties wherever located, including those outside of the United States.<sup>xlviii</sup> The Defense Department thus is responsible for ensuring that historical preservation be integrated into ongoing federal programs. Dugongs, a marine mammal on the vulnerable species

list, exist in Okinawa, including Oura Bay. They are protected by Japan's Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties, which is considered to be equivalent to the U.S. National Register of Historic Places.<sup>xlix</sup>

In 2015, a Japanese court concluded that dugongs are not the property of Okinawa, thus the court had no authority to terminate the construction.<sup>l</sup> The coalition lost the case and soon appealed to the higher court. Two years later, the construction began and has taken precious habitat away from the few dugongs that live in the bay. Prior to the project, there were three dugongs observed in Japan, all living near the Henoko site. After landfill that included red soil considered harmful to many species was introduced into the bay waters, one dugong was found dead and the other two went missing.<sup>li</sup> Even though the Ministry of Environment found the cause of the death to be a stingray injury<sup>lii</sup>, it seems likely that the dugong was forced to flee from the contaminated Henoko waters and could not adjust to the new environment. The environmental organizations' concerns regarding the dugong population in Okinawa turned out to be accurate.

This incident received great attention from the media, which blamed the death on the construction at Henoko. The central government, without sufficient investigation, denies the charge and continues to state that the dugongs are not in harm's way. This dynamic might shift if Okinawa is able to attract more attention from environmental organizations and research institutes, especially those in the U.S. With scientific backing, dead dugongs would become a problem that could no longer be ignored. Pressure would mount on Japan and the U.S. to pay attention to the environmental aspect on the base relocation process.

On May 7, 2020, the higher court, hearing the case, reached the same conclusion as the lower court did in 2015.<sup>liii</sup> This was another loss for the environmental groups. The conclusion must therefore be reached that legal means will not likely do much to halt the landfill project at Henoko. Lawsuits can only succeed when there is quantifiable data to support the claim. It might be more beneficial for Okinawa to utilize such tools as the international media to attract attention to the issue.

### **Climate Change and Rising Sea Levels**

The third argument that Okinawa needs to persuade U.S. policymakers to understand is the Henoko project's relation to the rising sea level due to climate change. As global warming has

evolved from scientific theory to common sense, global temperatures have risen dramatically and will continue to rise. As Arctic ice melts, it is contributing to rising sea levels across the globe. In fact, the global sea level in 2018 was 3.2 inches above the 1993 average.<sup>liv</sup> That statistic will only get worse in the future.

The problem is that the new facility is being built partly in shallow waters of Henoko, where rising sea levels will surely occur. Climatologists argue that the Henoko runways will be underwater in fifty to seventy years.<sup>lv</sup> With the substantial delays in the construction due to the new seabed issue, the Ministry of Defense now sees the construction completed by the late 2030s. Thus, the runways would be unusable within 30 to 40 years from the date of completion. If the rising temperature escalates even further, the runways could begin sinking in 20 years or so. Washington should determine whether this potentially short-term relocation plan is worth the effort.

That argument is not yet fully grasped by the general public. Okinawa therefore needs to promote more scientific research that specifically links the Henoko project and climate change. This would produce a scientifically based argument on how unsustainable the new facility would be. Assuming that the durability of the base is a main objective, both central governments would have no choice but to pay attention to such scientific evidence. Okinawa should borrow the power of knowledge from the research community. The two governments might then persuade to reconsider the basic premise of durability of the Henoko project.

In fact, a significant number of coastal populations are already affected worldwide, even to the point of evacuating from such areas before it is too late. When the Marines first considered building a facility at Henoko in the 1960s, as seen in contemporary blueprints, climate change was not an issue.<sup>lvi</sup> In the early 2000s, when both governments reached the unshakable conclusion that the Futenma replacement facility at Henoko was the only solution, climate change was not on their official minds.<sup>lvii</sup> Today, scientific evidence is obvious that sea levels are rising. To reject that presumption by resuming the Henoko project would be folly.

Admittedly, persuading a skeptical U.S. government that now rejects climate change science will not be easy. What needs to be done by the Okinawa prefecture and its representatives in Washington is to provide a blitz of information regarding such critical issues like the climate change effect to think-tanks, environmental groups, the U.S. Congress, and other relevant



organizations. Conferences, seminars, and meetings should be held to spread Okinawa's message. Only when Okinawa's arguments gain traction among a cross-section of Washington's policymakers, academics and researchers, and opinion leaders can the possibility of a reassessment of the basing issue on Okinawa become feasible.

### **Strategic Importance of the Marines in Okinawa**

The final question may be most important: Are the Marines really necessary in Okinawa? The standard explanation given by Washington and Tokyo is that the presence of U.S. Marines on Okinawa is necessary for Japan's national security since they are a powerful deterrent against possible enemy attacks. They are also considered essential for regional security; but is that really true today?

Unlike other military branches, the Marines are an offensive force for the purpose of invasion and engagement on the ground. The Marines in Okinawa have been stationed on the island generally for training and deployment elsewhere, in the past to Iraq and Afghanistan and even earlier to Vietnam. They have little use when it comes to defending Japan from missile attacks and bombardment from the sea and the air targeting its territory. In fact, some in Washington have been suspicious of the effectiveness of the Marines stationed in Okinawa. Barney Frank, the former member of the House of Representatives spoke to National Public Radio in 2010, and stated that, "We don't need 15,000 Marines in Okinawa."<sup>lviii</sup>

As the first step, the 2012 agreement to reduce the number of Marines in Okinawa by 9,000 (leaving 10,000) should be realized. The agreement would transfer them to Guam, Hawaii, and Australia, as soon as receiving facilities are ready. Once that occurs, serious thought should be given to further reducing or even removing the remaining number.

There is an indirect benefit for Washington in moving the Marines from Okinawa. To start, Okinawa is not an ideal training site for Marines. Specialized training deemed crucial to warfare are prohibited in Okinawa due to the risk to the local population. Many types of aircraft training are prohibited, a legacy of the 1959 aircraft accident that killed 18 and injured hundreds.<sup>lix</sup> In Guam, on the other hand, most training is allowed as U.S. regulation applies, allowing helicopter pilots to maintain their flight skills. Further, ground troops are also able to train without the backlash they

would face in Okinawa, such as noise pollution and bullet ricochets. If the purpose for the Marines being stationed in Okinawa is to train and wait for deployment, the island is not an ideal location.

The question of “Why does the U.S. have to protect its allies?” has risen, as the Trump administration holds to the false belief that “our allies take advantage of us far greater than our enemies.”<sup>lx</sup> Okinawa can encourage policy makers in Washington to understand that it is in their economic benefit to bring back some troops from overseas. Maintaining U.S. bases overseas is costly, about \$24.4 billion in fiscal 2020, and this excludes the costs of ongoing combat operations.<sup>lxi</sup> In that context, Washington should reconsider the long-term presence of Marines in Okinawa. They do not serve much of a strategic role and are hardly a major deterrent force in the region, so keeping them there is arguably a waste of taxpayers’ money.

### **The Kyushu Option: Too Many Eggs in the Okinawa Basket**

In May 2019, an Okinawa advisory council was created to come up with realistic measures to alleviate the burden of hosting U.S. military bases in Okinawa, as well as to build an argument questioning the choice of Henoko as the Futenma replacement facility.<sup>lxii</sup> The members included international security experts like Kyoji Yanagisawa, a former Defense Ministry official, and Dr. Mike Mochizuki, an associate professor at George Washington University.

In March 2020, the council recommended that the functions of Futenma be dispersed among Japan’s Self-Defense Force bases on mainland Japan. The recommendation includes relocating drills of MV-22 Osprey and other aircraft based at Futenma to multiple SDF bases. Since 2013, Osprey training outside Okinawa Prefecture has been conducted at SDF bases on mainland Japan once or twice a year, and joint Japan-U.S. drills about two weeks a year. By gradually expanding the magnitude and increasing the length of the training exercises that the Futenma-based aircraft conduct elsewhere, and rotating the bases that are used, the recommendation aims to minimize the time that the aircraft would be present at Futenma. This would pave the way for an eventual reversion of the base to Okinawa.<sup>lxiii</sup>

The recommendation did not specify what SDF bases would be used, but only two are considered to have the capacity to do so. The Tsuiki Airfield in Fukuoka, which is undergoing an extension of its runway for emergency use, and the Nyutabaru Air Base in Miyazaki with its 2,700-

meter runway are possible relocation sites for the Futenma aircraft.<sup>lxiv</sup> The main problem is the central government's unwillingness to seriously entertain the notion of such an option.

The council's recommendation is based on the idea of expeditionary advanced basing operations (EABO). According to the official naval concept of EABO, U.S. military forces should seek a strategy of having small-scale units that are dispersed on the frontlines to mount attacks, rather than relying on fixed bases with large numbers of troops.<sup>lxv</sup> This is a strategy devised to prepare for possible attack from China, whose missile capabilities have improved in the last few decades. The U.S. and Russia were prohibited to develop low and intermediate range missiles due to the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty.<sup>lxvi</sup> With the termination of the treaty in 2019, the U.S. is capable of developing and deploying intermediate range missiles to Asia, and such weapons should not all concentrate on one small island.<sup>lxvii</sup>

Applying the EABO strategies to the military presence in Okinawa, it is no longer necessary to keep large-scale military outposts there. Most of the important facilities in terms of weaponry are currently concentrated on the island of Okinawa. It is strategically better off to disperse the bases among the other locations in mainland Japan, if Washington wishes to keep the facilities relatively close to each other. The appropriate relocation sites should be the SDF bases in Kyushu as the council suggested. This sets out a vision for a gradual return of Futenma to Okinawa through the dispersal of the base's functions.

### **The Kadena Option**

Another way to shrink the U.S. military presence is the so-called "Kadena option." Kadena Air Base is capable of absorbing the Osprey function of Futenma, for example. Kadena is the largest U.S. Air Force installation in Asia and serves as the hub of airpower in the Pacific. The base has two 3,689-meter runways, that allow any aircraft in the U.S. and Japan to take off and land.<sup>lxviii</sup> The Henoko runways in contrast are only 1,800 meters long and can merely serve as a large heliport. So, it makes more sense to transfer that function to Kadena base where both the smaller and larger Marine aircraft can operate.

In addition, the Kadena option would allow Tokyo and Washington to avoid a long-term commitment that neither of them may want. The current Futenma's replacement facility at Henoko entails a commitment of at least several decades' use by the Marines. The Pentagon will not likely

need to deploy large-scale forces to foreign soils in the near future, especially those ground forces like the Marines, due to the technological advances in missile and air capabilities. Shifts in the international security environment will contribute to changes in the U.S. foreign policy, as well. In the same vein, as the SDF continues to gain more capabilities with changes in Article 9 of the Constitution, Japan might not need the level of U.S. military presence as it does now. Bases could be closed or turned over to the SDF. The U.S. military presence on Japanese territory would then be seen mainly as an enormous financial cost. In that case, the Henoko runways that cost billions of dollars and were sinking under rising seas would be seen as wasted money. So, the Kadena option, which does not require a large-scale construction, makes total sense to Tokyo and Washington.

The remaining function of Futenma being relocated to Kadena would not affect U.S. military posture in the region. The runway of Futenma being closed, transient aircraft could now land at Kadena. This option had been discussed by the two governments before Henoko was chosen, but they might want to consider the pros and cons of the Kadena option again. This would allow Futenma to close completely, without affecting the U.S. military interests in the region. Okinawa needs to reframe the issue to ‘how Futenma should be removed,’ instead of ‘how Futenma should be relocated to Henoko.’ Okinawa, with the help of academic and think-tank circles, should work to influence policy makers in Washington to recognize the fundamental issues regarding the obsolete tactic of keeping large-scale U.S. bases on foreign soils.

According to the latest Okinawa referendum, the majority of the island population does not want the new runways to be constructed in Henoko waters. The reasons vary from the longevity of the new military presence on the island to a simple anti-base sentiment. In order to convince Washington to listen to it, the Okinawa prefectural government needs to provide more feasible options to the Henoko project, rather than just claiming the construction is illegal.

If the Kyushu option does not sell, I believe the Kadena option would be the next best solution. Okinawa has been campaigning for moving Futenma “out of Okinawa,” yet the Kadena option does not require additional construction of facilities that would remain fixed on the island for decades. Even though the communities around Kadena as well as in Okinawa as a whole would oppose transferring Futenma’s remaining function to Kadena, the prefectural government could

meet with them to explain the pros and cons of that option, as well as the compare it to other alternatives. They might be successful in persuading local populations in the end.

## **Conclusion**

I have argued that Okinawa has been unsuccessful in influencing the Futenma base relocation negotiation for several reasons. In order for Okinawa to increase its bargaining power in negotiations, Okinawa prefectural government needs to borrow power from the international community as well as Washington, rather than putting its resources into meaningless talks with Tokyo. Through such an effort, Okinawa needs to make Washington and Tokyo realize that its inclusion into a trilateral arrangement is essential in order to resolve the basing problem that has been festering for over two decades. Moreover, such an arrangement could ensure that both U.S.-Japan security interests and Okinawa interests are represented in talks and solutions.

In my paper, I have presented four arguments that could potentially deem the ongoing Henoko project as greatly flawed or unnecessary. I see the soft seabed argument as the strongest since it shows the unsuitability of the current plan, as well as the possibility of eventual collapse of the dual runways. The second argument questions the strategic importance of the Marines in Okinawa and their relevance to U.S. national security interests. I argue that at least they can be relocated to Japanese Self-Defense Force bases in Kyushu.

Even though the relocation plan is being proceeded on the land of Okinawa, it is an extremely difficult and complicated problem that entails many different issues within and outside of the island. These problems are interconnected to each other and impossible to disentangle, which makes it more difficult to find ‘the best possible solution’ for Tokyo, Washington, and Okinawa. Even for Okinawa, some locals benefit from the presence of the base and wish for the Futenma base to remain as is or to be relocated to another part of the island.

In the late 1950s, Okinawa depended on the base economy, with over 50 percent of the prefectural economy related to U.S. military spending. Now, with Okinawa’s economy becoming increasingly independent, only 5 percent of Okinawa’s GDP is dependent on the base.<sup>lxix</sup> Much of the prefecture’s economy now depends on tourism, particularly from mainland Japan, Korea and China, totaling 12 million people in 2019, on an island of 1.4 million.<sup>lxx</sup> In addition, there are signs of Okinawa becoming another high-tech center, further boosting its economy.

Approximately 90 percent of the land used by MCAS Futenma is privately owned, with about 3,000 landowners. While these individual landowners receive compensation for leasing their plots of land, the benefit to them could become even better after the land is returned and commercially developed. Moreover, the prefecture is becoming a hub of exchange by taking advantage of its geographical location as a bridge between mainland Japan and other Asian nations.<sup>lxxi</sup> There are a lot of opportunities for profitable and sustainable commerce, benefiting not only for Okinawa but also mainland Japan, and without the need to host a large-scale U.S. military presence in return for subsidies from the central government.

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## Japan's Evolving Security Policies

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### **Introduction**

Since its establishment in July 1954, the Japanese Self-Defense Force (JSDF) mission has focused on maintaining a minimal force primarily for the defense of Japan. Japan's militarist past has had and continues to have a significant impact on the limits of its defense policy. Public opinion, as well, continues to have a strong anti-militarist tone, for example, mitigating against revision of Japan's peaceful constitution. In that context, the activities of the JSDF have been constrained by war-renouncing Article 9 of the Constitution and related policies set by the government, such as the traditional 1% of GDP cap placed on defense spending (though recently removed by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe).

But such a reclusive Japan is no longer sustainable. In recent years, with the changing security environment in the region around Japan, pressure has built to redefine the roles and missions of the JSDF to meet new threats, something that Prime Minister Abe has taken on as a priority theme of his policy agenda. It is no longer simply the defense of Japan, but what to do in cases of potential contingencies involving a nuclearized North Korea or possibly an expansionary China. Moreover, Japan has branched out from focusing only on security cooperation with the United States to include a broader spectrum of strategic partners such as the United Kingdom, South Korea, Australia, South East Asia, and even India. As Japan's security situation and relationships with other regional actors change, Japanese leaders have concluded that the policy and defense structure centered on the JSDF needs to be adjusted to meet more current concerns. These include North Korea's existential threat to Japan, China's expanding influence in the East and South China seas, a reinvigorated Russia in the region, and a realization that defense interests with the U.S. may diverge at times requiring, periodic upgrading of security arrangements.

This paper focuses on how the JSDF is changing to match Japan's new security-policy direction. In the first of three parts, we will explore the factors that limit or influence the roles and missions of the JSDF. These factors include constitutional, social, and political limitations that

stem from Japan's militarist past. Next, based on that historical perspective, we will view how the JSDF is meeting current security challenges balanced with the expectations of the U.S. We also provide suggestions on how Japan might further develop its military capabilities in the future. Finally, in a case study of the Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF), we will show what changes are needed to update its capabilities for homeland defense, as well as missions overseas.

### **Origin of the Self-Defense Forces**

Japan's military history dates back to the 6<sup>th</sup> century. By the 12<sup>th</sup> century, a powerful military caste, the samurai, emerged in feudal Japan, and by the early 17<sup>th</sup> century after a long warring states period, the Tokugawa established the country's first military dictatorship, known as the shogunate, that lasted until the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the samurai caste was abolished. Under a constitutional monarchy, Japan opened its country to the world and industrialized its economy, but it also developed a modern army and navy based on the Prussian model. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Japan began to use its military to build an empire, focusing on the Korean Peninsula and Manchuria. But it went too far, starting a war with China in 1937 that dragged on until 1945, and another war with the United States in order to preserve and expand its empire even further.

After Japan surrendered in 1945, ending World War II, Allied forces led by the United States occupied the nation, bringing drastic reforms that would change the country forever. Japan was disarmed, its empire dissolved, soldiers and overseas civilians repatriated, and with a new Occupation-written Constitution, its form of government changed to a democracy, yet it kept the emperor on the throne as a symbol of Japan. In addition, the Occupation reorganized and rebuilt Japan's economy and education system. Following the San Francisco Peace Treaty in 1951, Japan became an independent nation again, initially intent on recovering its economy and eschewing any kind of military capability. Such unarmed neutrality did not sit well with conservative elements in the government who wanted rearmament. The U.S., faced with a Cold War, the Korean War, and the spread of international communism, applied considerable pressure on the Japanese government. This led to Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida agreeing to the establishment of the JSDF, the signing of a security treaty with the U.S. (revised in 1960), and the agreement to an unwritten compact, known as the Yoshida Doctrine, that allowed Japan to rebuild its economy, while maintaining a minimum military capability for the sole self-defense of Japan. From the early 1950s on, the JSDF has slowly but steadily evolved until it now ranks as the world's

fourth most powerful military in conventional weapons and has a defense budget that is the world's eighth-largest. But the JSDF, despite its military capabilities, has never been tested in battle.

### *Growth of a Modern Army During the Meiji Period*

The Meiji Emperor ruled from 1867 to 1912 as a constitutional monarchy, but the real modernizers of Japan's economy and military were the Genro, an oligarchy of former samurai who had played a leading role in the 1868 Meiji Restoration (the overthrow of feudal rule) and in the organization of the new government that followed this revolution. Genro was an unofficial designation given to certain retired elder Japanese statesmen, considered the "founding fathers" of modern Japan, who served as informal extraconstitutional advisors to the emperor during the Meiji era and into the 20th century. The major accomplishments of the Meiji Emperor and the Genro included abolishing the feudal land system, introducing a new educational system, creating a cabinet government, and producing a constitution that created the Diet. During the Meiji Emperor's rule, Japan annexed Korea (1910) and fought two successful wars: the Sino-Japanese War (1894-5) and the Russo-Japanese War (1904-5), the first triumph of an Asian power over a Western one. Such achievements attracted the admiration of Western imperial powers and the United States, which saw this as the first transformation of a backward Asian civilization.<sup>1</sup> Just after World War I, Japan was identified as one of the "Big Five" powers, along with Britain, the United States, France, and Italy. Japan even inked an alliance with Great Britain.

### *World War II*

Japan's quest for power reached its apogee in the 1930s and early 1940s, when the military annexed Manchuria and went to war against China and then the United States, which was standing in Japan's way. It also entered into a largely paper alliance with Germany in hopes to gain even more territory in Asia. The December 8, 1941, attack on Pearl Harbor, was meant to be a swift blow to the Americans, as Japan moved into Southeast Asia to take over vital resources for its war machine. Japanese military leaders miscalculated, and the U.S. recuperated and came back with a vengeance to pursue a long and bloody war in the Pacific. The entire country mobilized, and the war only ended when the United States dropped two nuclear bombs on Japan, and Russia was moving through Korea to open another front from the west.

## *A Defeated Nation*

The Occupation in 1946 drafted a constitution and imposed it on Japan. It went into effect on May 3, 1947. Despite the Constitution and its war-renouncing Article 9 having been drafted by a team of General Douglas MacArthur's lawyers, it was subsequently ratified by the Diet and even today is favored by a majority of Japanese. It was not just the atomic bombs that turned Japan into a peace-loving nation. Lingering suspicion of the military, remembrance of the mass casualties in the Pacific War, and guilt for invading and committing atrocities in other countries in Asia also help explain the loyalty of the Japanese public to the peace constitution.<sup>ii</sup> It also explains in great part why Prime Minister Abe, despite his longevity in office, has yet to get the political traction to revise Article 9. Instead, Japan in the past under reformist prime ministers, as well as now under Abe, resorted to various means to expand the legitimacy of the JSDF as a military, including reinterpreting Article 9 in 2014 to allow the Forces the right to protect itself and its allies on the battleground. The reinterpretation has made the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty more symmetrical.

It is important here to reflect on the text of Article 9 that Prime Minister Abe wants to revise to stipulate the existence of the JSDF as an armed force:

*(1) Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes.*

*(2) In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.*

Article 9 was interpreted early on as allowing Japan the right to maintain self-defense capabilities, but until the reinterpretation in 2014, Japan was seen as not having the right to the use of collective self-defense.



(Source: “Armed Forces Personnel, Total - Japan | Data,” 2017, <https://data.worldbank.org>)

#### *National Police Reserve Evolves into Self-Defense Forces*

In the five years since the end of World War II, North Korea had built up a formidable military force. Pyongyang, by 1950 perceived a declining U.S. interest and support for South Korea and took that as an opportunity to attack the South. The United States responded rapidly, moving forces from Japan to South Korea to reclaim the peninsula. China later joined North Korea to fight the “invaders.”

The Korean War (1950-1953) posed a new problem for Japan. It was still under Allied occupation, had no capability to defend against attack, but served as a forward base for U.S. and United Nations troops. Japan could not join the allied effort, but the country provided significant material support to the allied forces fighting in Korea. In the aftermath of the Korean War, Japan was pressed to fill the gap to defend the mainland in the case that U.S. forces again have to withdraw troops from Japan and deploy elsewhere.

In that context, the idea of rearming Japan began. The JSDF began modestly as the National Police Reserve in 1950. It was formed when Allied Forces had to withdraw manpower from Japan to repel North Korea's invasion of the South. Japan needed not only to manage public security, but it also had to protect its own territory should U.S. forces be engaged and unable to come to Japan's assistance. The National Police Reserve (NPR) started with 75,000 members, with half of the ranks drawn from veterans of the Imperial Japanese Army. The top officials in the NPR were civilian administrators, so that the former military leaders could not regain power. On July 1, 1954, the Japanese transitioned from the National Police Reserve into the Ground, Maritime, and Air Self-Defense Forces. To administer the new forces under civilian control, the government established the Japan Defense Agency (JDA). Although the National Police Reserve was supposed to be a police force, its organization was similar to the military, which made for a smooth transition in 1954 to the JSDF.<sup>iii</sup>

In 1954, before the reorganization, there was a serious debate on the legality of the NPR being converted into a military force. Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida justified the JSDF as a "military force without war potential," but critics argued that this was just semantics.<sup>iv</sup> Interestingly, in a 1969 report, US Army Col Frank Kowalski writes: "The rearmament of Japan [was a] great lie" in that Japan did not constitute a war potential based on the number and quality of its soldiers, guns, tanks, airplanes, and other armaments.<sup>v</sup> He also describes the difficulties of initially teaching Japanese leaders what civilian control of the military really meant. Shigeru Yoshida, who was concerned about the possibility of a resurgence of militarism in Japan, fought hard with U.S. negotiators to keep the level of Japan's defense capability to the minimum necessary level.

In 1957, the Japanese government issued its Basic Policy for National Defense, consisting of four principles:

1. Support the United Nations' activities and promote international cooperation to achieve world peace.
2. Stabilize the people's livelihood and establish the foundation for national security.
3. Establish effective defense capabilities.
4. Defend the nation on the basis of the Japan-US Security Arrangements.<sup>vi</sup>

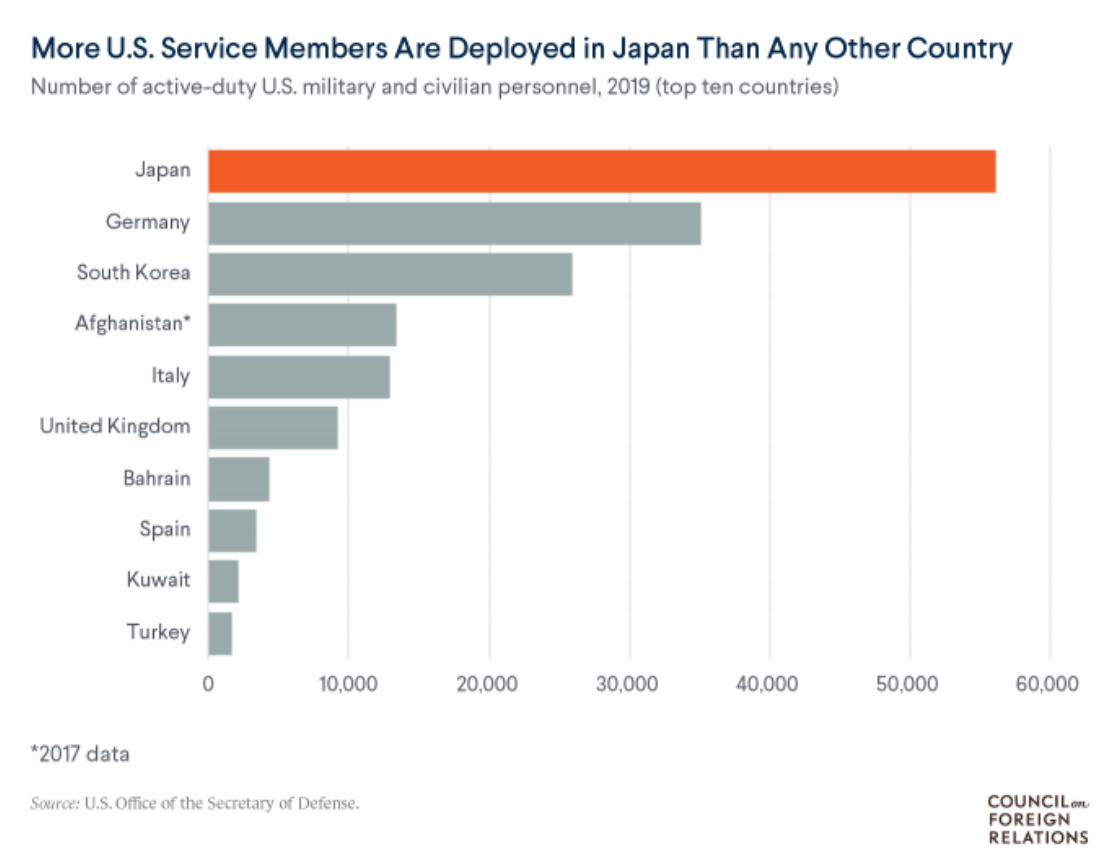


In 1957, Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi stated his view that nuclear weapons were not technically prohibited by Article 9 of the Constitution, but for reasons of humanity and in accordance with popular sentiment national policy should prohibit both their use and introduction. Kishi acknowledged that the possession of nuclear weapons was allowable under Article 9, if such adhered to the principle of a “minimum necessary level for self-defense.”<sup>vii</sup> The issue of whether Japan should have its own nuclear weapons was again brought to the surface by China’s acquiring its own nuclear bomb in the mid-1960s. Again, the idea was dismissed. The issue was resolved in 1970 when Prime Minister Eisaku Sato signed the nuclear weapons Non-Proliferation Treaty. For Japan, the nuclear deterrence provided by the U.S. came to be the preferred option.

In 1964, Japan was shocked when China detonated its first nuclear weapons. The then Prime Minister Eisaku Sato saw a nuclearized China as Japan’s biggest threat, and he even argued in 1967 for Japan to acquire its own nuclear weapons, which the U.S. adamantly opposed. Prime Minister Sato needed weapons to match them. The bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki included a public distaste for nuclear weapons in Japan. When Sato negotiated for the return of Okinawa from the United States, he signed a Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, ending the nuclear debate in Japan. Additionally, when he negotiated the return of Okinawa to Japan, he described the government’s position to neither possess nor manufacture nuclear weapons nor permit their introduction into Japanese territories. This declaration was not signed into law but adopted as policy by his cabinet on December 11, 1967. He worried that these principles might be too restrictive for Japanese defense in extremity and reframed them into a Four-Pillars Nuclear policy. Under this policy, Japan promotes the peaceful use of nuclear power, works toward global nuclear disarmament, relies on the US extended nuclear deterrent, and lastly, supports the Three Non-Nuclear Principles theory. Sato stated in a speech in February of 1968 that Japan would apply these principles “under the circumstances where Japan’s national security is guaranteed by the other three policies.”<sup>viii</sup>

When the U.S.-Japan security treaty was revised and ratified in 1960, Japan agreed to provide the United States bases within Japan.<sup>ix</sup> Most of them existed already. Japan was to develop its own self-defense capabilities, while the bases allowed for the forward presence of U.S. forces in Asia. The presence of the U.S. bases was not trouble-free, however. Later, these bases were the source of protests by Japanese activists for being used to support the Vietnam War.<sup>x</sup> In 1972, when

Okinawa was returned to Japan, the U.S. bases remained in place, and now make up over 70 percent of all U.S. bases in Japan. At present, there are more U.S. troops deployed to Japan than any other country.



(Source: Council on Foreign Relations, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/us-japan-security-alliance>)

### *Vietnam War*

After the Vietnam War, at the strong urging of the U.S., Japan began to seek a more significant role in the U.S.-Japan alliance, while balancing its Article 9 restrictions. The first postwar defense strategy in the 1970s was a direct result of Japan's desire to limit Soviet expansion eastward. Major principles established included the exclusively defense-oriented policy, ensuring that Japan would not become a military power, the three non-nuclear principles,

and maintaining strict civilian control of the military.<sup>xi</sup> The three principles of weapons exports by Prime Minister Eisaku Sato in 1967 and the one-percent limit of GDP on defense spending set by Prime Minister Takeo Miki in 1976 also enforced the self-imposed dictum of maintaining a minimum level of defense capability.

Japan and the United States redefined the bilateral security arrangements in 1978 with a set of defense cooperation guidelines, centered on the Soviet threat. The guidelines specifically addressed an invasion scenario on the northern island of Hokkaido. Negotiations started in 1975 between JDA Director-General Michita Sakata, and Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger.<sup>xii</sup> They agreed to overlook such sensitive issues as the Peace Constitution, the Three Non-Nuclear Principles, and significant changes involving the US forces deployed to Japan. Under the new guidelines, Japan would take on more responsibility for repelling small scale aggression and attacks on the homeland. Japan claimed more responsibility for “defensive operations in Japanese territory and its surrounding waters and airspace,” while the United States would assist with intelligence cooperation and mutual logistical support. The changes were viewed as following Japanese laws and regulations, including Article 9.<sup>xiii</sup> Although the guidelines focused solely on a Soviet invasion, they set a precedent for future cooperation and interoperability between the American and Japanese forces.

### *First Gulf War*

During the first Gulf War in 1991, following Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait, Japan was unable to send SDF troops to join the multinational coalition fighting Iraq because of its Constitution. It instead contributed \$13 billion to support the coalition and aid affected countries. Having to rely on “checkbook diplomacy,” greatly embittered Japanese officials who desperately wanted the country to provide a human contribution. The weaknesses in Japan’s defense policy involving contributions to the international community and the Alliance were exposed. However, public opinion in Japan did not support involvement in the war; nor was there any clear understanding of what Japan could or could not do. As a result, the government could not comply with U.S. expectations.<sup>xiv</sup> The government felt humiliated by having to rely on “checkbook diplomacy” as its only tool during an international crisis.<sup>xv</sup> Once liberated from Iraq’s occupation, while Kuwait thanked those countries that had aided it during the war, it omitted mentioning Japan in its statement.

The period of the 1980s and 1990s saw growing economic friction between the United States and Japan over trade imbalances and Japanese business practices. Japan's economy was seen as relatively closed to foreign exports. Numerous trade negotiations between Japan and the United States only seemed to make matters worse when results seemed unsatisfactory. Many in the U.S. government felt that Japan should assume a defense burden commensurate with its economic strength and called Japan a "free rider."<sup>xvi</sup> The trade issues threatened to spill over into defense affairs. In fact, following the end of the Cold War with no Soviet threat to hold them together, combined with Japan's bitter experience in the Gulf War, the Alliance seemed to be drifting apart without purpose.

In a government opinion survey in 1994, at least 85 percent of the Japanese public believed there was a threat to Japanese security from at least one country, but only 49 percent believed the United States would aid Japan if attacked.<sup>xvii,xviii</sup> However, another poll stated that only six percent of the public was willing to increase defense spending.<sup>xix</sup>

After much political debate, the Japanese government in 1992 passed the International Peace Cooperation Act, which opened the way for Japan's participation in UN peacekeeping operations. The first mission was to Cambodia in 1993. Since then, Japan has participated in a wide variety of international peace cooperation activities.



### *Crisis Challenges the Alliance*

The U.S.-Japan security relationship experienced one of its most challenging crises in 1995, when a schoolgirl in Okinawa was kidnapped and gang-raped by a group of U.S. military personnel. The heinous incident created a national uproar that threatened the very presence of U.S. forces. The offenders were handed over to Japanese authorities for prosecution, but the crisis in the Alliance was finally brought to closure in December 1996 with the final report of the Japan-U.S. Special Action Committee on Okinawa (SACO) that promised to return 21% of the land in Okinawa from 11 U.S. military installations, including MCAS Futenma, a Marine air station located in the heart of a densely populated community.

Another factor that affected both the US-Japan relationship and the reorganization of the Japanese military was the massive earthquake and tsunami in northern Japan, accompanied by the meltdown of a nuclear power plant in Fukushima. The American response was called Operation Tomodachi (Friendship). President Obama authorized 24,000 personnel, 24 navy vessels, and 189 aircraft to carry out disaster-relief operations in cooperation with the JSDF. The U.S. support efforts were conducted under the direction of Japanese government or military authorities. The effort had to overcome enormous obstacles to provide aid and relief to the victims, but in the end, the U.S. forces received high marks. They even responded briefly to the meltdown of the reactors at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant.<sup>xx</sup> This experience not only strengthened U.S.-Japan relations, but the response also generated much goodwill toward the United States among earthquake and tsunami survivors in the Tohoku region and sparked interest among other local governments about how the U.S. military could come to their aid in the event of a similar disaster.

### *Drastic Security Reforms under the Abe Administration*

Since coming into office in December 2012, after his party, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), won a landslide victory in the Lower House elections, Shinzo Abe has become one of Japan's most powerful postwar prime ministers.<sup>xxi</sup> He has also become Japan's longest-serving prime minister. He has introduced numerous domestic reforms, including a bold economic policy dubbed "Abenomics." On the security front, Abe introduced changes aimed at strengthening executive control over foreign and security policy decision-making and bolstering deterrence through an expansion of the Japan Self-Defense Forces' roles, missions, and capabilities within

and beyond the Alliance. He set a course for boosting spending above the GDP cap, improved readiness, and initiated a flexible response force for a variety of contingencies.<sup>xxii</sup>

Perhaps Prime Minister Abe's single most significant reform to national security-relevant institutions has been the establishment of Japan's first National Security Council (NSC) in December 2013. In consolidating executive control under the Prime Minister's Office (Kantei), Abe wanted the NSC to be the "control tower...centered on the prime minister" and tasked with "flexible and regular discussions of diplomatic and security affairs from a strategic perspective." Its purpose would be to provide "an environment for rapid responses based on strong political leadership."<sup>xxiii</sup> Abe also introduced Japan's first National Security Strategy in 2013. Additionally, he initiated a revision to the Defense Program Guidelines, drafted a year earlier in 2012. This revision focused on a post-cold-war Asia, and also enabled Japan to review other defense planning legislation. The most dramatic change, however, was the government's reinterpretation of the Constitution to allow the SDF the limited right to use collective self-defense, which had previously been banned. Japan would now be able to come to the aid of the U.S. and other security partners if attacked. In April 2014, Japan also adopted policies to allow the transfer of defense technology to Australia, India, and certain Southeastern Asian states.<sup>xxiv</sup> A set of security legislation specified the new parameters of JSDF operations, including a more robust participation in peace-keeping operations. Japan also redefined the cornerstones of its policy with the US in 2015. These included:

- Protection of the United States and its citizens from attack
- Access to markets of the region
- Freedom of navigation to ensure access to and through the region
- Maintenance of a stable balance of power that would support regional peace and stability and facilitate US economic and political access to the region
- Promotion of democracy and human rights
- Support for US security treaty allies<sup>xxv</sup>

### *Problems with Policy*

Japanese cooperation in line with the new legislation in 2015 did come with some problems. One significant problem was the integration of Liaison Officers (LNOs). There is no English definition of the Japanese policy word *Ittaika* because it only exists in Japan.<sup>xxvi</sup> It roughly means to integrate and is one example of a policy that is influenced by the interpretation of Article 9. In January 2020, a Japanese officer was integrated into the United States Naval Forces Central Command (NAVCENT) as an LNO. Others have been assigned with the Special Operations Command in Florida, the NATO headquarters in Brussels and the United Kingdom, among others.

In 2014, Japan justified this policy of LNOs by redefining the geographic relationship to combat and not command and control. Instead of confining Japanese SDF forces to only operate in rear areas, they can be close to the front lines.<sup>xxvii</sup> They must still, however, operate under an independent command and control structure.<sup>xxviii</sup>

Another issue deals with the legal rights of military officers. Currently, military officers can stand trial in civilian courts if they are in an engagement and kill someone, even if they were following the rules of engagement. Additionally, there are concerns about prisoners of war and the Geneva convention status of Japanese soldiers.

### *Transitioning to Present Day*

Sixty years have passed since the revised U.S.-Japan security treaty was signed in 1960. Because the security environment in East Asia has been changing dramatically, the security arrangements between the U.S. and Japan must be reviewed and updated to further protect the Japanese homeland, as well as address the security of Asia as a whole. In the post-cold war world, China has emerged as an economic and military superpower second only to the United States. The U.S. is slightly losing its global economic dominance, and at the same time, Japan's economic growth has stagnated. It is now essential to reconsider the future of the Alliance and re-examine the role for each nation in East Asia.

For the United States, Japan remains one of its closest allies and partners, and the view in Japan is the same. Japan is currently one of the most pro-American nations in the world, with 67% of Japanese viewing the United States favorably, according to a 2018 Pew survey; and 75% saying they trust the United States as opposed to 7% for China.<sup>xxix</sup> Faced with a rising China, Japan is



expanding its security structure to include cyber and naval infantry capabilities. These expansions still fall into self-defense definitions but can react to modern threats, specifically with the possibility of disputes over Japan's remote islands, as well as expanding cyber-attacks.

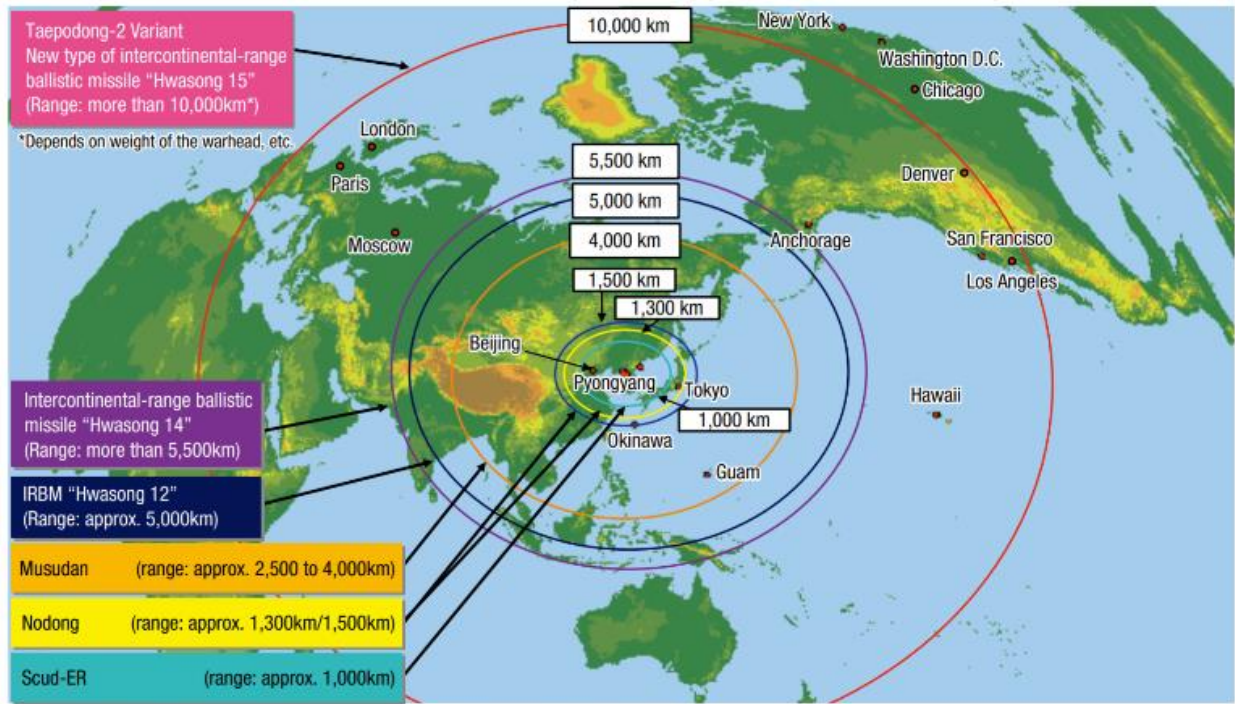
#### *The collapse of the Soviet Union and current threats*

Japan is geopolitically surrounded by real and potential threats: North Korea with its nuclear and missile programs, China with its maritime aggressions, and Russia with its military buildup in the Far East. During the Cold War, Japan's biggest threat was the Soviet Union and the fear of an invasion of Hokkaido. Two ideologies divided the world into two blocs: a liberal bloc led by the US and a communist bloc led by the Soviet Union. Japan played an essential role in the Far East as a member of the liberal bloc. Japan confronted the Soviet Union by building up its defenses in the northern island of Hokkaido, which faces the Sea of Okhotsk, an outpost for Soviet submarines.

At present, Russia is no longer seen as a threat to Hokkaido, and indeed, it does not have enough capability for amphibious operations. The current presence of the Russian Armed Forces in the Far East region is significantly smaller than it was at its peak.<sup>xxx</sup> Japan has to prepare for accidental conflict with Russia, but the threat potential is slim.

#### *The Korean Peninsula*

During the Cold War, North and South Korea continued to confront each other as proxies of the liberal and communist blocs: China-backed North Korea, while the United States was stationed in South Korea and supported them. Japan was in charge of providing logistic bases to the U.S. forces deployed on the peninsula. The North and South Korean military forces were mainly comprised of ground forces, facing each other along the land border. They did not have modern naval and air forces able to deploy outside of the Korean Peninsula. Therefore, Japan did not need to worry about any threat from the Korean front. Japan's role in case of conflict on the Korean peninsula was minor.



Note 1: The figure above shows a rough image of the distance each missile can reach from Pyongyang for the sake of convenience.  
 Note 2: Quotation marks indicate the names used by North Korea.

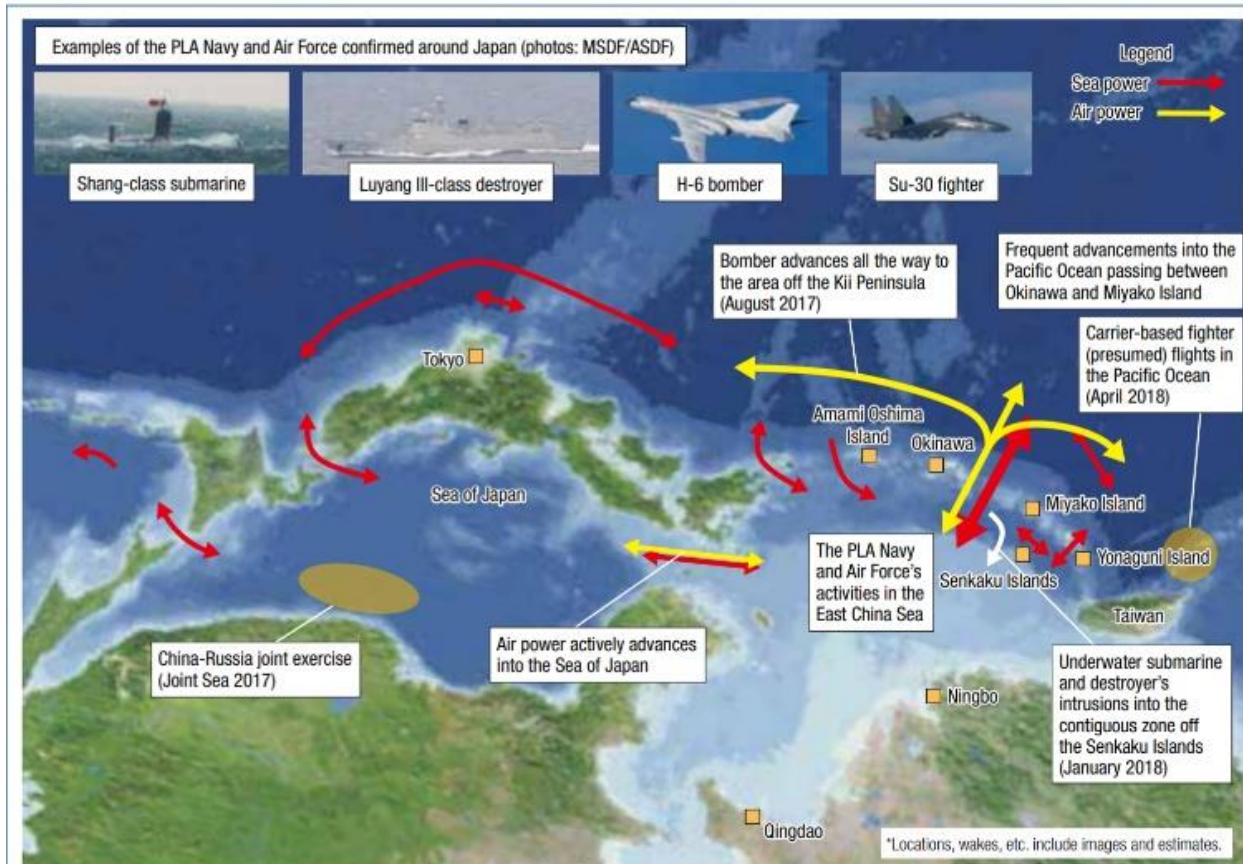
(Source: MOD Publication "Defense of Japan", 2018, pp. 71)

Currently, North and South Korea still confront each other along the border. Meanwhile, both countries have developed modern military systems.<sup>xxx</sup> North Korea became an unprecedentedly serious and imminent threat to Japan, developing nuclear weapons and missiles, whose range can easily cover the whole of Japanese territory.<sup>xxxii</sup> South Korea, as an ally of the US and a part of the liberal order, continues to be swayed by a strong nationalism that has lashed out at Japan over historical and territorial issues, and even at its ally, the U.S. In a rare rift for the two allies, the U.S. and South Korea are now at odds over how much the South should pay for hosting the U.S. forces in Korea. Fast-paced summit diplomacy between South Korean President Moon Jae-in and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un was at first seen as a sign of instability of the U.S.-South Korean alliance, although President Trump sought to match it with his own summitry. With such summitry now in limbo, it appears that the security arrangements between the U.S. and South Korea are now as stable as ever.

*The China Factor*

During the Cold War, the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) of China was configured to fight guerrilla warfare, following the tenets of Maoism. The PLA Air Force was equipped with only old-fashioned aircraft made by the Soviet Union. China also lacked modern vessels. The Navy could only protect coastal waters and had no capability as a blue-water navy. In the early decades after the revolution, the PLA was not seen as a military threat to Japan or any other nation nearby. As a result, Japan’s Maritime and Air Self Defense Forces (SDF) could have overwhelmed the PLA at sea or in the air if conflict were to occur.

An image of the PLA's recent activities in the sea and airspace around Japan



(Source: MOD Publication “Defense of Japan”, 2018, pp. 108)

At present, the PLA has been rapidly modernizing its military capabilities in line with China’s economic growth. Its naval and air forces could overwhelm the JSDF in conflict. Japan’s Defense White Paper now places China as a main security threat to Japan. China is seen also as

developing amphibious operation capabilities to invade Taiwan. “The Anti-Secession Law,” enacted in March 2005 by the National People’s Congress, does not rule out the use of force by China against Taiwan should it seek independence.<sup>xxxiii</sup> China’s naval forces could also direct their operations against Japan. Japan fears that the PLA Navy is preparing to advance into the Pacific and the Indian Oceans, posing a direct threat to the Sea Lanes of Communications (SLOCs), which is an essential lifeline of Japan. Such scenarios may account for Prime Minister Abe’s efforts in recent years to rebuild better relations with China’s leaders as a hedging strategy.

### *The Value of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty to the United States*

During the Cold War, the U.S., under the security treaty with Japan, used its military bases in that country as a forward presence to contain the Soviet Union in Asia and deter it from attacking. The communist bloc, led by the Soviet Union, sought to expand its influence in East and South Asia, focusing on Vietnam, North Korea, and China. In order for the U.S. to counter the expansion of the communist bloc, it required bases in Japan to resupply and recharge U.S. forces protecting the peace and stability in the region. For Washington, Japan’s growing military capabilities throughout the cold-war period were a welcome addition to the U.S.-led effort to contain the Soviet Union.<sup>xxxiv</sup> At the time, the ruling LDP in Japan shared the same anti-communist ideology as the U.S.

After the end of the Cold War, the significance of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty that had been crucial to counter and deter the Soviet Union was in question. Japan was worried that the *raison d’être* for the Alliance was lost. The U.S. and Japan thus decided in the 1990s that it was necessary to redefine the purpose of the security treaty if the alliance were to survive. By the end of the decade, the adjustment had been made, refocusing the bilateral security arrangements on “contingencies in the area neighboring Japan,” as well as on the growing North Korean threat.<sup>xxxv</sup> In the process, the U.S. urged Japan to boost its defense capabilities and share more of the security burdens in the region.

Today, as China rapidly builds its military capabilities, the U.S. has come to depend even more on the security arrangements with Japan and to urge even more enhancements. China’s intentions remain unclear, but it would be imprudent for the United States and Japan to downplay the potential threat. In one of their meetings, Chinese President Xi Jinping told then-President Barack Obama that “the vast Pacific Ocean has enough space for large countries like the U.S. and

China.”<sup>xxxvi</sup> The remark suggests that China has the intention to occupy the western half of the Pacific Ocean. To counter such a strategy, the United States needs to secure the “first-island chain,” a chain of major archipelagos out from the East Asian continental mainland coast that stretches from Taiwan to Japan and then to the Philippines. The U.S. may have come to recognize this possibility.

Under President Donald J. Trump, U.S. policy toward China has shifted from engagement to confrontation. While maintaining an engagement policy toward China, the U.S. during the Obama administration sought to rebalance its military power toward Asia with the ultimate goal of containing China’s growing influence and assertiveness. Under Trump, Washington still seems to be undecided about what its diplomatic and military responses to China should be. Such uncertainty seems to have emboldened China in the region and may account in part for its harsh policy towards Hong Kong. While the U.S. recognizes that Asian security is an essential part of its global security strategy, the administration seems unsure as to how much of its national interest resides in East Asia, especially in defending the freedom of navigation principle in the South and East China Seas. For example, the United States did not actively engage China in its bold construction of artificial islands in the South China Sea, nor did it seriously side with the valid territorial issues of the Philippines and other Southeast Asian countries against China.

### *Japan’s Commitments to the Alliance*

Early in the Cold War, Japan relied entirely on U.S. military strategy to safeguard its homeland from Soviet aggression or other regional threats. Through an unwritten understanding, Japan would only keep its military capabilities at the minimum necessary level for defending itself, while concentrating its national efforts on economic recovery and growth. Prime Minister Yoshida believed that the U.S.’ global military power was the ideal safeguard for Japan.<sup>xxxvii</sup> Such a grand strategy—dubbed the Yoshida Doctrine—could only last so long, however. Eventually, Japan would be accused of being a “free rider” on defense and not bearing its proper share of the security burden. But during those early decades, Japan did not feel a direct threat from its Asian neighbors. Moreover, its exporting companies had full access to the U.S. economy to enable Japan’s miraculous growth.

Since at least the late 1970s, the U.S. began to pressure Japan on trade issues and criticize its free-rider mentality. Japan responded by agreeing to provide significant host-nation support for

the stationing of U.S. forces in the country, and it gradually began to assume additional responsibilities in the alliance, such as guarding the three straits in its archipelago against Soviet submarine intrusions. It also agreed to defend its sea lanes up to 1,000 miles from the homeland.

Today, Japan has shifted its defense posture to deal with the existential threat from North Korea, as well as the growing threat from China to Japan's southern flank. China has been rapidly building up its naval and air powers and has been increasing its military pressure on the Senkaku Islands, which China claims to possess, and other remote islands south of mainland Japan. Confrontation between the Japanese naval and coast guard vessels patrolling these islands and the Chinese PLA Navy and its Coast Guard vessels could lead to conflict at any time. But since the Chinese military has overwhelming strength in terms of quantity when compared to the JSDF, Japan must expect and rely on the power of the U.S. military under the arrangements of the U.S.-Japan security treaty. Japan is also worried about Chinese interference in the SLOCs from Japan to the Middle East. Those sea lanes are vital for Japan's energy security. During the Cold War, Japan assumed that the U.S. Navy would take care of defending the SLOCs, but now it realizes that it may have to share the security burden by securing them itself.

The former Joint Chief of Staff General Massaki Hajime stated that, "Japan has a military policy that is defense-oriented. Having said that, if the SLOCs are endangered or attacked, the SDF has to deploy and defend the SLOCs for our essential energy security even outside of Japan territory."<sup>xxxviii</sup>

Even regarding North Korea's nuclear weapons and missiles targeting Japan directly, the U.S. and Japan have been working together to outfit Japan with a missile defense system and share intelligence. In negotiations with North Korea, the U.S. is expected to include Japan's interests in any future denuclearization and missile deals.

### *Changing the Nature of the Security Treaty*

Since Japan and the U.S. concluded a security treaty in 1951 and revised it in 1960, there has been no significant change in its general principles. The U.S. is responsible for defending the Far East and Japan, and Japan supports and provides military bases to the U.S. In other words, the U.S., under the treaty, has the responsibility for the defense of Japan, while Japan just provides facilities and has no obligation to defend the U.S. In fact, Japan could not come to the defense of

the United States in the past because it was constitutionally forbidden to send armed forces overseas. That asymmetry has changed with the reinterpretation of the constitution under Prime Minister Abe, but President Trump's comment shows an unawareness of that change: "When World War III breaks out, Japan is just watching it on Sony TV."<sup>xxxix</sup>

Since the dawn of the 21st century, the military circumstances in East Asia have been changing. The nature of the U.S.-Japan alliance has changed from a structure in which the U.S. leads security strategy and Japan follows, to a structure in which the U.S. and Japan share security strategies and responsibilities. In other words, the U.S.-Japan alliance has changed its nature from unilateral to bilateral. In recent years, Japan has begun to respond to a direct threat from North Korea and a growing threat perception of China. It has been upgrading its capabilities to defend the homeland, including remote islands. Meanwhile, there is a growing concern in Japan that the U.S. has become a declining power and is unwilling to deal effectively with a rising China. There is a view that the Alliance can only continue to respond well to the changing security environment if there is a more equitable sharing of the security burdens in East Asia between the U.S. and Japan.

#### *Defense Policy of the Abe Administration and the Alliance*

The Abe administration passed a set of security legislations in 2015 designed to enable the JSDF to engage in proactive military operations in defense of the homeland. Most importantly, the Abe administration changed the interpretation of the Constitution to allow the JSDF to apply the right of collective self-defense in order to come to the aid of the U.S. and relevant allies like Australia. For example, JSDF fighter planes should be able to take military action to protect U.S. fighter planes patrolling against North Korea. The security legislation also allows the JSDF to operate beyond Japan's territory, including areas of conflict, and it also allows for a more robust participation in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations. For example, the JSDF can now be deployed to the Middle East to protect Japan's energy supply lines.

The U.S.-Japan alliance is undergoing a significant transformation and is expanding its mission. From the new legal point of view, Japan is now able to conduct combined military operations with the U.S. military globally, such as in the South China Sea and the Indian and Pacific Oceans. However, the SDF is not allowed to invade other countries' territories for its own occupation. Likewise, the SDF is not allowed to attack missile launching bases in other countries. Japan must rely on the U.S. military for this kind of military operation.



There has been little pushback from Asian countries regarding the new security legislation. Almost all Asian countries have accepted and welcomed Japan's new strategy to expand its security contributions to the Asian region, in cooperation with its ally the U.S. Countries in Southeast Asia, for example, are seriously concerned about China's expansionist moves in the South China Sea. These countries worry that the U.S. military presence in the region to protect freedom of navigation in international waters might decline. It would be acceptable to them for Japan to share security responsibilities with the U.S. in the region. However, Japan has been cautious in the South China Sea, focusing on assisting countries to build their own capacities, and avoiding freedom of navigation operations (FONOPS) with the U.S. In the East Asia region, only China and South Korea have expressed their concern about a proactive Japan, citing Japan's historical problems.<sup>xi</sup>

An example of the Abe administration's proactive approach to self-defense based on the new security strategy is the establishment of the Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade (ARDB). The ARDB is a textbook example of the government of Japan increasing its military capacity to defend itself from emerging threats, while also creating expeditionary capabilities to respond to contingencies internationally. The following case study will examine the ARDB, including its origins, evolution, and capabilities.

### **Case Study: The Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade**

On March 27, 2018, the Japanese Ministry of Defense established the Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade, a Japan Ground Self-Defense Force (JGSDF) amphibious operations unit that is under the command of the Ground Component Command (GCC).<sup>xli</sup> The primary mission of the ARDB is "to conduct full-fledged amphibious operations for swift landing, recapturing, and securing in the case of illegal occupation of remote islands" due to emerging threats that pose a security risk to Japan's southwestern islands.<sup>xlii</sup>

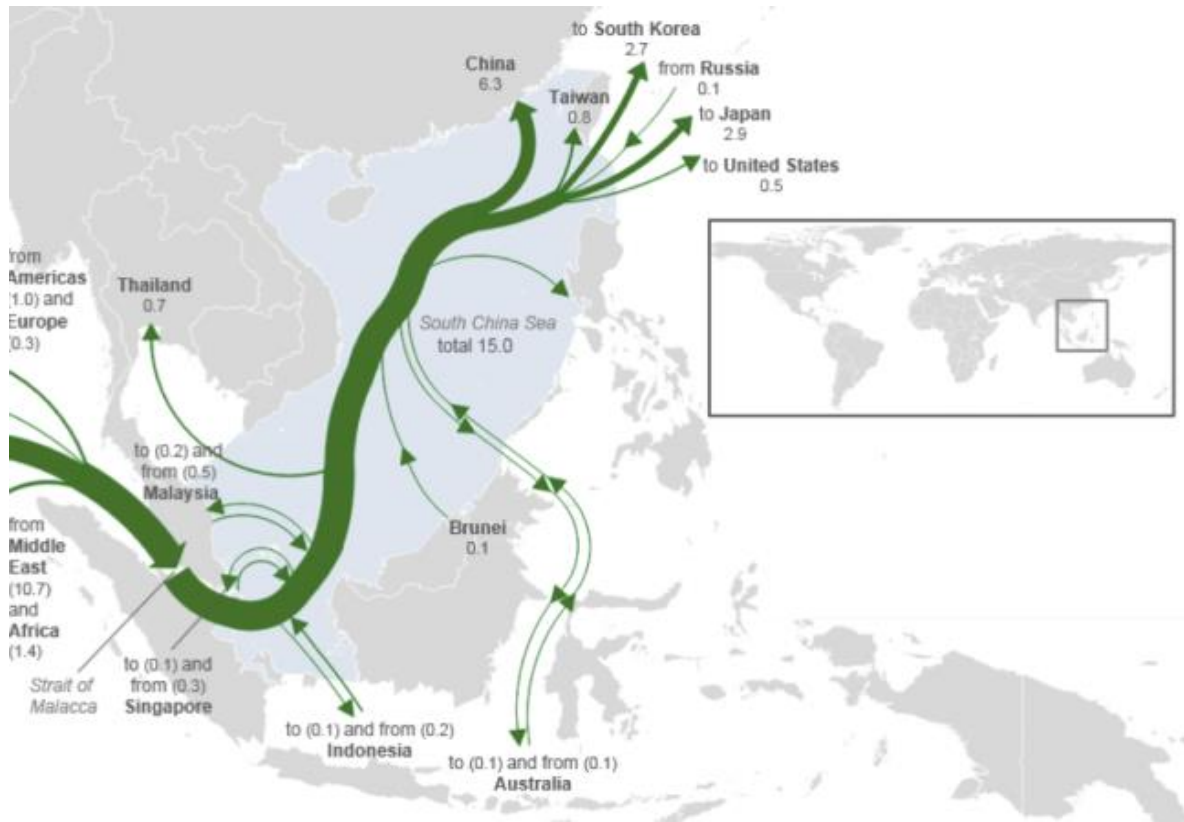
The Japanese archipelago is composed of over 6,850 islands spread over hundreds of thousands of square miles of territory, with over 30,000 kilometers of coastline and a claimed Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of 4,470,000 square kilometers. The southwestern area is dispersed and particularly vulnerable to the emergence of the Chinese threat, with over 2,850 islands spread over 1,100 kilometers from Kyushu to the westernmost inhabited island of Yonaguni.<sup>xliii</sup> In order to deter and, if necessary, respond to any hostile activities or invasions of



the southwest islands, the JSDF developed the “Southwestern Wall Strategy,” which focuses on deterring any infringement on Japanese sovereign territory as well as the capability to recapture any territory if needed.<sup>xliv</sup>

### *Origin, Threats, and Evolution*

The origins of the ARDB’s genesis and evolution are in response to the Chinese military’s buildup and modernization; an interest in military issues by former Prime Minister Hashimoto Ryutaro; the personal experiences of LTG(ret) Isobe Koichi, a retired JGSDF officer who graduated from the U.S. Marine Corps University in Quantico; and outreach and engagements between the leaders of the U.S. Marine Forces Pacific (MARFORPAC), U.S. Army Pacific (USARPAC), and the JSDF.<sup>xlv</sup> After the conclusion of the Cold War, Japan faced a rising China that was rapidly building up its military capabilities.<sup>xlvi</sup> During the late 1990s, Japan took note of the modernization of the People’s Liberation Army’s Navy (PLAN) and PLA Air Force (PLAAF). The military build-up indicated China’s intention to expand their area of operational activities beyond the Southwest Islands of Japan and threaten Sea Lanes of Communication that were critical to Japanese energy security. In 1996, Prime Minister Hashimoto asked the JSDF Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and three service chiefs which JSDF service was the counterpart to the U.S. Marine Corps, to which there was no answer. Since LTG(Ret.) Isobe had recently graduated from Quantico, he was assigned to come up with a solution. In 1997, he recommended that the JGSDF be the service that should assume that role.<sup>xlvii</sup>



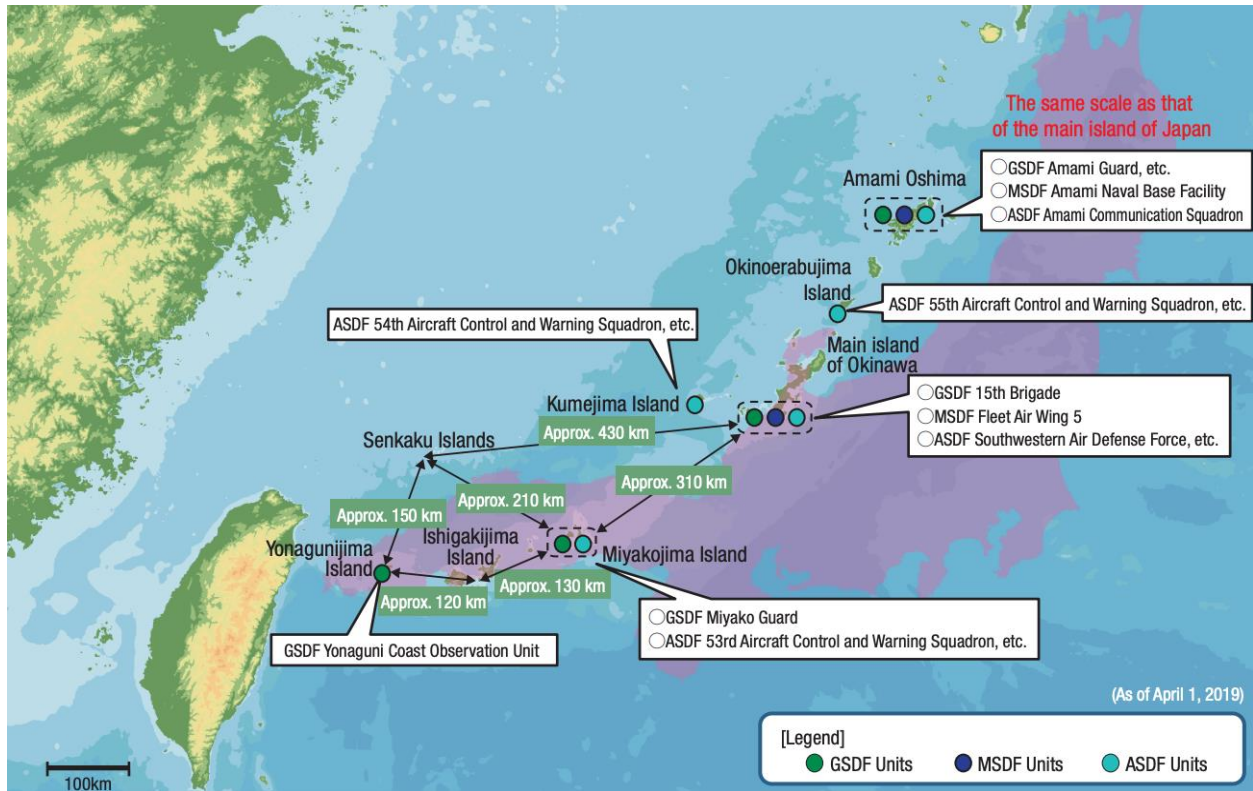
(Source: *Today in Energy*, <https://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php?id=36952>)

Beginning in 2001, senior-level seminars were conducted to promote mutual understanding between the JGSDF, MARFORPAC, and USARPAC, improve the effectiveness of the U.S.-Japan security alliance, and to build a more capable and competent global partnership.<sup>xlviii</sup> In March 2002, the Western Army Infantry Regiment (WAIr) was established at Camp Ainoura in Sasebo City, Nagasaki Prefecture, and placed under the direct control of the Western Army Commander. The regiment’s mission was to defend the remote islands of the Southwest Island chain, but was not initially designed to recapture islands because the knowledge, doctrine, and force structure needed for amphibious operations were not yet established.<sup>xlix</sup> The WAIr then began by procuring critical capabilities for conducting amphibious operations.<sup>1</sup>

### *Southwestern Wall Strategy*

The “Southwestern Wall Strategy” began in 2016 and aims to strengthen Japan’s defense posture across the first island chain by developing relevant operational capabilities and continuous

command, control, communications, and computers plus intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (C4ISR); construct JSDF facilities for each branch of service; and secure and protect US forward presence throughout the area in order to protect the safety of its nationals and the sanctity of its territory.<sup>li</sup> The strategy centers around three key lines of effort: 1) establishing new JSDF camps and improving existing facilities across the Southwest Islands, 2) enhancing the ability of the JSDF to deploy and concentrate their defensive capabilities to any threatened areas in the Southwest Islands using modern equipment and specially trained units, and 3) establishing the ARDB. The Southwest Islands are an important geostrategic location that required additional facilities, additional deployments of forces, and the creation of new units in order to create an effective anti-access area denial (A2/AD) network. The JSDF constructed an ISR unit at Yonaguni Island, which is located at the southwest end of the island chain, 110 km from Taiwan, and has begun the construction of additional facilities on Amami-Oshima Island, Miyako Island, and Ishigaki Island, where JGSDF security units with surface-to-ship missile and surface-to-air missile batteries will be deployed. If any indicators of an imminent invasion are detected, units from across the three services of the JSDF will be rapidly deployed from across Japan to that area to deter or counter an enemy invasion; should deterrence fail, their mission is to defeat and expel any enemy forces as soon as possible. In the event of an enemy invasion of Japanese remote islands, the JSDF will conduct operations to regain those islands by landing JGSDF ARDB units with support and coordination with the JMSDF and JASDF.<sup>lii</sup> The JSDF already had much of the equipment needed to conduct amphibious operations because of its preexisting need for air and maritime transportation. However, since deciding to deploy the ARDB, the JSDF have procured additional platforms, such as AAV-7 amphibious assault vehicles and MV-22 Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft from the U.S. through the foreign military sales program, to facilitate rapid delivery of combat power.<sup>liii</sup>



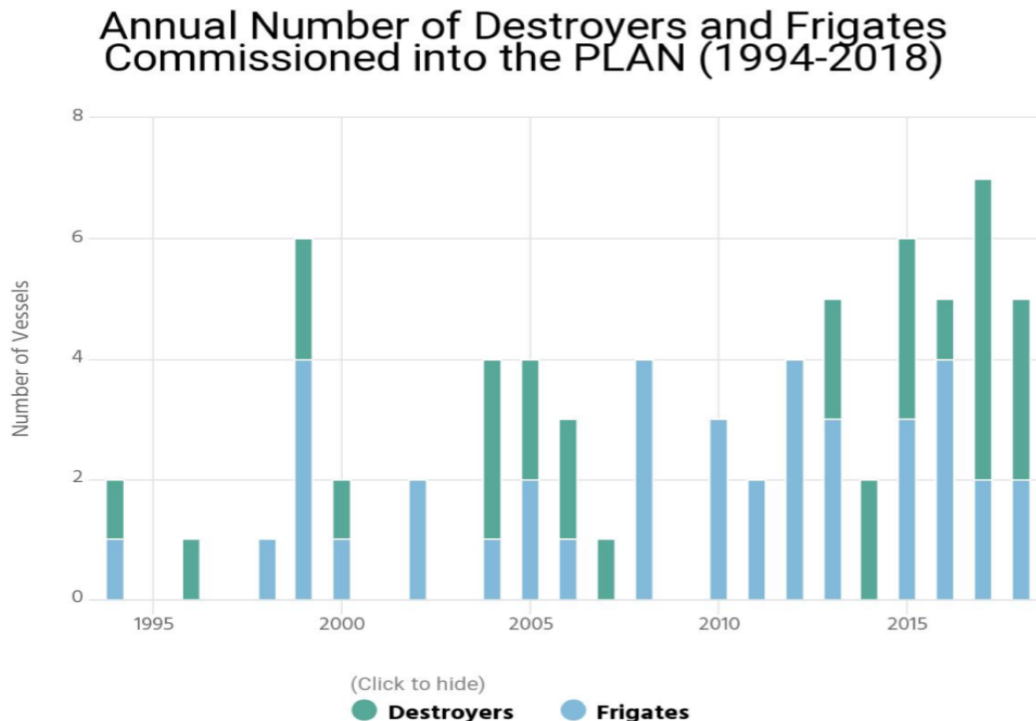
(Source: *The Defense of Japan 2019*, [https://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w\\_paper/2019.html](https://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w_paper/2019.html))

### *Chinese Military Strengthening and Modernization*

The rapid modernization and strengthening of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) has been observed by Japan since the late 1990's. PLA modernization was shaped by their observation of U.S. technological dominance over an Iraqi military that resembled that of the PLA's during the 1991 Gulf War. Four years later, the U.S.' vigorous response to the Taiwan Strait Crisis by sending the Seventh Fleet demonstrated to China that it had few options to re-unify Taiwan or deter it from declaring independence unless it could dramatically strengthen its military and prevent third party intervention in a future contingency. Therefore, China increased defense spending and demanded more credible options to use force against Taiwan. President Xi Jinping has directed the PLA to become a world-class military by the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the PRC and be capable of defending Chinese interests around the globe. According to Xi, by 2035, the PLA must be able to win local wars and by 2049, be a global force. Without formal military alliances, the PLA is focusing on power projection and an enhanced

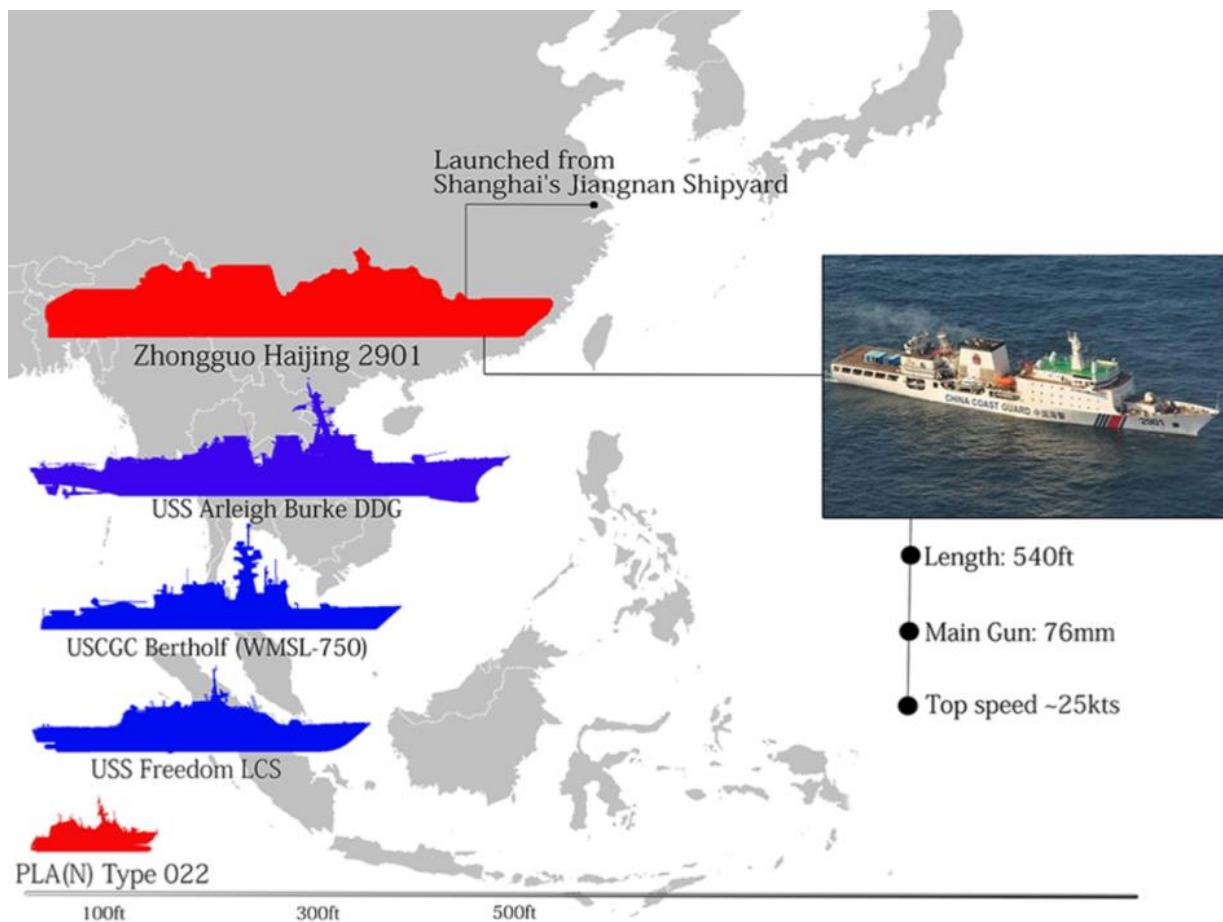
A2/AD network throughout the South China Sea. The scenarios the PLA is preparing for include Taiwan, the Senkaku Islands, SCS disputes, a crisis on the Korean peninsula, a border dispute with India, and military operations other than war.<sup>liv</sup>

The Peoples Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) has expanded and enhanced its capabilities in line with China’s increasingly global interests, from focusing on coastal defense to focusing on near seas defense and far seas projection. It has conducted operations further from China and invested heavily in submarines, destroyers, and aircraft carriers. Since 2008, the surface fleet construction has dramatically increased. During the past 4 years, the PLAN has constructed approximately the equivalent of the entire French Navy. In 2012, China also commissioned its first aircraft carrier, the Liaoning, which was purchased from Ukraine in 1998. The Type 001-A, China’s second aircraft carrier, which is also its first domestically constructed, completed sea trials in 2018. Also, in 2018, China began construction of its third carrier, the Type 002. The Liaoning has been active in the region and as recently as early April of 2020, the Liaoning skirted Japanese territorial waters as it passed through the Miyako Strait.



(Source: The Australian Naval Institute, <https://navalinstitute.com.au/how-is-china-modernising-its-navy/>)

China regularly engages in gray-zone operations utilizing its Coast Guard (CG) and maritime militia. Gray-zone operations are activities beyond traditional state actions but below the threat of escalation, allowing nations to advance interests outside of accepted methods of diplomacy while avoiding military conflict. China's point of view is that deploying these assets to the front line is less provocative and less destabilizing than using the PLAN as well as freeing up the PLAN for distant seas operations. China's CG mega cutters are the largest CG ships in the world, equipped with 76mm cannons, impact-resistant hulls, and have superior speed and endurance; they are roughly equivalent to a U.S. Navy destroyer.



(Source: Center for International Maritime Security, <http://cimsec.org/east-asian-security-age-chinese-mega-cutter/16974>)

### *Activity in the Senkaku Islands*

In September 2010, tensions between China and Japan were raised over an incident that occurred in the vicinity of the Senkaku Islands when a Chinese fishing vessel rammed a Japanese Coast Guard ship. The Chinese vessel's Captain was arrested and held in Japan for 17 days before being returned to China without being charged. The Chinese government placed tremendous pressure on the Government of Japan (GOJ) and showed their ability to force Japan to bend to their will. This event substantially increased tensions between the two countries. Later in 2012, Japan purchased the Senkaku Islands from their private owner in order to prevent Shintaro Ishihara, the former right-wing governor of Tokyo, from purchasing the islands and further escalating tensions. However, China viewed this action as Japan nationalizing the islands and emphasizing their claims of sovereignty. The Chinese government responded by establishing an Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) over the islands in November of 2013. After these events surrounding the Senkaku Islands, the GOJ realized that not only were the Southwest Islands vulnerable, but the JSDF was unprepared to counter China's challenges to Japanese control.<sup>lv</sup> It was after this event that Japan shifted its strategic focus from their Cold War enemy of Russia in the North to the southwest islands, began implementation of the "Southwest Wall" strategy, and accelerated efforts to increase the capability of the JSDF to conduct island defense and assault operations.

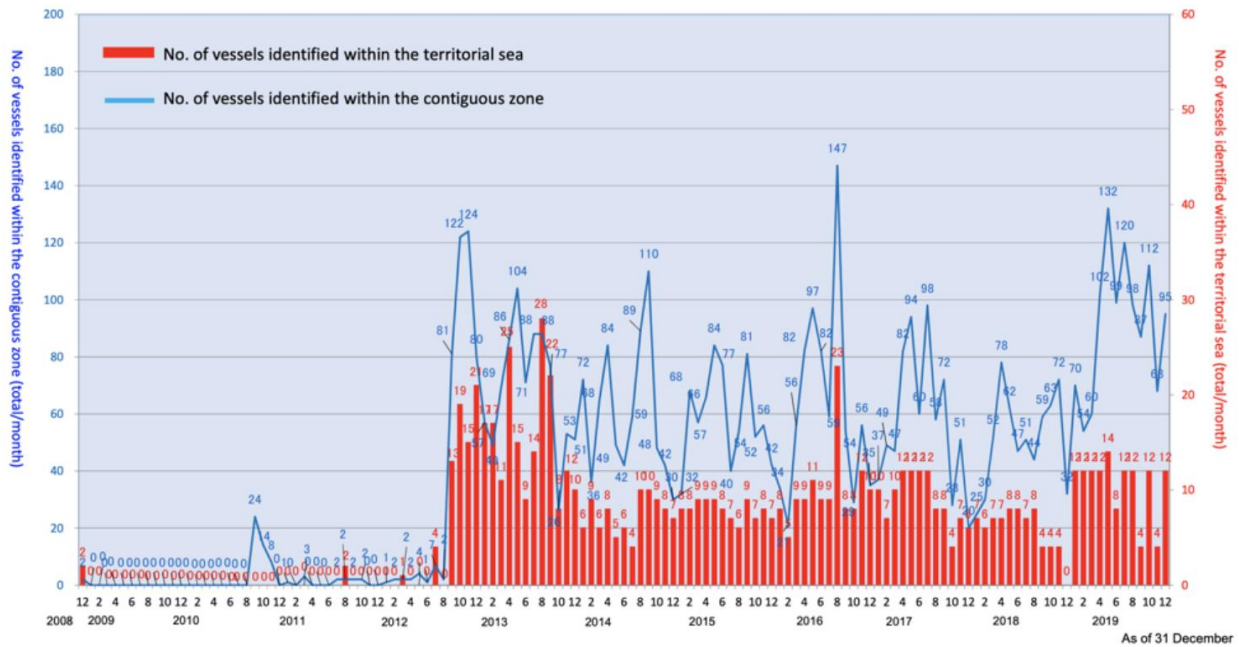




(Source: Consortium of Defense Analysts: *Threats to US Security*,  
<https://cofda.wordpress.com/2013/11/26/u-s-directly-challenges-chinas-air-defense-zone-with-b-52-bombers/>)

In 2016, two hundred to three hundred Chinese fishing vessels descended on the Senkaku Islands to assert Chinese claim to the island. Although they were deemed fishing vessels, they were part of China’s Maritime Militia, a paramilitary component of China’s armed forces. China has engaged in gray zone operations intended to frustrate effective response by other parties involved and advance its disputed sovereignty claims in the South and East China seas. The following year, Japan’s 2017 Defense White Paper stated that “China’s attempts to change the status quo in the East and the South China Seas based on its unique assertions which are incompatible with the existing order of international law, have become serious security concerns to the region including Japan and to the international community . . . increasing the risk of unintended consequences due to misunderstanding or miscalculation.”<sup>vi</sup>





(Source: Tokyo Review, <https://www.tokyoreview.net/2020/02/rough-seas-between-china-and-japan/>)

### Chinese Sovereignty Assertions in the South China Sea

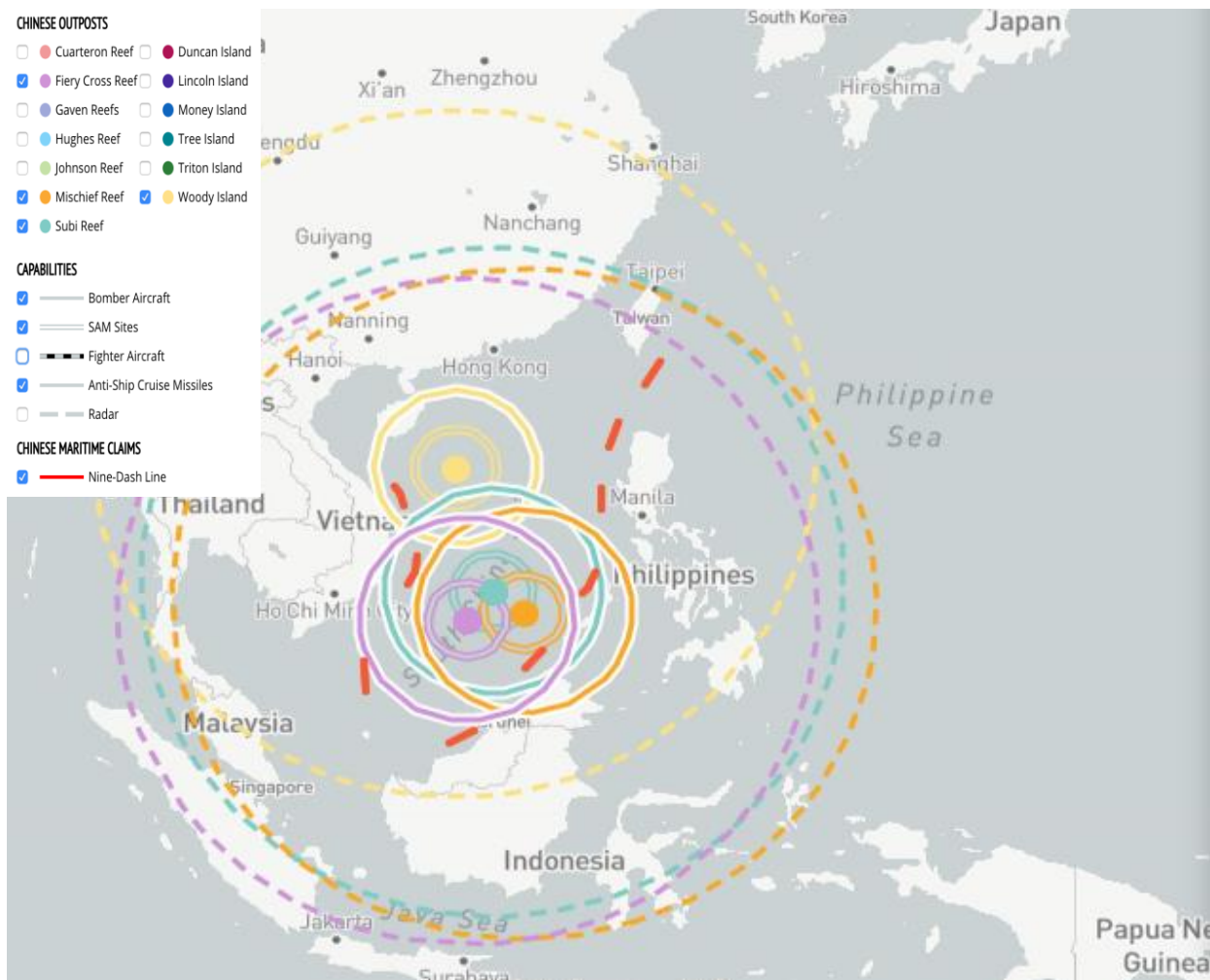
China’s activity in the South China Sea and their attempt to change the status quo is another factor to Japan’s change in strategy. Approximately 30 percent of global maritime crude oil transits occur in the South China Sea, including most of Japan’s oil. Additionally, 12% of the fish caught in the world and 50% of global fishing vessels are located in the South China Sea. In 2009, China asserted its sovereignty over the majority of the South China Sea with the nine-dash line. This led to incidents with Southeast Asian nations including in 2011 with the Philippines and Vietnam and again in 2014 with Vietnam. Recently, a Chinese vessel sunk a Vietnamese fishing ship in the vicinity of the Paracel Islands, which both countries claim sovereignty over.



(Source: *Harvard International Law Journal*, <https://harvardilj.org/2015/11/a-shifting-tide-in-the-south-china-sea-the-permanent-court-of-arbitration-declares-jurisdiction/>)

### *Militarization of the South China Sea*

After claiming sovereignty of the South China Sea, China began building artificial islands so it could forcefully squeeze other Southeast Asian nations out of the region. Major island building operations began in 2013 throughout the Spratley and Paracel Islands and in Scarborough Shoal, which was seized from the Philippines in 2012. Despite Chinese assertions that the islands would not be militarized, in 2015, military fortification and airstrip construction began. This area is now part of a major A2/AD network with the mission to conduct near sea defense and prevent third party intervention during a Taiwan contingency. Hundreds of boats of the Chinese militia are home-ported in the Spratley Islands and enforce Chinese sovereignty claims throughout the South China Sea.



(Source: Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, <https://amti.csis.org/chinese-power-projection/>)

In 2016, arbitration determined that Chinese nine-line claims were invalid, China illegally seized Scarborough Shoal, and artificial islands could not be used to establish straight-line EEZs. However, China’s activities in the SCS have only increased. China uses its assets to project power in peace-time across the entire nine-dash line and currently has power dominance over all claimants. China is aiming to win the gray-zone operations, push all civilian vessels out of the area, and undermine the United States as a security provider in the area.

*Japanese Strategic Documents:*

The culmination of Chinese actions, including: the previously discussed establishment of the ADIZ in 2013 and the maritime militia activities in the Senkaku Islands the previous year; the

Chinese military buildup; the release of the nine-dash line in 2009 that claimed sovereignty over almost the entire South China Sea; harassing US Navy ships in 2009 and 2014; clashes with Vietnamese oil and gas survey ships in 2011; seizing Scarborough Shoal from the Philippines in 2012; the blockade of Thomas Shoal in 2014; the HYSY-981 Oil Rig incident with Vietnam near the Paracel Islands in 2014; initiating island building operations in the South China Sea in 2013 in the Spratley Islands, Paracel Islands, and Scarborough Shoal; and militarizing over 20 outposts throughout the South China Sea has prompted the Japanese government to publish a strategic document that labels China's aggressive actions as a threat to regional stability.<sup>lvii,lviii,lx</sup> From 2010, when the National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG) first addressed the strengthening of the Chinese military, to the 2017 NDPG that stated that China's attempts to alter the status quo in the East and South China Seas have become a serious security concern to Japan, there has been a clear policy toward Japanese threat perception.

On March 27, 2018, Japan officially announced its response to the security concerns in the region with the establishment of the ARDB, Japan's first amphibious brigade since the conclusion of World War II. Its mission would be to focus on securing the safety of Japanese nationals living in the Southwest Islands and on recapturing any lost territories seized by an adversary. The WAIr served as the seed for this new amphibious brigade, with over 10 years of procuring equipment and honing skills that are the basis for the ARDB.<sup>lx</sup> During the announcement, then Minister of Defense Itsunori Onodera stated that,

“in the event of an invasion of a remote island, its task will be promptly landing on the island and regaining and securing it, so the ARDB is equipped with the amphibious operation function necessary for such activity. The brigade will continuously conduct training using equipment which will be introduced from now on, including the AAV-7 amphibious assault vehicle and the V-22 Osprey, in order to further strengthen the amphibious operation function.”<sup>lxi</sup>

In the December 2018 NDPG, Japan included an island recapturing battle drill and let the world know they had a credible deterrent against any encroachment on their territory.

#### *ARDB Strength and Composition*

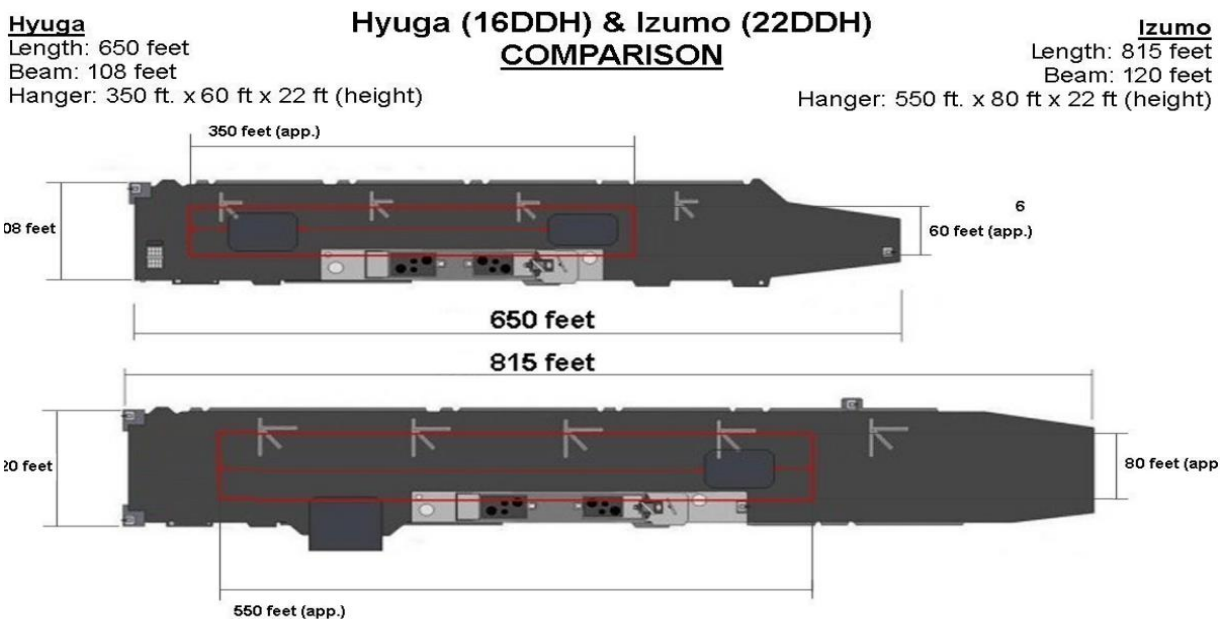
The USMC is used for explaining and comparing the ARDB due to both organizations' ability to conduct amphibious operations, their role in Humanitarian Assistance/ Disaster Relief (HA/DR) operations, and their high level of readiness, but there are several important differences between these organizations. First, the ARDB is not an expeditionary force, nor is it structured to conduct expeditionary warfare. Second, the mission of the ARDB is to deter aggression and to defend and secure the remote islands if necessary. Third, the ARDB is not a separate service; it is a component of the JGSDF. Fourth, the ARDB does not have the organic assets to conduct land, air, and sea operations; the JGSDF must coordinate with the JASDF and JMSDF to provide these capabilities.<sup>lxii</sup>

The ARDB has currently fielded two amphibious regiments of approximately 2,100 personnel. Each regiment contains one AAV-7 amphibious assault battalion, one field artillery battalion, one reconnaissance company, a signal company, an engineering company, and a logistics support battalion.<sup>lxiii</sup> A third regiment is planned that will raise the total strength to 3,000 personnel. The ARDB is based at multiple stations in western Japan and headquartered at Camp Ainoura, near Sasebo Naval Base in Nagasaki prefecture.<sup>lxiv</sup>

### *ARDB Challenges and Limitations*

The ARDB has several challenges that it is working to overcome. Effective joint doctrine and an efficient joint command and control structure are essential to operate effectively during amphibious operations. The JSDF has proven it can operate jointly during HA/DR operations as previously mentioned, but amphibious operations that involve an adversary and include rapidly changing conditions across multiple domains are entirely different and much more complex.<sup>lxv</sup> To better synchronize joint operations, a joint amphibious headquarters to command and coordinate effective amphibious operations is being developed.<sup>lxvi</sup> Additionally, the ARDB participates in two exercises with the USMC each year, Iron Fist and Keen Sword. However, they are primarily JGSDF exercises with small, token JMSDF and JASDF participation.<sup>lxvii</sup> Japan also conducts independent island capturing exercises; however, they are not yet of a scale large enough to be realistic. In order to test its forces under conditions more closely simulating actual conditions of an amphibious operation, an exercise would require at least one or two JMSDF flotillas (8–16 destroyers), two or three LSTs, five to ten minesweepers, a large attack aviation contingent, and more than 2,500 total personnel.<sup>lxviii</sup>

There are also equipment issues the ARDB is working to address. Each service has its own communication systems. The JGSDF does not have the Link 16 system that the JMSDF and JASDF utilize for data sharing, operating pictures, and targeting data. This poses a significant obstacle for coordinating fires and leads to a more deliberate deconfliction measure to ensure safe operations.<sup>lxix</sup> Additionally, current JMSDF platforms were not designed for island capturing operations. The Hyūga- and Izumo-class DDHs can serve as C2, air- and sealift platforms, but there are only two of each class of ship in service and they lack floodable well decks to handle AAVs and Landing Craft Air Cushions (LCACs). The Izumo can operate five Ospreys from its deck, but the Hyūga-class can only carry one. JGSDF rotary assets do not have foldable blades which reduces the number of aircraft that can be put on any one platform, and they were not designed for maritime operations. The three Ōsumi-class LSTs do not have large storage areas for ammunition, can fit only 2 LCACs, and can only carry between nine and 13 AAVs. Critical to the ARDB rapid deployment capability will be the establishment of the JGSDF V-22 unit located in Saga, but this is tied up due to public resistance to the Osprey.



(Source: Thai Military and Asian Region, <https://thaimilitaryandasianregion.wordpress.com/2019/02/17/izumo-class-helicopter-destroyer/>)

## *ARDB Exercises and Operations*

In January 2006, the WAIr participated in its first annual exercise focused on an amphibious assault. Iron Fist was conducted at Camp Pendleton and it brought the understanding of the complexities of amphibious operations and the importance of joint operations. To build on these lessons, in March 2006, the Japanese Joint Staff was created, focusing on the planning of joint operations and the development of joint strategy and operational concepts.<sup>lxx</sup>

In 2013, the JSDF participated in Dawn Blitz, a joint exercise with the U.S. This was the first time the JGSDF, JMSDF, and JASDF conducted a joint amphibious operation. It was also significant in further developing combined operations between the U.S. and Japan during an island taking operation.<sup>lxxi</sup> Lessons learned in joint operations, readiness, and rapid deployment were put into practice later in 2013, when the JSDF conducted two HA/DR operations, a key capability for the ARDB concept. Operation Tsubaki Rescue was the JSDF's first joint HA/DR operation. It occurred on a remote Japanese island in October 2013 that involved sea and air deployments for search and rescue and humanitarian assistance in response to massive flooding after a typhoon hit the Izu islands. One month later in November, a JSDF joint task force, JTF Sankai, responded in coordination with U.S. and Philippine forces to Super Typhoon Haiyan which killed more than 6,000 people in the Philippines. These HA/DR operations demonstrated the utility of a rapidly deployable unit that was proficient in conducting joint operations.<sup>lxxii</sup> Later in 2013, the 2013 Mid-Term Defense Program Guidelines specifically addressed shortcomings that were identified during HA/DR operations and combined operations with the USMC. It directed the procurement of AAV-7 amphibious assault vehicles, MV-22 Osprey tiltrotor aircraft, CH-47JA transport helicopters, unmanned aerial vehicles, and C-2 transport aircraft.<sup>lxxiii</sup> Additionally, the 2013 National Defense Program Guidelines promoted a “dynamic joint defense” concept through the integration of the three JSDF services, coordination with the U.S., and shifted the focus of Japan's defense strategy from countering a Russian ground invasion in the North to protecting against air and maritime threats from China in the Southwest. It directed that the JSDF will construct further camps and facilities and deploy surface-to-ship missile and surface-to-air missile batteries in the southwest islands.<sup>lxxiv</sup> In 2014, the WAIr participated in the Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) Exercise, focusing on amphibious operations for the first time.

## *Conclusion*

Beginning in the late 1990s, Japan recognized Chinese attempts to alter the status quo in the East and South China seas and created an organization that will be trained and equipped to recapture remote Japanese islands and deter Chinese aggression in the southwest islands. The ARDB is receiving the bulk of JGSDF funding and exercises in order to quickly identify shortcomings and correct them. This high level of readiness and close coordination between the ARDB and the USMC will lead to a higher level of coordination and increased interoperability between U.S. and Japanese forces. However, China and Korea, still suspicious of Japanese rearmament and acquisition of offensive capabilities, will create capabilities within their armed forces to counter this capability and may lead to an East Asian arms race. Aside from Chinese military modernization and strengthening, South Korea is also aiming to ensure it will not be left unprepared. In 2019, a powerful South Korean lawmaker published a white paper that proposed a catapult-equipped aircraft carrier, which would make the ROK one of only four countries to have such a ship. South Korea is already developing a destroyer with similar capabilities as the Izumo-class destroyer, including the ability to accommodate F-35B aircraft.<sup>lxxv</sup>

It is clear that Japan will continue to build a military that is capable of unilateral effective deterrence against aggressive actions and is capable of recapturing territory if lost. Although this is viewed as defensive in nature according to Japanese politicians, in order to accomplish the mission set forth, the JSDF will in fact acquire offensive, pre-emptive, and expeditionary capabilities. The Abe administration has made it legally possible for Japan to share the responsibility for Asian security with the U.S. and its allies. From now on, Japan must re-establish a new national military strategy and form a national consensus on what it will do, and how much of the burden for the security of Asia it will share with the U.S. military. With regard to Japan's territorial defense, the U.S. and Japan have already developed detailed plans for military accidents in the territory of Japan and has conducted extensive training for this. The U.S. military and the SDF have already established a strong sense of solidarity and a coordination mechanism through their training. The U.S. and Japan have to develop a closer relationship to share the security burden. They, together with other Asian countries, should start to plan an exercise from the HA/DR missions, the crackdown of piracy and other incidents, and to warfare.



Japan is prepared to strengthen its security relationships with other Asian countries. At present, Japan has just begun conducting security cooperation through the training of coast guards, the export of military equipment, and the command post-exercise of its humanitarian operations. Japan should plan and execute multilateral military exercises with other Asian countries to protect its regional security. However, to truly stabilize the region and avoid otherwise preventable military confrontations due to misinterpreting each other's actions, Japan must establish a Japan-China crisis management mechanism through direct military dialogue with China. Japanese and Chinese military forces are coming into contact more frequently and desperately need a mechanism to avoid small accidental clashes. A military liaison system with China would give each country a direct line to avoid misunderstandings that could otherwise escalate into a large-scale conflict.

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## **U.S.-Japan Crisis Cooperation: Pandemic a Test for the Alliance**

*Neave Denny*

### **Introduction**

Japan entered a new era in its official calendar, “Reiwa” (令和), on May 1, 2019, when Naruhito ascended the imperial throne to become the 126<sup>th</sup> emperor in Japan’s long history. The previous emperor, Akihito, had formally abdicated the day before. The term *Reiwa* that was picked for the new era comes from an ancient *waka* poem in the Manyoshu (“Collection of a Myriad of Leaves”) from about 1,200 years ago:

“In this auspicious month of early spring,  
the weather is fine and the wind gentle.  
The plum blossoms open like powder before a mirror  
while the orchids give off the sweet scent of a sachet.”<sup>i</sup>

The two Chinese characters of Reiwa mean “peace” and “harmony,” symbolizing “the culture coming into being and flourishing when people bring their hearts and minds together in a beautiful manner.”<sup>ii</sup> But the choice had its critics, too, who charged that the two characters individually can mean “command” and “control,” nuanced associations with Japan’s ancient military.<sup>iii</sup> Such exaggerated controversy over the era name demonstrates the still-prevalent political split in Japan between hawkish conservatives and dovish liberals over views toward Japan’s militarist past, as well as the country’s evolving defense posture. Such ideological sparring reflects well the constant tensions of the Heisei era (1989-2019) as conservative Japanese leaders from the ruling party, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) often met with political opposition and domestic backlash from a basically pacifistic electorate as it worked to strengthen Japan defenses, as well as enhance the security arrangements with its ally the United States. Bold defense reforms under Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (2012-) have also been met with sharp criticism from Japan’s Asian neighbors.

Under Prime Minister Abe, the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) have continued to evolve into a world-class military, a fitting partner for the U.S. forces. A set of security legislation enacted in 2015, along with a reinterpretation of the Constitution to allow limited collective self-defense,

have made the U.S.-Japan Alliance more symmetrical and Japan more ready to meet a future contingency in the region.

The changes are not just for the battlefield. As the new Reiwa era began, Japan was prepared to show its capabilities in handling potential security threats to the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, though now the games have been postponed to 2021 due to the COVID-19 crisis. The government brought in global experts and worked with U.S. experts to ensure safety and security, including cybersecurity, terrorism, and even biological threats. Tokyo even imported deadly viruses, such as Ebola, for research in preparation for a possible outbreak.<sup>iv</sup>

Of course, what Prime Minister Abe could not have anticipated was that the world would be engulfed in a pandemic just months before the Olympics were scheduled to start and that Abe would have to declare a national emergency when the coronavirus struck Japan. No one had anticipated, also, that the alliance would once again be tested during a time of crisis so soon after the triple disaster of an earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear meltdown in northern Japan in March 2011. How would the two countries respond as allies to the pandemic of 2020? Just as each previous security crisis and humanitarian disaster had brought the United States and Japan more closely aligned as partners, surely the COVID-19 pandemic would propel the same coordinated response. Global leaders, too, would be looking to the U.S. and Japan to join an international effort to respond to the pandemic and work together with other countries to find treatments and a vaccine.

However, with domestic political wrangling, mixed signals and orders from the White House, and growing isolationist policies, the U.S. has rejected a number of multilateral cooperative efforts, including a coordinated response to the pandemic, and seemingly has abrogated its position these days as a global leader. Japan, in turn, has been steadily moving toward multilateralism in trade and diplomacy, and has stepped forward in providing COVID-19 related assistance and crisis relief planning. With the U.S. and Japan seemingly on divergent paths, what will happen to the Alliance and the long tradition of cooperation between the two countries in a multitude of areas?

## **Methodology**

The signing of a revised U.S.-Japan Security Treaty in 1960 set the stage for a long period of bilateral cooperation that continues to this day. The Treaty allowed the U.S. to keep troops in Japan, required the U.S. to defend Japan, and launched a lasting friendship between the two former



enemies. Cooperation goes beyond just the security arrangements of the Alliance; it includes global-scale cooperation in international security, disaster relief, and medical relief. Through a wide spectrum of bilateral cooperation, including security affairs, the U.S. and Japan have worked to maintain peace and stability not only in the East Asian region, but also throughout the world.

In order to measure the successive growth of the strength of the Alliance from its signing to 2020 in the areas of security cooperation and humanitarian relief, two metrics will be used as a measure of equal partnership. The first is foreign aid, a financial transaction in support of the joint initiatives. Japan was criticized for its “checkbook diplomacy” during the first Gulf War in 1991, but financial support is vital for underwriting international operations and assisting parties affected by conflict or other disasters. The second metric is the physical mobilization of people—a human contribution—in support of an initiative, for example, deploying the Japanese Self-Defense Forces, the U.S. military, medical teams, or other specialists to the site of disaster for rescue and relief missions. With the combination of both financial and human support, an equal partnership and equal country support can be measured. Through these metrics, the transition from the unequal partnership of the early decades of the Alliance to the strong “global nature” of the U.S.-Japan relationship today becomes apparent. Finally, this study will measure bilateral cooperation during the current COVID-19 crisis using these same metrics.

### **U.S.-Japan Cooperation in Security Crises**

According to Dr. Kent Calder in his book *Pacific Alliance*, crisis tends to bring the United States and Japan closer together.<sup>v</sup> Of the security crises that have occurred since World War II, three stand the most prominent. The first is the Gulf War, when the U.S. mobilized a multinational force to liberate Kuwait from an invader, Iraq. Japan was unable to provide a human contribution because the Constitution prohibited dispatching the SDF to a combat zone overseas. But it was able to provide \$13 billion to underwrite the expenses of the multinational force led by the U.S. and provide financial assistance to countries affected by the war. The second crisis stemmed from a set of defense cooperation guidelines with the U.S. issued in 1997. These guidelines expanded the focus of the alliance from the defense of Japan to the maintenance of peace and stability in the region, introducing a new area of emphasis, cooperation in areas surrounding Japan that could significantly affect its security. Based on these cooperation guidelines, Japan under Prime Minister

Junichiro Koizumi was able to offer the U.S. full support in the war on terror following terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001.

Japan not only provided financial support, but it also dispatched the SDF to Iraq for logistical support to the U.S.-led coalition of the willing. It also provided Iraq and Afghanistan with significant foreign aid. Moreover, under the same set of guidelines, the United States and Japan were able to come up with a coordinated military response providing rescue and relief assistance to communities in northern Japan hit by the March 2011 earthquake, tsunami and nuclear reactor meltdown. Each of these successive steps showed growing cooperation between the two countries in disaster relief and anti-terrorism operations. Japan was able to successfully remove, at least temporarily, the hurdles that had earlier blocked it from taking action.

The U.S.-Japan Security Treaty from the start was noteworthy for its asymmetry. Japan would be protected by the U.S., but there was no reciprocal action that required Japan to come to the aid of the United States. The defense capability of the SDF was kept intentionally limited and troops could not be sent overseas.<sup>vi</sup> Even when Japan joined the United Nations in 1957, it was then unable to provide human resources for humanitarian support and aid in times of need under Article 1.<sup>vii</sup> In the first Gulf War of 1991, the restrictions of the Constitution and resulting ambiguity of Japan's role in international peace keeping was made apparent in what is now known as "Japan's 'defeat' in the Gulf War."<sup>viii</sup> In August 1990 when Saddam Hussein attacked Kuwait, U.S.-led multinational forces worked together to repel that force. But Japan could not respond with a human contribution, despite pressure from the U.S. The George H. Bush administration had high expectations of Japan as a "very reliable" ally, but the government of Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu government remained unable to satisfy such requests, and was unable to pass PKO legislation to send the SDF for non-combat support.<sup>ix</sup> After the war ended, Japan was able to send minesweepers to the Gulf, but the PKO law did not get passed until 1992, long after the conflict ended.

Japan did provide an impressive \$13 billion in financial assistance, but even some in Japan lambasted the contribution as "checkbook diplomacy."<sup>x</sup> Japanese companies were able to provide car carriers, transport tanks, and transistor radios, but American politicians nonetheless continued to severely criticize the Japanese effort.<sup>xi</sup> They wanted to see boots on the ground. The international community felt it was "a sense of crisis, that relying on checkbook diplomacy simply could not be continued, went deep into the hearts and minds of the realist, and the voices of the

passive pacifists became considerably subdued.”<sup>xii</sup> The embarrassing episode prompted LDP Secretary-General Ichiro Ozawa to state that it was time for Japan to become a “normal nation.”<sup>xiii</sup> He became an advocate of Japan developing a special unit for PKO contributions to the United Nations.

Finally, in June 1992, enactment of the International Peace Cooperation Law enabled Japan to send not only its civilian personnel but also its Self-Defense Forces personnel to UN peacekeeping operations, though under strict rules and limited to logistical support. But, Richard Samuels notes that “old constraints were replaced with new ones. The SDF members could not use force and must withdraw immediately in conflict zones.”<sup>xiv</sup>

Another crisis for the Alliance came in the mid-1990s. In 1995 three American military personnel gang-raped a young girl in Okinawa, greatly straining the US-Japan relationship. The national uproar was eventually eased when the perpetrators were turned over to Japanese authorities for prosecution, and when in 1996, the U.S. and Japan agreed to reduce the presence of the U.S. forces in Okinawa, including the promise to return a major Marine base, Futenma. The Taiwan missile crisis in 1995 also threatened to rock the Alliance. What role would Japan have to play if conflict between the U.S. and China broke out over Taiwan? There needed to be a post-Cold War redefinition of the security treaty and the roles and missions of the two allies.

Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto came into office in 1996 promising a strong platform of fixing and reaffirming the unsettled security relations with United States.<sup>xv</sup> In April 1996 President Clinton met Prime Minister Hashimoto in Japan to adopt the “Japan-U.S. Joint Declaration on Security – Alliance for the 21st-Century.” This was followed by the 1997 set of new defense cooperation guidelines. Under the new security arrangements, Japan agreed to expand the role of the SDF to logistically support U.S. forces during a regional contingency with supplies, transportation, repairs, maintenance, medical services, communications, airport use, base use, and maritime support. In addition it enabled the SDF members to use weapons to protect themselves while carrying out relevant activities.<sup>xvi</sup> The arrangements also set bilateral communication and information sharing guidelines, as well as firm up an understanding for joint humanitarian crisis response.<sup>xvii</sup> Then director-general of MOFA’s Treaties Bureau Kazuhiko Togo notes that most difficult point of the negotiations was making it vague so there was flexibility of response to

prevent another “Gulf War failure”.<sup>xviii</sup> Some analysts see this agreement as the end of the “Japan-bashing era” that had sprung up in the United States over trade disputes.<sup>xix</sup>

Now able to contribute to the Alliance and the international community with substantive security and peacekeeping operations, Japan started to become a stronger player internationally. Joint exercises, once limited, were now routine for the SDF and U.S. forces. Richard Samuels comments that “alliance partners were inching their way toward collective self-defense.”<sup>xx</sup> Then, in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the nerve centers of the U.S., Japan’s response was no longer limited to just words and money; it provided a human contribution to the subsequent war on terror in Iraq and surrounding regions, something that Togo says was “fundamentally different from that of the Gulf War in 1991.”<sup>xxi</sup>

Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi dispatched the SDF to Iraq for rear support activities in July 2003, a decisive measure that showed a “reflection of Japan’s eagerness in strengthening the alliance and in contributing to peace and security in the world.”<sup>xxii</sup> Prime Minister Koizumi’s support for President George W. Bush in the Iraq War was decisive and quick. Forty-five minutes after the attack, Koizumi had established a “Situation Center.” One hour later he upgraded his office to the “Emergency Anti-Terrorism Headquarters” with himself as the lead. By September 19<sup>th</sup>, Koizumi pledged \$10 million to help fund rescue and cleanup in the U.S. and finalized a plan to dispatch SDF ships for intelligence gathering, supplies, and humanitarian relief.<sup>xxiii</sup> Japan sent SDF liaison officers to CENTCOM in Tampa, Florida, to support coordination of Japanese and American troops in Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>xxiv</sup>

Echoing Togo’s sentiment, Koizumi stated in a January 19, 2002 cabinet meeting: “Merely arguing is not enough to realize peace. Peace is something that can only be built by the combined capabilities of the international community...we must fulfill our responsibilities as a member of the international community through action.”<sup>xxv</sup> This unwavering support earned Prime Minister Koizumi strong appreciation from the U.S., and approving Koizumi’s bold actions, a majority of Japanese and four of five major Japanese newspapers expressed support for SDF activities in Iraq.<sup>xxvi,xxvii</sup> The U.S.-Japan security relationship became a “formidable military configuration” to transform into what Kent Calder calls the “New Alliance,” noted now for tight tactical and strategic cooperation.<sup>xxviii</sup>

The growing maturity of the bilateral security relationship, marked by such activities as joint military exercises and overseas missions, was forged by crises, both abroad and within Japan. The next testing of the relationship would start on March 11, 2011, this time on Japanese soil. A 9.0 magnitude earthquake struck the Tohoku region of northern Japan creating an enormous tsunami and killing nearly 16,000 people along the 430-mile coastline.<sup>xxxix</sup> The earthquake disaster found the forces of Japan and the United States well equipped and well-coordinated to meet it. Within hours, the SDF and U.S. Navy's 7<sup>th</sup> Fleet launched *Operation Tomodachi* with relief aid and supplies.<sup>xxx</sup> The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission in October provided Japan with a number of safety proposals that Japan promised to implement in its nuclear facilities.<sup>xxxi</sup>

The maturation of the alliance and Japan's international role led the U.S. and Japan to a new set of defense cooperation guidelines in 2015 that outlines a more balanced relationship of responsibilities between the two countries. It redefines security cooperation to have a "global nature," which is premised on the U.S. and Japan as equal partners. It includes not just the security of Japan, but a broader framework that allows such cooperation as providing humanitarian medical relief worldwide. The guidelines also stress the "seamless, robust, flexible, and effective bilateral responses," and "a whole-of-government alliance approach" that will knit together civilian and military sectors. Japan and the United States will also enhance intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) cooperation, sharing and protecting intelligence gathered by manned and unmanned reconnaissance aircraft. Such may include intelligence gathered by a future fleet of RQ-4 Global Hawk drones or American RC-135 reconnaissance aircraft.<sup>xxxii</sup> The agreement makes mention of "bilateral ISR activities" to ensure "persistent coverage" of threats to Japan and the region.<sup>xxxiii</sup> Under the guidelines, the United States and Japan will launch a new standing Alliance Coordination Mechanism to "enhance operational coordination, and strengthen bilateral planning." After nearly 80 years of cooperation, the U.S. and Japan have become inextricably linked in joint-global leadership in times of crisis.

### **History of U.S.-Japan Medical Relief Cooperation**

Just as bilateral cooperation in security has strengthened in national security defense, Eriko Sase and Susan Hubbard of the Japan Center for International Exchange (JCIE) state that joint global health cooperation has strengthened under the Alliance.<sup>xxxiv</sup> Section 5 of the 2015 Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation specifically lists partner capacity building

exercises including cooperative activities may include maritime security, military medicine, defense institution building, and improved force readiness for disaster recovery.<sup>xxxv</sup> However, Sase *et al* state that U.S.-Japan aid cooperation began formally in 1993 when they signed the “Common Agenda for Cooperation in Global Perspective” for HIV aid, scientific coordination, and global human development.<sup>xxxvi,xxxvii</sup> Sase *et al* suggest that cooperation through coordination of each country’s strengths was important to parallel the growth of the U.S.-Japan security treaty for security with that of the medical relief support.<sup>xxxviii</sup>

In 2017, after the outbreak of Ebola was contained, the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) and the Japan Center for International Exchange (JCIE) hosted a joint-conference on how the U.S. and Japan could continue to be global leaders in the challenge of global health. Key to this discussion was that “the depth and strength of the broader U.S.-Japanese relationship at every level of engagement, from government-to-government, to agency-to-agency, down to expert-to-expert” was paramount to preparing for and mitigating the effects of the next global health challenges, and next inevitable pandemic.<sup>xxxix</sup> Throughout the near 80-year history of the U.S.-Japan Alliance, similar to the growth in U.S.-Japan security cooperation, the U.S. and Japan have been working together on international medical crises to protect not only their populations, but also the populations of those in other countries. In exploring the history of medical cooperation, it is clear that the U.S.-Japan Alliance has only grown stronger in these times of crisis.

### **Global Health Challenges During the U.S.-Japan Alliance**

1957-1958	H2N2 Influenza (Pandemic)
1968	H3N2 (Pandemic)
1981	HIV/AIDS (Pandemic)
2002-2004	SARs – Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (Pandemic)
2009-2019	N1H1 – Swine Flu (Pandemic)

2012	MERS – Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (Pandemic)
2015	Zika
2014-2016	Ebola (Epidemic)
2020	COVID-19 (Pandemic)

***Asian Flu – The Beginning of Cooperation***

In 1957, just six years after signing the San Francisco Treaty and U.S-Japan Mutual Security Treaty, the “Asian Influenza” broke out, first starting in Hong Kong, then to Japan by May and, finally, the U.K in June and U.S. in October. Six weeks before the virus struck in the UK, there were daily reports saying that the virus would not start in the UK until the winter contrary to The World Health Organization’s warnings.<sup>xi</sup> However, as early as April 1957, U.S. medical doctor, Dr. Maurice Hilleman, read about a growing flu epidemic in Hong Kong that was targeting the youth. The next day he sent a report requesting samples from infected U.S. Navy personnel stationed in Army Medical General Laboratory in Camp Zama, Japan. Hilleman created and began mass production of a vaccine for the “Asian Flu” anticipating an outbreak in the fall when schools commenced.<sup>xli</sup> “The epidemic made history in more than one way. It was the first time the medical world had ever made advance preparations before an epidemic struck.”<sup>xlii</sup>

In Japan, the Self Defense Forces were employed to collect samples of those who were infected, working directly with the Japanese Influenza Centre and the in the Medical Service School, Self-Defense Forces of Japan under Lieutenant-Colonel Sonoguchi.<sup>xliii</sup> The Japanese Medical Service School received information in U.S. newspapers that the U.S. had identified the influenza strain found in both Hong Kong and Singapore and, soon received formal information from the World Influenza Center. By May 1957, the new virus was isolated to create a vaccine, and the production of the vaccine began in July. The National Institute of Health of Japan produced the first vaccine in November 1957; however, vaccines were limited.<sup>xliv</sup>

In the end, the Asian influenza epidemic had a powerful effect on Japan with the number of deaths reaching approximately 8000, after the resurgences in winter and summer epidemics.

The death toll was the highest of any epidemic seen in Japan with rates as high as 60% in some communities.<sup>xlv</sup> What was largely seen as quick action in producing a vaccine to save the U.S. from the first wave, may have helped mitigate the second wave in Japan. According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the eventual death toll was 1.1 million people worldwide, including 116,000 in the United States.<sup>xlvi</sup>

While these numbers may seem grim, this was in fact a triumph of international coordination. Through samples from Japan, a vaccine was produced and information shared globally to stop the spread. According to Dr. Claire Jackson, Director of the Centre for Health System Reform and Integration at the University of Queensland, unlike the Spanish Flu pandemic of 1918, this was the first epidemic that had a global network for research and tracking the virus. Just 10 years prior, in 1946, the United Nations assigned an Interim Commission with the task to develop an initial program to establish the United Nations had established the World Health Organization (WHO). The Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System (GISRS) was established in 1952 with 25 countries reporting to the GISRS. In 1956, the Collaborating Centre for the Surveillance, Epidemiology and Control of Influenza in Atlanta and the World Influenza Center in London were recognized as the key research centers for global cooperation.<sup>xlvii</sup> Japan as a member state of the WHO since 1951, also contributed and became integrated in this new framework that would continue to serve citizens across the globe.<sup>xlviii</sup> Sase *et al* says that in the Medical Relief field, continued cooperation and complementary of strengths that allow them to be so successful as partners.<sup>xlix</sup>

### ***HIV – Japan Acts, Provides Aid***

As a leading actor in the international community with a large stable economy, by the 1990s, the U.S and Japan began to collaborate on a number of global health risks, not just through multilateral organizations, but also bilaterally. However, just as in the Gulf War response, critics say that despite being of the leading donors in international development, Japan was slow to support the U.S. and others in stemming the spread of the HIV epidemic.<sup>1</sup> However, as the HIV epidemic began to shift toward Asia, Japan and the United States began to work together “because it allows utilization of expertise from countries in other stages of the pandemic, can prevent duplication of efforts, and complements efforts of the other countries.”<sup>li</sup> To counter international backlash, Japan established the Global Issues Initiative and dispersed \$460 million to promote



active cooperation and coordination for HIV/AIDS programs. The U.S. and Japan also developed the United States/Japan Cooperative Medical Sciences Program, the Common Agenda for Cooperation in Global Perspective, collaborated in the Paris Summit, and the United Nations Joint Program on AIDS.<sup>lii</sup> Japan also held an International Conference on AIDS and infectious disease cooperation in Yokohama with Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama and Crown Prince Naruhito.<sup>liii</sup> Japan also created the “Global Fund” at the 2000 G8 meeting in Okinawa where Japan and the U.S. reaffirmed their dedication to fighting HIV, TB and malaria worldwide.<sup>liv,lv</sup> Later, Minister of Foreign Affairs Makiko Tanaka announced it would commit \$3 billion over the course of five years, and President George Bush subsequently offered a contribution of \$200.<sup>lvi</sup>

Japan’s HIV medical relief response paralleled its Gulf War response, substantial funding, and hesitant in-personal response. Similar to the sentiment of the issue not warranting the expense of Japanese lives in the Gulf, the Japanese legislators initially felt that as there were no confirmed cases of HIV in Japan, it was not their direct responsibility to act.<sup>lvii,lviii</sup> However, with international pressure and U.S. support, the Japanese continued to grow their aid in medical response. Albeit slowly, this crisis helped Japan recognize its role in the international community, “checkbook diplomacy” would no longer be sufficient.

### ***SARS – Japan Acts with Strategy Partners and Multilaterals***

Shortly after the terrorist attacks in 2001, President Bush and Prime Minister Koizumi changed the Common Agenda with the “Partnership for Security and Prosperity.” The U.S.-Japan Partnership for Global Health was created in 2002. Both of these efforts showed that one of the central tenants of their cooperation was global health. At the time, the ODA for the U.S. and Japan combined made up 58% of global ODA. When SARS broke out in Singapore in 2003, it was much closer to Japanese soil, and the U.S. and Japan had been working on humanitarian and medical relief efforts for nearly 10 years. Japan prepared for an outbreak, however, prevented any cases from hitting Japan.<sup>lix</sup> However, the U.S. and Japan cooperated in the World Health Organization, the United Nations, G8 Summits. Japan also provided Emergency aid to China: 1.5 billion yen in emergency grant aid and 27 million ten in grassroots human security aid. Japan also provided 20,000 coveralls to Beijing and four portable X-ray machines to Shanghai.<sup>lx,lxi,lxii</sup> While Japan was providing aid and training, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) was involved early in Asia to identify the disease, provide

public health experts to the WHO, and apply pressure to governments for information for greater prevention and spread.<sup>lxiii</sup>

### ***Ebola – Ongoing Missions***

Starting in 2014, an Ebola virus outbreak was cutting through West Africa. To prevent the spread, the United States Center for Disease control trained and dispatched a total of 24,655 workers and ran 24 laboratories across the globe to identify, track and contain the outbreak. In this wave 11,000 people passed away.<sup>lxiv</sup> Similarly Japan, in 2014, contributed \$2.1 billion dollars to the fund to fight Ebola. Although Japan was initially chastised for once more only engaging in “checkbook diplomacy,” Japan still has government and healthcare workers in the Democrat Republic of Congo actively fight the Ebola resurgence of 2018.<sup>lxv</sup> It also extended an additional 3 million dollars in aid to stem the 2018 outbreak through the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).<sup>lxvi</sup> Finally direct partnership between the U.S. and Japan was also mobilized. Starting in 2014, President Obama worked directly with Japanese company Fujifilm to develop its promising drug Avigan, the same drug Japan is using right now to help with the COVID-19 crisis.<sup>lxvii</sup>

### **Importance of U.S.-Japan Humanitarian Cooperation**

Up until 2016, the leaders of Japan and the U.S. have been strengthening the U.S.-Japan Alliance through coordination of U.S. and Japanese troops as well as coordination of medical and humanitarian aid experts. The United States and Japan have been growing under the “New Alliance” and acting as global leaders in times of crisis. History has shown that coordinated and concerted international efforts can stem the spread of security issues and diseases alike. However, under the current COVID-19 pandemic, there have been mixed results and it may be pushing Japan into a greater role of leadership as the United States fades in its traditional role.

### **COVID-19 Crisis and Cooperation**

Finally as we look at the current COVID-19 crisis, while the U.S. under Trump is tied down by domestic turmoil compounded by isolationist policies, Japan under Prime Minister Abe is taking a lead in providing financial aid, offering supplies and medicines, as well as working with global leaders to coordinate long-term disaster relief in countries of need.

The current pandemic needs global leadership and coordinated responses by all countries to stop the spreading and support the flow of necessary medical supplies and doctors to disadvantaged areas. Due to the large-scale nature of the pandemic's impact, a coordinated effort is needed to respond to the inevitable global economic recession, as well. Coordination in security and defense, economics, and finances, including overseas aid, medical cooperation, and long-term disaster relief planning are all part of the global agenda for a comprehensive response.

### *Leadership and Diplomatic Efforts*

In previous crises, the U.S. President and the Japanese Prime Minister have led the coordinated responses. The relationships of both leaders have tended to be fairly genial and cooperative.<sup>lxxviii</sup> However, the Abe-Trump relationship, though cordial, has been accompanied by elements of discord over U.S. policy decisions. With Trump's withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership Trade (TPP) deal, Abe was left to pick up the pieces and revive the TPP as the CPTPP. Japan also has continued to negotiate with the 16-country Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP).<sup>lxxix</sup> Similarly, when Trump claimed the World Health Organization (WHO) was partial to China, apparently giving lip-service to the charge, Abe said he would investigate the WHO's impartiality.<sup>lxxx</sup> But he then joined other leaders like Germany's Angela Merkel to support the necessity of the WHO.<sup>lxxxi</sup> Similarly, in response to Trump's announcement that he would withhold funds from the WHO, Prime Minister Abe convened with world leaders from the U.K., Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Norway and Saudi Arabia on May 8<sup>th</sup> to discuss the state of COVID-19. Together they pledged \$8 billion dollars in a collective effort to develop vaccines and treatments. The U.S. leadership did not show up at the meeting.<sup>lxxxii</sup>

Regardless of Trump's refusal to work multilaterally, Abe and Trump have had two telephone conversations since the start of the pandemic. On March 25<sup>th</sup> the two discussed the postponement of the Olympics, and they also agreed to coordinate bilaterally on COVID-19 information sharing.<sup>lxxxiii</sup> Then, on May 7<sup>th</sup>, both Abe and Trump agreed in another phone call to cooperate on the development of relevant drugs and vaccines.<sup>lxxxiv</sup>

At the cabinet level, Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, and South Korea's Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha, held a joint conference early in the spread of the pandemic, February 15<sup>th</sup>, to discuss the international spread of COVID-19 and efforts to stop the spread from China and the Middle East.<sup>lxxxv</sup> Similarly, on March 20<sup>th</sup>, Motegi held a

telephone conference with Pompeo to discuss border controls, lessons learned, vaccine development coordination and strengthen public-private partnerships between the two countries for vaccine development.<sup>lxxvi</sup> Then, on May 11<sup>th</sup>, Motegi and Pompeo met virtually with a number of countries to discuss mid- to long-term solutions for supporting developing and vulnerable countries deal with COVID-19. Therefore, while it may appear on the news that there is little coordination at the higher levels, there appears to be some international cooperation at lower levels.

An example of one success story is the return of U.S. citizens from the Diamond Princess cruise ship, while docked in Yokohama, Japan after the first ill patient was identified on February 4, 2020. Japanese officials performed 3,000 tests on the Diamond Princess passengers, provided them with working cell phones, and monitored the situation until the Japanese Ministry of Health, Welfare and Labor, was able to coordinate with the U.S. State Department, Japanese SDF and U.S. Embassy Tokyo members to safely get U.S. passengers onto a plane and return them home.<sup>lxxvii</sup> No SDF member contracted COVID-19 from the mission. One failure, however, was miscommunication with the Japanese Ministry of Health over providing U.S. embassy personnel with testing kits. Another one was the accidental release of a number of people before they were tested.<sup>lxxviii,lxxix</sup>

Finally, despite of the government leadership cooperation issues, the U.S. and Japanese private sector businesses have taken the initiative to cooperate and share necessary information for stemming the pandemic and developing a cure. On April 21<sup>st</sup>, U.S. tech giants Facebook, Amazon, Hewlett Packard, IBM, Microsoft, and Sandia National Laboratories signed the “Open COVID Pledge” to suspend their enforcement of patents until the vaccine for COVID-19 is found.<sup>lxxx</sup> Similarly, on May 7<sup>th</sup>, Japanese tech companies like Canon, Toyota, Nissan, Yahoo Japan, and Ajinomoto Co. Inc. announced that they will make their intellectual property free for activities related to diagnosis, prevention, containment, and treatment of COVID-19 until the WHO determines the pandemic is contained.<sup>lxxxii</sup> This unprecedented collaboration of the private sector may be the solution for stopping and containing the disease. While the leaders of both countries may not be interested in coordination internationally, the private sectors of both countries are willing to make bold decisions.

## *Defense*

Despite the global pandemic, the Alliance is still going strong, with security arrangements being smoothly carried out. Areas of the East China Sea centered around the disputed Senkaku Islands are challenged regularly by the intrusions of Chinese naval vessels.<sup>lxxxii</sup> When a fleet of PLA Navy warships, including an aircraft carrier, passed through the ocean between Miyako Island and the main island of Okinawa on April 11, Japanese Air Self-Defense Force planes scrambled in response.<sup>lxxxiii</sup> In addition, North Korea has continued to test-fire missiles into the Sea of Japan.<sup>lxxxiv</sup> However, the U.S.-Japan coordinated response continues to be ready to meet such challenges.

In addition, the U.S. military is assisting with the development of medical relief for COVID-19. The U.S. Army has teamed with leading vaccine-maker Gilead to coordinate on a cure for the COVID-19 strain the U.S. Army has been working on since January 2020.<sup>lxxxv</sup>

## *Financial*

According to financial experts, similar to the stability of the defense sector, the global financial sector has been operating largely unhindered. On March 15<sup>th</sup>, the Bank of Japan coordinated with the Bank of Canada, the Bank of England, the European Central Bank, the Federal Reserve, and the Swiss National Bank enhanced the provision of U.S. dollar liquidity for providing domestic relief. In addition, on April 17<sup>th</sup>, the Bank of Japan worked with U.S. bankers to provide stimulus loan relief of around \$19.9 to Asian countries.

With regard to international aid, the U.S. Congress committed to providing funds to the International Monetary Fund.<sup>lxxxvi</sup> Japan, the largest contributor to IMF, pledged an additional US\$100 million contribution to the IMF's Catastrophe Containment and Relief Trust.<sup>lxxxvii</sup> However, as mentioned above, the U.S. under President Trump has cut off support to the WHO. He has also announced that the U.S. will withdraw from that organization. On May 4<sup>th</sup>, the global community pledged \$8 billion for the Coronavirus Global Response Initiative. This will provide immediate funding for eligible countries to protect healthcare workers, create a pipeline for vaccine distribution, and purchase diagnostic tests. However, with the absence of the U.S., the WHO's largest donor, these countries have tried to meet the need, but the U.S.' annual assessment of \$115.8 million will be difficult to replace.<sup>lxxxviii</sup>

## **Cooperative Prospects:**

### ***Short-term***

1. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and U.S. President Donald Trump agreed in a telephone call to cooperate closely in developing COVID-19 vaccines and drugs, and in their efforts to boost their respective economies. Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga told reporters the leaders exchanged views on the COVID-19 situation, measures to prevent further spread of the virus, development of drugs and vaccines, and steps for reopening the economies in their countries. He said Abe proposed the talks. "It was extremely meaningful to be able to reassure Japan-U.S. cooperation via telephone talks between the two leaders just as the international society is expected to unite and tackle the (pandemic)," Suga said.
2. The U.S. and Japan are cooperating both on the government level and private for information sharing. Therefore, the next step would be resource sharing of medical supplies and coordination among business leaders to provide supplies for short-term needs.

### ***Long term***

1. Economic Recovery: The U.S. and Japan need to draft strong multilateral cooperation to reduce tariff and non-tariff barriers that impede cross-border trade and global supply chains, as well as scale back capital flow measures as global financial sentiment recovers. The global economic recovery will take a global effort. The U.S. and Japan as two of the largest GDPs in the world have the ability to make a profound positive effect, if they are willing to take the lead.
2. Humanitarian Relief: Looking to the strength of their history for humanitarian and medical relief, the U.S. and Japan must boost multilateral assistance, including access to concessionary financing, grants, and debt relief for developing and vulnerable countries.
3. Pandemic Preparedness: In preparation for the next pandemic, the U.S., Japan, and other main leaders will have to collaborate to reinstate many of the pandemic prevention centers that were removed from 2016 to 2020. In order to ensure the long-term stability of these preparations, international support, not just one-country support, should be instated. Plans for early and automatic exchange of information on unusual infections, global stockpiles of personal protective equipment, and clear protocols on social distancing and on cross-border transfers of essential medical supplies as well as funding of the WHO should be

guaranteed. If the WHO needs reforms following a review of its pandemic response, such should be implemented swiftly.

## **Conclusion**

The U.S.-Japan Alliance, in recent decades, has significantly deepened, strengthened, and become more balanced compared to the asymmetrical security arrangements of the Cold War period. It has been transformed from a one-way arrangement with the United States protecting Japan into a bilateral pact that not only allows Japan to come to the aid of its ally in a regional contingency, it also finds the two countries now working as global partners for peace, stability, and humanitarian relief. These strides were taken in times of crisis, and each hurdle was overcome through joint efforts, including training, planning, and coordination. In medical science, the U.S. and Japan have taken significant joint steps in reducing the threats from HIV/AIDS, SARS, and Ebola, and have provided joint humanitarian relief in times of disaster, all the while strengthening their own relationship with financial support and in-person coordination.

Now, as an equal member and a global leader, Japan has entered the Reiwa era. The year 2020, however, has become another test period for the Alliance. Japan's partner, the United States, is becoming increasingly isolationist withholding international aid and humanitarian relief and even pressuring Japan to basically pay for the U.S.' defense of Japan by quadrupling host-nation support. There is growing concern in Japan that the U.S. is becoming an unreliable ally that might start to pull its military resources from the region. For Japan, will this testing period be amicably resolved and become just another period of growth and independence for Japan within the Alliance? Will the two countries once again come together in the end to update the bilateral security arrangements under the Security Treaty?

The pandemic has brought not only enormous suffering to the peoples of the world; it has also wreaked havoc with the global economy, including Japan's and the United States'. It will not be easy for the extensive damage to be repaired in the near term. It may take years. But the pandemic is also an opportunity that both the U.S. and Japan cannot afford to ignore. It can usher in a period of the kind of strong leadership and cooperation that has been the hallmark of ties between the U.S. and Japan. Should there ever be a time for the U.S. and Japan to display global leadership and strengthen their already vast cooperation, it would be now.

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## **The Elusive Goal of Trilateral U.S.- Japan-South Korea Cooperation**

*Lizhong Yang*

### **Introduction**

The ongoing bitter dispute between Japan and the Republic of Korea is directly linked to Japan's annexation of Korea in 1910 and its brutal colonial rule for 35 years that included forced labor and the military's use of Korean women as "comfort women" during World War II. As if historical problems were not enough, South Korea in the 1950s took over the Liancourt Rocks, barren isles that Japan also claims as their possession. The hot and cold dispute of historical and territorial issues boiled over again in recent years, but this time it is out of control. The never-ending spat over comfort women and other legacy issues spiraled into a protectionist trade dispute over sensitive semiconductor materials, and then, spilled over into the security cooperation sphere, as South Korea threatened to withdraw from its U.S.-backed intelligence pact with Japan—the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA).<sup>1</sup> At this point, the U.S. became seriously alarmed, and convinced South Korea to remain in the pact in the fall of 2019. Escalating tensions over a series of legacy issues have worried Washington, especially with the North Korean nuclear threat issue unresolved, and China and now Russia flexing their military muscles in the region. What is also alarming on the GSOMIA issue has been Washington's reluctance to get involved as the "honest broker" until the last minute, to press disputants to lower the level of rhetoric and enter a serious discussion to resolve this issue and return the bilateral relationship to an amicable state.

The irony is that the military forces of Japan and South Korea have long enjoyed smooth cooperative ties, linked by a common enemy to the North and their country's respective alliances with the U.S. But such a relationship has received little appreciation by the public in both countries, who probably see such ties as a necessary price of meeting the North Korean threat and sustaining their alliances with the United States. There is also a mismatch among political leaders preventing smooth cooperation at the summit level. The combination of Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, an avowed "nationalist", the ROK's President Moon Jae-in, who is a liberal and former civil-rights activist, and President Donald Trump, with his "America-first" policies, has not led to trilateral cooperation. Just the opposite, each seem to be marching to the beat of a different drum in dealing with vital Korean Peninsula security issues. As a result, while the U.S. and of course the ROK

were distracted by the lure of summit diplomacy with North Korea's Kim Jong-un, domestic political forces in South Korea unleashed underlying grievances against Japan over historical, trade, and other issues, which Japan refused to treat as legitimate. Tensions consequently rose to unprecedentedly high levels, with neither side willing to find ways to assuage the situation and pursue practical ways to resolve the host of issues.

As if to throw gasoline into the fire, the actions of President Trump toward the two allies have threatened the robust and mutually beneficial security relationships all parties have long enjoyed. Especially distressful has been the Trump administration's repeated criticism of Japan and ROK for not shouldering their "fair share" of hosting U.S. forces in their respective countries. Trump has been calling for a quadrupling of host-nation support, the cost that nations pay to host U.S. troops on their soil.<sup>ii</sup> This indignity, reminiscent of mercenary tactics, has hurt the pride of Japan and the ROK. It could further erode the prospect of trilateral security cooperation toward North Korea if tensions with the DPRK continue to mount.

The row between Japan and South Korea is also a trade spat, and not just based on historical and territorial issues. This paper aims to delve deeply into both the historical roots that have affected current perceptions and attitudes in each country, as well as the economic issues between the two countries that have exacerbated the relationship even further. At a time when priority should be on coming together against a common foe, Tokyo and Seoul seem more interested in trading charges and countercharges over a host of issues that should have been resolved long ago in a mutually satisfactory way. This paper will also analyze Washington's past and present stances and strategies to encourage trilateral security cooperation. I also add suggestions about ways to alleviate bilateral tensions, so that trilateral security cooperation can begin to smoothly operate.

## **Trilateral Coordination after the Cold War**

### *Changes in the international environment*

The collapse of the Soviet Union ended the Cold War era of protracted political tensions and proxy wars with the West. It left the United States as the sole hegemonic power in the world, but that euphoric period was short-lived. The 1990s led to dramatic changes in the international community: the creation of new states from the fragments of the USSR, the first Gulf War in 1991 when Iraq invaded Kuwait, the rise of China as a major economic and military power, the Taiwan

Strait crisis in 1996, the sudden emergence of North Korea as a nuclear and missile threat to Japan and the region, and a major global financial crisis late in the decade. Japan went through a turbulent decade, too, with the collapse of its economic bubble and the resulting long recession, a domestic terrorist attack, a major earthquake in the Osaka-Kobe area, and political disruption when the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), ruling party since 1955, was out of power for a year, forcing the party to seek coalition partners to survive. For Japan and South Korea, oddly, the 1990s saw the development of friendlier ties, marked by a landmark visit by President Kim Dae-jung to Tokyo in 1998. Japanese relations with North Korea, however, worsened in the 1990s, reaching a critical stage when the DPRK fired a Taepodong ballistic missile over northern Japan in 1998.

The DPRK nuclear and missile threat resulted in the U.S., South Korea and Japan finally coming together in a “virtual alliance,” the first time that trilateral security cooperation was able to gain traction among the three nations.<sup>iii</sup> After the 1990s, despite agreements with the West, North Korea would later break its promises and go on to accelerate its nuclear and missile programs. It twice withdrew from the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, first in 1993 and then again in 2003. It signed the Agreed Framework with the U.S. and other countries in 1994, agreeing to freeze operation and construction of nuclear reactors suspected of being part of a covert nuclear weapons program in exchange for two proliferation-resistant nuclear power reactors. But by 2002, Pyongyang abandoned the pact.

Then, in 2007, the DPRK concluded another agreement negotiated in the Six-Party Talks, only to break it two years later. Since then, North Korea has been truculent, until President Moon and later President Trump managed to engage its leader Kim Jong-un in rounds of summit diplomacy. Nothing has come of any of them, however, and relations among all three countries at present are icy. The capabilities of the DPRK missile and nuclear arsenal has also progressed. Pyongyang now claims to have both atomic and hydrogen bombs. Its tests indicate it has delivery systems ranging from intermediate-range ballistic missiles (IRBMs) that threaten its immediate neighbors to intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) and submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), which pose direct threats to the United States. This has created a “stability-instability paradox”, in which North Korea expects to use its sustaining nuclear-weapons threat as a means to intimidate its immediate neighbors to reach limited objectives. Pyongyang states that the ultimate goal is Korean Peninsula reunification, but that would be under Pyongyang’s terms<sup>iv</sup>.

Further complicating a future scenario is the emotional issue of the split in the Korean nation and families divided by the Korean War. For Japan, there is the additional emotional issue of Japanese citizens abducted by North Korean agents decades ago. Therefore, dealing with the DPRK threat is not a binary issue, but a complex one involving other issues, some quite emotional. It seems inevitable that “to secure such an outcome acceptable to all parties, close U.S. coordination with the ROK and Japan is essential”.<sup>v</sup>

While North Korea’s nuclear threat continues to cry for trilateral U.S.-Japan-South Korean cooperation, China continues its military buildup and aggressive actions in the East and South China seas. This has only been challenged by U.S. Navy freedom-of-navigation operations, and little else. Chinese Coast Guard and paramilitary vessels have continued to harass fishing boats, military ships and oil and gas rigs belonging to smaller Southeast Asian states that reject Beijing’s sweeping claims over nearly the entire sea. Such activities present an increasing challenge to U.S.-ROK-Japan trilateral security. Since the Tiananmen Square massacre in 1989, the Chinese Communist Party has used nationalism as a convenient tool to rally the public behind its causes. Such scapegoating has been used against Japan, as well. After Xi Jinping took power, China started to project its power in the surrounding region, including the South and East China Seas. Xi also proposed an Asian Security Concept in 2014, and while he did not point it out explicitly, the “Asia for Asians” vision apparently excluded the United States, evoking Japan’s wartime Great East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.<sup>vi</sup> China clearly also has a global vision as seen in the “one-belt, one-road” (BRI) initiative, but its actions are seen by many as ill-intentioned, such as saddling unsuspecting developing countries with huge debts from project loans. China is also accused of supporting authoritarian leaders mired in corruption, the examples including a series of white-elephant development projects in Hambantota, hometown of then Sri Lankan president Mahinda Rajapaksa.

As a result, China’s global image has become tarnished by such actions, and made even worse by its public mishandling of the coronavirus crisis. Its image in Japan and South Korea, not to mention the U.S., is woefully lacking. According to surveys conducted by the Pew Research Center in 2019, 90% of Japanese and Koreans, as well as 81% of Americans saw China’s military might as a bad thing for their country.<sup>vii</sup> In 2017, 83% of South Koreans and 64% of Japanese viewed China’s power and influence as a major threat to their country; while only 41% of Americans viewed China as a major threat in 2016, the number has also since seen a steep growth

to 62% in 2020.<sup>viii,ix</sup> Even the three countries' relatively neutral or even slightly favourable views on the effect of Chinese economic growth (55% of the respondents in Japan, 48% in South Korea, 50% in US view China's economy as a boon) cannot overturn the public's perception of China as a threat.<sup>x</sup> On the other hand, Japan and South Korea consistently have high levels of positive views towards United States, often well into the 60% range and at times as high as 85% (2011 in Japan and 2015 in South Korea). This is significantly higher than attitudes towards China, which were unfavourable in Japan after the 2000s, sinking to around 10% in recent years. South Korea's favourable views of China, once as high as 61% in 2015, have dropped to the 30% range since 2017.<sup>xi</sup>

There is no doubt that the U.S., Japan, and South Korea all share the same serious concerns over North Korea's nuclear ambitions. There are also similar concerns about China's emergence over the past decade or so as a major economic and military power and the chief rival of the U.S. in the Indo-Pacific.<sup>xii</sup> There are generally two schools of thought regarding how to respond to such threats, namely, engagement or resistance. South Korea has a tradition of "revering great powers" (*sadaejueui*), and in recent years, it has clearly adopted a more pro-engagement stance towards China than has the U.S. and Japan.<sup>xiii</sup> For example, this pro-China posture was evident in President Park Geun-hye's attending the 2015 China Victory Day Parade and the ROK's decision to join China's *Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank* (AIIB), which the U.S. and Japan refused to do. The government of President Moon Jae-in, a staunch liberal, has adopted a friendlier stance towards the DPRK, focusing on summit meetings with Kim Jong-un. Unfortunately, his diplomacy has not paid off, and ROK-DPRK relations now are again icy, and increasingly volatile as Kim Jong-il's decreased appearances provoked concerns about his health, while his sister Kim Yo-jong emerged to the center stage in DPRK politics.

In contrast, Japan's conservative government has taken a hard-line stance against the DPRK, though Prime Minister Abe once stated he would meet with Kim without conditions. Japan's policy stance toward China has a hard-line aspect when it comes to security affairs, but in terms of political and economic ties, the two countries have been warming up in recent years, thanks in great part to summit diplomacy between Abe and Xi. Japan is capable of a hedging strategy or shifting gears to take advantage of a change in the international climate. But it is also able to take risks when the rewards are possibly great, as seen in Prime Minister Junichiro

Koizumi's bold visits to Pyongyang in 2002 and again in 2004. Abe, too, has shown himself to be a risk taker, as seen in his effective diplomacy to seek a rapprochement with China over tensions caused by territorial and historical issues. While trade frictions between the U.S. under Trump and China under Xi grew, Japan under Abe was moving toward engagement with China. Japan has even mused about joining the AIIB, or at least supporting some projects. The United States has talked tough in dealing with China and North Korea, but the foreign policies or strategies of the Trump administration have been unpredictable and sometimes incoherent in the eyes of Japan and the ROK. Trump's three summit meetings with Kim Jong-un have been nothing more than photo opportunities, and Trump has long chided U.S. allies as "free-riders" who do not pull their own weight. Such a categorization is untrue since both Japan and South Korea have contributed significant amounts of host-nation support for U.S. troops in their respective country over the decades. Such policy gaffes and inaccuracies have set off alarms in South Korea and Japan about whether the U.S. is deeply committed to help fend off its allies' regional threats.

It is in the common interests of the U.S., Japan, and South Korea to coordinate their foreign policies towards China, for even President Trump has acknowledged that "America first is not America alone."<sup>xiv</sup> If such trilateral coordination is not effectively carried out, North Korea, China and Russia will play the three partners against each other. China has proposed an "Asian security vision", which stresses the role played by Asians themselves in building security, is viewed as a rejection of interference from outside the region and attempts to neutralize South Korea to focus more on the U.S.-Japan alliance.<sup>xv</sup> This is evident in China deliberately flying near the disputed islands of Dokdo/Takeshima with Russia. At the same time, the DPRK also attempted to drive a wedge between the three countries, including siding with South Korea to criticize Japan in the recent trade disputes, and leaving out Japan and even bypassing the initiator, South Korea, to directly negotiate with the US government in nuclear talks.<sup>xvi,xvii</sup> At present (June 2020), all talks are at a standstill, and Pyongyang even blew up the north-south joint liaison office that was opened in 2018. It is anybody's guess as to what comes next.

### *Domestic Politics Trumps International Cooperation*

As the regional security environment becomes more dangerous, trilateral cooperation is more imperative than ever. Yet logic seems to have been upended by domestic politics spilling over wildly into bilateral relations. Let us probe into the effect of domestic politics on bilateral and

trilateral relations, choosing three periods of time in the post-Cold War period when North Korea should have been the priority security agenda of South Korea, Japan, and the United States.

Following the end of the Cold War period, all three countries had experienced significant changes in their respective domestic political landscapes that have impacted at times heavily on relations with each other. Following the June 29 Declaration in 1987, South Korea entered a new era of democratization that continues today, rotating between an array of liberal and conservative leaders of varying quality and reputations. With the changing of its president, South Korea tended to switch foreign policies, sometimes reaching out to North Korea, sometimes pulling back sharply, as the North veered from friendly to hostile and even provocative in its foreign policy. South Korea's attitude toward Japan, too, tended to ebb and flow like the tide toward Japan, sometimes acting as if reconciliation were in the cards, sometimes treating the country as a bitter enemy. The root of such policy shifts can be said to be traced to the vagaries of domestic politics and the tendency of ROK leaders to flow with the tide of the moment.

Japan may not have been much different in letting emotions and nationalistic tendencies affect relations with its Asian neighbour. Relations between Tokyo and Seoul were often upended by symbolic acts in Japan—revised history textbooks that seemed to justify Japan's militaristic acts or colonial rule, prime ministerial visits to the Yasukuni war shrine, and rallies and events centered around claims to the disputed Liancourt Rocks (Takeshima/Dokdo isles). When Prime Minister Shinzo Abe came into office first in 2006-2007, then from 2012, he brought with him a reputation as a nationalist and historical revisionist, traits that the South Koreans treated as anathema. The U.S. during those decades and until 2016, often served as the honest broker, urging both countries to mend relations for the sake of vital security interests in the region. Trilateral security cooperation, though given a try from time to time, remained an elusive goal. Since Donald Trump became president in 2017, the role of the U.S. as mediator-in-chief for the mostly verbal wars between Seoul and Tokyo suddenly ended. And sure enough, relations between the two allies since then have become increasingly tense and disruptive. The U.S. has remained mostly silent as tempers in Seoul and Tokyo flared, and bilateral agreements were ripped up.

Things were not always that way between the two countries. In the immediate aftermath of the Cold War, during the 1990s, Japan and South Korea remained on relatively good terms. One example was the 1996 decision to jointly host the 2002 FIFA World Cup, seen as a good

demonstration of bilateral reconciliation. During the 1997 financial crisis in Asia that hit South Korea hard, Japan provided large amounts of financial assistance through the International Monetary Fund to rescue the economy. When President Kim Dae-jung visited Japan in October 1998, Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi apologized profusely for Japan's colonization of Korea in the past. A joint statement issued by the two leaders read in part:

“Obuchi, looking back on the relations between Korea and Japan in this century, humbly accepted the historical fact that the Japanese colonial rule inflicted unbearable damage and pain on Korean people and expressed remorseful repentance and heartfelt apology for the ordeal.”<sup>xviii</sup>

The incident was a high point in that decade.

Between 2001 and 2008, however, things took a change for the worse, even though South Korea remained liberal under President Kim Dae-jung and his successor Ron Moo-hyun. The problem was Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi, who insisted on regular visits to Yasukuni Shrine, thus infuriating Seoul and Beijing. Even the amicable event of the jointly hosted 2002 World Cup did little to resuscitate poisoned relations. Not surprisingly, North Korea emerged again as a bone of contention. Koizumi visited Pyongyang in 2002 and 2004, meeting Kim Jong-il and bringing back abducted Japanese and their families. The surprise moves were not appreciated in Seoul or in Washington, which felt blindsided.

The Kim regime in the North, however, was not convinced by the conciliation efforts of Koizumi to play ball with the West. In 2003, the DPRK abruptly withdrew from the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, terminating the relatively “frozen” nuclearization process there under the 1994 Agreed Framework. The re-emergence of North Korea as a nuclear threat convinced the U.S., Japan, and South Korea to return not just to trilateral cooperation but to broaden their response to a multilateral approach in an effort to head off a serious crisis. As a result, Russia and China were enlisted to join what was called the Six Party Talks that included North Korea to negotiate a viable solution to the nuclear standoff. The talks, that lasted from 2003 to when North Korea withdrew in 2009, went through six rounds of negotiations, but never seemed to achieve any major results. In the meantime, the DPRK was not averse to committing violations at will, such as its initial nuclear test in October 2006, which prompted a series of condemnations and sanctions authorized by United Nations Security Council Resolution 1718.



The situation became more complex after the Global Financial Crisis, with all three countries impacted by the global recession and the United States being hit the worst. At the same time, all three countries saw major changes in government: The liberal Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) took over from the LDP in 2009 after a landslide election victory, and held on to power for three years until the conservatives won in 2012. In South Korea, conservatives returned to power in 2008 under President Lee Myung-bak (2008-2013). And in the U.S., President Barack Obama held the oval office from 2009 to 2016. For reasons beyond the scope of this paper, nothing was achieved during those years with the DPRK that can be described as a breakthrough.

In fact, relations with the DPRK during this period became even more tense due to a series of provocations. In 2009, the DPRK conducted the Kwangmyeongsong-2 satellite launch, which flew over Akita and Iwate prefectures in Japan. It is considered to have been a disguised intercontinental ballistic missile test. This prompted yet another round of sanctions under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1874. Contrary to the DPRK's more restrained response three years earlier, this time it withdrew from the Six-Party Talks, citing "infringement" of its sovereignty and calling the launch "space exploration." In South Korea, the emergence of a conservative presidency under Lee served as an excuse for the North to push forward with its nuclear and missile programs, and its adventurist policies. This is evident in the subsequent sinking of the ROK ship, the Cheonan, and later bombardment of Yeonpyeong Island in an attempt to intimidate the South. By 2017 it conducted five more nuclear tests, developed a hydrogen bomb, and possessed ICBMs capable of reaching the United States.<sup>xix</sup>

Despite North Korea's blatant provocations, trilateral coordination among South Korea, Japan, and the United States remained missing in action. Moreover, South Korea-Japan relations deteriorated rapidly, especially when President Lee Myung-bak, reversing his former stance of restraint in order to avoid provoking Japan, became the first South Korean leader to visit the hotly disputed Dokdo/Takeshima Islands, immediately escalating the ongoing argument over island sovereignty. Then, late that fall, the LDP won the general election and returned to power under the leadership of Abe, who had a reputation of being a nationalist and historical revisionist.

Bilateral relations remained in a deep freeze even after Park Guen Hye took over the Blue House as the first woman to be elected President of South Korea. The situation remained strained until 2015, when Park and Abe held the first high-level meeting between their two nations in more

than three years and agreed to accelerate talks on repairing ties strained by the bitterness rooted in Japan's colonial rule of Korea. Park called on Japan to "heal the painful history" and Abe urging South Korea to "look to the future."<sup>xx</sup> In December, bilateral talks between Foreign Ministry officials produced an agreement that was supposed to permanently resolve the long-festering comfort women issue.

The Park-Abe summit meeting in November of 2015 reflected a shared awareness that the two neighbors and staunch allies of the U.S. should not let their historical grievances get in the way of mutual economic and security interests, including the need for joint efforts to stop North Korea's nuclear weapons program. Until then, Park had refused to meet Abe, insisting that Japan take steps toward proper atonement for its colonial-era activities. South Korea insisted that Japan had not only failed to take responsibility for forcing or luring the comfort women into sexual slavery, but that under Abe, it had systematically attempted to whitewash its wartime atrocities. Japan rebutted that the matter had been resolved once and for all in the 1965 treaty that restored diplomatic ties between the two nations.

For a while, there was an uptick in trilateral meetings in 2013 and 2014, the result of the U.S.' attempt to use trilateral platforms to exert its influence and salvage ties between its two major allies. The result was the comfort women agreement in 2015, which faced wide-range resentment in South Korea, and is perceived as an expedient diplomatic transaction to pay off the remaining comfort women unaccompanied by a heartfelt apology from Japan.

A dramatic turn of events happened in January 2017, when the inauguration of Donald Trump as U.S. president ushered a whole new relationship between Washington and Asian governments. Then, in March, the impeachment of President Park in March on corruption charges shocked the world. She was replaced by liberal Moon Jae-in in May. Outrageous behaviour from the DPRK continued well into November, when Kim Jong-un decided that the successful launch of Hwasong-15, which the DPRK claimed could cover almost the entire US mainland, "finally realized the great historic cause of completing the state nuclear force."<sup>xxi</sup> He then decided to return to the negotiation table from a position of strength.

However, unlike the multilateral platform of the Six-Party Talks, the latest round of North Korean nuclear talks consisted almost entirely of personal diplomacy, starting from inter-Korean dialogues with President Moon, then later summit meetings with Xi Jinping, Vladimir Putin, and

of course with Donald Trump, three times. This one-by-one approach, though, meant that all parties were kept in a fog, with only Kim himself knowing the full contents of the dialogues with the other leaders—a divide-and-conquer strategy that added to the original obscurity of its negotiation strategy.<sup>xxii</sup> The result was a mixed bag: on the positive side, North Korea refrained from provocative acts or testing for about three years, but on the negative side, nothing was achieved to move North Korea toward denuclearization. The lack of tangible results was especially disadvantageous for President Trump, who became the target of extensive domestic criticism for his failed summitry. Moon, too, has earned low marks, since the formerly warming relationship with Pyongyang is now once again cooling rapidly. As can be seen in the most recent Singapore Joint Statement, the results of those talks were nothing more than vague remarks with no concrete steps towards denuclearization.

Japan got zero or less benefit from the wave of summit diplomacy that has now receded. Abe never got to have his summit with Kim Jong-un, who refused to meet him. All other members of the six-party team had had their individual summit meetings. Japan also remains in just as dangerous a spot as before, under constant and direct threat from North Korea's missiles, which could also be armed with nuclear warheads. Even the North's minor missile tests were almost always aimed eastwards into the Japan Sea, the trajectory that would be used if North Korea launched a nuclear attack.<sup>xxiii</sup>

North Korea has now virtually isolated itself, for it can no longer air its concerns to South Korea or the U.S. Talks of any kind are moribund. China and Russia are virtually its only sources of trade and aid and has helped sustain Kim Jong-un's regime. Beijing has opposed tough international sanctions on North Korea in the hope of avoiding regime collapse and a flood of refugees across their long border.

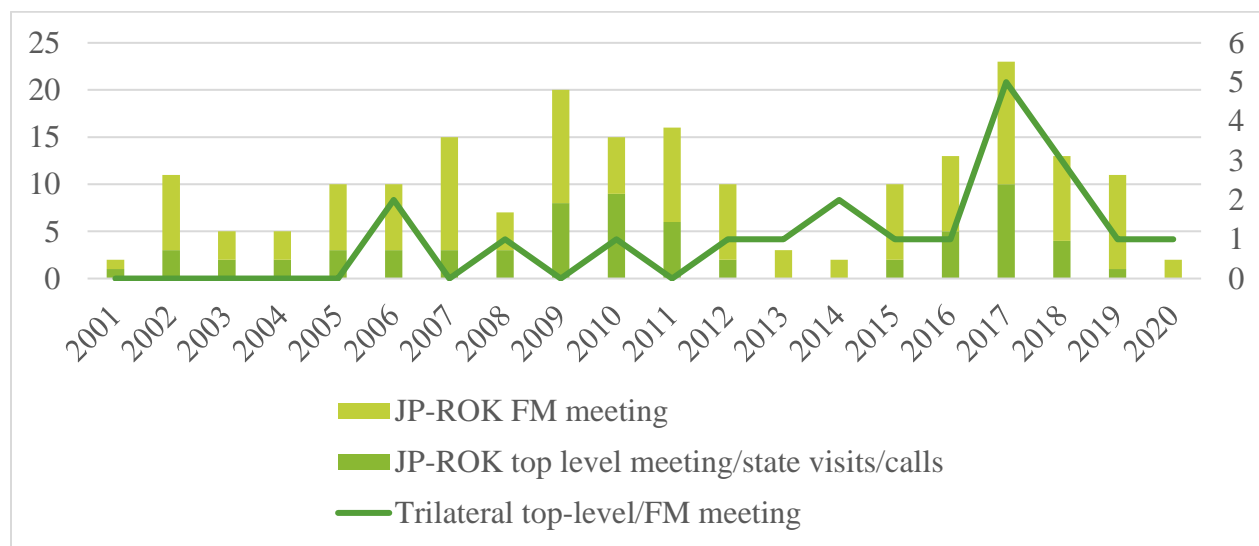
Beijing has long been unhappy with the DPRK's nuclear tests and missile launches, but it wants a multilateral solution, having advocated the resumption of Six-Party Talks in order to denuclearize North Korea. A purge of top North Korean officials since Kim came to power also has worried China about the stability and direction of Kim Jong-un's leadership.

Here again, however, domestic political factors have blocked trilateral discussion, let alone six-party coordination over the past couple of years. Rulings by South Korea's Supreme Court

over the issue of forced labor during Japanese colonial rule in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century have almost completely derailed normal relations between the United States’ two closest allies in Asia.

To make matters worse, South Korea’s Supreme Court ordered Japanese companies with wartime histories to compensate scores of South Koreans for being forced to labor in plants and mines during the Pacific War. The Court has authorized the confiscation of assets in South Korea owned by those Japanese companies. Japan maintains that the issue of forced labor was fully settled in the 1965 normalization treaty when diplomatic ties were restored and Tokyo provided Seoul with \$500 million in grants and loans in a “final and complete” settlement for its occupation of the Korean Peninsula. Needless to say, with trade and legal spats spiraling out of control, it seems impossible for the U.S., the ROK, and Japan to present a united front against the North Korean threat, as well as China’s increasingly aggressive posture in the region. The only intervention by the U.S. into the series of escalating disputes was prompted by a decision by Seoul to end its GSOMIA pact with Tokyo. That for Washington was a bridge too far. Seoul was persuaded to remain in the intelligence-sharing agreement.

**Figure 1 US-Japan-ROK Diplomatic Interactions**



(Source: “大韓民国 過去の要人往来・会談.” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan)

**Figure 2 US-Japan-ROK Administrations and Evolution of DPRK Nuclear Issue**

	Japan	ROK	USA	China	DPRK
2001	LDP	Kim	Bush	Jiang	"Frozen" under agreed framework
2002	LDP	Kim	Bush	Jiang	"Frozen" under agreed framework
2003	LDP	Roh	Bush	Hu	6-Party Talks
2004	LDP	Roh	Bush	Hu	6-Party Talks
2005	LDP	Roh	Bush	Hu	6-Party Talks
2006	LDP	Roh	Bush	Hu	1st Nuclear Test
2007	LDP	Roh	Bush	Hu	6-Party Talks
2008	LDP-Fukuda	Lee	Bush	Hu	6-Party Talks
2009	LDP	Lee	Obama	Hu	2nd Nuclear Test
2010	DPJ	Lee	Obama	Hu	No talks
2011	DPJ	Lee	Obama	Hu	No talks
2012	DPJ - Noda	Lee	Obama	Hu	No talks
2013	LDP	Park	Obama	Xi	3rd Nuclear Test
2014	LDP	Park	Obama	Xi	No talks
2015	LDP	Park	Obama	Xi	No talks
2016	LDP	Park	Obama	Xi	4th, 5th Nuclear Test
2017	LDP	Moon	Trump	Xi	6th Nuclear Test
2018	LDP	Moon	Trump	Xi	2018–20 Korean peace process
2019	LDP	Moon	Trump	Xi	2018–21 Korean peace process
2020	LDP	Moon	Trump	Xi	2018–22 Korean peace process
Conservative/Autocratic party leadership; the darker the more Conservative/Autocratic					
NK: The darker the more serious the nuclear problem					
Progressive party leadership					
Progressive and nationalist leadership					

### **Domestic Political Landscape and Trilateral Cooperation**

In this section, I look at how two variable factors—nationalism and regional threat perceptions—have affected the willingness of South Korea, Japan and the United States to cooperate in dealing with pressing security issues, starting with the North Korean threat.

#### *South Korea*

#### Nationalism

Scholars of Northeast Asian politics and foreign relations agree that South Korean conservatives seem more willing to compromise with Japan than liberals, particularly when it

comes to security cooperation.<sup>xxiv</sup> This tendency has often been attributed to the military dictatorship roots of South Korea's conservatives, especially under President Park Chung-hee (in power 1961-1979), who was a military officer in the Japanese Imperial Army during the colonial period, and was not averse to relying on Japanese support during the ROK's economic boom. Park's pro-Japan stance, combined with his authoritarian rule caused critics in South Korea to deny the legitimacy of the 1965 normalization treaty, even though it took 14 years of hard negotiations to conclude. Many fault the treaty for disregarding victim compensations and instead claim it was directing Japanese reparation funds to state-led industries. In fact, while the majority of litigations filed by forced laborers or their kin directly targeted Japanese entities, a few Korean companies funded by Japan's repatriation funds, most notably POSCO, were also listed as defendants.

However, the reality is that after South Korea began to democratize in 1987, distrust, as well as a good deal of animosity towards Japan was present in both conservative and liberal political parties.<sup>xxv</sup> A study by CSIS showed that conservatives and liberals share the same "apprehensions and suspicions toward both China and Japan".<sup>xxvi</sup> Indeed, one should not forget that President Lee Myung-bak, a conservative, was born in Japan. After his presidential campaign, Lee actually said he would not demand a formal apology from Japan.<sup>xxvii</sup> Interestingly, Lee, as a university student, had once been jailed for protesting against normalization talks with Japan during Park Chung-hee's rule. As President, Lee visited the Dokdo/Takeshima Islands for propaganda-like photo opportunities in 2012, which riled Japan.

It should also be noted that liberals also historically played a positive role in promoting good relations with Japan. Liberals like Kim Dae-jung and Roo Moo-hyun promoted reconciliation with Japan in the 1990s, without any prodding from the United States. Some argue that liberal presidents from backgrounds as "civil society activists", were in fact "better positioned to find avenues for reconciliation" and transitional justice regarding Japan.<sup>xxviii</sup>

As mentioned above, both conservatives and liberals share more or less the same nationalistic attitudes. There are right-leaning nationalists and left-leaning nationalists. Still, there are intrinsic differences between conservatives and liberals regarding how far to go in negotiating sensitive historical issues. Such is the case of the 2015 comfort women deal, which was rejected by liberals after President Moon came into office.<sup>xxix</sup>

President Park Geun-hye, daughter of military strongman Park Chung-hee, continued her father's legacy of bold decision-making and careful calculations. Inheriting the nationalist platform of fellow conservative Lee Myung-bak, Park eventually made the calculation that for the sake of preserving the alliance with the U.S. and maintaining the ROK's own security, South Korea would be better off if it struck a deal with Prime Minister Abe, even though she deeply distrusted him.<sup>xxx</sup> Understanding that public opinion was not on her side, Park called on the public and the former comfort women to "understand" her decision, and she even intervened to impede the judicial process then moving forward on forced labor and comfort women issues. But her order to forge ahead with the agreement with Japan was a miscalculation. The public outcry over the comfort women agreement could not be contained and after Park left office (in disgrace over a money scandal), her successor Moon terminated the deal. Park's decision, perhaps influenced indirectly by her father, was based more on national security calculations than an understanding of the deep-running public sentiment against Japan.<sup>xxxi</sup>

The current liberal president, Moon Jae-in, on the other hand, started out as a lawyer actively involved in advocating transitional justice for comfort women and forced laborers. He had been personally responsible for the forced-labor litigation that created the recent spat.<sup>xxxii</sup> Amidst ongoing tensions with North Korea, he did not immediately act to scrap the deal, but as soon as he secured for himself the role of a direct broker between North Korea and the U.S., there was no incentive to him to continue paying lip service to the agreement. Eventually, the deal was rendered effectively dead, even though 70 percent of the victims were accepting money from the fund that the agreement had set up. Moon, however, also miscalculated by thinking that South Korea's withdrawal from the GSOMIA with Japan would not be opposed by Washington.<sup>xxxiii</sup> By letting the dispute over historical issues spill over into the defense sphere, jeopardizing what was left of trilateral security cooperation, Washington responded quietly but forcefully to change Moon's mind. Moon's did just the opposite of Park, who traded history for defense benefits. Although the GSOMIA still stands as of this paper's submission, the historical issues and trade spat continue unabated.

Nationalist sentiments can be emotional firebombs, thrown and exploded in any direction. In South Korea, such emotions not only seared security ties with Japan, they also have been directed toward the United States, albeit at a less heated level than with Japan. South Koreans have

friendly feelings toward the U.S., over 80% according to the Pew Research Institute.<sup>xxxiv</sup> However, the U.S. military presence of about 28,000 in the ROK is not necessarily appreciated, particularly when high-profile crimes or accidents committed by U.S. personnel anger Koreans and raise questions about extraterritoriality guaranteed by the SOFA.<sup>xxxv</sup> This sentiment is especially noticeable among liberals, who recall the U.S, allegedly supporting dictator Chun Doo Hwan during the Kwangju Uprising in 1980, when he ordered the massacre of pro-democracy forces. Although liberal parties for now are largely in favor of U.S. military presence, given the enormous North Korean threat, some ROK military officials have warned that just as “impulsive or assertive nationalism on the part of the smaller ally” lead to the forced removal of US bases from the Philippines, similar dynamics could very well happen in South Korea as well.<sup>xxxvi</sup>

### Regional Threat

Liberals and conservatives in South Korea also have different perceptions towards the North Korean threat than the ROK’s security partners the U.S. and Japan. Liberals have a record of pro-engagement ‘sunshine’ policies toward North Korea, by stressing the ethnic (*minjok*) homogeneity and brotherhood of the two Koreas, which is contrary to the more hawkish view advocated by conservatives that coincides with the policies of Japan and US.<sup>xxxvii,xxxviii</sup> In general, pro-engagement plays well when North Korea’s intimidation and unpredictability cause South Koreans to grow weary of the risk of “miscalculation and unintended escalation”, prompting Moon to reiterate that the North Korea nuclear issue must be resolved peacefully and “no military action on the Korean Peninsula shall be taken without prior consent of the Republic of Korea.”<sup>xxxix</sup> They are also more inclined to pursue a more independent foreign policy from the U.S., seeking to assume operational control over the ROK military, and resent the demand of the Trump administration to drastically increase host-nation support.<sup>xl</sup> However, liberals also realize that if South Korea dramatically improves its relations with the DPRK with no progress on denuclearization, trust between Seoul and Washington would be seriously damaged.<sup>xli</sup>

Conservatives, on the other hand, favor a hardline posture on North Korea’s nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction (WMD) programs.<sup>xlii</sup> They also see the alliance with the U.S. as the foundation of South Korea’s national defense.<sup>xliii</sup> Both left and right, however, are cautious not to irritate China, and are interested in a multilateral mechanism for Northeast Asia security issues. This includes partners like Japan and China, although traditionally both have been



perceived negatively by the public opinion.<sup>xliv,xlv</sup> Importantly, South Korea has a robust trade relationship with China, with a quarter of its exports going to China. The ROK also runs a trade surplus with that country.

Although South Korea is currently under a liberal president, conservatives might gain more traction in the future. An opinion survey of the “New Generation”, or those born after 1990, shows that young people in South Korea take liberal democracy as a given and are most concerned about economic and employment issues. The survey also found that more than a third of this new generation actually view Japan positively, largely thanks to cultural imports from that country, such as computer games and comics. It also found that more than 60% of the respondents would not participate in pro-democracy demonstrations, if back in the 1980s.<sup>xlvi</sup> While this demonstrates a worrying indifference towards social and political issues among the younger South Koreans, it could actually be a boon for future relations with Japan. The new generation is more inclined to seek practical solutions than their parents, who make up the more liberal-leaning 386 generation. The ROK military is also more sympathetic towards security cooperation with Japan, as seen in the case of Minister of National Defense Jeong Kyeong-doo defending the GSOMIA in October, even though Seoul had officially announced its termination in August.<sup>xlvii</sup> The military can thus exert its unique influence and guarantee that trilateral defense cooperation does not get derailed.

## *Japan*

### *Nationalism*

Traditionally, the LDP establishment had been very cautious in not provoking its Asian neighbors on nationalistic issues, as they are also Japan’s vital economic partners. But in the case of Japan’s ties with South Korea after the normalization treaty in 1965, bilateral relations were generally smooth while military strongman Park Chung-hee was in power, until his assassination in 1979. However, the kidnapping of South Korean activist Kim Dae-jung from Japan in 1973 by KCIA agents created a major crisis in the relationship. Eventually, pressure from the U.S. as well as Japan resulted in Kim being spared execution and eventually released. He became the ROK president in 1998 and worked to improve ROK-Japan ties. In the early 1980s, Japan-ROK ties turned bitter over revisionist textbooks in Japan that distorted the historical narrative surrounding Japan and the Korean nation. Prime Minister Zenko Suzuki ultimately resolved the problem, but

it took his successor Yasuhiro Nakasone to make strides to repair ties with Seoul through summit diplomacy.

In a much-publicized summit meeting between Prime Minister Nakasone and President Chun Doo Hwan on January 12, 1983 in Seoul, the two pledged to improve ties and discussed a multibillion-dollar aid package. Nakasone told Chun that arrangements had been completed for a \$4 billion package for South Korea, to run for five years from April. Washington strongly welcomed the Japanese decision to provide help for South Korea's then hard-pressed economy, as a major gesture to an American ally. It seemed like trilateral cooperation has begun.

But Nakasone made a big miscalculation when he decided to visit Yasukuni Shrine on August 15, 1985—the 40th anniversary of Japan's surrender in World War II—triggering angry anti-Japan demonstrations in China and sharp reactions in South Korea. Nakasone refrained from visiting the shrine again, citing the importance to “consider the national sentiment of neighboring countries.” But even in his statement of suspending future visits to the shrine, he considered it “a legitimate duty of politicians to respect the feelings of the people and their bereaved families who wish to carry out official worship [at Yasukuni Shrine]”, and that the suspension was “not by any means to deny or abolish the official visits to Yasukuni Shrine per se”, but only because it “does not suit Japan’s national interests”.<sup>xlviii</sup>

Such kinds of statement would definitely be considered ingenuine, if not outrageous today, but in the 1980s, the focus was elsewhere: China’s Communist Party had not yet enlisted *nationalist legitimacy* through the utilization of *Chinese* history, and South Korea’s military regime was more concerned with North Korea than a Japanese prime minister venting nationalist sentiments. Japan’s capital and markets were also overwhelmingly dominant and crucial for the economies of South Korea and China, then still in relatively early stages of development. Thus, at that time, it was easier for Japanese politicians to get away with nationalistic remarks. On the other hand, Japan’s progressive parties in the 1980s were a relatively strong force for pushing pacifistic or anti-militaristic agendas. The Japan Socialist Party and dovish factions in the ruling LDP would jump all over any leader or prominent politician making overly nationalist comments. Even nationalist LDP politicians who had directly experienced the war and knew its atrocities did not necessarily deny Japan’s responsibility for ravaging its Asian neighbors. There was an element of

guilt and responsibility, as evidenced by Nakasone's use of official development assistance (ODA) to prop up the weak South Korean economy.

The next generation of politicians who had not experienced the war, however, did not have such a sense of responsibility, and helped perpetuate the myth that Japan's descent into war was justified and acts condemned by the international community were either not as bad as depicted or did not really happen. Such a selective memory of Japan's militaristic past continues among a select group of politicians, journalists, and academics today; a group of historical denialists who are poisoning the atmosphere between Japan and its Asian neighbors.

In the case of Junichiro Koizumi as LDP politician and then prime minister, the complexities of categorizing LDP politicians as right wing or dovish can be seen. Koizumi would never have labeled himself as inherently right-wing and hawkish, even though he infuriated China and South Korea by repeatedly visiting Yasukuni to "pray for the war dead." He was the first and only prime minister to visit North Korea, successful in getting Kim Jong-il to admit that Korean agents had kidnapped Japanese from their native soil, and then coming back with the abductees and their families. He also was the only Japanese prime minister to have ever visited Marco Polo Bridge (where all-out Japanese aggression started the Pacific War), which he made the first stop of his visit to China. He masterminded a series of structural reforms, rooted out corrupt practices in the LDP, and supported the U.S. in its war on terror after the 9-11 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington.<sup>xlix</sup> His administration could be categorized as a new alliance among neo-liberalists, the pro-American alliance establishment, nationalists, and internationalists. At the same time, Koizumi's top-down dynamic rule also signified a major breakaway from the old LDP norms of Japan as a low-key passive partner of the U.S.<sup>l</sup>

Koizumi served as prime minister from 2001 to 2006, and then turned over the helm to Abe, who vowed to continue Koizumi's shift to the right, strengthen the alliance with the U.S., and adopt a hardline policy toward North Korea and China.<sup>li</sup> In the subsequent LDP chairman elections, Abe won over the representative of the anti-Koizumi establishment Yasuo Fukuda, who advocated for more humane economic reforms, conciliatory position with China, and was critical of Koizumi's visits to Yasukuni Shrine. However, Japan's politics went through another turmoil since then. Cabinet scandals, the United States House of Representatives House Resolution 121, the 2008 Financial Crisis and the 2011 Tohoku Earthquake and subsequent nuclear meltdown

caused Japan to see six different prime ministers in six years, among which were LDP nationalists Shinzo Abe and Taro Aso, LDP dove Yasuo Fukuda, progressive Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) prime ministers Yukio Hatoyama and Naoto Kan, and moderate conservative DPJ prime minister Yoshihiko Noda. As a result, Japan's diplomatic stance flipped-flopped between more reconciliatory approaches under Fukuda, Hatoyama, and Kan, and a more nationalist stances under Abe, Aso and Noda.

The DPJ rule lasted three years, after which the LDP was returned to power in the late 2012 elections, with Abe coming back as prime minister for the second time. Since then, the hawkish side of the LDP has firmly controlled the party and the policy agenda. Abe, though, has not done well in managing relations with South Korea, with one issue after another rising up and remaining unsettled. He has been unable to repair broken ties with Japan's most important trilateral partner, and Abe's effort to resolve the comfort women problem with a bilateral agreement ended in shambles. It remains to be seen whether the future of the Japan-ROK relationship will be dominated by hawks on both sides or whether dovish elements will over time reach an accord and allow the bilateral relationship to stumble toward normalcy.

The LDP is a big tent conservative party that includes a wide range of interests and political leanings. Shigera Ishiba, Abe's lone competitor in the 2018 LDP presidential elections, is a long-time critic of Abe. He scolded Abe on terminating GSOMIA and pointed to "Japan's failure to deal with war responsibilities" as the root of the problem.<sup>lii</sup> Dovish LDP figures like Toshihiro Nikai and Yasuo Fukuda were enlisted in talks with Beijing during difficult times. Such LDP leaders have enough clout within the party to make sure that their wing of the LDP can exert influence and served as a speed bump to slow down the LDP's right turn. Their force's presence in the LDP allows the LDP to opt for pragmatic choices and seek for middle ground.

### Regional Threats

Unlike the ethnicity (*wooriminjok*) appeal always present in inter-Korean relations, North Korea's animosity and threatening posture against Japan has not changed, even though the two countries tried twice to normalize relations through negotiations. The LDP being the sole ruling party from 1955 to 1993 and then part of a ruling coalition most of the time after that meant that its security posture has been constant. During the Cold War especially, the party was bound together by a strong anti-Communist ideology, remnants of which are still alive today. Yet it did

not take much ideology to see North Korea as an existential threat once the country installed hundreds of Nodong missiles aimed at Japan, and is now likely capable of being nuclear armed. That existential threat has carried over into the Abe administration, making Japan more reliant than ever on the U.S. extended deterrence. Perceptions of China are more complex, but it is clear that China's military buildup and naval expansion into the East and South China seas have made it a threat to Japan's security. Here too, the alliance with the U.S. plays a major deterrence role, even though Japan has been boosting its own defense capabilities. As long as that threat perception remains, it is unlikely that Abe's successor, dove or hawk, will significantly change Japan's posture toward North Korea or China.<sup>liii</sup>

Against that background, Japan is indeed capable of tactical shifts in its approach to North Korea and China in order to achieve national security goals. Right now, Abe is taking a tough line toward North Korea's denuclearization, and insisting that President Trump during his summit meetings with Kim, represent Japan's interest on medium-range missiles targeting it. Japan is capable of flexibility on the pace of denuclearization, however. For example, under the George W. Bush administration, when John Bolton, as UN ambassador, inflexibly insisted that denuclearization was a prerequisite for substantive bilateral talks with the DPRK, Koizumi urged a more gradual step-by-step approach to try to convince Kim Jong-il of the long-term gains of forgoing nuclear ambitions for global economic integration.<sup>liv</sup>

### *United States*

#### *Nationalism*

The United States has rightfully taken a neutral stance as the ROK and Japan have escalated their series of recent spats. Although the U.S. is the leader in guiding trilateral security relations, it has never taken sides in ROK-Japan disputes, and there has been no finger-pointing or probing into causes of the 70 years of bilateral enmity. As one U.S. observer put it: "Both parties deserve blame. South Korea is determined to hang onto emotional grievances—real, but long past. Japan insisted on justifying indefensible actions whose perpetrators were dead."<sup>lv</sup>

However, domestic nationalism in the United States is not completely absent from the picture of trilateral cooperation. For one, Abe was considered "Trump before Trump", and his nationalistic views found a good listener with Trump, establishing a kind of an ideological alliance

between the two leaders.<sup>lvi</sup> Trump and Abe enjoy a friendship unprecedented among U.S. presidents and Japanese prime ministers, meeting frequently, playing golf together, enjoying hearty meals together, and often calling each other on the telephone.<sup>lvii</sup> There is a possibility, therefore, that Trump may weigh in on the Japanese side if the tiff between the ROK and Japan keeps heating up.

Another influence from U.S. domestic politics is the difference in the vision of foreign policy between isolationists and internationalists. Most modern presidents before Trump have been internationalists or better yet, globalists, and thus were willing to get involved in messy affairs between allies when needed, as manifested by former President Obama's approach of trying to prod the two countries into concluding an agreement on the comfort women issue. During the Bush administration, House of Representatives Resolution 121 was a resolution about comfort women which Japanese-American Congressman Mike Honda of California's 15th congressional district introduced to the House in 2007. It asked that the Japanese government apologize to former comfort women and include curriculum about them in Japanese schools, citing both the 1921 International Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Women and Children that Japan has ratified and United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325. This resolution was passed on July 30, 2007.<sup>lviii</sup>

When Prime Minister Abe suddenly visited Yasukuni Shrine in December 2013, Washington outspokenly expressed "disappointment" at Abe's decision, ostensibly because the visit would complicate trilateral security cooperation and harm American interests. Obama reportedly raised the history issue in nearly every meeting "he's had with the leaders of Japan and South Korea over the last several years."<sup>lix</sup> He was also the first U.S. president to openly declare that the U.S.-Japan security treaty applies to the Senkaku Islands should any nation use force against them. The treaty requires the U.S. to respond to any territory "administered" by Japan. President Trump in contrast has not had much good to say about America's treaties and allies, and needless to say, did not intervene in the series of spats between Japan and South Korea even though it was in U.S. interests to do so. His aides did act to preserve the GSOMIA treaty, however, when the ROK decided to pull out from it.

## Regional Threats

There is no breeze blowing between the U.S. Republicans and Democrats over the necessity of North Korea to denuclearize. The two parties share a similar view of China, and despite Trump's friendly gestures and photo ops with Kim Jong-un, and his desire to reduce U.S. military commitments in Asia, his administration did not upset the bipartisan consensus, but rather pushed it forward. Structural changes in the long-term regional security environment in East Asia, including not only threats posed by North Korea's nuclear weapons but also the possibility of a worrisome Sino-Russian quasi-alliance, will undoubtedly continue to drive further integration of alliance relations among the United States, Japan and South Korea in the foreseeable future.

Ironically, it should be noted that because South Korea and Japan are technically not allies, the possibility of further Seoul-Tokyo estrangement is there. Should there be separate attempts by both countries to foster strong relations with the U.S., it will create the illusion for Japanese and South Korean policymakers that the U.S. will support them instead. This will make them compete for more goodwill from the U.S., which is not exactly beneficial for trilateral cooperation.<sup>lx</sup> For example, Koizumi's demonstration of Japan's commitment to strengthen the U.S.-Japan alliance could have emboldened Japanese nationalists to adopt inflammatory positions on war-related issues.<sup>lxi</sup> President Moon was also clearly seeking U.S. backing, or presuming on U.S. support in the trade spat with Japan by threatening to rescind GSOMIA. He may have sensed that the U.S. needed South Korea more than Japan. Perhaps he was right.

## **Conclusion**

The goal of trilateral security cooperation among the United States, Republic of Korea, and Japan has been often sought but seemingly never achieved. At present, it seems as far away from realization as possible. One persistent problem still left unsettled is the inability of South Korea and Japan to reach a state of true reconciliation over the unfortunate past. As a result of this weak leg in the triangle, trilateral cooperation based on mutual trust in the face of regional threats, starting with North Korea, has remained unfulfilled. The contributing factors include a strong streak of nationalism in domestic political circles in the ROK and Japan over such contentious issues as comfort women, Korean forced laborers during the colonial period, and post-war wrangling over small uninhabited rocky isles that both countries claim. As if that were not enough, Japan and South Korea have recently fought over Japan's navy flag, restrictions on semiconductor-

related trade, and intelligence sharing. Moreover, threat perceptions in South Korea and Japan toward North Korea and China have been diverging in recent years, particularly with the Moon administration's euphoria over its apparently successful summit diplomacy with Pyongyang. As the ties between the ROK and Japan became unravelled, the Trump White House was of little to no use in salvaging them. Such disarray is a perfect opportunity for North Korea to drive a wedge into the already weakened trilateral security fabric that binds the three countries. As it is, the Kim regime in the North, though still holding the line on provocative testing or other acts, seems free to further its quest for recognition as a nuclear weapons state and for security guarantees. There simply are no coherent negotiations going on to prevent that. China and Russia, as well, may be smiling at the remnants of what used to be the beginning of a robust US-led trilateral partnership.

To close this paper, it would be useful to summarize one apparent weakness of North Korea that could present an opportunity for the U.S., Japan, and South Korea in a reconstituted trilateral combination to restart serious efforts to engage the North in dialogue. The goal would be concessions from Pyongyang on the security side in return for assistance and possible easing of some sanctions on the economic side. North Korea's domestic situation over the years may help explain its periodic intransigence during nuclear talks or other outreach efforts. By the late 2000s, economic conditions were deteriorating as Pyongyang continued to funnel scarce resources into weapons programs. The country was and continues to be plagued by food shortages due to bad crops. Owing to sanctions and other factors, aid and investment have dried up.

Pyongyang seems unable to discard its outdated economic system. Unlike China's leaders, who linked market-oriented reforms to the Communist Party's survival, Kim Jong Il and now Kim Jong-un view opening the economy as a threat to their power and have even intensified state control over the economy in recent years.

Severe famines probably killed around 1 million people in the mid-1990s, when the government was forced to tolerate a limited amount of market reform, including farmers' markets and private farm plots. Pyongyang abruptly reversed course in the mid-2000s by re-establishing state control over food distribution. Later, officials tried to clamp down on operation of marketplaces.

Under Kim Jong-un, the economy has been severely weakened by international sanctions. The economy continues to experience minus growth. Kim has allowed state-owned enterprises and



the agricultural sector greater autonomy. Pyongyang in 2014 abandoned “the management of state firms,” an effort to shift from a “planned economy” to a “state-controlled market economy”.<sup>lxii</sup> With the enforcement of sanctions, the country has increasingly relied on private businesses, which have emerged since the 1990s. Despite the importance of market activities in household income and government revenue, they remain informal and separate from the official economic system.

As of 2020, despite efforts by the Kim regime to “reform” the economy, prospects for growth in the future look bleak given stalled negotiations with the U.S., and frozen communications with the South. Moreover, as long as the barrage of sanctions remain in place, food and energy aid from external sources remain minimal, and the Kim regime remains truculent, nothing can be expected to improve the security situation, making trilateral cooperation among the U.S, ROK, and Japan even more important than ever. In addition, the impact of COVID-19 on the North Korean population is largely unknown.

In recent weeks, angry rhetoric from the North targeting the South may be one means to divert domestic attention away from the economic and health crises that is ravaging the country toward a known enemy. It might also be to rally domestic support and prevent internal rife, as Kim Jong-un remained largely out of sight, with his sister temporarily filling the stage until his reappearance. Or maybe it was evidence of an internal rife, as Kim Jong-un has just ordered a military retaliation against the ROK, a sudden turn from the North’s rhetoric in the last few weeks. Regardless, the situation remains delicate in mid-June and desperately calls for the U.S. to quickly move to reconstitute trilateral cooperation, regardless of the ongoing spat between Japan and South Korea.

### **Policy Implications**

What indeed are the prospects for trilateral security cooperation to deal with common security threats?<sup>lxiii</sup> First, there must be a common strategy that not only involves all three countries in preparing for contingencies, but also builds trustworthy relations among them. South Korea should avoid leaving Japan out of the picture when it engages with North Korea, as well as China. Engagement policies with the DPRK should all be on the same page. South Korea’s liberal and conservative forces should promote bipartisanship not just on North Korean issues, such as planning for future summit diplomacy, but also come up with a practical approach to Japan that addresses historical and possibly territorial issues but does not trample on earlier treaties,

agreements and understandings. It is not in South Korea's national interests to change policies toward Japan every time there is a change of administrations in the Blue House. Military to military cooperation, once smoothly operating again, should proceed without political interference.

Japan, too, should avoid taking an overly legalistic position on the comfort women and forced labor issues, but instead steer them more toward a moral obligation that Tokyo can recognize. On North Korea, Tokyo should be more proactive and supportive of the ROK in its engagement policies towards DPRK, because if progress is made with the North, it could also be beneficial for Japan's own interests. The abduction issue with North Korea should be approached as Japan-specific and not become entangled in any multilateral effort to address the nuclear and missile issues with the North. Even though the current Abe government represents the right-wing forces in the ruling LDP, it and its successor, whether hawkish or dovish, nationalistic or moderate, should build consensus with the ruling party and its coalition partner that is based on realistic assessment of Japan's national interest and not on ideological or emotional grounds.

As for the U.S., aside from recognizing the intrinsic value of its two alliances, and not measuring it in money contributed for hosting U.S. forces, should accept the reality that the issues plaguing the Japan-ROK relationship are structural. They are based on emotional historical remembrances fired by nationalist sentiment on the ROK side, and steeped in a legacy of historical denialism and legalistic answers to haunting historical issues, and thus cannot be settled by pro forma agreements that to the other side lack sincerity. The U.S. in such a case should avoid acting as a mediator in historical or territorial issues; it just would not work and probably exacerbate the situation and be considered more of an insult than a service.<sup>lxiv</sup> So while the U.S. cannot be a referee, it by no means should stand by and see relationships spiral out of control, damaging defense cooperation and the trade partnership, as we have seen in the past two years. Perhaps the U.S. should intervene immediately and decisively, making it clear to both parties what is at stake. There is no reason why the U.S. could not treat a reboot of trilateral talks and cooperative exchanges as a platform to bridge the two sparring allies, especially during such difficult times, including the pandemic crisis. There is no reason to stand back while North Korea takes advantage of the rift between allies.

The differences in threat perceptions can also be worked out by shared communications and intelligence, and the rebuilding of mutual trust among the allies. There is fertile ground, as

public opinion in Japan and the ROK are overwhelmingly supportive of the alliance with the U.S. It may be time for the U.S. to consider how South Korea and Japan can be allowed a more flexible and adaptable role in dealing with or even deterring regional threats, and not just wait for orders from Washington.<sup>lxv</sup> Given the U.S.' inability now to engage with its allies in productive ways, it may be necessary for further dialogue be put on hold until the next U.S. administration, assuming that Mr. Trump is out of office, takes over the helm of the U.S. ship of state with a more strategic and coherent set of Northeast Asian security policies.<sup>lxvi</sup>

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## **Japan-North Korea Relations: Dead-End Issues or Still Opportunities?**

*Yu Young Kim*

### **Introduction**

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), more commonly known as North Korea, is one of the most secretive countries in the world. The nation of 25 million has been ruled by the Kim family since the end of World War II, and is now under the firm control of third-generation leader Kim Jong-un. After his father Kim Jong-il died in 2011, Jong-un became Supreme Leader and in 2012, the head of the Korean Workers Party. As avid as his father in displaying North Korea's military power, Kim has undertaken six nuclear tests and repeatedly launched ballistic missiles into the Sea of Japan, creating great concern in Japan and the region.<sup>i</sup> At the time of this writing in mid-June, tensions have risen between North Korea and the Republic of Korea (ROK) or South Korea to the point that the North threatens to mobilize troops along the demilitarized border.

At the beginning of 2018, it looked like the usually belligerent North was having a surprising change of heart toward its archenemies. A few months after boasting about its sixth nuclear test in September 2017, Kim Jong-un suddenly flipped a diplomatic switch to launch a charm offensive that seemed to have convinced the South and even the United States that North Korea might be willing to give up its nuclear weapons in return for some kind of deal. Unfortunately, such speculation was dead wrong. But Kim's "smile diplomacy" did indeed start a parade of dazzling summitry, beginning with his meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping. Kim then met with South Korean President Moon Jae-in, and soon after, President Trump, altogether three times, the last being on June 30, 2019. After such energetic summit diplomacy, there was much optimism in Washington about a possible breakthrough on the nuclear issue, but nothing happened. Interestingly, by meeting Russian President Vladimir Putin in April 2019, Kim Jong-un has had summits with leaders from all Six-Party Talks countries except Prime Minister Abe.

Since coming into office in December 2012, Abe has given high priority to resolving North Korea issues, including the abduction of Japanese nationals by North Korean agents and the DPRK's nuclear and missile development programs. The ultimate goal once issues are resolved is normalization of relations. The abduction issue seemed to progress as Tokyo and Pyongyang

agreed on a comprehensive reinvestigation of the whereabouts of still-missing abductees. But in 2016, following another nuclear test, North Korea dissolved the committee investigating the missing Japanese. Since then, contacts between the North and Japan have been severed. In addition, North Korea keeps ignoring Abe's suggestion of meeting Kim without preconditions. Even before the denuclearization negotiations between the United States and North Korea were curtailed, Japan has been on the sidelines unable to directly address the existential threat from DPRK missiles with possible nuclear warheads aimed at it.

This paper initially will examine three key issues in Japan-North Korea relations: normalization of relations, the abductee issue, and the DPRK's nuclear and missile programs. Next, it will analyze the Abe administration's North Korea policy, which is focused on resolving the abduction issue, preparing for a Korean contingency, and maintaining tough economic sanctions. The paper will then discuss the Kim regime's policy toward Japan. Finally, I list some proposals about how Japan might overcome the "deadlock" in contacts with North Korea that would lead to resolution of the bilateral issues.

## **Barriers to Improving Japan-North Korea Relations**

### *No Road to Normalization of Relations*

Normalization talks between Japan and North Korea officially began in the early 1990s. In 1988, then-South Korean President Roh Tae-woo announced the "July 7 Declaration." It stated that Seoul would try to reach out to socialist countries, and it would even cooperate with North Korea to improve relations with the United States and Japan. South Korea's attitude seemed to have enabled Japan to deploy a more flexible policy toward Pyongyang. In addition, rapid changes in the post-Cold War era including the collapse of the Soviet Union increased North Korea's need to expand the scope of its diplomatic relations. Particularly for North Korea, South Korea's successive normalization of ties with the Soviet Union and China accelerated its sense of isolation. Thus, the Kim Il-sung regime hoped to build a new relationship with Tokyo, expecting the infusion of Japan's technology and "cash."<sup>ii</sup>

In September 1990, an informal delegation led by former Prime Minister Shin Kanemaru of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) paid a visit to Pyongyang. Although it was not officially sent by the government, the delegation, which also included Tanabe Makoto, vice chairman of the

Japan Socialist Party (JSP), and thirteen government officials, were able to meet Kim Il-sung. As a result of that meeting, a Three-Party Joint Declaration was signed by the LDP, the JSP and the Workers' Party of North Korea (KWP). In the Declaration, the three parties strongly urged Tokyo and Pyongyang to start negotiations to normalize diplomatic relations and called for Japan to "fully and formally apologize and compensate the DPRK for thirty-six years of Japanese occupation and forty-five years of abnormal relations after World War II."<sup>iii</sup>

Tokyo's reaction to the Three-Party Declaration was mixed at best. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) criticized Kanemaru's compensation promise and labeled the Declaration as a party-to-party agreement, defining it as the result of "private diplomacy."<sup>iv</sup> Tokyo worried that the Kanemaru delegation had provided Pyongyang an opportunity to employ "dual diplomacy" advantageous to its interests.<sup>v</sup> However, the declaration also gave a chance to the Japanese government to recognize the necessity of starting a dialogue with North Korea. So, the Kanemaru mission to Pyongyang served as the springboard for normalization talks that began in 1991.

In the talks with North Korea, Japan adhered to four principles: negotiations should not damage Japan-ROK relations; Tokyo would not pay an indemnity to Pyongyang; North Korea should allow IAEA inspections in order to clear suspicions about the North having a nuclear weapons program; and the negotiations would not interfere with ongoing talks between Pyongyang and Seoul.<sup>vi</sup> In contrast, the goal of North Korea was simply to establish diplomatic ties with Japan and gain economic benefits as a result.

Despite eight rounds of bilateral meetings over two years, the two countries failed to reach any agreement and talks in the end collapsed. North Korea kept demanding colonial-period reparations based on the Three-Party Declaration, which clashed with Japan's negotiation principles.<sup>vii</sup> The issue of North Korea's abduction of Japanese nationals, suspicions of a secret nuclear program at Yongbyon, and Japan's demands for IAEA inspection of the suspected nuclear research site were also stumbling blocks.

Contacts with the North were revived after Junichiro Koizumi became prime minister in April 2001. On September 17, 2002, Koizumi paid a surprise visit to Pyongyang, where he met with Kim Jong-Il, Chairman of the National Defense Commission. In that historic meeting, the two signed the "Pyongyang Declaration".<sup>viii</sup> Koizumi also was able to return to Japan with five of the Japanese abductees. In a second trip in 2004, he was able to bring back the families of those

original five. Koizumi, through his two visits, demonstrated a proactive quality to Japanese leadership that rarely had been seen before.

The Pyongyang Declaration was a significant document. In it, Japan expressed “deep regrets and a heartfelt apology for the suffering and damage inflicted on Koreans” during the colonial rule, while North Korea promised to abide by international agreements concerning its nuclear program issue.<sup>ix</sup> Moreover, Koizumi and Kim Jong-il agreed that Japan’s compensation for its colonial rule would be carried out not as a form of reparations, but by “economic cooperation involving Japanese grants and low-interest loans.”<sup>x</sup> At the second summit in 2004, the two leaders reaffirmed their willingness to continue negotiations. The 2004 meeting brought North Korea an enormous amount of economic benefits. Koizumi pledged to provide 250,000 tons of food and \$10 million worth of medical aid through international organizations, and he flew back to Japan with five relatives of the Japanese abductees.<sup>xi</sup>



*(Koizumi’s First Visit to Pyongyang, Source: Hankyoreh)*

The Koizumi government utilized the North Korea card as a means to curry public favor, as well as to score a major diplomatic achievement.<sup>xii</sup> The euphoria was short lived, however, because in 2003, North Korea created another crisis when it withdrew from the United Nations Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), and reactivated its five-megawatt nuclear reactor. The Japanese public was appalled. Furthermore, Pyongyang’s condescending attitude accelerated mistrust and antipathy of the Koizumi government. Even though the normalization of relations has

been the ultimate goal of Japan's North Korea policy, incessant emergence of the other two issues—Japanese abductees and North Korea's nuclear program—served as a cause that continually prevented progress.

### *North Korea's Abduction of Japanese Citizens*

In the 1970s and 1980s, Japan experienced a series of abductions of Japanese citizens by North Korean agents. North Korea kidnapped Japanese people and put them in the regime's agent training program. Abducted Japanese civilians taught Japanese language and culture to North Korean spies who were going to infiltrate Japan.<sup>xiii</sup> The Japanese government has so far identified 17 Japanese citizens as victims.<sup>xiv</sup>

North Korea had not admitted the state-sponsored kidnapping program until the first summit between Koizumi and Kim Jong-il in 2002. At the summit, Kim Jong-il acknowledged and apologized for the 13 cases of abduction, and promised that North Korea would take measures to prevent any further recurrence.<sup>xv</sup> The abduction issue between the two countries seemed to be progressing as North Korea decided to repatriate five abductees. North Korea claimed that the remaining eight were deceased. However, at the second Japan-DPRK summit in 2004, North Korea acquiesced to Koizumi's demand to set up an internal committee to conduct a comprehensive investigation into the whereabouts of missing Japanese in that country. Moreover, in response to Japan's pledge of economic assistance, North Korea agreed to return five family members of the repatriated abductees.<sup>xvi</sup>

Koizumi declared that the return of the five abductees to their families would be Japan's first step to resolve the abduction issue.<sup>xvii</sup> He also vowed that the abduction issue would be the top priority of the Japanese government in future negotiations with North Korea.<sup>xviii</sup> Although Japan and North Korea held several working-level consultations to discuss follow-up measures, Pyongyang did not honor its promises on the investigation, now stopped, so the abduction issue to this day remains unresolved. Take the Megumi Yokota case, for example. Megumi Yokota was one of the eight abductees North Korea claimed had died. Pyongyang returned her alleged cremated remains, but through DNA testing, it was determined that the ashes were not hers.<sup>xix</sup> Although intergovernmental consultations were held intermittently over the years, no progress has been made to date.

### *North Korea's Nuclear and Missile Threats*

Despite agreements, sanctions, and various negotiations, North Korea has continued to develop its nuclear and missile programs to the deep concern of the international community. In its nuclear weapons program, it was estimated in early 2019 that the DPRK had an arsenal of approximately 20–30 nuclear weapons and sufficient fissile material for an additional 30–60 nuclear weapons. North Korea has also stockpiled a significant amount of chemical and biological weapons. Moreover, the DPRK has made significant advances in its short- and long-range missile capabilities since its first launch of a Nodong missile in 1993. Hundreds of them now target Japan. In addition, after six tests since 2006, North Korea has expanded the yield of its nuclear weapons and consolidated its status as a global nuclear power. Assuming that the DPRK now possesses miniaturized nuclear warheads, the enhanced missile capability makes Japan the direct target of a nuclear attack.

Japan's concerns over the security threat by North Korea is represented in its National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG). In 1993, just after North Korea declared its withdrawal from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in January, it launched a Nodong short-range ballistic missile in May. Amid rampant suspicions over Pyongyang's nuclear weapons program, the firing of Nodong-1 SCUD missiles with a range capable of reaching most of the Japanese archipelago shocked the country. Furthermore, that December, Japan obtained a U.S. intelligence report that concluded North Korea already possessed one or two nuclear weapons.<sup>xx</sup> Tokyo worried that Nodong missiles mounted with nuclear warheads would be used not against South Korea but Japan.<sup>xxi</sup> That fear was reflected in the 1995 version of the NDPG, which replaced the threat of the Soviet Union with that of North Korea.<sup>xxii</sup>



(Source: heritage.org)

Against this backdrop, Prime Minister Koizumi took matters into his own hands and presented Japan's security concerns when he met Kim Jong-il in 2002. The two leaders agreed on the necessity for dialogue on security issues, including the nuclear and missile programs. Koizumi promised to provide economic cooperation, and in return, Kim Jong-il pledged to observe "all related international agreements" and to place a moratorium on missile tests.<sup>xxiii</sup> In the second meeting in 2004, Kim Jong-il underscored Pyongyang's stance to "freeze nuclear facilities in exchange for energy assistance and other compensation through the Six-Party Talks," reaffirming the resolution to continue the moratorium on missile tests.<sup>xxiv</sup>

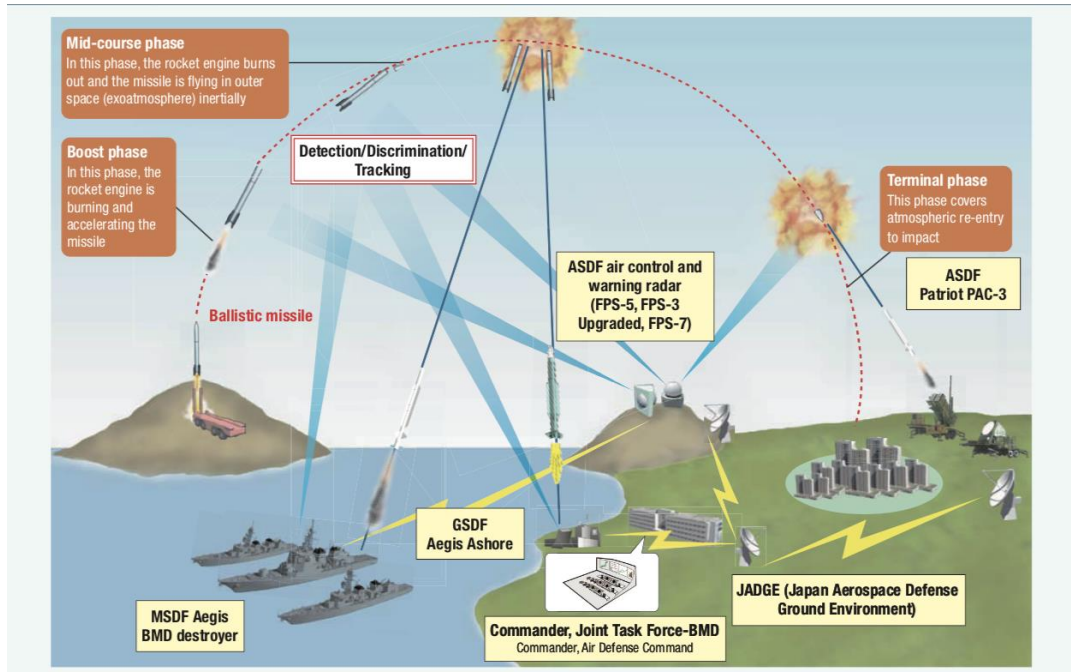
The existential threat to Japan was exacerbated even more by two more DPRK nuclear tests, one in 2006 and another in 2009. In the next NDPG, issued in 2010, Japan was clearly alarmed by the changing security environment, especially China's maritime expansion and the unstoppable North Korean threat. The guidelines became an important strategic document for the DPJ government. They described the role of the Japan Self-Defense Force (JSDF) as shifting to a

“dynamic defense force,” and argued that Japan would secure “dynamic deterrence” by revealing its advanced military technology and “high-performance defense capabilities.”<sup>xxv</sup> In addition, Japan expected the United States to back up Japan with its extended deterrence.<sup>xxvi</sup>

The North Korean missile threat has forced Japan to concentrate on ballistic missile defense (BMD) in cooperation with the United States. Missile defense cooperation started with a joint study. After North Korea launched Nodong missiles in 1993, Tokyo and Washington set up a forum for policy study on ballistic missile defense under the sub-cabinet level Security Sub-Committee (SSC). The two governments then established the Theater Missile Defense-Working Group (TMD-WG).<sup>xxvii</sup> When North Korea test-launched an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) in 1998, Taepodong 1, that flew over Japan, Japan’s cabinet-level Security Council approved starting technological research with the U.S. on Navy Theatre Wide Defense (NTWD), which was later reorganized as the Sea-based Mid-course Defense (SMD) system.<sup>xxviii</sup>

In 2003, the Koizumi government officially decided to introduce the BMD system to defend against North Korean missiles. That system is now in operation. The approval of the development and deployment of the BMD system not only marked a major transposition in strategic thinking on security policy, it also implied Japan’s willingness to defend itself with its “own missile defense shield.”<sup>xxix</sup> Up to the present, Japan continued to construct its own multi-tier defense system for effective response against ballistic missile attacks, by installing ballistic missile defense capability to the Aegis-equipped destroyers and deploying the Patriot Advanced Capability-3 (PAC-3), one of the air defense system designed to intercept ballistic missiles.<sup>xxx</sup>





*(Build-up and Operational Concept of BMD, Source: Defense of Japan 2019)*

In addition to the enhancement of military capabilities, the Japanese government pursued improving civil defense by enacting relevant laws and setting up a nationwide communication system. The Civil Protection Law, promulgated in 2004, regulates guidance about evacuation and relief operations for the national and local governments.<sup>xxxii</sup> Japan has also launched the National Early Warning System, the so-called J-Alert, to deliver warning messages and evacuation orders in 2007.<sup>xxxiii</sup> When North Korea fires a ballistic missile toward Japan, the Japanese government transmits emergency messages via J-Alert. Using that system, the city of Tokyo conducted the first public drill in preparation for possible missile attacks from North Korea in 2018.<sup>xxxiii</sup>



## Actions in case of missiles flyng to Japan

It may take less than 10 minutes that missiles reach Japan after being launched. If missiles are about to hit Japan possibly, J-ALERT system provides emergency information through various devices such as sirens and emails.

1. Evacuate im mediately.
2. Collect precise information im mediately.

Follow official instruction and take action calmly.



**J-ALERT Message [ Example ] \*announced ONLY in Japanese**  
 直(ただ)ちに避難(ひなん)。直ちに避難。直ちに建物(たてもの)の中(なか)、又(また)は地下(ちか)に避難して下(くだ)さい。ミサイルが、●時(じ) ●分(ふん)ごろ)、●●県(けん)周辺(しゅうへん)に落下(らくか)するものとみられます。直ちに避難して下さい。  
 Evacuate immediately. Go into a building or underground nearby. A missile will possibly land in the area around XX Prefecture at around X:XX. Go inside immediately.

When you receive a message,  
**Stay calm and take action im mediately.**

**Outside**  
 Go into a nearby building or underground,  
\*a sturdy building if possible  
 such as underground shopping arcade and subway stations.  
 Can't find a building nearby?  
 Lie flat on the ground or take cover  
 behind anything that might offer protection.

**Inside**  
**Stay inside well away from windows**  
 or stay in a windowless room.

**A missile hit in nearby area?**  
 Outside: Cover your nose and mouth with cloth. Evacuate from an impact area. Evacuate toward the windward side or into a sealed room.  
 Inside: Stop a ventilator, close windows and seal cracks of a room.

**Look in advance.** Civil Protection Portal Site (English)  
[http://www.kokuminhogo.go.jp/en/pc/index\\_e.html](http://www.kokuminhogo.go.jp/en/pc/index_e.html)

(Source: Civil Protection Portal Site)

## North Korea Policy of the Abe Administration

### Concentration on the Abductee Issue

Prime Minister Abe has long maintained great interest in the abductee issue, taking a proactive stance toward resolving the issue. Abe, as deputy chief cabinet secretary, accompanied Koizumi to Pyongyang in 2002, an experience that emphasized to him the seriousness and urgency of that vexing issue. In his policy speech to the 183<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Diet in January 2013, Abe said the following:

“... [On] the resolution of the abduction issue. My mission will not be finished until the day arrives that the families of all the abductees are able to hold their relatives in their arms. Under a policy of ‘dialogue and pressure’ with North Korea, I will do my utmost to achieve the three points of ensuring the safety and the immediate return to Japan of all the abductees, obtaining a full accounting concerning the abductions, and realize the handover of the perpetrators of the abductions.”<sup>xxxiv</sup>

At the same time, Abe established the “Headquarters for the Abduction Issue,” a governmental organization to work for the resolution of the issue. The new organization would demand North Korea to immediately repatriate the remaining abductees, investigate cases, and extradite the North Korean agents to Japan.<sup>xxxv</sup> The organization also sought to initiate consultations between Japan and North Korea, collect relevant information, obtain international cooperation on the investigation, and work on informing the public of this issue.<sup>xxxvi</sup> In addition to the establishment of the Headquarters, the Japanese government has made an effort to identify more abduction cases committed by North Korea by investigating general missing cases of Japanese people. A Special Guidance Section in the Foreign Affairs Division of the National Police Agency was created in March 2013 to do just that.<sup>xxxvii</sup> The police also collaborate with the Japan Coast Guard to reinvestigate marine accident cases.<sup>xxxviii</sup>

Such abductee-related measures of the Abe administration have exceeded the limitations of past governments. Previous measures failed to deal with the abduction issue systematically and effectively, often merely accelerating economic sanctions on North Korea.<sup>xxxix</sup> Thus, Abe’s effort to establish new organizations appears to be the first step to resolve the issue in a more systematic and practical manner.

The Japanese government’s effort seemed to gain partial achievement when Tokyo and Pyongyang in May 2014 agreed on a comprehensive survey of Japanese abductees beyond the 13 cases North Korea had earlier claimed. Signed in Stockholm, this was the first official agreement between the two governments since the launch of the second Abe administration and the Kim Jong-un regime. North Korea pledged to establish a “Special Investigation Committee” in return for Japan’s lifting a part of its unilateral sanctions.<sup>xl</sup> To discuss follow-up measures of the Stockholm agreement, Japan and North Korea’s diplomatic authorities held meetings in Beijing, Shenyang and Pyongyang. However, the probe was suspended in 2016 when North Korea resumed nuclear

and missile tests, resulting in Japan imposing more economic sanctions. In return, Pyongyang unilaterally declared a complete cessation of investigations concerning any and all Japanese people, including abductees, and it dissolved the Special Investigation Committee.<sup>xli</sup>

With direct negotiations again having failed, the Abe administration has been trying to internationalize the abductee problem. It has been conveying the seriousness of the abduction issue and emphasizing that it is not a problem unique to Japan, but a universal problem of the international community in terms of basic human rights violations. As part of this effort, the Japanese government, in cooperation with the European Union since 2008, sponsored the adoption of a UN Human Rights Council Resolution on North Korea. The comprehensive report released by the Commission of Inquiry (COI) in Human Rights in the DPRK in 2014 was based on testimony regarding various victims, international investigations, and reports from different countries. It also paid attention to “enforced disappearances, including in the form of abductions of nationals other states.”<sup>xlii</sup> Furthermore, in a speech from a UN event, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga defined the abduction issue as a “global challenge,” urging the international community to support Japan in putting pressure on North Korea to make progress.<sup>xliii</sup>

Taking advantage of opportunities such as his various summit meetings, Abe himself has addressed the abduction issue by calling for understanding and support of Japan’s position. Whenever he meets President Trump, Abe has reiterated the importance of immediately resolving the problem. In particular, Abe flew to Washington ahead of the first U.S.-DPRK summit, and asked President Trump to raise the Japanese abduction issue to Kim Jong-un. He also invited him to meet with the families of Japanese abductees in May 2019.<sup>xliiv</sup> In return for Abe’s effort, Trump reportedly brought up the abduction issue with his meeting with Kim Jong-un in Hanoi and complained about Pyongyang’s lukewarm attitude and not making “significant progress.”<sup>xliiv</sup> Abe also met Kim Yong-nam, the President of the Presidium of the Supreme People’s Assembly of North Korea, at the reception of the opening ceremony of the Pyeongchang Winter Olympic Games in 2018. He asked Kim Yong-nam to resolve the abduction issue, telling him “[Japan’s] thoughts and positions.”<sup>xlivi</sup> Most significantly, Abe proposed a summit with Kim Jong-un in May 2019, saying he was ready to meet the North Korean leader without preconditions. To create a dialogue atmosphere, Abe made a decision not to submit the UN Human Rights Council

Resolution on North Korea that year. Even though Abe is still waiting for Kim Jong-un's reply, his proactive move seems to reflect his strong will to resolve the abduction issue during his tenure.



*(President Trump Meeting Families of Abductees in May 2019, Source: Reuters)*

### *Consolidation of Defense Policy*

Since becoming prime minister in 2012, Abe has witnessed another four nuclear tests under the Kim Jong-un regime. The sixth nuclear test conducted in September 2017 had a yield of two hundred kilotons, which was significantly larger than the thirty-five kilotons of the fifth test.<sup>xlvi</sup> In terms of intercontinental ballistic missiles, capable of carrying nuclear warheads, it is estimated that the new Hwasong-15 tested in November 2018 could fly about 13,000 kilometers (8,100 miles).<sup>xlviii</sup> Tokyo has issued a statement in the name of the Prime Minister whenever North Korea conducts a nuclear test. By January 2016, the North Korean nuclear program had been defined as “[constituting] a grave threat to Japan” in the statement.<sup>xliv</sup> However, as North Korea carried out the sixth nuclear test in September 2017, the level of threat was elevated to a “more grave and imminent” one.<sup>1</sup> In addition, Japan has paid considerable attention to the combination of North Korea’s nuclear weapons and missiles. The annual *Defense of Japan* paper published by the

Japanese defense ministry focuses on North Korea's uranium enrichment and capabilities in producing a large number of nuclear weapons, as well as miniaturization of nuclear warheads to be mounted on ballistic missiles.<sup>li</sup>

In addition to threats from North Korea, the rise of China in terms of military buildup and expansion and its growing economic influence has exacerbated Japan's security concerns. China suggests building a "new type of relationship" with the United States and wishes to become the hegemon in the region. China's rising power in the Asia-Pacific region, not to mention the rest of the world, has been decreasing Japan's relative power. Such disturbing circumstances have served as drivers leading the Abe administration to prioritize a defense buildup. The Abe administration has capitalized on the threats of North Korea and China to consolidate a "strong" defense policy and improve Japan's defense capabilities, overcoming the ruling party's traditional reluctance to move quickly on such matters. One such example is the defense budget, which is heading toward exceeding the long-standing one percent of GDP cap on spending. The defense spending of Japan has increased steadily, reaching a record ¥5.1 trillion (\$45 billion) in the fiscal year 2017.<sup>lii</sup>

Under the motto of "proactive pacifism," the Abe administration has proclaimed its willingness to engage in working to achieve world peace through diplomacy and broad security measures. For example, the Abe administration has issued Japan's first formal national security strategy and has established a National Security Council.<sup>liii</sup> The new NSC and a formal national security strategy imply that Japan has become capable of a "broader approach to security."<sup>liiv</sup> The Japanese government has set up a National Security Secretariat (NSS), the first standing body that coordinates aspects of Japan's military security strategy across the government not only in wartime, but also in peacetime.<sup>liv</sup> A series of relevant legislation includes an official state secrets law, and a law that allows a reinterpretation of the Constitution enabling Japan to use the right of collective self-defense (CSD) with the militaries of allied states in limited circumstances. The legislation was passed in September 2015.<sup>lvi</sup> In addition, the Abe administration has concentrated on "reversing the decline in defense spending."<sup>lvii</sup>

Japan has also been placing a great deal of emphasis on strengthening the U.S.-Japan alliance. This policy stance of the Abe administration appears to be in line with the "new alliance relations" that the United States has urged its allies including Japan to play a larger role in implementing the "pivot to Asia" policy. The new U.S.-Japan Guidelines for Defense Cooperation,

revised in April 2015, set out a more flexible role for the SDF.<sup>lviii</sup> Based on the new Guidelines, the two countries established an Alliance Coordination Mechanism, which ensures “seamless and effective whole-of-government Alliance coordination” of U.S. military forces and JSDF in all relevant cases.<sup>lix</sup>

### *Economic Sanctions*

Whenever North Korea has conducted nuclear or serious missile tests, Japan has ratcheted up its economic sanctions on the country. The first and the second nuclear tests in 2006 and 2009 respectively resulted in immediate unilateral sanctions, including banning all imports from North Korea, barring North Korean ships from entering Japanese ports, and blocking entry of North Korean citizens.<sup>lx</sup> After the North’s fourth nuclear test in January 2016 and its subsequent launching of missiles, the Abe administration announced a ban on North Koreans from entering Japan and a freeze on assets in Japan suspecting of being North Korea-related.<sup>lxi</sup> Tokyo even prohibited the entry of foreign technicians who might spread nuclear and missile-related technology to the DPRK.<sup>lxii</sup> In a UN address after North Korea’s sixth nuclear test in September 2017, Abe underscored the necessity of consistent economic sanctions, stating that “what is called for is not dialogue but pressure.”<sup>lxiii</sup> Hence, Abe’s policy toward Pyongyang can be said to be limited to ratcheting up pressure, and not necessarily dangling any incentives that would encourage dialogue.

Abe seemed to have considered economic sanctions to be one of the most effective means to respond to the North Korean nuclear threat, coinciding with the Trump administration’s policy at the time of threatening “fire and fury” against Pyongyang. Tokyo’s hardline stance was undermined, however, when Kim Jong-un proposed a summit meeting with Trump and the President responded positively. The Abe administration’s emphasis on sanctions rather than dialogue to resolve the nuclear issue has effectively alienated Japan from the denuclearization negotiations process. The situation forced Abe to propose to meet Kim Jong-un for a summit without preconditions. But the focus would most likely be the abduction issue, which Kim has no intention of discussing. In an exclusive interview with *Sankei Shinbun* on May 1, 2019, Abe stated:

“I would like to meet with North Korean Workers’ Party Chairman Kim Jong-un without preconditions and hold frank discussions at the earliest possible date.” ... “There can be

no alternative other than to face Mr. Kim directly in a one-on-one meeting in order to break through the shell of mutual distrust between Japan and North Korea.”<sup>lxiv</sup>

Abe is still waiting for an official reply.

### **Kim Jong-un’s Japan Policy**

The Kim Jong-un regime seems to follow the previous regime’s precedents in terms of policies toward Japan. While improving its nuclear and missile capabilities according to the regime’s own timetable, North Korea has recognized Japan as a target to acquire economic assistance. Thus, North Korea has used the normalization of relations and the abduction issue as a means to gain economic benefits, including borrowing money at low interest and sanctions relief.

Pyongyang’s suggestion of resuming dialogue after Kim Jong-un took office can be understood in this context. In November 2012, in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, the first Japan-DPRK intergovernmental consultations to discuss the abduction issue in four years were held. The second intergovernmental consultations were held in March 2014 in Beijing. Two months later, North Korea signed the Stockholm agreement and pledged to set up a Special Investigation Committee. North Korea’s approach to Japan may have aimed at resolving the internal and external crises that broke out in the third year of the Kim Jong-un regime. The third nuclear test in February 2013 accelerated the isolation of the newly launched regime. Moreover, it would have been necessary for the regime to lull social and economic confusion due to strong economic sanctions by showing any achievement. Under these circumstances, Kim Jong-un seems to have chosen to improve relations with Japan as a breakthrough that could show results in a short period. North Korea might also have thought that dialogue with Japan could urge the Japanese government to provide humanitarian aid in exchange for resolving the abductee issue.

Nevertheless, the 2016 Stockholm agreement did not produce any progress. In January 2016, Pyongyang unilaterally suspended investigation of Japanese abductees, criticizing Japan’s imposing unilateral sanctions against North Korea’s launch of a ballistic missile.<sup>lxv</sup> Later in 2018, North Korean officials argued that the agreement had been nullified, even though Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga reaffirmed that the agreement was “still in place.”<sup>lxvi</sup>

Aside from the Stockholm agreement issue, the state-run media of North Korea has continued to berate Japan and even threatened an “attack on Japan.” The party organ *Rodong*



*Sinmun* on March 31, 2013, threatened a missile attack on U.S. military bases in Japan, stating that “not only Yokosuka, Misawa, Okinawa, and Guam but also the U.S. mainland is within our range”.<sup>lxvii</sup> The daily also stated on April 10, 2013, that “none of Japan’s territories shall be spared from being the target of our retaliatory attack”.<sup>lxviii</sup> Korean Central Broadcasting Station stated on September 13, 2017, that “the Japanese archipelago will be sunk into the sea by a nuclear bomb,” and the *Rodong Sinmun* threatened again on October 9, 2017: “If the flames of war break out on the Korean Peninsula, Japan can never be safe. Everything in Japan that is mobilized for war will be pulverized to pieces, to say nothing of the bases in Japan for U.S. invasion.”<sup>lxix</sup> More recently, the *Rodong Simun* criticized Japan as the “real abduction state” and “the world’s abduction kingpin.”<sup>lxx</sup> The daily questioned the credibility of Japan’s assertion on the abduction issue, introducing that a missing man, with whom the police had raised the possibility of kidnapping by North Korea, was finally revealed to be at home.<sup>lxxi</sup> Without providing official reaction to Abe’s suggestion of holding a summit with Kim Jong-un, North Korea is focusing on blaming Japan for all sorts of things via state media.

### **Conclusion and Policy Implications**

Although normalization of relations is still the primary diplomatic objective for Japan and North Korea, that target has proved to be elusive. Triggered by the Three-Party Joint Declaration in 1990, Japan and North Korea discussed the normalization in the early 1990s, and later in the early 2000s after Koizumi had visited Pyongyang. Other issues always got in the way, however, the unresolved abduction issue and North Korea’s continuous development of nuclear and missile capabilities that could obliterate Japan.

Among the 17 abductees whom the Japanese government officially lists, North Korea identified 13 abductees but claimed that eight of them had died. Even though Kim Jong-il made an apology to Koizumi and promised a comprehensive investigation, such pledges are rarely kept by the DPRK, greatly disappointing Japan. Above all, North Korea’s unchanging aspiration to become a nuclear weapons power with missiles to deliver the loads further raised Japan’s distrust toward the regime. Starting with the launch of the Nodong short-range ballistic missile in 1993, Pyongyang has fired a number of mid-range and even ICBMs toward and even over the Japanese territory. Responding to this existential threat, Japan expanded the capabilities of the Self-Defense

Forces, expanded a ballistic missile defense program in cooperation with the United States, and improved the civil defense system.

Against that backdrop, the Abe administration has concentrated on resolving the abduction issue, consolidating its defense policy and ratcheting up economic sanctions on North Korea. Abe made an effort to resolve the abduction issue in more systemic and practical manners by establishing and rearranging governmental organizations. The Headquarters for the Abduction Issue led by the prime minister was developed soon after Abe's inauguration. In addition, the Abe administration has been trying to internationalize the abduction issue, emphasizing that the issue is a universal problem of the international community in terms of basic human rights violations. Abe himself has been addressing the abduction issue and calling for understanding and support whenever he has opportunities such as summit meetings.

Moreover, the Abe administration has consolidated its defense policy and improved Japan's defense program in the face of the increasing threat from North Korea. The Abe administration has developed various security policies and practices including Japan's first formal national security strategy and the establishment of the National Security Council. The U.S.-Japan Guidelines for Defense Cooperation was revised in 2015, defining a more flexible role for the JSDF. The Japanese government has also strengthened economic sanctions on North Korea whenever the regime conducted nuclear or missile tests. Abe emphasized consistent economic sanctions rather than a dialogue, considering that the United States had put pressures on Pyongyang under the term "fire and fury." However, as the situation suddenly reversed and North Korea began denuclearization negotiations with the United States, Abe offered Kim Jong-un a summit without preconditions to solve bilateral issues.

Meanwhile, North Korea has recognized Japan as a target for acquiring economic assistance though improving its nuclear and missile capabilities outweighs all other goals. With his summitry with South Korea and the U.S. yielding little results, though testing has stopped for three years, Kim Jong-un may next turn to Japan as a means of ending economic isolation and easing some sanctions. But resuming consultations on the abduction issue with Japan may be a deal-breaker. Abe in turn wants to begin a direct dialogue with Pyongyang if only to gain a role in the greater Korea problem.

At present, Japan has limited options, because it cannot place the abduction issue on the back burner for domestic political reasons. Kim Jong-un does not respond to Abe's offer to hold a summit without preconditions. Moreover, as the U.S-DPRK negotiations have stagnated, it is difficult to raise the abduction issue through Washington. Even if Kim opens the door to new talks, Japan will remain wary, since Pyongyang has broken so many promises in the past.

So, what to do? One possibility might be taking a dual-track approach: entering talks with the North without preconditions and separating the abductions from other political and diplomatic issues. Entrusting the abduction issue to the Red Cross agencies of both countries, tried before, might be one way to separate it off. But bilateral talks for normalization, for example, could easily get sidelined if the existential threat of nuclear weapons and missiles become entangled. Frankly, those major issues would have to be addressed by some sort of multilateral approach: either trilaterally (U.S.-Japan-ROK) or by resurrecting the Six Party Talks, which would involve China and Russia again.

Japan also needs to seek to repair its relations with South Korea. Since 2018, Japan has remained sidelined in diplomatic dialogue with North Korea. Recalling the situation in the late 1990s, Japan was able to play its first explicit role in the security of the Korean Peninsula by participating in the establishment of the Korean Peninsula Economic Development Organization (KEDO), while direct and political and military coordination with Seoul was rapidly growing.<sup>lxxii</sup> Given that President Moon Jae-in worked voluntarily as a mediator in enabling the Trump-Kim summit meetings, Japan could expect South Korea to play a similar mediating role in improving Japan-North Korea relations. Moreover, as South Korea has its own unresolved abductees issue, Japan could suggest a joint investigation – perhaps through the above mentioned International Red Cross.

The new U.S.-Japan Guidelines for Defense Cooperation state that Japan, joining the United States, would take a leading role in trilateral and multilateral cooperation with other Asia Pacific countries to contribute to peace, security, stability, and economic prosperity of the region and beyond.<sup>lxxiii</sup> Improvement of relations with North Korea could be one of the means to secure peace in the region. Accordingly, it seems necessary for Japan to look back on the track record of little progress in contacts with the DRPK for over 20 years, with the exception of Koizumi's extraordinary feats of diplomatic genius in 2002 and 2004. There should be some inspiration for

Japanese leaders like Abe in looking back at those two breakthroughs. But Abe's term in office is running short, and North Korea's belligerence keeps growing, the U.S. and Japanese governments should consult with each other, as well as South Korea, and consider pursuing a policy shift aimed at building peace on the Korean Peninsula before it is too late. Waiting for Pyongyang to carry out the next provocation is not an option.

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<sup>iv</sup> Christopher W. Hughes, *Japan’s Economic Power and Security: Japan and North Korea* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 83.

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<sup>x</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xi</sup> Kim, 24.

<sup>xii</sup> Kim, 6.

<sup>xiii</sup> Jackie Northam, “Relatives of Japanese Taken by North Korea Still Hope to Find Loved Ones,” *NPR*, May 7, 2016. <https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2016/05/07/477020330/relatives-of-japanese-taken-by-north-korea-still-hope-to-find-loved-ones>.

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<sup>xvi</sup> Kim, 24.

<sup>xvii</sup> Kim, 14.

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<sup>xix</sup> Northam, “Relatives of Japanese Taken by North Korea Still Hope to Find Loved Ones.”

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<sup>xxi</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xxii</sup> Terence Roehrig, *Japan, South Korea, and the United States Nuclear Umbrella* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 100.

<sup>xxiii</sup> Kim, 7.

<sup>xxiv</sup> Kim, 24.

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<sup>xxv</sup> Roehrig, 101.

<sup>xxvi</sup> Ibid.

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## **Poles Apart: Arctic Policies of the United States and Japan**

*Madeline Wiltse*

### **Introduction**

The Arctic is a region of ever-increasing importance both to the United States and to Japan. With the strength of the U.S.-Japan alliance on other fronts, there is plenty of room and reason for collaboration between the two nations in the Arctic. This paper explores opportunities for cooperation in the Arctic between the United States and Japan.

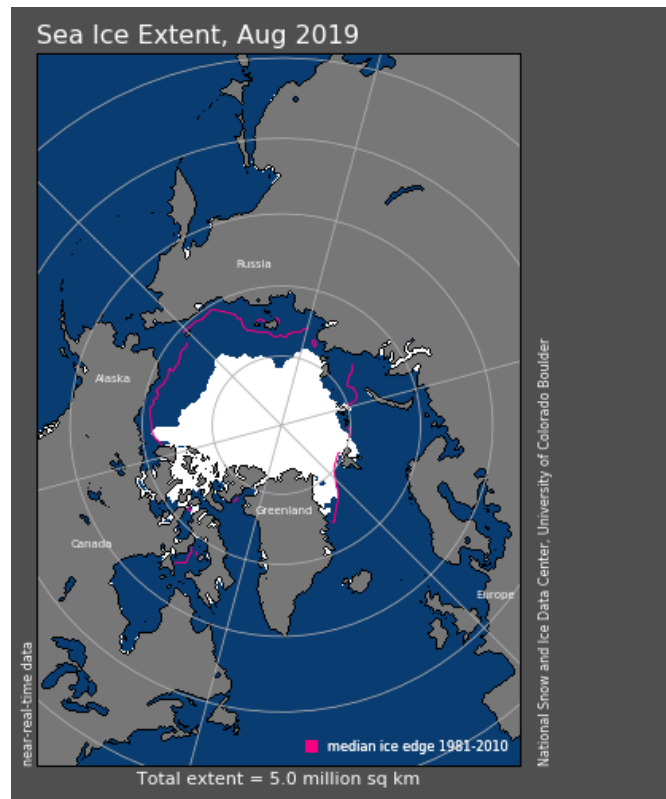
### **Stated Priorities**

The common thread in both the United States' and Japan's Arctic policies begins at the top, with their stated priorities. The vast majority of both nations' concerns fall into three categories of interests: economic, environmental, and geopolitical, though nuance and history both send them in different directions. Despite the very different places they end up in, they both contain the same foundational concerns that inform their decisions in many situations.

#### *Environmental*

From an environmental standpoint, the Arctic is one of the most important yet fragile regions of the world. In the summer, the Arctic Ocean absorbs much of the excess heat that the sun produces, and in the winter, the Arctic sea ice reflects much of the sunlight that reaches the Earth. However, in recent years the concentration of polar ice has decreased dramatically, which coincides with the rising global temperatures. This sensitivity to atmospheric changes, particularly man-made atmospheric changes, makes the region a valuable area for research, not only for climate scientists but for economic development. Additionally, the Northeast Passage, bordering Russia, and the Northwest Passage, bordering Canada and the United States, are both being monitored by Japan and the United States respectively, for the same reason. With the melting of the polar ice caps, both passages could become viable shipping routes during the summer months, as that is when the concentration of ice is at its lowest.

Figure 1. Arctic Sea Ice Extent Compared to Historic Median Edge, August 2019



(Source: National Snow and Ice Data Center, 2019)

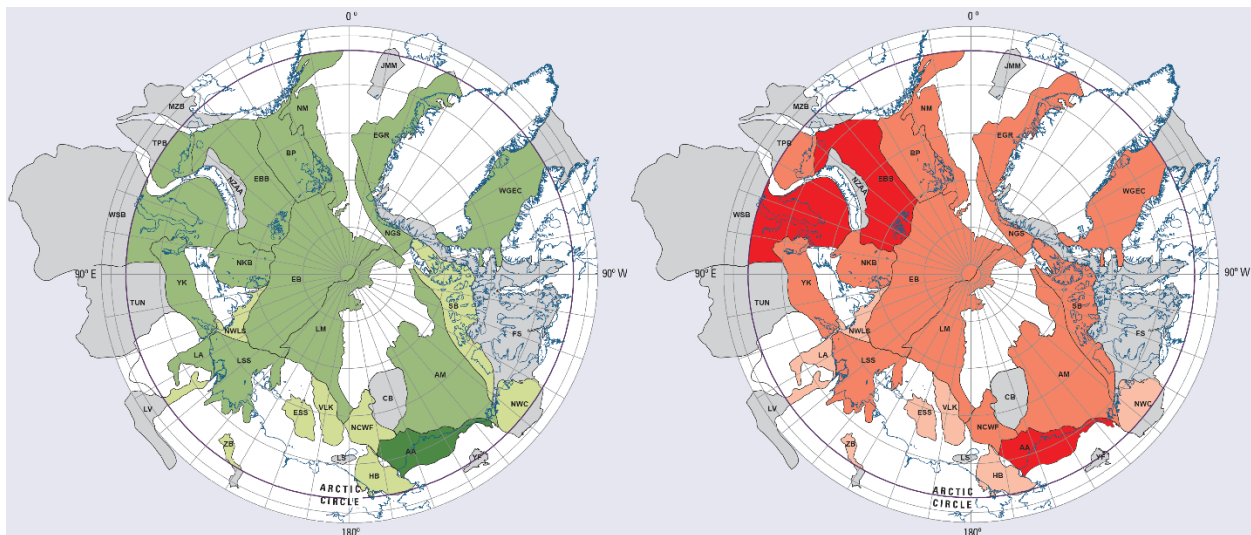
While the United States began with environmental concerns as a major factor in Arctic policy, this same consideration is no longer in place. The Trump administration has moved in the opposite direction, denying climate change and refusing mention of climate-based concerns to the point that in 2019, the eight-member Arctic Council couldn't release a joint statement for the first time in its 23-year history.<sup>i</sup> Joint statements are reliant upon consensus, and the United States refused to allow a statement in which climate change was mentioned.

Japan is not a member of the Arctic Council, but it has observer status. Its policy toward climate change and the Arctic is quite clear. In a study released by several ministries of the Japanese government in 2018, Japan explicitly highlighted the decreasing sea ice as an effect of global warming, and that it coincides with negative environmental circumstances affecting Japan.<sup>ii</sup> As such, the Japanese government believes that global warming, and the Arctic, is a world problem to be addressed, and not just one relevant to Arctic states.

## *Economic*

As a nation bordering the Arctic, the United States has an inherent interest and responsibility to protect that region. However, the economic opportunities found in the region are a driving factor of current U.S. arctic policy and not environmental considerations. In 2008, the U.S. Geological Survey made an estimate of the untapped resources found in the Arctic. Those estimates concluded that nearly 30% of the world's untapped natural gas reserves, and almost 13% of oil reserves are found in that region.<sup>iii</sup> Further, the survey listed Arctic Alaska as one of the primary locations for those reserves.

Figure 2. Estimated Concentrations of Untapped Oil (Left) and Natural Gas (Right) Found in the Arctic Circle



*(Source: US Geographic Survey, 2008)*

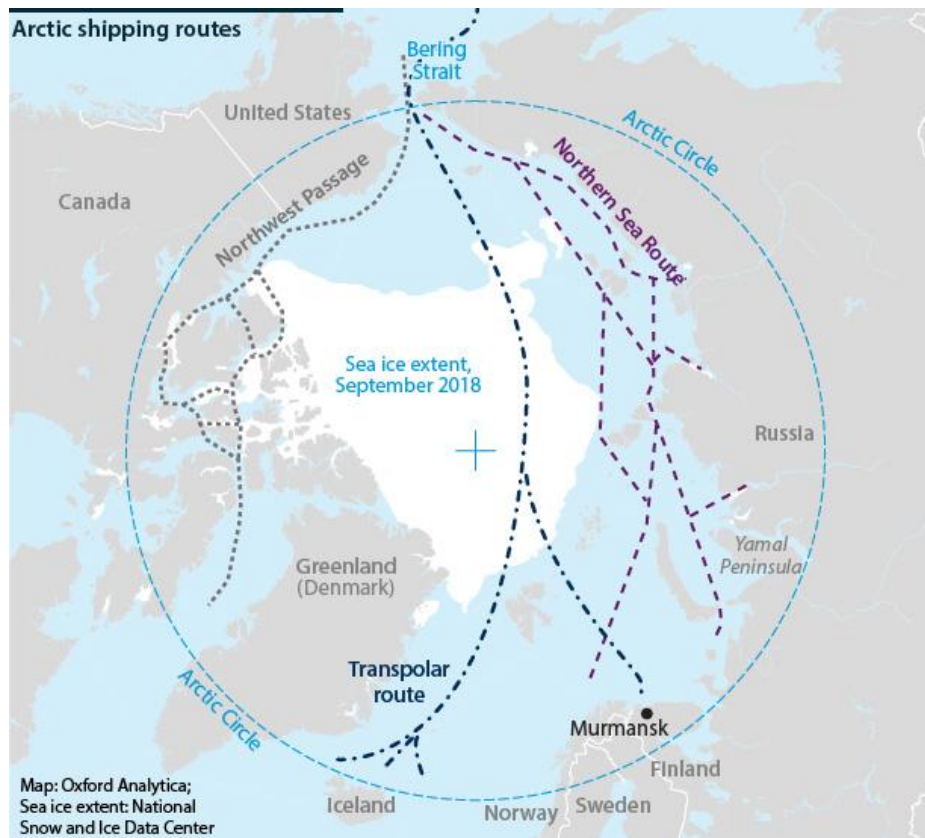
Japan is not an arctic nation, but it, too, desires access to those same resources. It like the U.S. considers the Arctic a valuable economic opportunity, specifically the opening of the Northeast Passage. The Northeast Passage is melting at a faster rate than the northwest, to the benefit of Japan. If successfully and sustainably developed, estimates indicate that the Northeast Passage could serve as an alternate route to Europe from Asia and cut shipping times in half.<sup>iv</sup> Japan wants to be part of that development.

## *Geopolitical*

In recent years, the geopolitical landscape of the Arctic has developed in ways that are concerning to the United States, particularly in the involvement of two nations in particular: Russia and China. For Russia, its role in that region stems from its being an Arctic state—almost half of the Arctic Coastline is part of Russia’s northern shore. The Russian government has increased its military presence in the Arctic region as well, some analysts calling it “Cold War-era levels of Arctic activity”.<sup>v</sup> With its increased military presence, Russia seeks to create a “zone of peace and cooperation” by leveraging its economic claims and protecting its interests, particularly in the development of oil resources in its arctic territory.<sup>vi</sup> The United States considers these actions to be needlessly intimidating, in an effort to push other nations out of the Arctic or force compliance in Russian standards.

Chinese interests in the Arctic are, like the United States, strongly economic in nature, but with an underlying aspect of control. In January 2018, China released a white paper on its Arctic policy. The document states that its goals are “to understand, protect, develop and participate in the governance of the Arctic, so as to safeguard the common interests of all countries and the international community in the Arctic, and promote sustainable development of the Arctic”.<sup>vii</sup> While similar in nature to other country’s statements on the Arctic, the direct implication is that China will in time have a leadership role, calling itself a ‘near-Arctic state’. The U.S. government is particularly concerned about the ‘polar silk road’, what the Chinese government calls an Arctic extension of its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) through the Northeast Passage.

Figure 3. Proposed Polar Silk Road Along the Northern Sea Route



(Source: Oxford Analytica, 2018)

While Japan is wary of Chinese expansion into the Arctic, geopolitically its concerns lie more with China's track record of disregard towards international law and maritime standards. The Arctic region is governed primarily by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), guaranteeing freedom of navigation. The Japanese government wants to ensure that it increases bilateral dialogues with Arctic States to maintain the current rules-based order.<sup>viii</sup> The concern is not as much about China's presence in the Arctic as a whole, but rather that China's presence follows the same rules that every other nation is a party to, to give every nation a chance to participate in the Arctic.

Despite these shared interests, the United States and Japan's Arctic policies have diverged in increasingly different directions in recent years, the United States focusing on the geopolitical, Japan focusing upon the environmental, and both interested in the economic potential of the region.

This does not mean their policies are incompatible, just that it takes a bit more cooperation and work to get them back to a viable collaborative medium.

## **Evolution of U.S. Arctic Policy**

It is important to note just how rapidly the U.S. government's approach to Arctic policy has evolved over the last decade. The vastly different approaches to the Arctic are a great signifier of just how different administrations can be, to the point that it is surprising to see that the two Arctic policies came from the same country, less than a decade apart.

### *Obama's Arctic Policy*

The Obama-era Arctic policy operated under a proactive, whole-of-government implementation plan, targeting long-term challenges that hindered the development of and operations in the region. The administration listed these challenges as follows in the National Strategy for the Arctic Region:

...Maintaining open sea lanes for global commerce and scientific research, charting and mapping, providing search-and-rescue (SAR) services, and developing capabilities to prevent, contain, and respond to oil spills and accidents – by increasing knowledge and integrating Arctic management.<sup>ix</sup>

The critical lack of infrastructure and emergency response notifications or procedures makes the Arctic a difficult region to work in, and the Obama administration sought to improve them. To accomplish these goals President Obama decided that the United States needed to follow the same guiding principles found in the Arctic Council; that relationship was a vital component of U.S. participation in the Arctic as a whole. While the Arctic council is the governing body, it does not have legislative powers or the ability to enforce the rules and norms it creates; that aspect relies upon the council members to cooperate peacefully to maintain the stability of the region. To that end, President Obama also believed that the United States needed to accede to the UNCLOS, because the United States is not currently party to the convention, and is the only Arctic nation who is not. He stated that accession would “maximize legal certainty and best secure international recognition of our sovereign rights with respect to the U.S. extended continental shelf in the Arctic and elsewhere”.<sup>x</sup> Territorial concerns notwithstanding, accession into the UNCLOS would also have reassured U.S. allies to its commitment to the maritime norms found in the Arctic. This

particular goal did not come to fruition, but the United States did cooperate internationally in other ways; often in Arctic Council working groups, covering topics like oil pollution, fishery regulation, and environmental concerns. The United States also led the SAR exercise Arctic Zephyr, and in 2015 the U.S. Coast created the Arctic Coast Guard Forum.<sup>xi</sup> This organization gathered the coast guards of six of the seven other Arctic nations, to promote cooperation on maritime regulations.

With all these values in mind, the Obama administration released over the course of his second term the National Strategy for the Arctic Region, the January 2014 Implementation Plan for the National Strategy, Executive Order 13689 in January of 2015, and a ‘year-in-review’ document in March of 2016, all coinciding with the United States’ heading the Arctic Council in 2015-2017. The national strategy put forth the goals for all subsequent documents, categorized along three ‘lines of effort’: ‘Advance United States Security Interests’, ‘Pursue Responsible Arctic Region Stewardship’, and ‘Strengthen International Cooperation’; the first line of effort primarily served as a support for the other two.<sup>xii</sup> At this point in time, the primary security interest in the Arctic was Russian expansionism, but it was not a threat worth worrying excessively about.

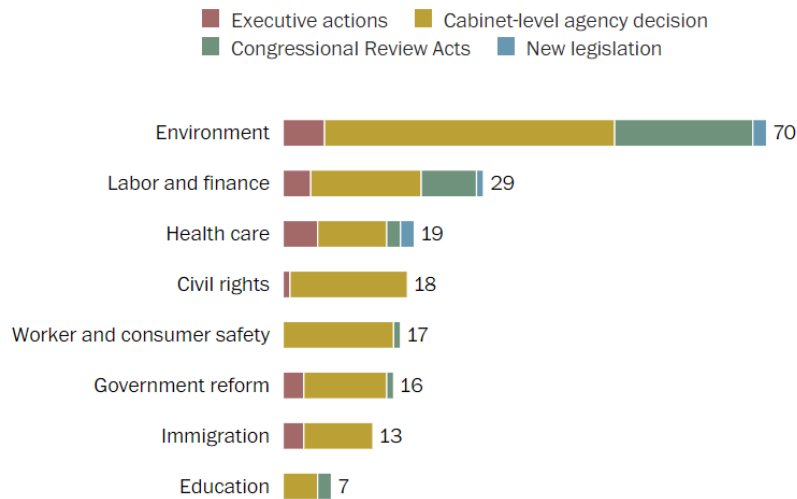
Where the strategy showed what the United States wanted to do, the implementation plan offered the how, with a list of 36 different policy goals requiring not only the participation of over 25 different U.S. government agencies, but also that those agencies “work with other nations, industry stakeholders, non-governmental organizations, and research partners” in order to achieve those goals.<sup>xiii</sup> Further, the implementation plan solidified the environmental preservation focus as well, a priority stated by Obama since before he took office. As a restriction on the implementation, everything done to achieve the listed policy goals had to comply with Executive Order 13653, released by the White House the year before on ‘preparing the United States for the impact of climate change’.<sup>xiv</sup> The next phase of the implementation plan involved another executive order: Executive Order 13689—Enhancing Coordination of National Efforts in the Arctic.<sup>xv</sup> To help consolidate the work done by the various agencies, the executive order created the Arctic Executive Steering Committee (AESC), to serve as an oversight organization, and to create yearly reports about the progress on the implementation plan. It only managed to put out one report to Congress before the administration changed, in March of 2016. This ‘year-in-review’ document outlined every step taken to achieve the policy goals written in the implementation plan, as well as created an appendix to update the plan to reflect these improvements. In all, Obama’s Arctic

policy was well rounded, guided by the AESC to build a reliable road map for the incoming President to follow should they so choose. The Trump administration, however, did not choose to follow this road map.

*Trump’s Arctic ‘Policy’*

Compared to the Obama administration, President Trump’s policy style is far more reactive and disjointed. For the first two years of his term, the Arctic barely registered as a concern, and faded away as a policy priority. In fact, the president’s primary concern has been in fulfilling his campaign promise of undoing every Obama decision he possibly can. From 2017-2018 alone, he overturned or attempted to overturn nearly 200 of the Obama Administration’s rules and policies, spanning eight policy areas. Of that 200, nearly 70 related to the environment, and much of the Obama administration’s Arctic policies were likewise environmental in nature.<sup>xvi</sup> Additionally, while the Trump administration did not explicitly end Executive Order 13689, the steering committee has not been used since he took office and has faded to a state of dormancy. The position of U.S. Special Representative for the Arctic has likewise remained unfilled. The centralized Arctic policy touted by President Obama has been cast aside, leaving individual agencies to decide whether to implement any of the strategies in the Arctic.

Figure 4. President Trumps 2017-2018 Attempts to Overturn Obama-Era Legislation



(Source: “How Trump is Rolling Back Obama’s Legacy,” *The Washington Post*, 2018)



The second focus of the Trump administration has been on economic development, and this applies to the Arctic, as well. One of the first things President Trump did was sign Executive Order 13795 on April 28, 2017, titled ‘Implementing an America-First Offshore Energy Strategy’.<sup>xvii</sup> This order took specific aim at protections in the Chukchi and Beaufort seas, as well as any other Obama-era environmental protection regulation, in order to use the protected lands for resource exploration. A later document also attempted to open Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) land for oil leasing, but both this and the executive order were overturned in 2019.<sup>xviiiix</sup> Despite the setback, the administration continues to push to open the Arctic lands and waters up for leasing, resource development, and drilling. President Trump’s focus is on his campaign promises: building American businesses, strengthening the energy sector, and making America ‘great’ again. The environment is not a priority, nor its protection considered a necessity, which is antithetical to everything that the Arctic Council stands for.

Interest in the Arctic picked up again following the increase in activity from China and Russia, particularly China’s Polar Silk Road development. Now that the Trump Administration is treating the region as a concern, larger forums like the Arctic Council are another means of pushing the United States’ agenda regardless of the relation to the forum itself. In May 2019, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo began this trend with a speech at the Arctic Council Ministerial, the majority of which consisted of a diatribe against Chinese claims of being a ‘near-Arctic state’, and another pointed statement against the increasing Russian military activity in the Arctic circle.<sup>xx</sup> Later that year, then Energy Secretary Rick Perry spoke at the October Arctic Circle Assembly. Despite the conservation focus of the overall forum, the Perry speech centered around the energy resources that could be tapped of oil and natural gas, and another jab at China, saying that the United States’ goal is “successfully resisting those countries seeking to dominate the Arctic from the outside”.<sup>xxi</sup> The Arctic is less a peaceful region for the United States than it is a battleground.

This battleground mentality is best described by President Trump’s infamous proposal to Denmark to purchase Greenland. The country was in complete shock. Greenland is in a strategically valuable location in the Arctic and has unmined reserves of rare-earth metals. The United States still has Thule Air Base in Greenland, as well, its farthest north space surveillance and missile defense outpost. However, the present concern is about growing Russian and Chinese interest and investment in the country. In 2019, the Pentagon released a ‘China Military Power

Report’, which stated that, “the government of Denmark has publicly expressed concern about China’s interest in Greenland”; all of the above likely prompted the Trump Administration’s off-the-cuff suggestion.<sup>xxii</sup> The rejection resulted in the planned diplomatic trip to Denmark being canceled, and now the shift has turned to diplomatic relations with Greenland itself. Within the State Department’s 2021 budget is a request for \$587,000, in order to “establish a permanent diplomatic presence in Greenland”.<sup>xxiii</sup> This would include building a consulate, to deter Russian and Chinese involvement with a greater U.S. presence in the region.

### *The Military*

Throughout both administrations, the involvement of the military has been consistently powerful. Unlike many other agencies, the Department of Defense in the United States has the prestige, the funding, and the personnel to pursue much of its policy aims with less inhibition from Congress. The military is always a priority, and the biggest difference is how the military is utilized. For the Obama administration, the military served as a tool for policy, serving as a supplementary agency for much of the Implementation plan’s policy directions. For the Trump administration, the military serves as the primary maker of policy.

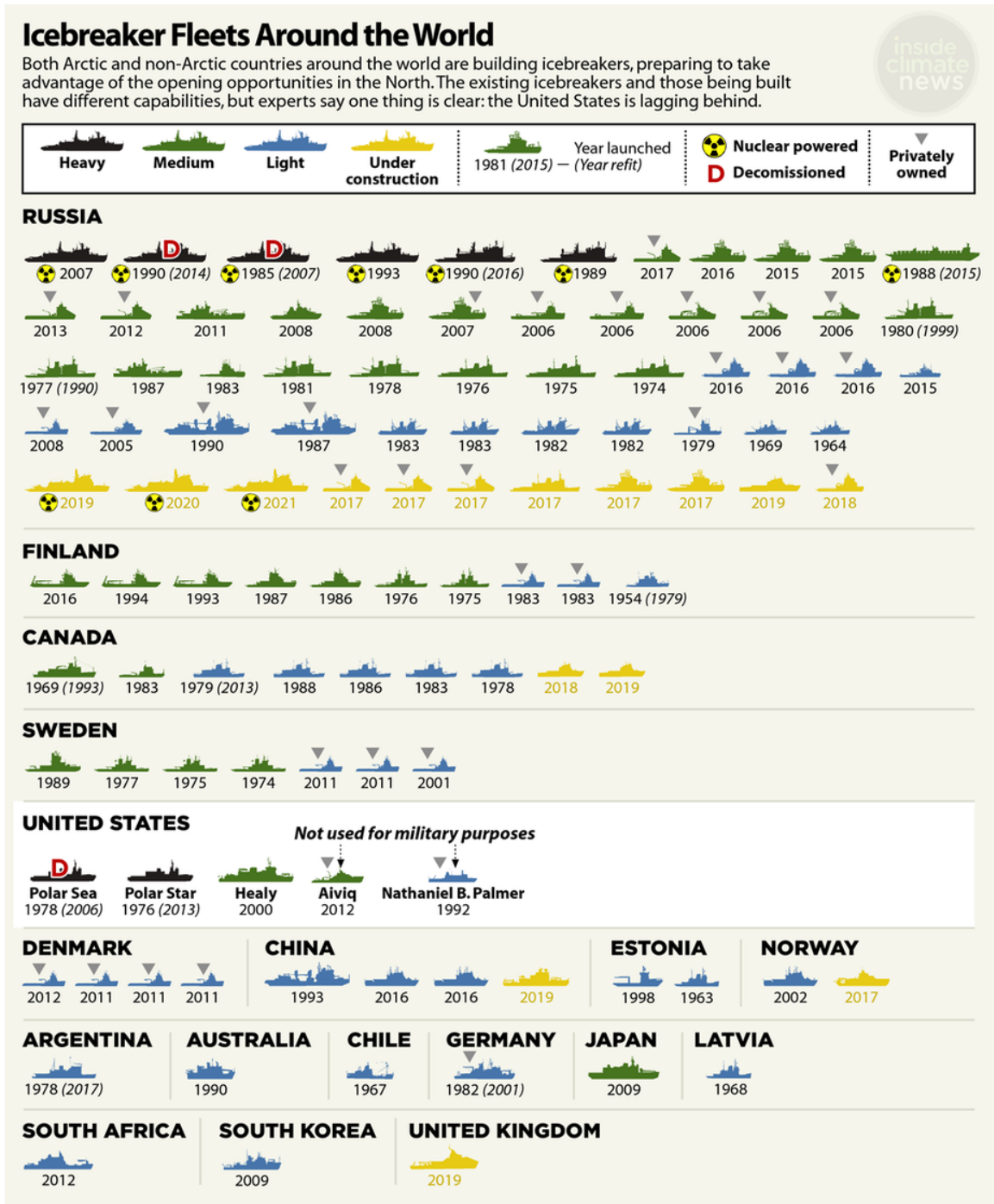
Where the White House has not released an Arctic Strategy, the Department of Defense, and each individual branch of the military did, and the DoD has a precedent for it going back until 2013. The 2019 iteration of this document, unlike in previous years, primarily focused on the security dilemma the United States was most concerned about in the Arctic, including the military activity from Russia and the Chinese Polar Silk Road, which the DoD considered another instance of China leveraging its economic power to bend other nations to its will.<sup>xxiv</sup> Also, unlike previous years, the document neglected to mention the positive relationships that the United States has in the Arctic, nor does it make any mention of climate change, no doubt reflecting the influence of the White House. Beyond those revisions, however, the only major development found in the 2019 document that the 2016 strategy omitted was the inclusion of China as a threat to the region.

Even before the updated strategy, however, the military was pushing forward with Arctic policy goals. First, the Navy announced in May 2018 that it was going to re-establish the 2nd fleet, which had patrolled the North Atlantic to counter Soviet naval forces during the Cold War. The Navy announced it fully re-established on December 31, 2019.<sup>xxv</sup> The Navy has also expressed the desire to pursue more Freedom of Navigation of Operations (FONOP) exercises in the Arctic, but

this is currently unfeasible. The Navy does not currently possess the funding, despite the considerable amount of money going to DoD, nor the special ships capable of handling the treacherously icy Arctic waters.

The only branch of the military with much currently built up to handle the Arctic is the Coast Guard. The U.S. Coast Guard currently maintains only two icebreakers: The Polar Star and Healy. As shown in the graph on the next page, Russian icebreakers vastly outnumber the United States, and China even possesses more ships with icebreaking capacities to navigate the Arctic than the United States does. Worse, the icebreakers the United States does possess have been refit or are very close to the intended lifespan; another icebreaker, built at the same time as the Polar Star, the Polar Sea, has already broken down and was cannibalized for parts to do the refitting of the Polar Star. The Coast Guard established what is called the ‘Polar Security Cutter Program’ several years back in the hopes of receiving funding to replace and renew the aged fleet, and in the fiscal year 2020 funding program Congress finally granted nearly \$1.2 billion, not only to fund the first new icebreaker, but also to partially fund the building of a second one.<sup>xxvi</sup> It is important to note that these icebreakers are not exclusively used in the Arctic; in fact, the majority of their operations thus far have been in the Antarctic.

Figure 5. The Number of Icebreakers Possessed by Country



SOURCE: U.S. Coast Guard

PAUL HORN / InsideClimate News

(Source: Inside Climate News, 2018)

The ultimate struggle that the United States currently faces is the fact that, with President Trump at the helm, U.S. priorities no longer match up to its Arctic neighbors. The former advisor to the chairman of the Arctic Council, Timo Koivurova, provided a first-hand account of what working with the United States was like for Finland as it headed the council, and the picture is quite grim. He outlined numerous difficulties in negotiation, finally outright stating: “It is a fact that the Trump administration is against exactly those climate change and multilateral frameworks that are at the core of how the Arctic Council functions”.<sup>xxvii</sup> In the Arctic, where cooperation is key, the United States stands alone in its endeavors. This is not just a problem for the United States moving forward, but to its allies, and to the Arctic as a region.

### **Japanese Arctic Policy**

The Japanese system of Arctic policy plays far more similarly with the Obama Administration’s plans, but from an outsider’s perspective. Japan has no geographic ties to the Arctic, but because of its common interests, it is a frequent participant in the Arctic Council and in the many research activities that go on in the region. Additionally, the country’s ‘peace constitution’ further encourages a scientific approach to international collaboration. As such, its Arctic policy past to present has been robust.

#### *Japan as a ‘First’*

Japan is one of the longest-running participants in polar affairs, having been one of the original countries to sign the Antarctic Treaty in 1959. This is especially true in environmental research. Tokyo first proposed its National Institute of Polar Research (NIPR) in 1961, with the center itself being built in 1973. In 1990, however, a specific wing dedicated to Arctic research was added on to the original floorplan.<sup>xxviii</sup> This foundation set off a chain of ‘firsts’ in terms of participation in Arctic affairs. Japan became the first non-Arctic nation to have its own research station in 1991, placing the center in Svalbard, Norway’s Ny-Ålesund research village.<sup>xxix</sup> While the research station is not staffed year-round, it is a permanent fixture in the village and frequently used by Japanese researchers. In 1992, Japan joined the International Arctic Science Committee (IASC), a research organization whose purpose is to describe, at an interdisciplinary level, what role the Arctic plays in the world.<sup>xxx</sup> It was the first non-Arctic nation to do so, only two years after its founding.

Japan continued its work and research, and in 2013, a trifecta of important events happened. First, Japan's petition to join the Arctic Council as an observer state was accepted, and it joined along with Italy, China, India, Singapore, and South Korea.<sup>xxxii</sup> Observer nations have no sway in the more legislative aspects of the council, but they can participate in working groups and other research-based endeavors. Second, Japan appointed its Ambassador for Arctic Affairs (now simply called the Arctic Ambassador), Masuo Nishibayashi.<sup>xxxiii</sup> He was later followed by Kazuo Shiraishi, and then the current ambassador, Ms. Mari Miyoshi. The Arctic ambassadors usually attend Arctic Council meetings and make speeches, as well as meet with other ambassadors from other countries. Finally, the Arctic Circle Assembly, an organization dedicated to research towards the development of a sustainable Arctic, had its first meeting, which Japan attended.<sup>xxxiii</sup> In 2015 Japan saw a return on its research investment, getting to host the most important international conference on Arctic research, the Arctic Science Summit Week (ASSW), in Toyama, Japan, the same year the Japanese government began its Arctic Challenge for Sustainability Project (ArCS).<sup>xxxiv</sup> In terms of significant research-based events, the most recent two arrived in 2018. The Third Basic Plan on Ocean Policy was approved in May, and was the first time in which the Arctic was explicitly stated to be a main aspect of Japanese foreign policy. In November, Foreign Minister Tarō Kōno delivered a keynote speech at the Arctic Circle Assembly.<sup>xxxv</sup> This job is normally allocated to the Ambassador to the Arctic; this was the first time a Japanese cabinet member had ever spoken to the assembly, speaking on the future of Japan's Arctic policy.

### *Modern Japanese Arctic Policy*

Japan has long established itself as a reliable and strong force in Arctic research, and that has bled in more recent years into its actual government policies. Its modern Arctic policies begin with the 2015 Arctic Policy document, proposed by the Headquarters for Ocean Policy. The plan cited the potential impact to the climate and the growing economic opportunities both caused by the melting sea ice as reason for the policy report. While many recommendations were stated, the primary ones were to:

Give full consideration to the Arctic environment and ecosystem, which is fragile, with a lower ability to recover; ensure the rule of law, and promote international cooperation in a peaceful and orderly manner; Pay full attention to security developments in the Arctic; aim for economic and social compatibility with climate and environmental changes; and seek

possible economic chances for the use of the Arctic Sea Route and for the development of resources.<sup>xxxvi</sup>

It is notable to compare this document to the Obama administration's National Strategy for the Arctic Region, which cites many similar goals and desired outcomes, despite being released two years apart. The Japanese government's considerations in the Arctic have always been very on par with that of many of the Arctic nations.

2015 also saw the creation of the ArCS project, which ended in March 2020. As stated in their final report, the goal of the ArCS project was twofold: first, to pursue fruitful research through which to make recommendations to the various stakeholders that made this project possible, to allow them to maintain sustainable development of the Arctic. Second, was to "promote the presence of Japan within various international legal discussions".<sup>xxxvii</sup> Though this purpose is often not explicitly stated, it can be inferred that much of Japan's intergovernmental collaborations have this purpose in mind. The report particularly emphasizes the importance of a multidisciplinary approach to Arctic research. True, effective strategy in the Arctic is argued to be most powerful when policy, security, sustainable development, and environmental considerations are considered. The projects involved covered all manner of subjects related to Japanese environmental concerns, from polar ice research to investigating possible accessible offshore oil reserves that Japan could invest in.

The current basis for Japanese Arctic policy is the 2018-released Third Basic Plan on Ocean Policy. The plan focuses on the areas where Japan excels, particularly technology. It calls for Japanese businesses to lead the way in world innovation of marine technologies, and for Japan to push to maintain the established rule of law through UNCLOS. Other notable policies highlighted included: special cooperation with the Norwegian government to maintain the Ny-Ålesund research station, consideration of building an Arctic-specific Research ship with icebreaker capacities, increasing bilateral dialogues with Arctic States to maintain the current rules-based order, continuing the Trilateral High-Level Dialogue on the Arctic among Japan, China and South Korea, and encouraging the Japanese business community to invest more in the Arctic and the Arctic sea routes.

To explain a bit further, Japan currently possesses only one ship with icebreaker capacities: the *Shirase*. However, this is a polar icebreaker, rather than an Arctic icebreaker, meaning that the

ship travels both to the Arctic and to the Antarctic for research purposes. As with the United States, this icebreaker is also well beyond its estimated lifespan, and a partner icebreaker will be necessary not only for more focus on Arctic research, but also to replace the *Shirase* when it inevitably permanently breaks. For the Japanese business community, there are currently too many uncertainties to call the Arctic a sure investment. Additionally, in the same way that the United States is concerned, Japan is likewise worried about the lack of infrastructural development for commercial shipping in the Arctic. Until such projects are funded and underway, Japanese engagement in the Arctic beyond singular large investments on foreign assets is unlikely.

Japan's Diplomatic Yearbook 2019 has a section in particular on the Arctic, reaffirming the adherence to the Third Basic Plan, highlighting international activities as well as a highlight of Foreign Minister Kono's keynote speech at the Arctic Circle in October of 2018.<sup>xxxviii</sup> While the section was brief, it mentioned bilateral meetings Ambassador to the Arctic held with Denmark and the EU, some further findings of the ArCS initiative, the trilateral dialogue with China and the ROK, and research stations that Japan researched in (including the United States, Canada, Russia, Norway, and Greenland).

Japan's reach is limited, in part by its lack of military that the United States often emphasizes with its own. As such, Japan's proposed actions all center around research and data-sharing with any nation they collaborate with, as well as stating the desire to establish more research stations in other Arctic states. Japan also hoped to expand upon the rights and abilities of observer states in the Arctic Council, a move the United States is entirely against due to the rights then being extended to China.

#### *Japan as a Global Collaborator*

As a global collaborator, Japan is very proactive with the Arctic nations, finding opportunities with as many as possible. One of the more prolific non-research collaborations is with Russia, on the Yamal Liquid Natural Gas (LNG) project. Russia's Yamal peninsula is situated well within the Arctic circle, and the project drills and exports LNG. The primary investors in this project is Novatek (the largest natural gas producer in Russia, 50.1% stake), Total (a gas and energy producer/supplier, 20% stake), China Natural Petroleum Corporation (CNPC, 20% stake), and the Silk Road Fund (an investment fund for the belt and road initiative, 9.9% stake), and utilizes the Northeast Passage to ship its products. Since 2017 the Yamal LNG project has shipped



20 million tons of LNG.<sup>xxxix</sup> Though Japan does not have a percentage stake in the project, the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC), an export credit agency and policy-based financial institution, extended the project a 200 million Euro loan to finance the main drilling facility.

Figure 6. Map of Yamal LNG Shipping

**LNG transportation routes and distances from Yamal LNG**



Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration based on Novatek and IHS.

(Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration, 2019)

In exchange, the project earmarked some of the drilled LNG to be exported to Japan.<sup>xi</sup> This is far from the only interaction Japan has had with Russia. During Foreign Minister Kōno’s speech, he congratulated the Japan Oil, Gas and Metals National Corporation (JOGMEC) and Novatek for signing a Memorandum of Understanding, with the hopes of increasing Japanese and Russian economic cooperation in the Arctic.<sup>xli</sup> Japan sees Russia as particularly critical in the economic development of the Northeast Passage, in much the same way that China does.

Beyond Russia and beyond the previously listed engagements, since 2013 JOGMEC has also been pursuing exploring petroleum resources in Greenland, collaborating with the Greenland

Petroleum Exploration Company.<sup>xlii</sup> The project appears to be ongoing. In November of 2020, Japan is going to host the 3rd Arctic Science Ministerial with Iceland. The ministerial is a newer research-based collaboration with Arctic and Non-Arctic States, stemming from the White House Ministerial that President Obama founded in September 2016.

Where the United States is currently unable or unwilling to step up in the Arctic region, Japan has been more than willing to dive in in any way possible and has shown no indication of slowing down any time soon. As one of the most active non-Arctic states and a powerful force in research, Japan is a valuable resource and asset that should be pursued, as much of the other Arctic nations do.

### **Past Collaboration**

While Japan cooperates with many nations in the Arctic, and the United States has made efforts in the past to collaborate with other Arctic nations, the two countries have not participated in much bilaterally. The only large-scale collaboration between the United States and Japan on a subject related to the Arctic is in the foundation of the International Arctic Research Center (IARC), at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. The IARC was founded in 1999 at UAF through an agreement between Japan and the United States “to demonstrate our ability to solve, jointly, problems that are beyond what any one nation can address” as outlined in the agreement signed by President Clinton and Prime Minister Hashimoto in 1997.<sup>xliii</sup> The IARC serves as one of the major central locations for American Arctic research to this day, but is largely funded by local government and private donors.

Beyond the IARC, however, collaboration is rather scarce between the two nations. At think-tanks that do research on the Arctic, Japanese researchers write papers on the Arctic, but they are not normally part of the regular staff. Rather, U.S.-Japan cooperation is often as part of a larger group. In 2015, this included the Obama administration’s White House Arctic Science Ministerial, the first White House hosted a meeting of science ministers, indigenous groups, and interest groups from around the world. It was meant to encourage research, collaboration, and data-sharing in the Arctic.<sup>xliv</sup> Japan participated in that first meeting, and with the two ministerials that occurred following it, though the United States has not. Additionally, the Sasakawa Peace Foundation, an organization dedicated to bettering Japan’s international relationships, including the U.S.-Japan relationship, is helping run the Arctic Circle’s Japan Forum in November of this

year. Japan cooperates with the United States in Arctic Council working groups, but there simply has not been much for the two nations to do together, despite the common interests. However, there is a lot of potential to do so. If both nations can get past the obstacles that hinder them, the United States and Japan could pool their resources to make great strides in Arctic research and infrastructural development.

## **Obstacles**

With the current administration, and the current opinions in the United States, collaboration with Japan is a difficult undertaking. First, the Trump administration's rhetoric against China has been unintentionally charged against nations like Japan as well. The United States is extremely against expanding on the abilities of observer nations in the Arctic Council and has repeatedly made negative statements about non-Arctic countries encroaching upon Arctic matters. While the more obvious target of this language is China, the use of this language also creates exclusivity against Japan as well, who that language may often also apply to, despite following the rule of law and contributing arguably more frequently to the Arctic's governance than the United States has.

The second problem is the current anti-climate change stance of the Trump administration. If the United States couldn't even come up with a joint statement at the Arctic Council ministerial last May because they refused to sign anything with language about climate change, it's going to be extremely difficult to get anything going right now with Japan. Unlike the United States, Japan's focus is on climate change and climate research, which aligns far more with what the Arctic Council typically stands for. The final problem to be overcome is the current disregard for alliances that the United States displays. The United States is not currently in a mindset that is conducive to collaborative work, and the administration holds very little respect for the longstanding relationships the United States has built not only in the Arctic but around the world.

All of these problems are significant obstacles to be overcome, but only if the status quo continues for four more years. Should another candidate take office, the demographics of congress change, or values shift in any way towards the Obama-era regulations once more, reaching out for Japanese cooperation once more becomes not only viable, but with proper reforms, it could be a likely next step.

## **Recommendations**

There are a considerable number of things the United States must do in order to open up to Japanese cooperation, and admittedly very little Japan may need to do in return. Quite frankly, Japan has and continues to be heading in the right direction, and its primary concern is, as many situations in Japan are, a need for more resources and more funding for its research. Much of these recommendations are unfortunately dependent upon a change in the American government in order to be implemented, as a change of heart from the Trump Administration is highly unlikely.

First, the United States needs to revive the AESC. The Arctic is a vast and very complicated region, whose problems require the cooperation of numerous agencies to be truly effective. The Obama administration assigned tasks to over 25 different U.S. government agencies alone, not including the non-governmental organizations, indigenous groups, and other interested parties. The steering committee is vital in that regard, because the many disjointed projects require oversight and consolidation to turn their actions into a coherent policy to be exported abroad.

Second, the United States should increase funding to the IARC, and resume the White House Arctic Science Ministerials, or resume involvement in the spinoff Arctic Science Ministerials that Japan is helping host. The IARC is the international hub for U.S. Arctic Research, and as such it should have more resources at its disposal to further its research. The White House Ministerial gave the government a stronger connection to the research being done and offered a diplomatic opportunity to welcome in these other nations and show U.S. commitment to the Arctic. With the shaky ground the United States currently stands on, both to its alliances and to its convictions as an Arctic nation to do what is truly best for the Arctic, resuming this involvement in whatever form possible is a strong move from the public relations perspective.

Finally, and perhaps most important, the United States and Japan should collaborate to increase investment in Arctic infrastructure. Research in the poles is quite difficult because of the long distances traveled, cold and ice conditions, poor communications network, lack of resources, lack of infrastructure, and lack of emergency response systems. There is a strong need for development of the region in those ways, and as it currently stands, China is the one filling that void. China frequently participates in projects mapping the Arctic and has a larger fleet of icebreakers than both the United States and Japan combined. Both nations are concerned about this increased presence, and if both nations work together, they could not only help develop the

Arctic into a less dangerous environment for ships, but they could possibly serve as a deterrent to the Chinese presence in the region.

## **Conclusion**

The importance of the Arctic is only going to grow as the years progress. The United States and Japan have many assets to offer one another when it comes to this region, and their overarching common interests further encourage the two nations to converse on this topic. While it is dependent upon a new administration and a revival of past actions, collaboration is not only possible, it is recommended.

## ENDNOTES

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## Is a Free and Open Indo-Pacific a Strategy or Illusion?

*Yu Inagaki*

### Introduction

Since the end of the Cold War, the U.S. has been the dominant power in maintaining the international order, characterized by extensive *international* cooperation on security, nonproliferation, counterterrorism, counterpiracy, and ending civil wars or regional conflict. This basically unipolar system, however, has been changing in recent years due to the rise of China. This makes Japan, which has benefited from the international liberal order and has ensured its security through its alliance with the U.S., face a new international environment. In this situation, the administration of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (2012-) has promoted the Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) strategy (the Japanese government now uses “initiative” instead of strategy, as later described) as a new policy orientation to protect Japanese interests. In tandem, the U.S. has also started to focus on the Indo-Pacific as an important strategic theater to deal with China’s rise.

This paper explores what the U.S. and Japan have done—or have not done—under the FOIP, so that we can judge whether it is an effective strategy or not. In the first section, I compare Japan’s FOIP and the U.S. version. This is important because the success of their respective strategies depends on to what extent the two countries share the goal and the means to reach it. Japan and the U.S. share a basic perception of China, but they take different approaches to achieve their policy ends. The second section looks at what Japan and the U.S. have done, especially in the military and infrastructure-related spheres. Based on that, this paper argues that FOIP has worked as an “idea” or “norm” to promote policy coordination among like-minded countries in each sphere despite some differences in national interests. The third section, however, states that FOIP has not worked effectively as a strategy to counter China and may in fact have a negative effect on U.S. competition with China over hegemony in the region. Moreover, other countries, such as India, Australia, and those in Southeast Asia, do not want to be involved in the competition between the U.S. and China over regional hegemony.

This paper also looks at a new dimension, the cyber domain, which has ushered in even more severe competition in the Indo-Pacific. The fourth section provides some policy implications, including the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic, still ravaging the globe when this paper was

written. The more U.S.-Japan competition intensifies, the more Japan will face a strategic dilemma between balancing and engagement. In conclusion, the FOIP has contributed to the reconstruction of the geopolitical framework in Asia, influencing strategic thinking, but it does not have enough power or institutional structure to affect the balance of power.

### **U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy**

America's Indo-Pacific strategy is based primarily on its security concerns – a reaction to ongoing change in the regional security environment. U.S. commercial interest in Asia dates back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but was not made a strategic priority not until after the Pacific War. Still, during the Cold War, the main concern was not Asia but the Soviet Union. NATO was the top priority. China was not then seen as much of a threat for the U.S., and for many years, the U.S. sought engagement with China both to keep it from linking up to the USSR, as well as to urge it to become a responsible member (“stakeholder”) in the international liberal order. For a while after the Cold War, when the international system was seen as a unipolar world led by the U.S., security focus shifted from state-to-state competition to regional conflicts and counterterrorism in the Middle East and South Asia, especially after 9.11.

This situation, however, has been changing as China rapidly rose as a global economic and regional military power. As a result, the administration of President Barack Obama started to refocus on the Asia-Pacific region under the so-called rebalancing strategy. With this new strategy, the U.S. sought to intensify bilateral ties with Asian countries and invest more effort to build Asia's regional order.<sup>i</sup> Its policy, however, still had an element of engagement with China to try to embrace it in the international liberal order.<sup>ii</sup>

Today, the Trump administration has taken a more aggressive policy toward China, and China has responded the same way. As the latest National Security Strategy (NSS) and National Defense Strategy describe, the U.S. now perceives the security environment as a reemergence of long-term, strategic competition with China and Russia, as “revisionist” powers.<sup>iii</sup> Some of the contributing factors have been China's maritime and territorial expansion in the South China Sea, the U.S.' massive trade deficit, and U.S. concerns over technology outflow. Although the U.S. has security concerns with Russia, Iran, and especially North Korea, the “new Cold war” with China occupies the most policy attention.<sup>iv</sup> The term “Indo-Pacific” was introduced in the NSS, which states, for example, “a geopolitical competition between free and repressive visions of world order

is taking place in the Indo-Pacific region.” The report emphasizes that China’s actions in military, economy, and infrastructure threaten regional order and American interests.<sup>v</sup>

Rex Tillerson, then secretary of State, criticized China’s behavior in the region in a 2017 speech at CSIS, arguing that the U.S. would cooperate with other democratic countries, including Japan and India, to protect a rules-based order.<sup>vi</sup> Such harsh policy toward China comes from a conviction that the conventional wisdom that the more the U.S. engages with China, the more China would become a country respecting the international liberal order is wrong. At the same time, the U.S. sees India, another emerging power, as an important partner to deal with China’s rise. That is why the Indo-Pacific instead of Asia-Pacific became the new geopolitical concept. The fact that the US Pacific Command (USPACOM) changed to the US Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM) shows how the U.S. sees the region now.

In addition, Washington has issued two strategic reports about the Indo-Pacific; one is the Pentagon’s “Indo-Pacific Strategy Report”, and the other is the State Department’s “A Free and Open Indo-Pacific: Advancing a Shared Vision,”. DOD’s strategic report describes four FOIP principles:

1. Respect for the sovereignty and independence of all nations;
2. Peaceful resolution of disputes;
3. Free, fair, and reciprocal trade based on open investment, transparent agreements, and connectivity; and,
4. Adherence to international rules and norms, including those of freedom of navigation and overflight.<sup>vii</sup>

In order to achieve these principles, as these strategic documents show, cooperation with other countries is an important factor. The U.S. recognizes that it is unlikely to challenge China alone; support from allies and partners is necessary. Thus, faced with the balance of power in the region shifting in favor of China, the FOIP should be seen as a strategy to counter that trend and keep American influence there.

### **Japan’s Indo-Pacific Strategy**

The origin of Japan’s FOIP was the country’s growing concern with China’s economic and military might, which was worsening the security environment around Japan and in the region.

When Abe came into office, he continued to ratchet up his predecessor's policies towards China. Such initiatives as “Diplomacy that takes a panoramic perspective of the world map” (地球儀を俯瞰する外交) and “Proactive Contribution to Peace” (積極的平和主義), became the baselines of Japan's FOIP. The East and South China seas and the Indian Ocean are critically important to Japan because it imports most natural resources through those maritime routes. For Japan, thus, maritime security is indispensable. The first mention by a Japanese leader of the importance of the Indo-Pacific region occurred when Prime Minister Abe delivered a speech, “Confluence of the Two Seas,” at India's parliament in 2007.<sup>viii</sup> The term used by Abe then was the “arc of freedom and prosperity.” He said that Japan and India, as democratic countries placed at opposite ends of the region, should cooperate to keep maritime routes free and open. It showed that for Japan, India was emerging as a strategically important country to counter China.

Abe's security concern with China was clearly shown in an article he wrote, “Asia's Democratic Security Diamond,” in which he argues, “I envisage a strategy whereby Australia, India, Japan, and the U.S. state of Hawaii form a diamond to safeguard the maritime commons stretching from the Indian Ocean region to the western Pacific.”<sup>ix</sup> In his article, Abe shows strong concern about China's maritime expansion. His notion, however, immediately collapsed when Australia rejected it, thinking that the idea was anti-China. In addition, Southeast Asian countries saw the Security Diamond as a strategy of containment. Such a sense of caution from other countries has led Abe to adjust his strategy, and in recent years, shifting to the tactic of engagement with China.

After Abe became prime minister the second time in December 2012, he centered his Asian foreign policy on the FOIP. By that time, China's expansion in the region was more obvious. Abe told the opening session of the 6<sup>th</sup> Tokyo International on African Development (TICAD VI) in Nairobi in August 2016: “Japan bears the responsibility of fostering the confluence of the Pacific and Indian Oceans and of Asia and Africa into a place that values freedom, the rule of law, and the market economy, free from force or coercion, and making it prosperous.”<sup>x</sup> Interestingly, at this time, Japan's FOIP covered Africa. This geographical range was one of the differences from America's FOIP, which defines the Indo-Pacific from the west coast of India to the western shores

of the U.S. Japan also describes the Indo-Pacific region as “international public goods,” with the FOIP as a policy to ensure stability and prosperity of those public goods.<sup>xi</sup>

Under the FOIP, the U.S. and Japan share three main principles:

- Promotion and establishment of fundamental values (rule of law, freedom of navigation)
- Pursuit of economic prosperity (improvement of connectivity)
- Commitment for peace and stability (capacity building on maritime law enforcement)<sup>xii</sup>

Considering these principles, both the U.S. and Japan clearly pursue maritime security; especially for Japan, Sea Lines of Communication (SLOC) is vital since it heavily depends on maritime routes for importing natural resources. As Alfred Thayer Mahan, the naval strategist, stated more than a century ago, countries controlling the sea can retain economic prosperity, so the fundamental element of FOIP is to maintain maritime security as well as the liberal international order.<sup>xiii</sup>

### **Same Perception but Different Approach**

To what extent do the U.S. and Japan share strategic ends and means of the FOIP? On the one hand, they share the same perception toward China and the principles to deal with it, but on the other hand, their approaches are becoming different, especially in recent years. Japan’s main goal is to keep the multilateral regional order stable through both balancing and engagement. In this sense, Japan is doing a double hedging strategy with the FOIP.

On the one hand, Japan is hedging against the constraints on its military power, which is still governed by the policy that the defense budget should not exceed 1% of GDP (though Abe is determined to scrap the cap). Thus, it is coordinating with not just the U.S. but other like-minded countries, such as India and Australia. It is employing an external balancing strategy hedging against domestic limitations.

The other is hedging against Trump’s “America First” policy in order to protect Japan’s economic interests by its engagement with China. Even though Japan sees China’s expansionism as a threat, and is preparing for it in its defense policy, it also wants to keep its strong economic relationship with China. Abe has been pursuing better diplomatic ties with President Xi Jinping

through summit meetings. Meanwhile, the U.S. under President Trump has been at odds with China over a host of issues, just the opposite of the warming trend in Japan.

The liberal international order has been good to Japan, so it is no surprise that maintaining it has become a main pillar of Japan's foreign and economic policy. The U.S. under Trump has been rejecting multilateralism in favor of a unilateral or bilateral agenda. Japan also wishes to architect a regional order through mega-free-trade agreements. For example, when the U.S. withdrew from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), Japan picked up the pieces and rebuilt it as an 11-member CPTPP. Even though the U.S. has emphasized the importance of the alliance, allies struggle with U.S. demands for at least a four-fold increase in host-nation support, the cost of stationing U.S. troops in that country.

As a result, Japan now sees engagement with China as important to protect Japanese interests. For instance, Abe signaled to President Xi Jinping that Japan was prepared to coordinate infrastructure programs under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).<sup>xiv</sup> In addition, although neither Japan nor the U.S. has been willing to join China's Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), both having skepticism about the AIIB's governance and wishing to protect Asia Development Bank (ADB) interests, Japan has expressed a willingness to consider joint bank projects. Through engagement, Japan seeks to promote transparency of China's projects and by so doing, protect its interests.<sup>xv</sup> In addition, Japan now uses the term Free and Open Indo-Pacific "initiative" instead of "strategy" to soften the perception of other countries that Japan is trying to contain China through the FOIP.

On the other hand, the U.S. policy toward China has been hostile, the main security goal being to prevent China from becoming a regional hegemon. Politically, President Trump is now taking a hardline stance toward China, blaming it for the COVID-19 pandemic, for example. Generally, the U.S. sees China as a competitor, so there is little incentive for engagement.

One reason for such a different approach is that the U.S. under Trump sees non-military spheres, such as trade, the economy and technology as national security issues.<sup>xvi</sup> Japan, however, tends to treat these issues separately. For example, the U.S. puts pressure on other countries not to use Huawei as a digital platform for security reasons. Japan faces a dilemma, both wanting to ensure security, but also seeking to protect domestic industry from cheap Chinese goods. From



China’s perspective, there is an opportunity to decouple Japan from the U.S. in non-military spheres.

Japan’s shift under Prime Minister Abe to an engagement policy toward China, however, does not mean it no longer perceives China as a security threat, especially in the East China Sea. As the latest National Defense Program Guidelines show, Japan continues to be almost as concerned with China’s military buildup and maritime expansion as it is with the North Korean missile threat.<sup>xvii</sup> For example, Japan’s recent deployment of surface-to-air and anti-ship missile batteries to Okinawa’s Miyako Island reveals its intention to increase its deterrence capabilities around the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands and southern islands.<sup>xviii</sup> In addition to such internal balancing, Japan has strengthened its security partnerships with Australia and India, and it is focusing on helping Southeast Asian countries to build capacity that will protect their shores from China’s aggressive acts in the South China Sea.

It is incorrect, though, to say that Japan’s efforts to balance against China are incompatible with its efforts to engage with it. Japan and the U.S. indeed do have the same perception toward a rising China, but their approach is different, as seen in their versions of the FOIP. Figure 1 compares points of similarity and difference between the U.S. and Japan.

Figure 1. Comparison between the U.S. and Japan

	<b>The U.S.</b>	<b>Japan</b>
<b>Perception</b>	<b>China as a threat</b>	<b>China as a threat</b>
<b>Principles</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Liberal democratic value</b></li> <li>• <b>Economic prosperity</b></li> <li>• <b>Peace and stability</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Liberal democratic value</b></li> <li>• <b>Economic prosperity</b></li> <li>• <b>Peace and stability</b></li> </ul>
<b>Strategic goal</b>	<b>Preventing China from becoming regional hegemon</b>	<b>Keeping multilateral liberal order</b>
<b>Strategy means</b>	<b>Balancing</b>	<b>Double heading (external balancing + engagement)</b>

## **Free and Open Indo-Pacific as an Idea and a Norm**

The U.S. and Japan have shaped their versions of the FOIP to adjust to their perceptions of the changing international security environment, but they share the basic perception that China is a growing security threat. However, do their respective policies work effectively as a strategy to serve their political goals, uphold the international liberal order, and maintain maritime security? There is no consensus among experts regarding the effectiveness of the FOIP. While conservative security experts in the U.S. strongly support the idea of the FOIP and the Quad (which is the unofficial security dialogue involving the U.S., Japan, Australia, and India), some doubt the FOIP's effectiveness, considering it as just a set of principles, not a strategy.<sup>xix</sup> Certainly, in order to gauge the effectiveness, much depends not just on what the U.S. and Japan are doing, but also on influence on China's foreign policy, including the BRI.

Considering these factors, FOIP works as a "norm" or "idea" to shape the Indo-Pacific in strategic terms. The result of this can be seen in the expansion of bilateral and multilateral cooperation in security, economic, and infrastructure-related spheres. Still, given the variety of interests among the countries in the region and China's growing influence, the FOIP as a strategy is not likely effective in decreasing China's influence.

### *Theoretical Framework*

In order to explain the function of the FOIP, the constructivist notion of security is useful. One version is "norm dynamics," as proposed by Finnemore and Sikkink, and the other is "security architecture" developed by Buzan.<sup>xx</sup>

Regarding norm dynamics, Japan started to emphasize the Indo-Pacific (under the Arc of Freedom and Prosperity rubric) as a key region around 2007 when Prime Minister Abe was in office for the first time. The U.S. later also shifted its strategic focus to Asia – President Obama's "rebalancing" to Asia. Accepting that legacy, the Trump administration now considers the Indo-Pacific as a critical area for its national security. This norm-emergence has affected other Asian countries so that they view the Indo-Pacific in their own ways. For example, Australia describes the Indo-Pacific as an essential region for Australia's security in a 2016 white paper.<sup>xxi</sup> India and Southeast Asia have also emphasized the connectivity of the Indo-Pacific region.<sup>xxii</sup>

Interestingly, some European countries also have become interested in the Indo-Pacific. For example, France has come out with its own strategic document on the region.<sup>xxiii</sup> At the same time, these countries have different interests and strategies in the region, which poses difficulty in institutionalizing the Indo-Pacific. It means different things to different countries. While Europe has multilateral institutions like the EU and NATO, the Indo-Pacific does not have such a robust mechanism. One reason for this is a lack of leadership to overcome obstacles and differences in identity. Asian countries are not interested in U.S. leadership at this time, as well.<sup>xxiv</sup> The FOIP therefore functions mainly to loosely connect the region and promote policy coordination.

The other framework is Buzan's idea of a security architecture. While he admits that distribution of power is an important factor, he argues that each region has its own dynamic, which is different from a system-level structure. Three levels of security architecture exist: global, regional, and domestic. The idea of a security architecture seeks to understand how changes in the balance of power at the global level affects each country's behavior and the pattern of their interactions. Regarding Asia, the rise of China and its competition with the U.S. create a system force that affect other countries' strategies. In this context, the Indo-Pacific emerged as an important geopolitical framework, in which each country cooperates to deal with the uncertainty and risk of the rise of China and the decline of the U.S. Even so, because they have different interests and perceptions, creating an institution based on this security architecture is difficult.

These two theories show that the Indo-Pacific has been constructed intersubjectively as a new security sphere by Japan, the U.S., and other countries motivated by the system change. They cooperate in each issue to keep the region's stability and prosperity. In particular, the U.S., Japan, Australia, and India have strengthened their cooperation in security and infrastructure.

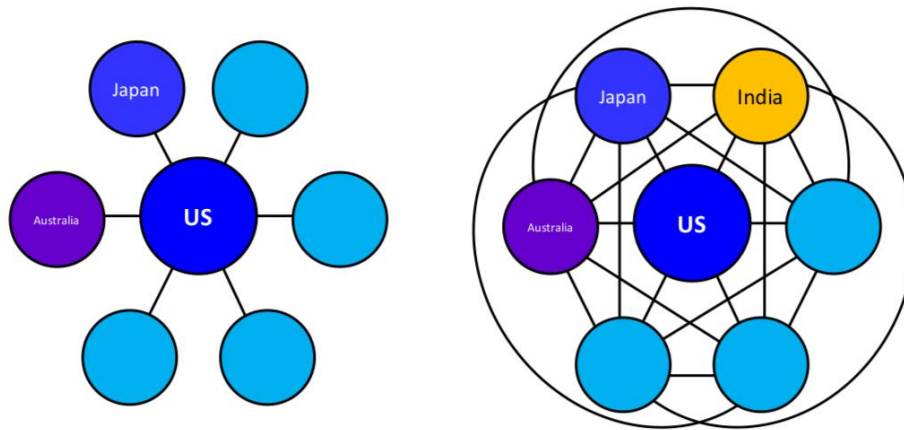
### *Security*

During the early Cold War period, the U.S. created the San Francisco system of bilateral alliances with the United States as a "hub", and Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Australia as "spokes" – the so-called hub and spoke system. This is totally different from Europe, which is protected by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), created in 1949 by the United States, Canada, and several Western European countries to provide collective security against the Soviet Union. The reason the U.S. did not and still does not favor multilateral security institutions in Asia has been its position that it can better exert control on its allies through bilateral

relationships. For example, while the U.S. provides security assistance to Taiwan, it does not want Taiwan, which may have confidence in the U.S.’ commitment, to declare independence and force the U.S. to intervene in the contingency and start a war with China. In order to maximize U.S. initiatives, a bilateral relationship is more useful than a multilateral institution.<sup>xxv</sup>

Due to the changing balance of power in the Indo-Pacific region, however, the U.S. and Japan, which both face resource constraints, have begun to feel the necessity for multilateral security cooperation (as seen in Figure 2). Abe’s idea of a security diamond and the Quad are typical examples of such a tendency. Compared with NATO, the Quad is not an alliance or other kind of security mechanism; it more like an amorphous peacetime relationship. That’s why the Quad is often criticized as not being a useful framework due to the various interests of the participants. This is true, but at the same time, all four countries have refocused on the importance of the Indo-Pacific on their own terms and share basic principles.<sup>xxvi</sup> While the FOIP and Quad have yet to establish a formal framework for cooperation, for Washington it is a coherent geopolitical tool for balancing against China.

Figure 2. Change from hub-and-spoke system to multilateral cooperation



*(Source: Satoru Nagao, “The Japan-India-Australia ‘Alliance’ as Key Agreement in the Indo-Pacific,” ISPSW Strategy Series: Focus on Defense and International Security, no. 375. September 2015.)*

Figure 2 shows the recent Japanese effort to strengthen security relations with other countries, omitting the U.S. As discussed above, Japan has expanded external security ties in a way that could not be envisioned prior to the Abe administration. For example, since 2014, Japan has participated in Malabar, a naval exercise with the U.S. and India. In 2019, Japan participated in the Talisman Sabre, a biennial joint Australia-United States military exercise, carried out in Australia. Of course, the U.S.-Japan alliance is still the fundamental architecture for security in East Asia. The tools for military cooperation consist not only of military exercises but also technology transfers and arms sales.

Recently, other countries outside the region have become involved in the security of the Indo-Pacific. Britain and France in particular have strengthened their commitments. France issued a policy document, “France and Security in the Indo-Pacific,” in which it states the importance of maritime security and supports freedom of navigation. Recently, the U.S., Japan, France, and Australia conducted a military exercise, La Perouse, at the Bay of Bengal focusing on formation sailing and anti-submarine warfare (ASW). In addition, a French warship passed through Taiwan Strait in April 2019, raising China’s hackles.<sup>xxvii</sup>

Figure 3. Japanese security ties with other countries

	Joint Declaration	2 plus 2	ACSA	GSOMIA/ISA	Joint Exercise	Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology
Australia	○ (2007)	○ (2007-)	○ (2010)	○ (2012)	○ (All)	○ (2014)
UK	○ (2017)	○ (2015-)	○ (2017)	○ (2013)	○ (All)	○ (2013)
India	○ (2008)	○ (2019)	△	○ (2015)	○ (All)	○ (2015)
France	×	○ (2014-)	○ (2018)	○ (2011)	○ (Sea)	○ (2015)
Canada	○ (2010)	×	○ (2018)	×	○ (Sea)	×
ROK	×	×	△	○ (2016)	○ (Sea)	×
Indonesia	×	○ (2015-)	×	×	○ (Sea)	△
Philippine	×	×	×	×	○ (Sea)	○ (2016)

(Source: Ch. 7 「自由で 開かれたインド 太平洋」に向けた取り組み in *East Asian Strategic*

*Review 2020, The National Institute for Defense Studies Japan.*)

In addition to cooperation with Australia and India, the U.S. and Japan have strengthened security ties with Southeast Asian countries, mainly through capacity building and military exercises.<sup>xxviii</sup> Since maritime security is a common good and East Asia is a geographically broad region, no one nation can manage security alone. Especially in the South China Sea, enhancing Southeast Asian countries' capabilities are essential to deal with China's aggressive activities in the region. Each Southeast Asian country has its own interests, and none wants to become involved in the U.S.-China rivalry. But at the same time, for them, capacity building by the U.S. or Japan is vital to deal with the current uncertain security environment.

### *Infrastructure*

Infrastructure, like security, is one of the key policy tools in the FOIP. Infrastructure projects are essential for stable trade, commerce, and energy security, and they enhance regional connectivity. As China strengthens its aid to developing countries through the BRI, Japan and the U.S. should try to cooperate to offer alternatives for those countries. Since Japan is no match for China in terms of economic strength, Japan has emphasized the quality and transparency of its infrastructure projects.<sup>xxix</sup>

The U.S. Congress passed the BUILD Act in 2018 to help the private sector invest in developing countries by providing financial assistance. It describes that the purpose of this act is to increase U.S. influence by providing an alternative to state-led direct investment.<sup>xxx</sup> In the same year, the U.S., Japan, and Australia formed the Trilateral Infrastructure Partnership and decided to work together to help with infrastructure projects in the Indo-Pacific region.<sup>xxxi</sup>

In 2017, Japan and India created the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor, a framework to provide development assistance to African countries. This kind of cooperation is possible because both Japan and India include Africa as part of the Indo-Pacific region. In this way, it can be said that cooperation at the bilateral and multilateral levels is boosting infrastructure and investment in the Indo-Pacific.

### **FOIP: Not a Strategy to Curtail China's Influence**

As described above, the FOIP as a new concept has the potential to play a significant role in promoting economic cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region. But is it effective in the strategic goal of curbing China's influence? When talking about the recent wave of U.S.-China

confrontation, there is a tendency to only compare their respective military power and economies. The debate is skewed since some experts support the theory of American decline, selectively using economic and other indicators. However, the debate over hegemony is more complex and heavily influenced by non-material factors, such as the will of the major powers and the perception of each country in the region. This section will focus on two factors: the domestic problems of the U.S. and perceptions of the U.S. by other countries critical of U.S. efforts to counter China's influence. Even though the U.S. considers the Indo-Pacific to be a key strategic region, it is being faulted for lagging implementation of its FOIP policy.

### *America First Policy and Resource Constraints*

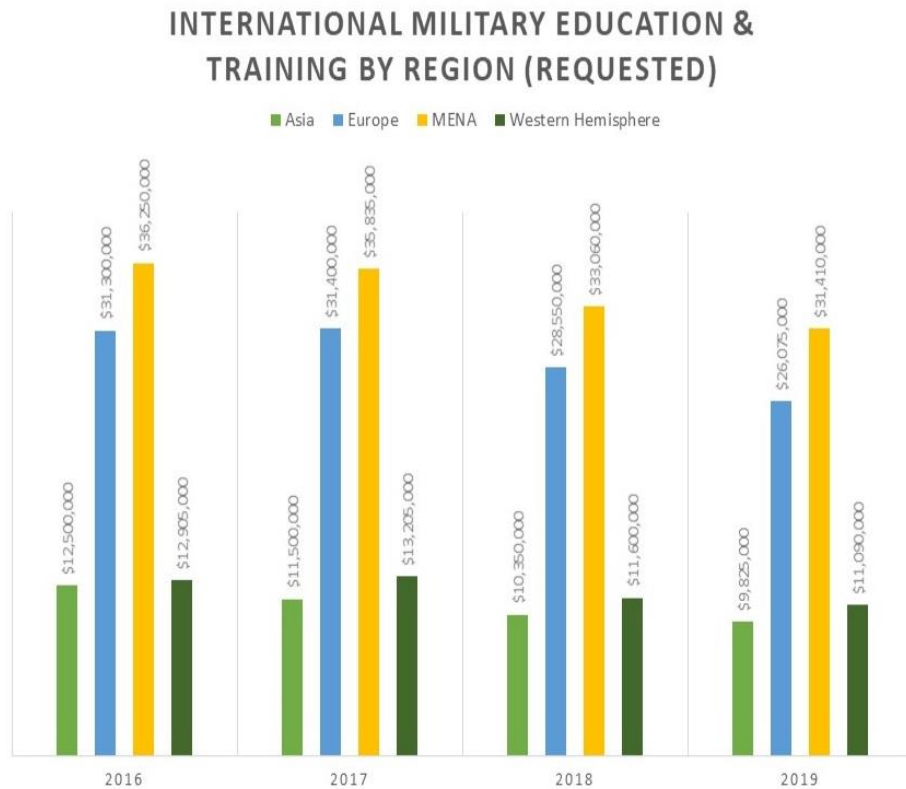
According to Ikenberry and Nexon, the hegemonic state is both the state that built the order (order maker) and a member of it (order taker), and therefore the domestic politics of the founding state is closely related to the dynamics of the regional order.<sup>xxxii</sup> The U.S, which has long maintained order in Asia, is now facing two problems: a lack of policy coherence and limited resources.

The first problem is the lack of coherence in the U.S.' overall strategy. Its withdrawal from the TPP and global climate change agreements appears to other countries to be a rejection of multilateralism, a self-imposed weakening of its hegemonic influence in global politics, and a signal of decline in American leadership in the world. Such a U.S. stance could induce Japan and Australia to seek to stabilize the regional order through engagement with China. Moreover, America's allies are faced with a U.S. President who shows his disregard for the value of alliances, one of the pillars of American strategy. China can thus exploit any crack in the alliance network to expand its influence. Is America therefore giving away the store to China in order to satisfy short-term unilateral goals?

Another issue compounding the U.S.' strategy in the Indo-Pacific is shrinking resources. This was a problem even when the Obama administration articulated a rebalancing policy toward Asia. Even though Washington continues to say it has shifted its strategic focus to the Indo-Pacific, the reality is that the U.S. still has to continue its commitments to other important regions such as Europe and the Middle East. Although President Trump has repeatedly stated his intention to withdraw from the Middle East, and has shifted some troops, the U.S. military presence is still there in the region. This is why cooperation with allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific is essential.

The data shows it. Figure 4 shows the amount of international military education and training by region. As can be seen, the aid to Asia is far less than what is going to the Middle East and Europe. Figure 5 shows the amount of Foreign Military Financing (FMF) in the fiscal 2021 budget request. The amount for the East Asia and Pacific region (EAP) is only 1.5% of total FMF, far smaller than that for Europe and the Middle East. Regarding the Economic Support and Development Fund, the amount for East Asia and Pacific (\$600.3 million) is smaller than Africa (\$796.8 million) and the Middle East (\$1,195.4 million). These data show that the US Indo-Pacific strategy is in a situation where it could be described as mere “rhetoric”.

Figure 4.



(Eric Sayers, “Assessing America’s Indo-Pacific Budget Shortfall,” *War on the Rocks*, November 15, 2018.)



Figure 5.

Foreign Military Financing

(\$ in thousands)	FY 2019 Actual			FY 2020 Request	FY 2020 Estimate			FY 2021 Request
	Enduring	OCO	Total		Enduring	OCO	Total	
<b>FMF Total</b>	5,962,241	229,372	6,191,613	5,370,900	5,645,015	511,909	6,156,924	5,570,900
<b>Africa</b>	5,000	-	5,000	5,000	*	*	*	5,000
Djibouti	5,000	-	5,000	5,000	*	*	*	5,000
<b>East Asia and Pacific</b>	99,000	2,000	101,000	120,900	*	*	*	85,900
Indonesia	14,000	-	14,000	-	*	*	*	-
Mongolia	3,000	-	3,000	-	*	*	*	-
Philippines	40,000	-	40,000	45,900	*	*	*	40,000
Vietnam	12,000	-	12,000	45,000	*	*	*	10,900
State East Asia and Pacific Regional	30,000	2,000	32,000	30,000	*	*	*	35,000

(Source: The FY 2021 Congressional Budget Justification, Department of State)

*Other Countries' Perception*

How much influence a country has in an area cannot be measured by simple hard power alone, such as the threat of military intervention or economic sanctions or trade embargoes. The struggle for hegemony is a complex structure that is influenced by the perceptions and strategies of each country, as well as the interaction between large and small countries. In the following, I will look at how Australia, India, and Southeast Asia view the Indo-Pacific in the context of the U.S.-China conflict and what strategies they are adopting.

*Australia*

Australia faces a similar dilemma to Japan, for it also considers the U.S. military presence to be fundamental to maintaining the regional order in Asia, and indeed it has benefited from that system. Consequently, China's growing military power and economic influence, followed by the apparent decline of the United States, accelerated by its inept response to the COVID-19 crisis, were systemic factors that forced Australian leaders to reconsider how to maintain a stable regional order. Australia also identifies the Indo-Pacific as a critical region, and it feels the need to build a new multipolar system within it in order to prepare for the changing balance of power. The Trump administration's unilateralist-like policies have reinforced such perceptions.

On the other hand, Australia, which has strong economic ties with China, faces the same dilemma as Japan in how to manage its relations with that country. In addition to strengthening its

traditional security cooperation with the United States, Japan, and India, Australia itself has shown a strong sense of caution about China on the 5G issue. For security reasons, Huawei and ZTE have been banned from participating in the Australian 5G market.<sup>xxxiii</sup> More recently, China's political interference in Australia has also become an issue.<sup>xxxiv</sup> Still, Australia also has little choice but to maintain its engagement with China based on its economic interests.

### *India*

The rise of India has been a major factor in the decision by the U.S. and Japan to label the Indo-Pacific as an important region, and both countries have been making great efforts to boost ties with that democratic country. For India, security in the Indian Ocean is of paramount importance, so China's maritime expansion encroaching on those waters in recent years has become a cause for New Delhi's concern. For example, since China and Sri Lanka agreed to give China a 99-year lease to operate a port at Hambantota, India has been worried that China may use the port as an overseas military base. After Narendra Damodardas Modi became prime minister of India in 2014, cooperation with Japan and the United States has been strengthened.

On the other hand, India's view of regional order differs from that of the United States or Japan in that it focuses on conducting independent diplomacy in a multipolar world made up of major, medium, and minor powers. The direction of India's strategy is reflected in its emphasis on the centrality of ASEAN. The country is trying to develop its economy and maintain its trade and maritime security through the East-West Corridor that connects the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia. Unlike Japan and Australia, which are in the middle of great power politics, India, as a non-aligned country, has long been aloof from the games of the great powers and is seeking instead to increase its own influence in an increasingly multipolar regional order.<sup>xxxv</sup> This means that India will never be fully aligned with either the U.S. or China. In addition, the problem of India is that it is still very much protectionist and reluctant to engage in a multilateral free trade regime. India's withdrawal in November 2019 from the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (*RCEP*) negotiations illustrates the difficulty of creating a multilateral institution in Asia.

### *Southeast Asia*

Southeast Asia is at the heart of the Indo-Pacific, where the great powers are vying for influence. Just as India attaches great importance to Southeast Asia, so too does Japan, in that

FOIP policy centers on Southeast Asia. Indeed, in response to China's BRI and its growing influence in Southeast Asia, Japan, and the United States have criticized BRI projects as debt-trap diplomacy and have tried to provide an alternative through investment, infrastructure, and capacity building noted for quality and transparency. In other words, the degree of those countries' influence in Southeast Asia can be seen as a litmus paper of how the FOIP is functioning as a strategy against China. Let us see how Southeast Asia countries view the picture by examining an opinion poll.

According to a survey by the ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, Southeast Asian countries consider China, not the United States, to be the most influential country in the region, on the economic (79.2%) and political (52.2%) fronts (Figure 6).<sup>xxxvi</sup> Many respondents also felt that the U.S. was less engaged (77%) and less credible (47%) as a strategic partner. This result seems to reveal that U.S. policy toward Southeast Asia is not stopping China's influence there, even though Washington continues to stress the importance of that region.

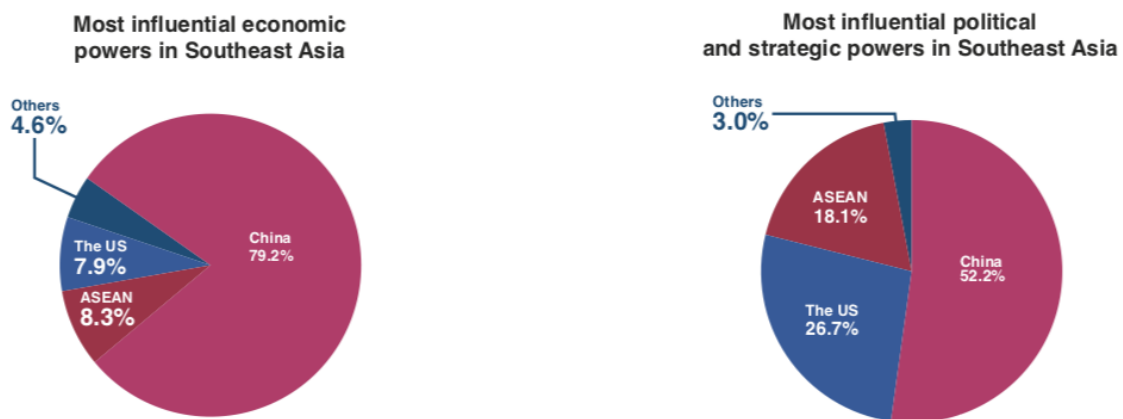
In the same survey, Southeast Asia's assessment of Japan, in turn, was quite favorable, though the results did not show that Japan has gained much influence over those countries. Very few respondents said Japan was the most economically (3.9%) and politically (1.8%) influential country, and those percentages were down from the survey in 2019. Japan, on the other hand, received the highest rating in four categories: leadership on free trade (27.6%), strategic option for hedging against US-China competition (38.2%), new partner in America's absence (31.7%), and trusted major power (61.2%). This is an interesting result because even though the U.S. and Japan share similar views regarding the FOIP and have strong economic ties with Southeast Asia countries, perceptions about them from the countries in the region are quite different. The result shows that the use of hard power alone is not enough to enhance a country's influence, and that soft power or the more manipulative sharp power is more important to gain influence.

The poll also examined Southeast Asia's perceptions of the Indo-Pacific and the Quad. It found that 54% of respondents said that the Indo-Pacific is a vague concept, and 28.4% said that it is a concept that will fade away. The results showed that while Southeast Asia recognizes that the Indo-Pacific is being shaped as an important region, it has developed its own strategic views as well. Southeast Asia does not share a common understanding of the goals and required efforts to achieve them within the FOIP. With respect to the Quad, the responses were split about whether the arrangement would have a positive (45.8%) or negative and/or no impact (54.2%) on the

security of Southeast Asia. Interestingly, 61.6% of the respondents said that their country should join the Quad. The exact reason for this answer is unclear, but the data does not support the premise that Southeast Asian countries will be able to contend with China through the Quad. Rather, given that the majority (79.3%) believes that they should increase their own resilience and not be associated with either the U.S. or China, they seem to be hedging their risks against an unstable security environment through a multilateral security framework.

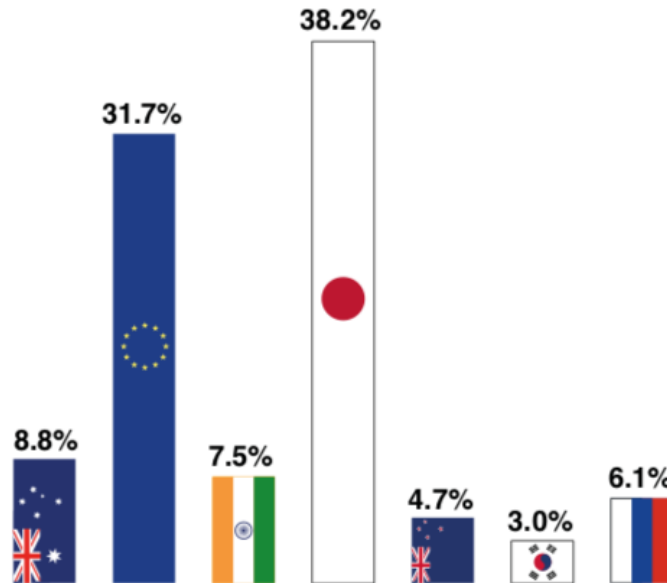
These results show that despite the importance of Southeast Asia under the FOIP, the perception is that influence of the U.S. is in decline, and that China's economic strength has become more pronounced. At the same time, distrust of China remains, and Southeast Asia is facing the same challenge as Japan and Australia: how to deal with the United States and China in this context.

Figure 6. Southeast Asian countries' perception



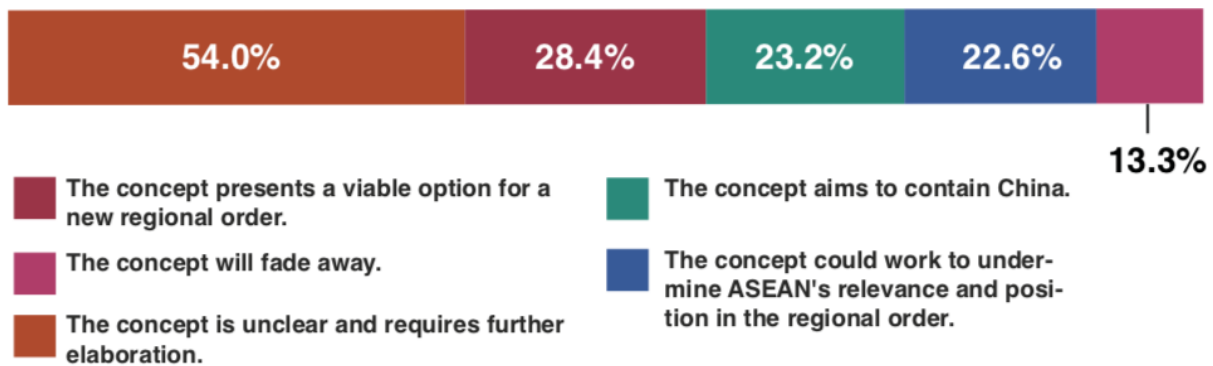
(Source: *The State of Southeast Asia: 2020 Survey Report*, ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, January 16, 2020.)

Figure 7. ASEAN's strategic options



(Source: *The State of Southeast Asia: 2020 Survey Report*, ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, January 16, 2020.)

Figure 8. Southeast Asian countries' views on the Indo-Pacific



(Source: *The State of Southeast Asia: 2020 Survey Report*, ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, January 16, 2020.)

The strategies of Japan, Australia, India, and Southeast Asia are being affected by the larger systemic factors of the recent escalation of confrontation between the U.S. and China. The question

remains as to whether such tensions will aid or hinder the construction of a stable, multilateral, regional order that embraces the liberal democratic system that the U.S. has maintained.

*New Dimension – Influence of 5G and Digital Silk Road on the FOIP*

One important element missing from most discussions about the FOIP is the relatively new subject of digital competition, which has begun to have its impact on the region. The recent intensive competition over a platform for 5G cellular networks is one example. The U.S. has strong security concerns over the Chinese company Huawei using 5G for spying and has asked allies and other countries not to use it. Different from trade, investment, and infrastructure, such competition is a zero-sum game, forcing other countries to choose between Huawei or nothing.

Regarding this issue, the U.S. and Australia share strong security concerns with China’s digital expansion, and they have tried to warn other countries. Even though the U.S. has repeatedly asked other countries not to use 5G by Huawei, other countries have an incentive to choose a cheap product, and so ignore U.S. warnings. As figure 9 shows, many countries in Southeast Asia have chosen Huawei/ZTE. While Japanese government bans Huawei/ZTE from official contracts, many companies continue to business with the two Chinese companies.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

Figure 9. Southeast Asian countries’ policy for 5G

	Signed MoU with Huawei/ZTE	Other players
Philippines	Yes	Ericsson, Nokia
Myanmar	Yes	Viettel, Nokia
Cambodia	Yes	Viettel, Nokia
Thailand	Yes	Nokia, Ericsson
Malaysia	Yes	Nokia, Ericsson
Singapore	No	Nokia, Ericsson, Qualcomm
Indonesia	No	Nokia
Laos	No	Viettel
Vietnam	No	Nokia, Ericsson

## Policy Implications

As discussed above, the FOIP has been an effective framework to promote policy coordination. However, it has not been successful in reducing China's influence in the region. In order to realize the principles set forth in the FOIP, the U.S. needs to demonstrate leadership, seek to cooperate more with its allies, and coordinate a strategy so that all parties are on the same page. Given budgetary constraints, it makes sense that the U.S. would look to Japan and other allies to play a greater role. But the Trump administration instead seems only interested in prodding allies to spend more money on host nation support and defense spending. There should be serious discussion about what diplomatic roles the U.S. and its allies might play in promoting the FOIP.

The real dilemma for Japan will be how to respond if confrontation between the U.S. and China intensifies. In that situation, Japan will need to review its strategy in order to keep regional stability and prosperity on track. Though Japan recently established a national economic council (NEC) in the National Security Secretariat (NSS), Tokyo still does not have a clear strategy about how to use its economic statecraft and technology.<sup>xxxviii</sup> Without that, Japan cannot negotiate with the U.S. and China to create a multilateral framework that would manage these spheres.

Japan is also about to enter a new phase in the security sphere. With the U.S. withdrawal from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, the U.S. has begun to focus on ground-based intermediate-range missiles. Deployment of such missiles to Okinawa would be the most effective way to counter China's Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2/AD) strategy in the East China Sea, and at the time of this writing, discussion in the U.S. is going on about such a possibility.<sup>xxxix</sup> However, such an argument has yet to be heard in Japan. When it comes to the actual deployment, Japan must also consider the political cost of China's likely response. Japan will then have to navigate the difficult waters of security and diplomacy.

In the future, cooperation is needed not only in the areas of security and infrastructure, but also in the field of 5G cellular networks. No matter how much Huawei is seen as a threat by the U.S. and Japan, other countries will evaluate the technology from an economic perspective. In other words, the competition in the digital space will depend on whether the U.S. and Japan can work together to provide those countries with an alternative platform at a reasonable cost.

In a post-COVID-19 world, confrontation between the U.S. and China could surface in a form closer to a cold-war scenario than before—in other words, a dispute over political systems and ideologies. What role can the FOIP play if conflict between the two countries escalates, and will this impact negatively on the goal of a stable multipolar order in the region? The challenge for Japan's diplomacy in the future will be how much leadership Japan can demonstrate and how it can move the FOIP from the principle of policy coordination to the next step of institutionalizing it as a multilateral entity.

## **Conclusion**

As discussed above, the role of the FOIP is to shape the Indo-Pacific region as a new geographical sphere and to promote policy coordination to keep the region stable and prosperous. As the security environment changes with the rise of China and its global strategic ambitions, Japan and the U.S., along with other democratic nations, must share the responsibility of maintaining the international liberal order, global economic growth and prosperity, and widespread maritime security. The FOIP is a promising vehicle to do just that in the Indo-Pacific region. The strategic initiative seeks to bring other powers into its fold, especially Australia, India, and Southeast Asia.

Still, the FOIP has not yet served to be an effective strategy to decrease China's regional influence, which is the main goal of the U.S. For the FOIP to be effective, both the ends and the means are important, but the U.S. and Japan do not necessarily share these aspects. While the U.S. seeks to prevent China from becoming a regional hegemon through balancing, Japan's aim is to promote a multilateral international order through both balancing and engagement with China.

Other countries, rather than taking one side or the other, have set their own priorities when it comes to managing an increasingly unstable security environment. For Japan, its strategy that combines balancing and engagement with China could create a dilemma for it if the U.S.-China confrontation deepens—which could become more likely given the disruption of the regional and international order by the COVID-19 pandemic. Not only Japan but all other Asian countries have to think about what strategy they should take. As a result, the FOIP seems likely to face more challenges as it seeks to become the core system or mechanism the region needs in order to stabilize and develop economically. It would seem thus in the benefit of the U.S., as well as Japan,



to realign their strategies and seek a course that leads to greater engagement with China and not further mutual provocation.

## ENDNOTES

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## The Abe Doctrine: “Proactive Pacifism” in Security and Diplomacy

*Zian He*

### **Introduction**

On November 20, 2019, Shinzo Abe became the longest-serving Prime Minister in Japanese history, surpassing the record of Taro Katsura a century ago. Soon after taking office in December 2012, Prime Minister Abe, in a speech in Washington in February 2013, promised, “Japan is not, and will never be, a tier-two country. That is the core message I am here to make. And I reiterate this by saying, I am back, and so shall Japan be.” Abe’s drive to “bring Japan back to a first-tier country” can be seen in his largely successful policy agenda covering the economic, security, and diplomatic fronts.<sup>i</sup> This paper focuses on Abe’s desire to restore Japan’s global diplomatic presence as an influential nation, based on the Abe Doctrine, a foreign policy aimed to promote international peace and security, as proposed in 2013 under the basic principle of “proactive contribution to peace” or “proactive pacifism.” For his globetrotting efforts during his almost eight years in office, Abe has earned his place among postwar Japan’s most dynamic leaders.

In his first 20 months as Prime Minister alone, Abe traveled to an unprecedented 49 countries and showed the public that his words were not empty. It might be worth mentioning that his two predecessors, Naoto Kan and Yoshihiko Noda, only visited eighteen countries in total during their relatively short terms in office. By late 2019, Abe had traveled to 80 different countries under his “diplomacy with a bird’s eye view of the globe.”<sup>ii</sup> He has flown a distance equivalent to going around the earth about 38 times. The Prime Minister aims to engage in long-term strategic diplomacy with his eyes set on the whole world, not only on bilateral relations with major countries. For a Japanese prime minister, such a scale of globetrotting diplomacy is indeed unprecedented.

As result, there probably is no part of the world that Prime Minister Abe has not visited. For example, he has often traveled to the Middle East for important displays of statesmanship, most notably traveling to Iran in June 2019 as the first Japanese prime minister to make a state visit there in 40 years, meeting with President Hassan Rouhani. In January 2020, he visited Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Oman.<sup>iii</sup> In addition, he has built up productive economic relations with African countries, including hosting of the seventh Tokyo International Conference

on African Development (TICAD7) last August in Yokohama, Japan, where he touted the achievement of offering \$20 billion in investment from the Japanese private sector in the past three years.<sup>iv</sup>

The Abe administration also shows Japan taking responsibility for global development through active participation and contributions to United Nations events. Furthermore, Prime Minister Abe himself has become a well-known face at international conferences. With Japan's significant contributions to the United Nations, the country has become more active in pursuing UN and UNSC structural reform, aiming ultimately at attaining a permanent seat on the Security Council.

Prime Minister Abe has also aimed for friendlier and peaceful relationships with key states in the region, including Russia. Among all the nations that Prime Minister Abe has visited, no destination has been as frequent as Russia. Since 2012, Abe has visited Russia eleven times. During 2019 alone, he officially visited Russia twice (January 22nd and September 5th). It is no secret that Abe has made Russia diplomacy a top priority. He wants to settle the Northern Territories issue – four northern islands that the USSR seized from Japan at the end of the war and will not return – and sign a long overdue peace treaty with Russia.

Prime Minister Abe's diplomacy has stretched out to the southern hemisphere as well. Japan's partnership with Australia has grown even stronger under Abe, with the two countries sharing economic and strategic interests. Australia is Japan's biggest supplier of energy and key minerals, reflecting that country's position as a reliable, safe, and competitive producer of raw resources. Australia provides around two-thirds of Japan's coal, and one-fifth of Japan's LNG imports.

Australia has become a strong ally to Japan in the Pacific. *Australia* and *Japan* signed a Joint Declaration on *Security* Cooperation in 2007. Since then there has been a consistent effort to enhance the *security* pact. The *relationship* further developed as a Comprehensive Partnership in 2008, and thanks to Abe, was elevated to Special Strategic Partnership in 2014. From the Australian perspective, Japan has gradually become “our closest friend in Asia.”<sup>v</sup>

China also has been a high priority target for Abe's summit diplomacy. Relations were sour when Abe became Prime Minister, mainly due to clashes over conflicting claims to the Senkaku

Islands. Through summit meetings, Abe has tried to rebuild trust and ease strains over the territorial issue. He has worked hard to build close ties with President Xi Jinping since 2016, with his efforts starting to be rewarded when the two leaders had a successful meeting in Vladivostok, Russia in September 2018. At that time, China was engaged in a virtual trade war with the United States.<sup>vi</sup> It is also worth noting that right after the momentous meeting, Prime Minister Abe displayed his talent in globetrotting diplomacy by immediately scheduling his state visit to China that October 25th.<sup>vii</sup> The subsequent meeting was widely recognized as the ice-breaker between the two leaders.

During 2019, Abe kept up the pace of improving ties with Beijing. After another successful meeting between Abe and Xi on the sidelines of the G20 in Osaka,<sup>viii</sup> the Prime Minister then made another visit to China in December.<sup>ix</sup> President Xi Jinping agreed to visit Japan this April in return, but the meeting has been postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

There is a deep calculus for Abe's initiation of so many contacts with China's leader, including the expected Xi visit to Japan. In the face of criticism, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has stressed the significance of Chinese President Xi Jinping's planned state visit to Japan, saying that Tokyo and Beijing have a "substantial responsibility for peace and prosperity in the region and in the world." "I want to take Xi's visit as an opportunity to clearly show people at home and abroad that the two countries are ready to fulfill that responsibility," Abe told the Diet.<sup>x</sup>

Abe also understands the necessity of Japan taking on more global responsibilities in order to maintain its place as a top tier country. To become a global leader, Japan needs international influence, using its economic strengths and other soft power tools, and at the same time, take appropriate steps to preserve Japan's national security. Such goals were not lost on Abe's predecessors, but Japan was sidelined for a while by deep recession in 2009 and the huge earthquake and tsunami in 2011. When Abe came into office in December 2012, he faced a number of unavoidable challenges. First, Japan required a new energy security strategy to support economic recovery, following the earthquake that destroyed a nuclear power plant in Fukushima and forced the shutdown of such plants all over the country. Due to a combination of such factors, Japan had a \$78 billion trade deficit in 2012. Second, Japan found itself facing an America in decline and a changing global hegemony with the rise of China. With Trump coming into power in 2017, Japan began to see the unraveling of the postwar liberal order as the U.S. turned increasingly isolationist and began to withdraw from international organizations and pacts. Japan

was forced to review its U.S.-centered foreign policy and structure a new multilateral approach to international diplomacy. To show that change in Japanese foreign policy, this paper presents some case studies illustrating Abe's strategy to achieve Japan's top-tier status and global leadership.

### **Abe to the Middle East: Energy Security and Technology Development**

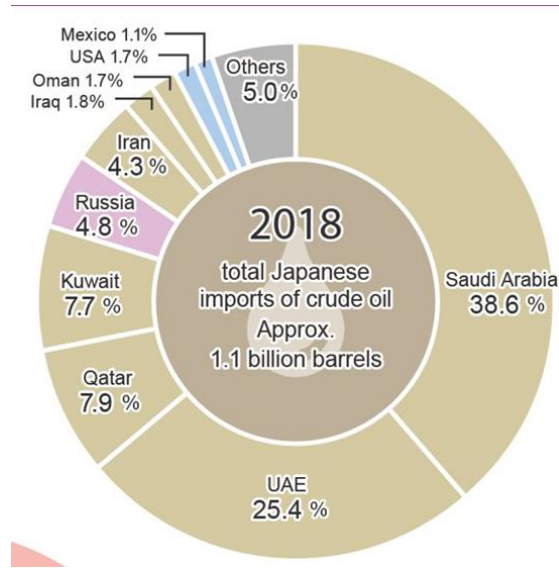
The main driver of Japan's increasing involvement in the Middle East has been the need to secure energy resources. Japan relies on the Middle East for 90% of its oil imports. The main suppliers of that oil are Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates. Japan's trade and investments in the region, and reputation as an honest broker, has made it a welcome presence in an area otherwise filled with strife and distrust.

Japan's strategic goal in the region has long been to play some kind of mediator role to promote peace and stability but attempts so far have failed. Japan, however, has kept its options open, hoping that the chance will come. Iran is one case in point. Prime Minister Abe made a historic visit to Iran last June, becoming the first Japanese Prime Minister to travel there since the revolution.<sup>xi</sup> Iran used to be a major supplier of crude oil to Japan, up to 11%, but due to sanctions from the U.S. and other countries, oil imports are now down to about 4 percent.

Maritime security centered on the Strait of Hormuz is also a priority for Japan's Middle East Policy. According to METI, Japan imported 1.1 billion barrels of crude oil in 2018 through that strait, of which 79.6% was from Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, and Kuwait.<sup>xii</sup> Any crisis and instability within the region would have a significant impact on the Japanese economy and social impact, but the closure of the Strait of Hormuz would sound the death knell for Japan.



Figure 1. Total Japanese Imports of Crude Oil in 2018



(Source: METI)<sup>xiii</sup>

When then-Foreign Minister Taro Kono addressed the strategic importance of the Strait of Hormuz to Japan during a speech in Washington last year, he called it the “lifeline of Japan.”<sup>xiv</sup> Japanese learned from the 1973 oil crisis the importance of increasing energy efficiency and reducing energy dependence on the Middle East. MITI (now METI) came up with a new “conservation style” that would decrease dependence on the Middle East from 85 percent in the 1970s to 73 percent in the 80s.<sup>xv</sup> One of the major contributors to the emerging independence was the increase in the nuclear energy ratio. However, the efforts to increase the energy self-sufficiency rate was ruined by the Fukushima nuclear reactor accident in 2011. With this in mind, it could be another reason to explain Prime Minister Abe’s effort on “making peace at the Middle East,” since there is no choice for Japan but to import more energy from the Middle East to make up for the loss of nuclear power after the Fukushima nuclear disaster. The nuclear reactors in Japan initially provided around 30 percent of all electricity usage in Japan before the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake, but soon afterward, all fifty-four nuclear reactors went offline, and the energy self-sufficiency rate in Japan dropped from 20.3 percent in 2010 to 6.7 percent in 2012.<sup>xvi</sup> Very few reactors have since been brought back online, placing Japan more dependent on Middle East energy supplies than on any other occasion so far.

Compared to his predecessor Naoto Kan, Abe's energy policy is more pragmatic. Abe criticized Kan's nuclear phase-out decision as "unrealistic and irresponsible."<sup>xvii</sup> In 2013, Abe created an independent branch of the Nuclear Regulation Authority (NRA) to develop new regulations, and he has ordered the restarting of nine reactors since 2014.<sup>xviii</sup> In 2015, the Abe Cabinet approved a METI-drafted Basic Energy Plan, in which nuclear energy would contribute 20-22% of electric power by 2030.<sup>xix</sup> Public opinion, however, remains extremely wary of returning to nuclear power after the Fukushima accident, and may prove to be the most significant deterrence to implementing the plan. At this stage, due to such public opposition, only six more reactors out of over 50 have been approved for licensed restarting.<sup>xx</sup>

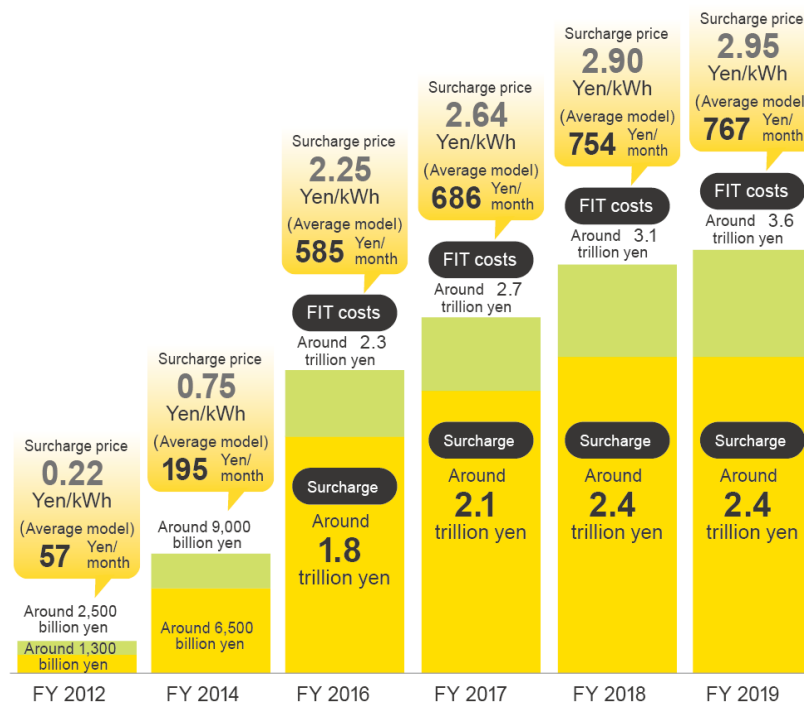
The Fifth Energy Plan in 2018 shows that the Abe administration has three primary objectives in its energy policy: 1) securing a stable supply of electric power; 2) reducing the price of electricity; and 3) reducing greenhouse gas emissions.<sup>xxi</sup> While the Cabinet wanted a faster pace for restarting nuclear power plants, Abe was more realistic in his approach to the energy mix. Reaching the first two goals required building closer ties with oil-rich Arab states. However, Abe did not give up on the third goal. He has engaged Israel as a potential partner for renewable energy development in order to meet the third target. Israel is not known for its renewable energy development at the moment, but Abe's plan is much broader.

Cooperation between Japan and Israel in high-tech industries plays an essential part in Abe's Middle East strategy. Thanks to Abe's diplomacy, ties between Israel and Japan have strengthened significantly in recent years, with mutual investments growing between the two nations. Abe has visited Israel twice – once in 2015 and a second time in 2018. One of the primary goals of Prime Minister Abe's visits has been to tighten technical cooperation between the two countries.<sup>xxii</sup> Japan's high-tech industries have been facing stagnation in recent years due to a lack of creativity in producing new products and to their risk-averse nature. Therefore, the Japanese industry deemed it necessary to seek assistance from other developed technological giants like Israel, a nation known for creativity and problem-solving. Since 2016, many Japanese companies, including SONY, Rakuten, Panasonic, NEC, and Ricoh, have started to research new technical solutions with their Israeli counterparts.<sup>xxiii</sup> For example, Mitsubishi purchased Israeli company Neuroderm for \$1.17 billion in 2017. Also, in 2016, Sony took over the Israeli chip manufacturer Altair for \$200 million. In his visit to Israel in May 2018, Prime Minister Abe signed a new

agreement with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Thanks to the close ties nurtured by Abe through his visits, Israel imported 7% more Japanese products in 2018 comparing to 2017.<sup>xxiv</sup>

On the problem of boosting renewables, Israel is facing a similar dilemma as Japan. In Israel, over 27 percent of electricity is generated by coal, and another 65.78 percent is produced by natural gas. However, starting in 2018, Israel’s energy authority, the Ministry of Environment, initiated a new energy reform plan which created the goal of 10% of its electricity being produced by renewable energy sources, such as solar panels and wind turbines, by the end of 2020. The U.S. and Japan are now the largest investors in Israel’s renewable energy development program.<sup>xxv</sup>

Figure 2. Changes in Surcharges following the introduction of the FIT scheme



(Source: METI)<sup>xxvi</sup>

In the meantime, Japan’s renewable energy technology has run into trouble. Japan introduced a Feed-In Tariff (FIT) scheme in 2012 to encourage more installments of renewable energy equipment and to guarantee a market share for renewable energy in Japan. However, the

FIT has become a burden on the domestic economy. The surcharge price of electricity in Japan has increased dramatically with the FIT. METI's 2019 report shows that the surcharge price increased from 0.22 yen/kWh in fiscal 2012 to 2.95 yen/kWh in 2019.<sup>xxvii</sup> Renewable industry analysts suggest that the optimal solution to the current situation is raising the cost-efficient ratio of renewable energy to a higher level. This requires further innovation to improve the existing systems.<sup>xxviii</sup> The emergence of cooperative arrangements between Japan and Israel, therefore, brings a new possibility for Japan to become a “decarbonized society” by 2050, as targeted.

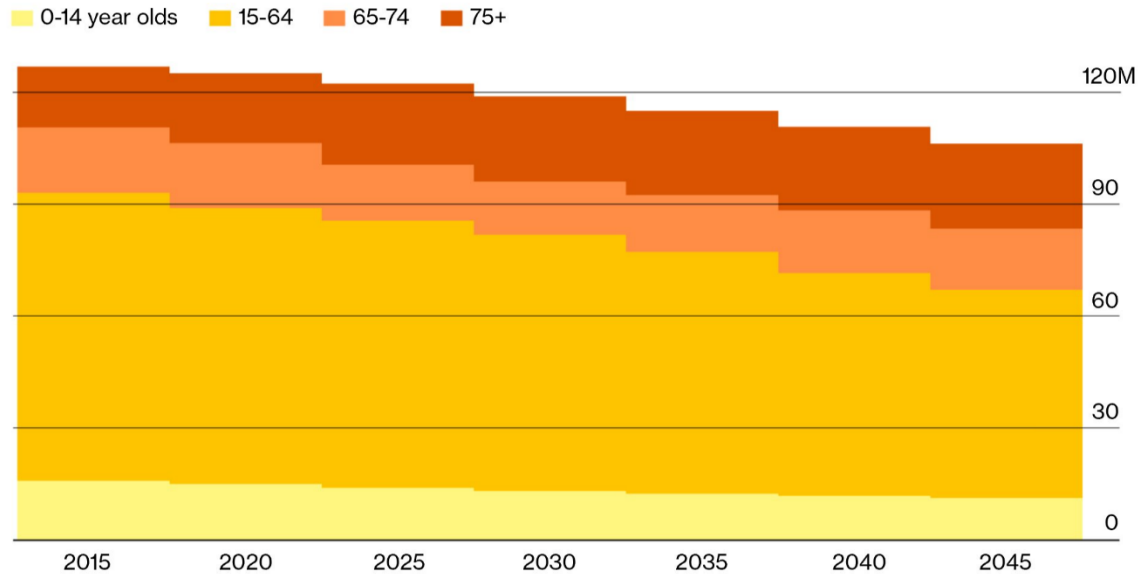
Israel also is a world leader in big data, Artificial Intelligence, healthcare, and Fintech. Moreover, Israel has one of the most impressive defense industry bases in the world, a factor that unquestionably matches Prime Minister Abe's desire to build a world-class defense capability.<sup>xxix</sup> In his first trip to Israel, Prime Minister Abe stated his desire for security cooperation with Israel, including areas like cybersecurity.<sup>xxx</sup> Japan is facing a rise in the frequency of cyber threats, and Israel is one of the largest exporters of cybersecurity products. Israel exported more than \$7 billion worth of cyber products in 2019, making up a 10% share of the global market.<sup>xxxi</sup> Toshiba Corp. established a new branch in Tel-Aviv in 2018 and is cooperating with local technicians to develop a new security network for renewables.<sup>xxxii</sup> Israeli cyber companies also contributed to security for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

Besides the technology needed for security, Israel is helping Japan solve the vexing problem of its shrinking labor force, due to the aging society with fewer children being born. Compared with the 65.3 million working-age people in 2017, the Health, Labor and Welfare Ministry expects there to be just 60.82 million in 2025 and only 52.45 million in 2040.<sup>xxxiv</sup> To counter the impact, Japanese and Israeli companies, such as MusashiAI of Japan and SixAI Ltd. of Israel, are collaborating to develop new Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies, the so-called Industry 4.0. The program is led by Japan's METI and Israel's Ministry of Commerce. The goal is to create AI to replace repetitive industrial work with AI robots, and thus overcome the shortfall in the labor market.<sup>xxxv</sup>

Figure 3. Japan’s Working Age Population Estimation from 2015 to 2045

**Japan’s working-age population shrinks as it ages**

Estimated population breakdown from 2015 to 2045



Source: National Institute of Population and Social Security Research

(Source: Bloomberg.com)<sup>xxxvi</sup>

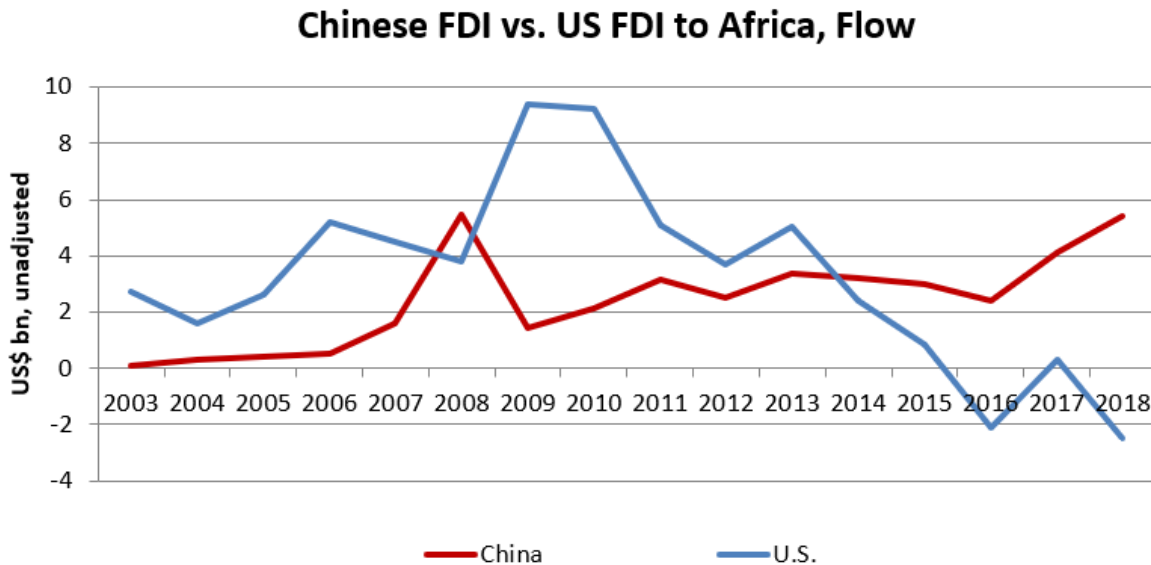
**Africa: Intersection of Global Competition and Responsibility**

In recent decades, Japan has been deepening its political and economic relations with Africa. Prime Minister Abe has been the driving force behind that diplomatic effort. He appeared last August before the Seventh Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD 7) held in Yokohama, Japan—his third presence at TICAD since he came into office. Unlike the previous TICAD conference, which was hosted in Nairobi, Kenya, the latest one returned to Japan where TICAD all started. During his opening address last year, Abe listed the conference’s achievements during the previous three years, which included \$20 billion in private-sector investments. Abe promised that Japan would continue to support Africa’s development in the future. He said that Japan would initiate the “double E, double I” project in Africa with limitless support. The double “E” stands for better collaboration between “Enterprises” and “Entrepreneurships”, while the double “I” stands for more “Investment” and “Innovation.”<sup>xxxvii</sup>

The TICAD, looking ahead a decade, set up a comprehensive agenda to tackle, including agricultural and industrial productivity, economic and financial management, humanitarian assistance, and environmental governance. For example, Japan will provide high-quality infrastructure to enhance connectivity between the regions. For the countries which may face financial difficulties, Japan can provide Official Development Assistance (ODA) and help to manage debt sustainability to more than 30 TICAD members. The option aims to ensure the consistency of their governance. At TICAD 7, Japan offered job training on maritime security and maritime resource management to over one thousand people in the region. Since food security has been a problem in Africa, Japan will provide agricultural technical assistance, which is expected to help double rice production from 28 million tons in 2018 to 56 million tons in 2030. Japan also agreed to provide job training to 26,000 workers in the healthcare industry, as well as help expand health insurance to several million people. Moreover, for the future of Africa, Japan has decided to offer high-quality education to more than 3 million children in mathematics and science, by creating a better learning environment.<sup>xxxviii</sup>

The goal of increasing trade and investment opportunities was the primary motivation for Japan to launch the TICAD in 1993. As globalization accelerated in the late 1990s and the global market expanded, there was an urgent need for productivity improvement. Specifically, for a traditional industrial country like Japan, access to raw materials is critical to maintain international competitiveness. Japan sees Africa as a promising source of raw materials as well as an emerging importer of Japanese products.<sup>xxxix</sup> TICAD allows Japan to strengthen ties with African nations and compete with other foreign investors in Africa, such as the United States and China. However, China, because of its 2014 Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is replacing the U.S. to become the most significant foreign investor to Africa.<sup>xl</sup> Moreover, Chinese investment and exports to Africa have been accelerating in the past three years. The value of China-Africa trade in 2017 was \$148 billion, down from a high of \$215 billion in 2014. According to statistics from the General Administration of Customs of China, in the first half of 2019, China's total import and export volume with Africa was \$101.86 billion, up 2.9% year-on-year.<sup>xli</sup>

Figure 4. Chinese FDI vs. U.S. FDI to Africa, Flow



Feb 2019

Source: The Statistical Bulletin of China's  
Outward Foreign Direct Investment, UNCTAD  
Bilateral Debt Statistics

**CHINA★AFRICA**  
RESEARCH INITIATIVE

JOHNS HOPKINS  
SCHOOL of ADVANCED  
INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

(Source: China Africa Research Initiative, Johns Hopkins University SAIS)<sup>xlii</sup>

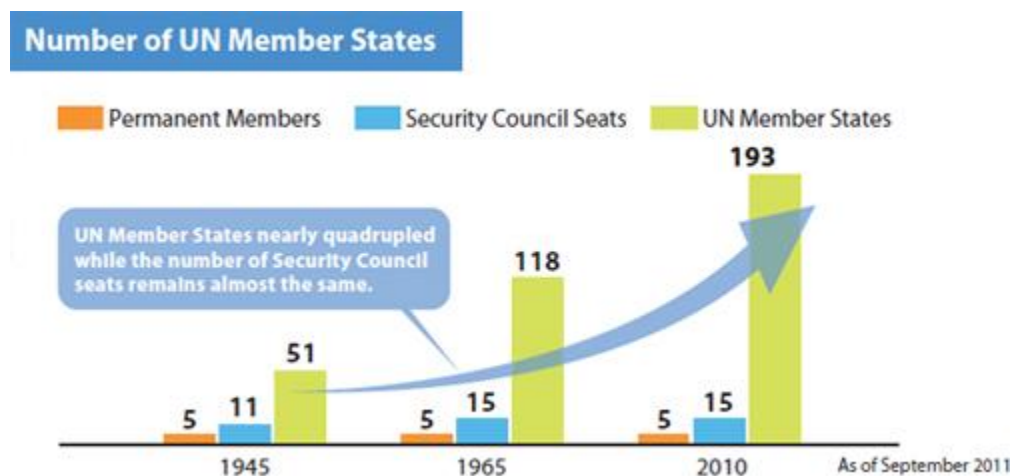
Although catching up to China on trade with Africa is less realistic, the Abe administration’s overall policy toward Africa creates an opportunity for Japan to receive more international recognition and enhance its reputation. At the end of his keynote speech in Yokohama, Prime Minister Abe introduced some new ideas for TICAD, called, “New Approach for Peace and Stability in Africa,” abbreviated to NAPSA. He talked about Japan’s cooperation with the police forces in Africa through the United Nations to help prevent crimes in Africa, and he reaffirmed Japan’s support for regional stability.<sup>xliii</sup> Japan has long sought a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), and in that pursuit, has wooed developing nations in Africa and other regions for their support, so Abe’s Africa initiatives must be put into that context, as well.

### United Nations: Promotion of Structural Reform

Japan has never concealed its desire to have a permanent seat on the UNSC, going back to its return to “global governance” in 1956. Like his predecessors, Prime Minister Abe believes that

a policy of “UN-Centrism,” accompanied by a rise in Japanese influence in that body, would be an essential step toward reaching that long-sought goal of a permanent UNSC seat. Japan has long been a strong advocate of UN Structural Reform, including the UNSC. It is now allied with Brazil, Germany, and India, like the G4, to push for reforms that would expand the membership of the UNSC by adding the G4. From the G4’s perspective, it is unreasonable to limit the permanent and non-permanent seats in the UNSC to five and fifteen, respectively, because the number of General Assembly (UNGA) member states has been increased from 51 in 1945 to 193 in 2019.<sup>xliv</sup> The G4 also question the UNSC’s misrepresentation since only China represents Asian nations, and there is no member representing Africa.<sup>xlv</sup> Opposition to UNSC Reform remains strong, however, as seen in the previous attempt. The reform package could not even pass the first round of UNGA voting. Japan’s sponsorship of the TICAD reportedly is a way for Japan to gain support from African nations in the UNGA, considering that Africa has 54 votes, which would be crucial to passing the reform proposal.<sup>xlvi</sup>

Figure 5. Number of UN Member States 1945 - 2010



(Source: MOFA)<sup>xlvii</sup>

Prime Minister Abe understands the difficulty of making a successful bid for UNSC reform from earlier failed attempts, yet he still continues promising that Japan will become a global leader.<sup>xlviii</sup> Japan has not wavered in its contributions to the United Nations’ annual budget. It has



long been recognized as the second-highest contributor to the UN budget after the United States. Japan's UN contribution is almost double that of China, which is ranked third.<sup>xlix</sup> Prime Minister Abe invariably gives a speech during the UNGA opening sessions every year since his return to office in 2012.<sup>1</sup>

Figure 6. Japan's Contribution to UN Budgets

► The ratio of contribution to the UN Regular Budget by major Member States

Ranking*	Country	2013-2015	2016-2018	Increase/decrease by points
1	U.S.	22.000%	22.000%	±0
2	Japan	10.833%	9.680%	-1.153
3	China	5.148%	7.921%	+2.773
4	Germany	7.141%	6.389%	-0.752
5	France	5.593%	4.859%	-0.734
6	UK	5.179%	4.463%	-0.716
7	Brazil	2.934%	3.823%	+0.889
8	Italy	4.448%	3.748%	-0.700
9	Russia	2.438%	3.088%	+0.650
10	Canada	2.984%	2.921%	-0.063

\* The numbers refer to rank for 2016-2018. Source: UN documents

► The ratio of contribution to the UN Peacekeeping Budget by major Member States

Ranking*	Country	2015	2016	2017	2018
1	U.S.	28.3626%	28.5738%	28.4691%	28.4344%
2	China	6.6368%	10.2879%	10.2502%	10.2377%
3	Japan	10.8330%		9.6800%	
4	Germany	7.1410%		6.3890%	
5	France	7.2105%	6.3109%	6.2878%	6.2801%
6	UK	6.6768%	5.7966%	5.7753%	5.7683%
7	Russia	3.1431%	4.0107%	3.9960%	3.9912%
8	Italy	4.4480%		3.7480%	
9	Canada	2.9840%		2.9210%	
10	Spain	2.9730%		2.4430%	

\* The numbers refer to rank for 2016-2018. Source: UN documents

(Source: MOFA)<sup>ii</sup>

Abe does not just give speeches at UNGA, he also actively participates in U.N.'s events during his attendance. For example, Prime Minister Abe attended the conference on the global issues of health and women in 2017, where he demonstrated Japan's willingness to initiate the

fight for gender equality. Moreover, during the conference entitled “World Leaders for Universal Health Coverage,” he expressed Japan’s resolution on promoting healthcare globally that “no one will be behind.” Furthermore, when Abe met with UN Secretary-General Guterres in September 2019, he reaffirmed Japan’s support on the DPRK denuclearization issue, stressing that implementation of the relevant UNSC resolution by all member states is significant. He addressed his concern on UN Structural Reform, pointing out that such is unachievable without addressing the problems of the UNSC, as well.<sup>lii</sup> The Japanese government’s reinterpretation of the Constitution in 2015 to allow Japan to use limited collective self-defense was the Abe administration’s response to criticism that Japan can only offer economic assistance on global security.<sup>liii</sup> All his efforts show Japan’s readiness to take a larger role as a “first-tier” nation that Prime Minister Abe has promised. It remains to be seen whether that goal, as applied to the UNSC, will ever be reached during Abe’s time in office.

### **Russia: Northern Territory Issue and Energy Talks**

In his relationship with President Putin since Abe came into office, the Prime Minister has not spared any effort to court the Russian leader in order to achieve his goals of resolving the territorial issue and signing a peace treaty. Abe met Putin three times in 2019, which added up to 27 meetings in total during Abe’s term in office.<sup>liv</sup> So far, however, all those efforts have not paid off, for the two countries remain far away from reaching a settlement. The northern islands dispute has been the subject of negotiations for more than half a century, with no resolution in sight.

Russia maintains that all 56 of the Kuril Islands, including the four that Japan calls the Northern Territories, are legally a part of Russia as a result of World War II, and that the acquisition was as proper as any other change of international boundaries following the war. Japan maintains that the islands were illegally seized and should be returned. The U.S. supports Japan’s claim.

Under the Treaty of Petersburg in 1875, Russia was granted undisputed sovereignty over Sakhalin Island in return for awarding Japan 18 of the Kuril (or Kurile) Islands. The treaty was in force until it was replaced by the Treaty of Portsmouth in 1905 after the Russo-Japanese War. The Treaty of Portsmouth affirmed the Japanese presence in south Manchuria and Korea and ceded the southern half of the island of Sakhalin to Japan. Japan had seized that island during the war.

At the end of World War II, the Soviet Union took control of four northern islands close to Hokkaido, violating the Neutrality Pact that Japan had signed with USSR in 1941. Japan declared its sovereignty over those four islands as part of a settlement under the San Francisco Peace Treaty of 1951, but the Soviet Union did not sign it. The issue was discussed when Japan negotiated with the Soviet Union in 1955-56 in an attempt to restore diplomatic relations with Russia. Under the Japan-Soviet Joint Declaration of 1956, the state of war was ended, bilateral relations were normalized, and the two countries promised to negotiate a peace treaty. On the northern territory issue, the Soviet Union agreed to return the smaller two of the four islands, Shikotan and Habomai, to Japan in the future after further negotiations. However, tensions during the Cold War disrupted negotiations until the 80s. Negotiations have continued on and off for decades with nothing accomplished on the islands or the peace treaty. Abe has continued the effort.

Prime Minister Abe's persistence on the Northern Territory Issue reflects both nationalism on this issue in Japan as well as the influence of his father, Shintaro, who as Foreign Minister in the 1980s strove to convince the USSR to make a deal on the islands.<sup>lv</sup> Abe has taken up the cudgel of earlier prime ministers to overcome Russian resistance on the northern islands issue. Although his meetings with Putin have even been termed a "Bromance," with Putin hinting at a two-island deal, nothing concrete has come out of their dialogue. There does not seem to be much incentive for Russia to make any concessions on territory.

One reason for this is Russia's deteriorated economic condition. Previous Russian leaders agreed to negotiate the territorial issue, desiring to acquire large amounts of Japanese investment. Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev agreed in 1988 to resume talks over the territorial issue 30 years after the 1956 Declaration. He had good reasons to do so. First, the Gorbachev government wanted to establish fresh contact with Western countries through Japan. Taking a low profile in diplomacy might have given the USSR a better chance to negotiate with the U.S. The calculation was that resuming territorial talks with Japan would be seen as proof of Soviet sincerity.<sup>lvi</sup> Second, his internal reforms were strongly opposed by the Communist Party. He needed some kind of instant outcome to prove his efforts were correct.<sup>lvii</sup> Unfortunately, the plan did not work out.

For Russian President Boris Yeltsin, he was placed in a similar position as Gorbachev, facing strong opposition in the parliament to his reform efforts. His free-market reforms in 1992 required investment from overseas, so negotiations with Japan aimed at helping the new market

economy of Russia survive under domestic pressures. He signed a Tokyo Declaration in 1993 in which Russia agreed to negotiate to resolve the fate of the four northern islands and then to sign a peace treaty. Nothing came out of the talks.

The situation is different now, for President Putin is more patient than his predecessors.<sup>lviii</sup> He is playing the long game. Unlike Gorbachev or Yeltsin, he realizes that Prime Minister Abe might bring in investments to Russia regardless of what happens on the territorial issue. Although economic incentives have been tied to progress on the territorial dispute for decades, the difference now is that Russian leadership is not under pressure from domestic opposition, so Putin has been waiting for Japan to take the lead on the northern islands. The incentive has been transformed from the potential outcome of the talks into finding the key to start the negotiations. The change in Russian tactic has made it harder for the Abe administration to make any progress on the territorial dispute with Russia.

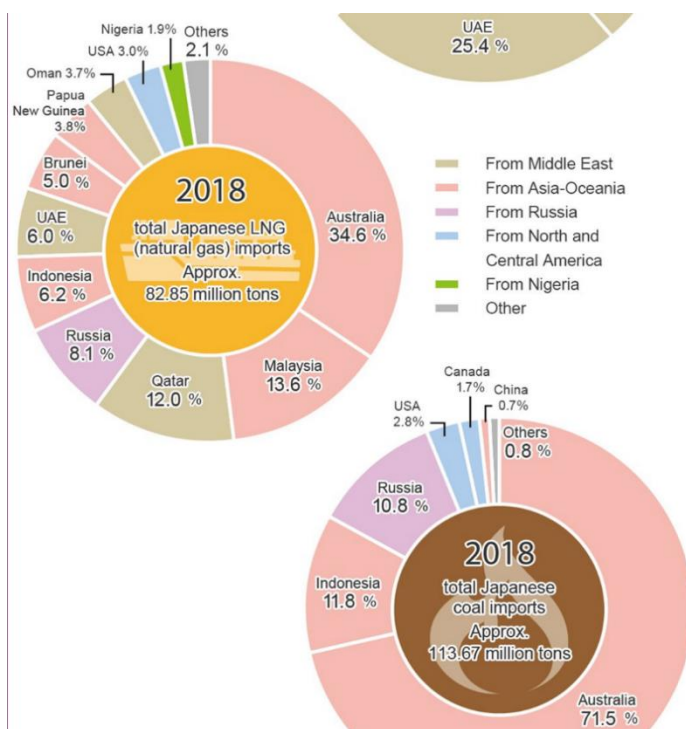
Territorial issue aside, Abe's efforts to strengthen personal ties with Putin are bringing benefits to Japan in other areas. The Japanese government recently offered to invest \$9 billion in the Arctic LNG 2 project on Gydan Peninsula. The project will be in cooperation with the two Chinese energy companies, CNPC and CNOOC.<sup>lix</sup> As the METI Minister Hiroshige Seko said in an interview: "It is one of the biggest projects in Japan-Russia relation history, and it will unite Japan and Russia even more, as well as Europe and Asia. The Japanese government will provide all necessary assistance for the realization of this project."<sup>lx</sup> "Novatek Corp.'s \$20 billion LNG project is expected to come online in 2022-2023 with a capacity of 19.8 mtpa if Novatek Corp. reaches a final investment decision in 2020."<sup>lxi</sup> Although some new sources hint that Japan has quit the negotiation because of U.S. sanctions on Russia, it gives us a new perspective of Russo-Japanese relations, which are not limited to discussion on the Northern Territories.

### **Australia: A Solution for Domestic and Global Challenges**

Although Japan's consumption of natural gas raised dramatically after the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear accident, the Japanese are not worried about depending too much on Russian LNG thanks to the Abe administration's efforts to enhance ties with Australia. In November 2018, Abe visited Darwin, Japan's first leader to *visit* that city since it was bombed in 1942 by the Japanese military during World War II, underlining the strength of the de facto alliance between the two countries. Abe "laid wreaths at Darwin's Cenotaph war memorial before observing a minute's

silence to acknowledge war dead” according to a Reuters report.<sup>lxii</sup> “I extended my condolences in honor of all the fallen soldiers, and renew my vow toward peace,” Abe said during his speech in front of the memorial.<sup>lxiii</sup> Abe’s visit brought the two countries even closer, with cooperation extending to trade and regional security.

Figure 7. Japan’s LNG and Coal Imports - 2018



(Source: METI)<sup>lxiv</sup>

According to METI, Australia has become the biggest LNG and coal exporter to Japan. In 2018, Japan imported approximately 82.85 million tons of LNG and 113.67 million tons of coal.<sup>lxv</sup> The visit also saw an agreement to collaborate on the huge Ichthys Gas Project in Darwin. At an investment cost of more than \$40 billion, this is the most substantial foreign investment project in modern Japanese history.<sup>lxvi</sup> The Japanese investor, INPEX Corp., is partly owned by the Japanese government, which has a close to 20% share of the company.<sup>lxvii</sup> Thanks to this massive project, Japan expects to solve its electricity shortage during peak usage periods after the Fukushima accident and ease its reliance on Middle East energy.

Another achievement of the Abe administration has been the strengthening of the quasi-alliance with Australia. Prime Minister Abe has supported the idea of a Tokyo-Canberra alliance since his first term in 2006.<sup>lxviii</sup> Each country now acknowledges each other as key strategic partners within the Asia-Pacific. After Abe returned to office in 2012, he advocated a new stage in the regional alliance which he called “Asia’s Democratic Security Diamond.” Japan, along with the U.S., Australia, and India would work together to counter the nuclear and missile threat from the DPRK, as well as the rapid military buildup of China.<sup>lxix</sup> Abe and Australia’s Prime Minister Tony Abbott agreed on a “special strategic partnership,” which included more collaboration between defense organizations and closer cooperation through diplomatic channels.<sup>lxx</sup> Earlier during visits done in 2014, the two leaders signed an “Agreement Concerning the Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology” to allow further research and development on defensive capabilities and technologies.<sup>lxxi</sup> Even though alliance ties have been distracted by the Trump administration’s isolationist bent, Japan and Australia are still finding common interests in the Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy in areas such as anti-terrorism and rebalancing economic influence in the Pacific through the CPTPP. Ties with Australia are a long-term strategic interest for each country rather than a short-term solution for contemporary challenges. As the U.S.’ two most reliable allies in the Pacific, cooperation can only become closer in the future.

### **China: Prime Minister Abe’s Hedging Strategy under “America First” Politics**

Prime Minister Abe and President Xi Jinping both understand that the Sino-Japanese relationship is the most crucial one in Asia since the region’s future will be shaped by how the two economic giants get along. Since their ice-breaking meeting in September 2018, Abe and Xi have worked effectively to ease the bitterness that has existed between the two countries over the last decade.<sup>lxxii</sup> External and internal factors drive the development of a new relationship.

The Trump administration’s “America First” ideology as applied to U.S. foreign policy, and the escalating nuclear threat from North Korea are the two primary external reasons for this tension. Abe worked hard to build personal ties with President Trump, who considers the Prime Minister his friend, but his efforts did not prevent the U.S. from withdrawing from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) agreement. Japan’s economic growth relies on free trade and globalization. Therefore, the rejection of free trade institutions by U.S. leadership has undoubtedly undermined the economic interests of Japan.<sup>lxxiii</sup> In addition, President Trump’s controversial

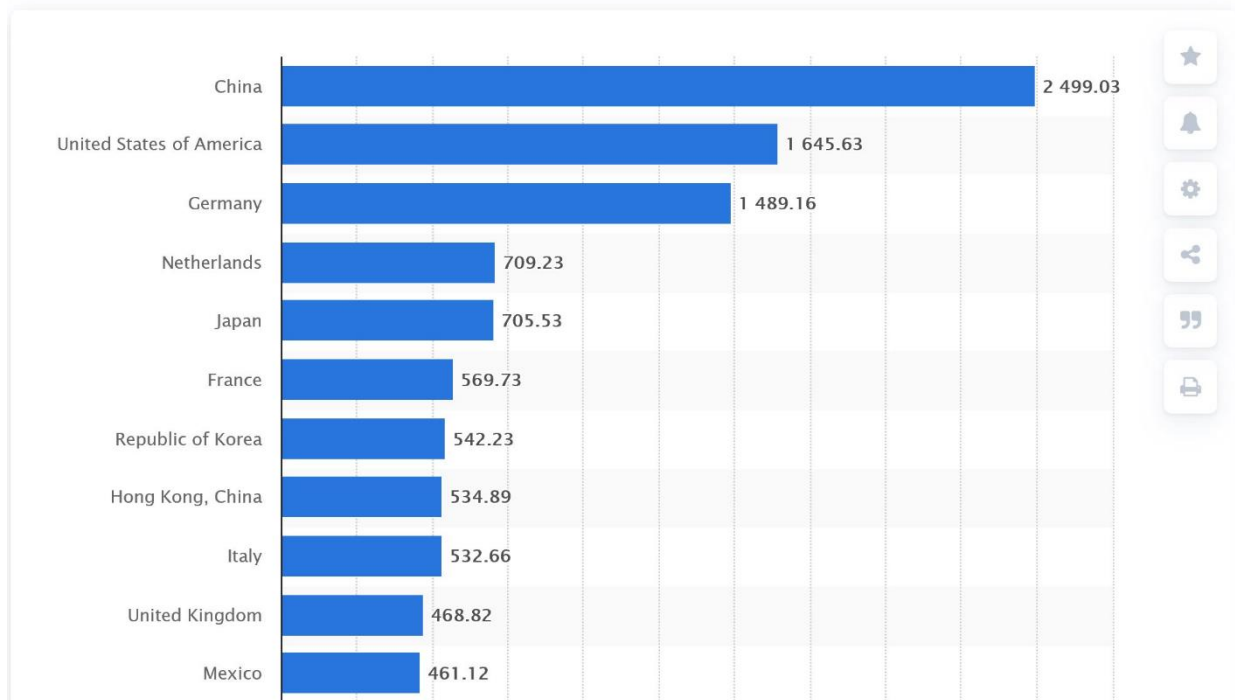
comments on Asia-Pacific security and his criticisms of allies Japan and South Korea, saying they are taking advantage of the U.S.’ commitment to the region, add more uncertainty to Japan’s security concerns about North Korea’s nuclear and missile tests.<sup>lxxiv</sup> Is America still a reliable ally?

From China’s perspective, trade disputes and growing political tensions with the United States, plus an unstable North Korea armed with nuclear missiles, do not serve its interests either. China’s exported about \$2.5 trillion in goods in 2019, making it the largest exporter in the world.<sup>lxxv</sup> The United States is China’s biggest trade partner, as well. If China were to lose the American market, it would have to find other countries to sell its products too. Japan, like its neighbor, with which it is already has a thriving trade relationship would be the best alternative.

Figure 8. Top 20 Export Countries Worldwide in 2019

## Top 20 export countries worldwide in 2019

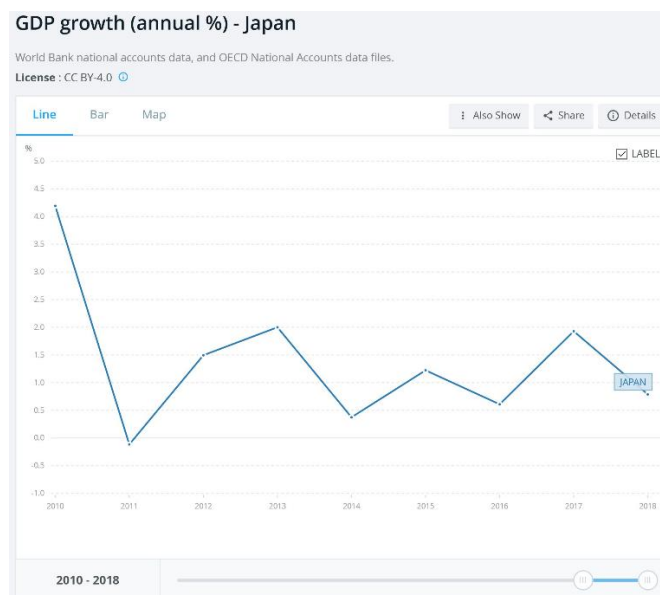
(in billion U.S. dollars)



(Source: Statista 2020)<sup>lxxvi</sup>

Even though China has long had a relatively close relationship with North Korea and is now its main trading partner, Beijing does not want that country to have a nuclear capability. Not only does this destabilize the Korean Peninsula and the region, an issue of primary concern for Beijing, North Korea’s aggressive behavior and exhibitions of its nuclear capability could lead to conflict with the U.S., a major threat to China’s national security.<sup>lxxvii</sup> Beijing’s support for North Korea ensures a buffer between China and South Korea, which hosts around twenty-nine thousand U.S. troops and marines. “While the Chinese certainly would prefer that North Korea not have nuclear weapons, their greatest fear is regime collapse,” writes Jennifer Lind, a professor at Dartmouth University.<sup>lxxviii</sup> As a result, the two nations have common interests. During Abe’s visit to Beijing in December 2019, both leaders agreed to pursue denuclearization of North Korea and expressed their willingness to cooperate to build deeper economic ties.<sup>lxxix</sup> After the meeting with Xi, Abe attended a trilateral meeting with Chinese Premier Li Keqiang and the South Korean President Moon Jae-in in Chengdu, China. That meeting focused on the denuclearization of North Korea. The three leaders promised to promote dialogue with the DPRK.<sup>lxxx</sup> So it appears that future trilateral cooperation to work to convince North Korea to consider denuclearization is a possible future option, should the U.S. continue to isolate itself from a multilateral approach.

Figure 9. GDP Growth (Annual %) – Japan 2010 - 2018



(Source: World Bank)<sup>lxxxi</sup>



As for domestic factors, Japan's economy has not been doing well, with the Prime Minister's much-touted package of measures — “Abenomics” — having reached its limit. The 2020 pandemic has hurt the economy even more, and Japan is now in a recession. Abe has introduced another initiative that can help over time. When the GDP growth rate dropped to a meager 0.6% in 2016, Abe introduced the concept of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific 1.0 (FOIP 1.0) during TICAD 6 which was designed to increase regional influence and overcome economic stagnation.<sup>lxxxiii</sup> However, the FOIP 1.0 collided with the more competitive strategy, China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Moreover, some ASEAN nations expressed their concern about the potential of the two initiatives dividing the region.<sup>lxxxiii</sup> In the development of the next iteration of his initiative, dubbed FOIP 2.0, Abe adopted a more cooperative approach to the region. FOIP 2.0 is less exclusive compared to FOIP 1.0.<sup>lxxxiv</sup> The door is open now for cooperation with China and its Belt and Road Initiative. Abe insists now that Japan will support any country that “shares the vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific” to join the framework.<sup>lxxxv</sup>

Abe, in a speech in 2017, stated his support for the Belt and Road Initiative for the first time: “I would expect that the One Belt, One Road initiative will fully incorporate such a common frame of thinking, and come into harmony with the free and fair Trans-Pacific economic zone, and contribute to the peace and prosperity of the region and the world.”<sup>lxxxvi</sup> In 2019, then-Foreign Minister Taro Kono stated at a trilateral conference in Chengdu that China and South Korea could both be essential partners to Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific initiative.<sup>lxxxvii</sup> From this change of strategy, it would seem that the Abe Administration has gradually found its position as “a global leader.” In other words, the true leader is not the one who is most decisive in decision making, but the one who is more adaptive and capable of putting aside differences and of bringing countries together to cooperate.

### **Conclusion: Will Abe the “Comeback Kid” Lead Japan “Toward a Beautiful Nation?”**

Prime Minister Abe returned to office in December 2012 at one of the most challenging times in postwar Japanese history, when the credibility of the government had been ruined by frequent replacements of prime ministers, the collapse of the Democratic Party of Japan after three years as the ruling party, and the nation shocked by the massive earthquake in northern Japan. Although Abe came into power bearing much baggage—nationalistic views, historical revisionist, and a record of failure during his earlier time in office as prime minister—his long preparation

(five years) for the prime minister's post while out of office, his centralized decision-making in the Prime Minister's Office (Kantei), his surrounding himself with qualified experts for advice and decision expeditors, as well as his transition from idealist to realistic pragmatist, all served to make his lengthy tenure in office highly successful, despite some bumps and scandals along the way. Even more praiseworthy has been Abe's diplomacy—the Abe Doctrine that has taken him to all corners of the world—and his expert use of summitry and soft power tools, which have paid off in dividends. It will be hard for his successor to fill his shoes.

Abe shares characteristics with the greatest prime ministers in postwar Japan like Yasuhiro Nakasone and Junichiro Koizumi: strength of character, security consciousness, a grasp of international trends, and the ability to match strategy and policy. He has centralized power and decision-making into the Kantei, and made excellent use of policy aides, advisers, and skilled bureaucrats to formulate and manage his policy agenda. He has a grand strategy that encompasses Japan security interests, economic growth, and diplomatic goals, all under the overarching theme of bringing Japan back as a first-tier country. To be a top tier nation, Japan, as a nation without many natural resources, needs to have access to sustainable supplies of energy and other raw materials. Abe has traveled to the Middle East, Australia, and any other country to ensure energy supplies for the nation. He will go anywhere in the world, such as Israel, to gain access to advanced technology that the Japanese economy needs. He has made reconciliation another pillar in his diplomacy, witness his speech to the U.S. Congress in April 2015, as well as his other gestures. Abe is resourceful and persistent: When FOIP 1.0 and TPP seemed doomed to failure, his administration turned to other solutions like FOIP 2.0 and CPTPP. Abe has been successful because he has learned to be realistic and pragmatic in order to solve problems.

In Abe's book *Towards a Beautiful Nation*, published in 2007, he wrote of his desire to restore Japan to being a fully sovereign nation and global leader.<sup>lxxxviii</sup> Japan today may not yet be the Beautiful Nation that Abe envisioned, but through his diplomacy and the Abe Doctrine he has put to good use Japan's soft power tools, such as financial and humanitarian assistance, regional cooperation, and contributions to the global economy and its institutions. Japan has arguably come back as a first-tier nation and a rising global leader, just like Prime Minister Abe promised on his return.

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## Japan's Complex Relationship with Iran Strains U.S. Ties

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Japan and Iran sit at opposite ends of Eurasia, the largest landmass on Earth, separated by disparate histories, religions, and cultures. While the two nations in the distant past were linked sporadically by trade through the Silk Road, their relations deepened significantly in the twentieth century, when Iranian oil became a key energy source for postwar Japan's rapid emergence onto the world stage as a developed economy. Since realizing the extent of its reliance on Middle Eastern oil in the oil crisis of 1973, Japan has sought to maintain friendly, business-oriented relations with Arab oil-producing states, including Iran.

Japan fully supported the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) signed in 2015, commonly known as the Iran nuclear deal. However, the subsequent fallout between the U.S. and Iran when the Trump administration pulled out of the deal put Japan into a delicate position. Over time, though, the U.S. standoff with Iran has brought to light the potential Japan may have in playing the role of mediator between the two adversaries. The worldwide pandemic has put a halt to such an initiative, but it has not changed Japan's aspirations to become a more prominent player in the world, or to maintain its neutral stance toward Iran. The U.S. also can benefit from Japan's potential to leverage Iran, perhaps serving as a bridge between the U.S. and Iran in encouraging renewed talks with Iran in the future. There is a China factor as well—Japan does not wish to see China expand its influence in the Middle East, including in Iran, and its diplomatic strategy reflects that calculus.

### **A Historic Overview of Japan-Iran Relations**

Japan-Iran relations can be traced back to the ancient Silk Road when trade and ideas made their way across one end to the other. But there is sparse evidence for direct interaction between Iran and Japan prior to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Meiji Period (1868-2012) saw the first diplomatic exchange between the two countries, when the Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent envoy Yoshida Masaharu in 1880 to visit Iran with merchants, who hoped to find markets to export tea and silk.<sup>i</sup> Official diplomacy began in 1929, when Japan opened a legation in Iran, and Iran followed with one in Japan the following year.<sup>ii</sup> Relations and trade halted in 1942 with the breakout of World War II, and resumed in 1953 after the signing of the Treaty of San Francisco.<sup>iii</sup> As Japan began to

develop rapidly in the 1960s, it began to rely heavily on Iranian oil, importing cotton and oil from the land previously known as Persia. Japan for its part exported china dishes, lamps, bicycles, tires, tubes, and cloth.<sup>iv</sup> By 1970, Japan's crude oil imports from Iran totaled around 1.5 million barrels a day, roughly 44% of its oil imports.<sup>v</sup> Oil dependency on the Middle East in general was high, peaking in 1967 at 91.2%, and hovering slightly below 80% in 1973.<sup>vi</sup>

Since 1973, Japan has walked a tightrope between Iran and the U.S. The 1973 oil crisis was a major blow to countries importing significant amounts of oil from the Middle East, but the shock proved to be pivotal for Japan, shaping its diplomatic stance towards Iran and the rest of the region for decades to come. The oil crisis that saw crude prices shoot up was set off by Arab states belonging to the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). Their aim was to put pressure on countries aiding Israel in the Yom Kippur War through a series of embargos and price increases. Oil, which had cost \$2.18 a barrel in 1971, shot up to \$11.65 by January 1974.<sup>vii</sup> The Japanese economy quickly suffered, the GDP growth rate plummeting to -1.23% in 1974, the first time Japan had experienced a negative growth rate since the end of World War II.<sup>viii</sup> Energy production levels fell, and inflation rose by 18%.<sup>ix</sup> The effect on everyday Japanese was palpable; supermarkets saw long lines and empty shelves as customers panic-bought toilet paper and other essential goods that citizens erroneously thought would become unavailable.

The Japanese government, having experienced the danger of depending significantly on one region for oil, moved swiftly to try to diversify energy sources, while rethinking its Middle East diplomacy. During the Yom Kippur War, Japan had taken a pro-Israel stance because of the previous year's Lod Airport Massacre, where three Japanese terrorists from the Japan Red Army opened fire with machine guns and hand grenades in the Israeli airport. Since then, Japan largely fell in line behind the U.S. in shaping its foreign policy towards the Middle East; the oil shock thus placed Japan face-to-face with a dilemma that pitted its economic interests against its political.<sup>x</sup> Although some Japanese officials like Vice Foreign Minister Hogen Shinsaku voiced concern about damaging relations with the U.S., Japanese business leaders, including Kogoro Uemura, urged the government to take a pro-Arab stance to avoid a worsening of the crisis.<sup>xi</sup> Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka asked Secretary of State Henry Kissinger if there would be American compensation to Japan to weather the oil crisis if it fell in line with American interests; Kissinger said "no." Tanaka's finance minister, Kiichi Aichi, was also concerned that opposition parties

would pin the blame on the government for the nearly 20% spike in the wholesale price index compared to the previous year, threatening the ruling Liberal Democratic Party's chances in the election the following summer.<sup>xii</sup>

On November 22, 1973, Japan announced its pro-Arab stance, releasing a statement calling for the withdrawal of Israeli troops from occupied territories in Palestine. In December, Deputy Prime Minister Miki Takeo visited Kuwait, Qatar, Egypt, Syria, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Iraq, and Iran to discuss peace in the region, Japan's assistance in technical and economic development, and oil.<sup>xiii</sup> The diplomatic about-face worked; Japan was recognized as a country friendly to Arab OPEC countries on December 25, 1973.<sup>xiv</sup>

Japan has since walked a diplomatic tightrope between satisfying its economic interests by buying oil from Iran and keeping its close ties to the U.S. In the Iranian Revolution of 1979, the pro-U.S. Shah Reza Pahlavi was overthrown and replaced with the religious leader Ayatollah Khomeini, who declared a new Islamic Republic. U.S.-Iran relations took a nosedive when Iranian students held over 50 Americans hostage in the Hostage Crisis that immediately followed. Japan tried to keep out of the dispute; Prime Minister Zenko Suzuki sent a letter to the newly elected Iranian president Abolhasan Bani-Sadr which expressed his "sincere respect to [his] Excellency for the great leadership [he] displayed for the building-up of [Iran] after the revolution," calling the hostage crisis an "unfortunate matter for our two countries that our relations are being affected by the holding of members of the U.S. Embassy in hostage."<sup>xv</sup> Japan, the largest importer of Iranian crude at the time, didn't stop its imports until the U.S. objected, halfway through the 15-month crisis.<sup>xvi</sup> Japan also took a neutral stance in the Iran-Iraq War that followed from 1980-1988, dispatching Foreign Minister Shintaro Abe (current premier Shinzo Abe's father) to both Iran and U.S.-backed Iraq to encourage peace. Japan's \$5.6 billion petrochemical plant in Iran, however, was destroyed during that war.

Japan has shown that when push comes to shove, it has chosen its alliance with the U.S. over its close ties to Iran. Japan has mostly complied with a series of sanctions imposed by the U.S. over the years, beginning in 1979 but broadening again in 1984, 1995, 2005 and 2011.<sup>xvii</sup> Secretary of State Hillary Clinton praised Japan's compliance with the 2011 sanctions as "especially noteworthy" in light of the "extraordinary energy and other challenges" facing Japan after the country suffered a tsunami and nuclear disaster in March of that year, which forced a

shutdown of its nuclear energy facilities. Oil imports from Iran have decreased significantly because of American sanctions over the years, amounting to 4.3% of total crude oil imports in 2018.<sup>xviii</sup>

### **Japan and the Iran Nuclear Deal**

Japan's reaction to the Iran nuclear deal and its fallout is thus a continuation of this same philosophy that has undergirded Japan-Iran relations since 1973, which is to maintain a pro-business mentality that enables it to remain a neutral peace broker in the region.

The JCPOA was an agreement signed July 2015 by the P5+1 (the permanent members of the United Nations (UN) Security Council—China, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and Russia—plus Germany), the European Union, and Iran, in order to ensure Iran's nuclear program remained peaceful. It was adopted in October of that year, after which countries began to honor agreements made in the JCPOA, and was officially implemented in January 2016.<sup>xix</sup> The Agreement spelled out provisions for Iran that would assure the international community that its nuclear facilities were not being used to develop weapons. It would do so by allowing the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the UN's nuclear watchdog, to conduct inspections on nuclear facilities to make sure uranium enrichment was kept to low levels not usable in weapons development. A plutonium-producing heavy-water reactor at Arak was as such rendered inoperable.<sup>xx</sup> The deal gave the IAEA unprecedented access to Iran's nuclear sites, with the then director-general of the agency, Yukiya Amano, calling the agreement "the world's most robust nuclear verification regime." In exchange, the United Nations, the EU, and U.S. promised to lift nuclear-related sanctions, and the U.S. pledged to repeal all sanctions within eight years.<sup>xxi</sup> For many players in the U.S. and abroad, the deal was touted as a diplomatic success story, and promised a new era in which Iran would be slowly folded back into the international economy, thus ensuring a more stable and peaceful Middle East. Then-U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, following the deal's implementation, said, "the United States, our friends and allies in the Middle East, and the entire world are safer because the threat of a nuclear weapon has been reduced."<sup>xxii</sup>

The deal's unpopularity with the Trump administration led to the U.S.'s withdrawal from the JCPOA in 2018, leading to escalating tension between Iran and the U.S. Criticism was levied against the JCPOA since its inception during the Obama administration, with then-House Speaker Paul Ryan saying that the JCPOA would mean "lifting economic sanctions on the world's leading

state sponsor of terrorism.”<sup>xxiii</sup> Other critics said the deal fell short of being effective when it failed to include restrictions on long-range ballistic missiles, and had restrictions that would only last from six to thirteen years.<sup>xxiv,xxv</sup> President Donald Trump, calling it “one of the worst deals ever,” pulled the U.S. out of the agreement in May 2018, calling on Iran to cancel its nuclear program and pull out of the Syrian war.

Iran refused, and pre-JCPOA sanctions began to be re-imposed in August, and again in November.<sup>xxvi</sup> A series of escalations followed: Iran announced its intention to increase uranium enrichment on May 8, 2019; Yemeni rebels, whom the U.S. accused Iran of arming (which Tehran denied), launched drone attacks on a Saudi oil pipeline on May 14; on the 19<sup>th</sup>, a rocket, the origin of which was never made clear, landed by the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, prompting President Trump to tweet, “If Iran wants to fight, that will be the official end of Iran. Never threaten the United States again!”<sup>xxvii</sup>

This set the stage for Prime Minister Abe to visit Iran. On June 12, 2019, Abe arrived in Tehran, hoping to deescalate rising U.S.-Iranian tensions, and becoming the first sitting Japanese prime minister in 40 years to visit the Islamic Republic. He urged President Hassan Rouhani to prioritize stability in the region. Incidents did not stop, however. The next day, two tankers in the Gulf of Oman, one Japanese and the other Norwegian, were attacked and damaged by suspected Iranian forces. On June 20, Iranian forces shot down a U.S. military drone it claimed had flown into Iranian airspace. Meanwhile, the U.S. upped its sanctions against Iran, and in July, the Islamic Republic surpassed the limit of enriched uranium that had been prescribed in the nuclear deal.<sup>xxviii</sup> The tumultuous year was topped off in December, when President Rouhani visited Tokyo for another summit meeting with Abe. He was the first Iranian leader to visit Japan since 2000.

Though Japan was not a signatory to the JCPOA, it did not want to see the nuclear deal fail and did not support the U.S.’s argument for pulling out of the deal. Japan also made it clear that its unique position as both friend and major investor of Iran and ally to the U.S. made it capable of being a neutral party able to communicate with both sides in search of common ground for restarting negotiations.

Japan’s desire to both help ease tensions in the region and press Iran to adhere to the JCPOA has continued to play out. As Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated in a release in November 2019:

“Japan once again strongly urges Iran to comply with the JCPOA, to immediately return to its commitment under the JCPOA and to refrain from further measures that may undermine the JCPOA...Japan will continue making its diplomatic efforts toward easing tensions and stabilizing the situation in the Middle East region in coordination with relevant countries and international organizations.”<sup>xxxix</sup>

Japan also has its own strategic and economic reasons for urging Iran’s compliance to the nuclear deal. First, its oil dependency on the Middle East, including Iran, remains strong. Iran used to supply about 16 percent of Japan’s oil imports, peaking in 2003; that figure as of 2017-2019 is about 5-6 percent.<sup>xxx</sup> It is also a major investor in Iran, signing a bilateral investment treaty in February 2016.<sup>xxxi</sup> Second, Japan believes that by establishing a robust economic partnership with Iran, it can counter the influence of its business competitor China in the region. Finally, from a non-proliferation perspective, Japan sees a nuclearized Iran possibly enhancing the existential threat that North Korea’s nuclear capability presents to Japan.

In the short amount of time that the JCPOA was in effect, Japan displayed the extent of its willingness to restart long-delayed business opportunities with Iran. In October 2015, even before the JCPOA was officially implemented, Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida negotiated a bilateral investment pact with his Iranian counterpart Javad Zarif.<sup>xxxii</sup> The pact, signed in February 2016, aimed to increase auto sales and start oil field development. It touched on a variety of other areas as well, including medical care, environmental protection, and nuclear safety. Oil imports from Iran increased by 140% from 2015 to 2016.<sup>xxxiii</sup> Exports to Iran, composed mainly of vehicles and machinery, grew from \$245 million in 2014 to \$851 million in 2017.<sup>xxxiv</sup> Japan’s official energy development company, Inpex, re-opened negotiations with the National Iranian Oil Co. in 2017 to develop the Azadegan oil fields, after having had to abandon a previous attempt in 2010 mainly due to U.S. sanctions.<sup>xxxv</sup>

The South Azadegan oil field development project itself is exemplary of Japan’s longstanding relationship with Iran and shows Japan’s willingness to engage in risky ventures as soon as U.S. sanctions were eased. Resting on the southwest edge of Iran along the Iraqi border, the West Karoon petroleum area containing the Azadegan and Yadavaran oil fields is said to have a contract value of \$25 billion. Azadegan by some estimates is considered one of the world’s biggest oil discoveries in the last 30 years, holding an expected 33.2 billion barrels.<sup>xxxvi</sup> Original

plans to develop the field with Inpex began in 2000, but fell to a standstill in 2001 following the September 11 terrorist attacks in New York City. Talks re-started in 2004, but sanctions imposed by the U.S. again hampered the deal, and Inpex was eventually forced to drop out in 2010. China's state-owned China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) stepped in to develop the field, but was pushed out in 2014 by Iran, citing slow development.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

Iran, for its part, seems to have welcomed Japanese cooperation with open arms. Iranian Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance Ali Taiebnia said Japanese products have “always been associated with high-quality and trustworthy products, [and thus] will have a higher chance to enter Iran's market and establish long-term partnerships.”<sup>xxxviii</sup> The managing director of Iran's Petroleum Engineering and Development Co. claimed Inpex's “good name in the oil industry” and “past experience and data regarding Azadegan [placed it] one step ahead” of rivals competing for the development of the oil field.<sup>xxxix</sup> Although ultimately Inpex pulled out of a competition to develop Azadegan yet again following sanctions re-imposed in 2018, Iran's decision to then begin development with its own National Iranian Oil Company, rather than choose another foreign competitor, perhaps indicates the country's preference for Japan.<sup>xl</sup> Iran's economic hope and need to diversify its trading partners, combined with the diplomatic clout of Japan and its ability to deliver high-quality investments, makes it a well-welcomed economic partner for Iran. Japan's eagerness to develop business relationships seems to be reciprocated by the other side.

The JCPOA allows Japan to keep competing players at bay in the region, particularly, but not limited to, China. China became Iran's largest trading partner in 2010, with trade volume ballooning from \$4 billion in 2003 to \$50 billion in 2013. In 2017, China was the destination for 31% of Iranian exports, and the originator of 37% of its imports.<sup>xli,xlii,xliii</sup> China has further been the leading investor in Iranian transportation projects, pouring \$4.2 billion into the Tehran-Qom-Isfahan High-Speed Rail Project and electrifying the Tehran Mashhad Railway.<sup>xliv</sup> Chinese companies have also agreed to develop oil infrastructure such as the Abadan oil refinery, and the Azadegan oil fields in 2010, even though ultimately the latter was cancelled.<sup>xlv</sup> The EU seems also ready to engage in trade and investment projects in Iran. The EU exported over €10.8 billion in goods in 2017, mostly machinery and transport equipment, which overlaps significantly with Japan's exports in 2017.<sup>xlvi</sup> The Dutch-British Royal Dutch Shell Co. and France's Total SA were

also in the running to develop the Azadegan oil field in 2017.<sup>xlvi</sup> Japan thus is not the only player eager to do business with the Islamic Republic.

Iran's staying in the JCPOA would also decrease the risk of nuclear cooperation between it and North Korea. Although no public evidence exists to show Iran-North Korea nuclear cooperation or even trade in the past, the two have collaborated on ballistic missile efforts.<sup>xlvii</sup> This relationship was particularly strong during the Iran-Iraq War, when North Korea's relationship with the Communist bloc made it a consistent source of weapons. At one point there were 300 North Korean military advisers in Iran, and total sales of weapons, training and military assistance totaled to over \$1 billion.<sup>xlvi</sup> North Korea, driven by its need for cash, also sold weapons to Iraq as well; Iran therefore does not seem to get automatic preference from North Korea. Although there is unclear evidence on whether this cooperation includes exchange of nuclear expertise or even fissionable material, Japan wants to avoid any such cooperation, as a wider nuclear North Korean arsenal would mean an even greater threat to its national security. Japan thus has an interest in having Iran adhere to the JCPOA, which would keep Tehran under the influence of anti-nuclear proliferation, pro-American players like the EU, and of course the U.S. itself.

### **Iran Turns to Asia, as Asia Turns to Itself**

International isolation has taken a heavy economic toll on Iran; sanctions coincide with negative downturns in its economic indicators. GDP growth rates sank down to -7.5% in 2012 after the Obama administration intensified sanctions for reasons including nuclear proliferation, drug trafficking and human rights abuses.<sup>1</sup> After U.S. sanctions were lifted in 2016, GDP growth rates grew from -1.3% in 2015 to 13.4% in 2016.<sup>li</sup> GDP shrunk another 4.8% in 2018, and was expected to go down another 9.5% in 2019, after pre-JCPOA sanctions were re-imposed.<sup>lii</sup> Iranian consumers also saw prices of goods skyrocket; consumer price inflation hit a high of 52.1% in May 2019, though it came down considerably to 25% by February 2020.<sup>liii</sup> Moreover, Iran has been ravaged this year by the COVID-19 pandemic. New infections have been averaging more than 3,000 a day in the first week of June—a 50% increase over the previous week.

Economic downturns are not desirable for the regime wishing to maintain its legitimacy. Iran's unemployment rate was 10.6% as of December 2019, a slight improvement compared to a year before when it was around 11.8%; the youth (defined as 15-24 years old) unemployment rate in December 2019 was 25.8%.<sup>liv</sup> The high proportion of youth in the country—a third between



ages 15 and 29 in 2013—means many are increasingly removed from the values that drove the Iranian Revolution in 1979, and are disenchanted with the regime facing bleak employment opportunities.<sup>lv</sup> Expecting oil revenue to fall by 70% in 2020, the Iranian government tripled gasoline prices, increased taxes, and cut back on energy subsidies, causing widespread unrest and protests through 2019 and into 2020.<sup>lvi</sup> Iran’s incentive to look where it can for economic and pandemic help is very strong. That country may likely be Japan, but it could continue to be China as well.

With the West largely closed off or unreliable due to sanctions, Iran is looking increasingly for partners in Asia. Iran has thus far looked to China for the help it cannot get from American allies like Japan and the EU. Iran is expected to be a lynchpin in China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) announced in 2013, being strategically located on the Eurasian continent between China and Europe, Turkey, and the Middle East.<sup>lvii</sup> Iran is not a neutral threat to China-U.S. relations—China reduced its 2012 imports from Iran by 22% after U.S. sanctions were implemented.<sup>lviii</sup> But China can afford to take a stronger stand against the U.S. than Japan.

Foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying, for example, condemned the sanctions on Iran imposed by the Trump administration, saying: “China is opposed to the blind use of unilateral sanctions particularly when it damages the interests of third parties. I think the sanctions are unhelpful in enhancing mutual trust and unhelpful for international efforts on this issue.”<sup>lix</sup> Although China-Iran relations are not without their own bumps in the road, China’s economic support has allowed Iran to weather the international isolation it would otherwise face.

Iran’s help from other Asian countries comes at a time where Asia is growing into a more formidable economic force by itself and is turning increasingly to fellow Asian countries for trade and investment. The continent is growing in economic might as countries continue to develop rapidly. China is the largest economy in the world in purchasing power parity (PPP) terms; India is now third; and Southeast Asian countries like Vietnam and the Philippines are rapidly overtaking others in rank. Asia holds over half of the world’s population and is collectively projected to outpace the rest of the combined world in 2020. “[Asia] has become the main growth engine of the world,” said India’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi, at the 2018 annual meeting of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), “In fact, we are now living through what many have termed the Asian Century.”<sup>lx</sup>

As Asian economies grow, regional trade agreements have proliferated across the continent; bilateral trade agreements in the Asia-Pacific now number 54 as of 2015. There were only four in 2001.<sup>lxi</sup> Two mega-regional trade agreements, the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), implemented in 2018, and the anticipated arrival of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), slowed by India's intransigence, have shown the new willingness Asian countries have in becoming more economically invested in their neighbors.<sup>lxii</sup>

Prime Minister Abe has made clear that Japan is eager to be a part of that new equation. Abe has been described as “hawkish” and a “nationalist” by the Western media, pointing to his support from the far-right and his desire to amend the Constitution to legitimize the legal existence of the Self-Defense Forces. In 2013, he gave a speech at the Center for Strategic International Studies promising a new globally involved role for Japan, particularly in the Asia-Pacific, famously declaring, “Japan is back.”<sup>lxiii</sup> Since then Abe has taken a proactive diplomatic stance that has engaged Japan with countries around the globe, including China, the Middle East, Africa, India and Southeast Asia. By September 2014 his 66 foreign visits had already outnumbered all of his predecessors'.<sup>lxiv</sup> In addition to the CPTPP, Abe has been eager to take the lead in bringing RCEP negotiations to a successful conclusion.<sup>lxv</sup> His diplomatic efforts in June 2019 to ease tensions between Iran and the U.S., though unsuccessful, at least show a willingness by Japan to get out front on an international issue, removing somewhat the image of Japan's diplomatic timidity.

### **Japan Between Iran and the U.S.**

Japan's friendly ties with Iran have long been at odds with the policies of its most important ally, the United States. But the unique position Japan holds with Iran can also be a boon to the U.S. in two ways: countering China's political and economic influence in that country, and potentially acting as a mediator between the U.S. and Iran should the need arise.

Faced with China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Japan has bolstered its own investment efforts in the same regions, thus countering the widening influence of China in those countries. Japan is currently engaged in several cross-regional initiatives that crisscross the Eurasian continent, including the Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) Initiative, in tandem with the U.S., which has its own version of the FOIP. Japan has also engaged in infrastructure and trade deals

with the EU; mega-trade agreements like the CPTPP and RCEP; and bilateral investment projects in Southeast Asia, Pakistan, and the Baltics.

Japan's efforts might pay off, since the downsides of countries not being able to afford BRI investments have come to light. Such a case happened in Sri Lanka, which had to cede control over the port of Hambantota to China when it could not repay its debts. Japan, perhaps to counter China's weight, has since agreed to build a natural gas import terminal in another Sri Lankan port, Colombo.<sup>lxvi</sup> Iran, which has come to rely heavily on cash-flushed China, is hungry for other investors—as was made clear when it expelled China from the Azadegan project in 2014. Japan's stepping in as an alternative business partner therefore has the added benefit of countering China's growing presence in the region.

Japan's diplomatic legacy in the Middle East has given it a positive image in the region. It has cultivated a politically neutral presence, which could come in handy should the U.S. need an honest broker in pursuing a new dialogue with Iran. Japan has been able to maintain good relations with parties in the region that have been at odds with each other, such as Israel, Palestine, and Saudi Arabia, the longtime regional rival of Iran. Abe is one of the few leaders that can lay claim to having good relations with and access to both President Trump and President Rouhani. He has already acted as mediator to a small extent in June of 2019 when he met separately with President Trump and Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, relaying to each the message of the other. “[Trump] said that he did not want to see an escalation in tensions,” Abe told reporters after his meeting with Khamenei, and added that Khamenei “said that Iran has no intentions of manufacturing, possessing, or using nuclear weapons.”<sup>lxvii</sup> Abe also briefed Trump on his talks with President Rouhani after meeting with the Iranian leader in December 2019.<sup>lxviii</sup> The role of mediator in the Middle East thus would be an appropriate one for Japan.

Should the U.S. want to engage in a new dialogue with Iran, either to renegotiate the terms of the JCPOA or discuss other issues, Japan can be a useful resource to tap as a go-between. Japan has no historical baggage that may be off-putting to Iran, which is not something that other powers like Britain or Russia can lay claim to. Japan can provide Iran with the opportunity to come to the negotiating table again without fear of the humiliation the Islamic Republic would face if it entered directly into talks with the U.S. Iran has made it clear that the regime's pride is a crucial part of any negotiation calculation moving forward; “No wise and proud nation will accept negotiations

under pressure,” Khamenei has said to Abe.<sup>lxix</sup> A country like Japan that has provided stable diplomatic support over the years, and economic support whenever sanctions were lifted, is liable to be a good candidate to be a liaison between Iran and the U.S.

Both the U.S. and Iran would have to be convinced to come to the table, even though another JCPOA, perhaps even with renegotiated terms, stands to be beneficial to both. An Iran rendered incapable of building nuclear weapons would mean a more stable Middle East, and a more secure world. Iran itself has much to gain from lifted sanctions: economic opportunities, ability to arrest inflation and lower unemployment rates, and the chance to quell rising unrest in the country, made worse by the spreading pandemic.

It is, however, unlikely that any form of the JCPOA would be reinstated while Trump is in office. Trump—though he extended to Iran the opportunity to talk in 2018—is not likely to prioritize negotiations, certainly after tensions reached a boiling point with the covert U.S. assassination of General Qasem Soleimani of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps in January 2020. Iranian leadership also seems unwilling to engage; Khamenei has previously said that “genuine talks would not come from someone like Trump.”<sup>lxx</sup> Any talk with Iran is therefore likely to come after Trump leaves office. Under Abe’s strategy of engaging with both parties, Japan might then have the opportunity to serve as a bridge between the two countries in restarting talks.

China’s increased presence in Iran is no surprise, being a direct product of becoming the new economic heavyweight of the world. With Japan and China vying for influence, the chances are strong that Japan, with its long-standing credentials in the Middle East, can play a constructive role in the pursuit of peace.

## **Conclusion**

Japan has walked a diplomatic tightrope between Iran and the U.S. for several decades, but from the recent events involving the 2015 signing of the JCPOA and the subsequent U.S. withdrawal from it have posed an additional dilemma for Japan. Since then, based on the diplomatic activities of the Abe administration, it is clear that Japan has not changed its fundamental stance of political neutrality and prioritizing business ties, jumping to invest in Iran whenever sanctions were lifted. The aftermath of the fallout of the JCPOA has given Japan the opportunity to show its willingness to exercise that long-cultivated neutrality in the region for

productive diplomatic means. In the meantime, Japan has become concerned about China's expanding economic influence across Asia and beyond. At the same time, North Korea remains an existential threat to Japan because of its nuclear and missile programs aimed. Meanwhile, Iran seems to be at a historic crossroads where decisions made now will determine its course on nuclear weapons and economic prosperity for decades to come. Can Japan use its diplomatic influence to encourage Tehran to make a wise choice? Although ultimately it is up to the U.S. to decide whether to re-engage with Iran or not—something that may be determined by the next U.S. presidential election in November 2020—Japan remains ready to play a positive diplomatic role in promoting dialogue with the Islamic Republic that could be beneficial to both Japan and the U.S.

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## Can Japan Solve Its Demographic Crisis Before It Is Too Late?

*Zhanping Ling*

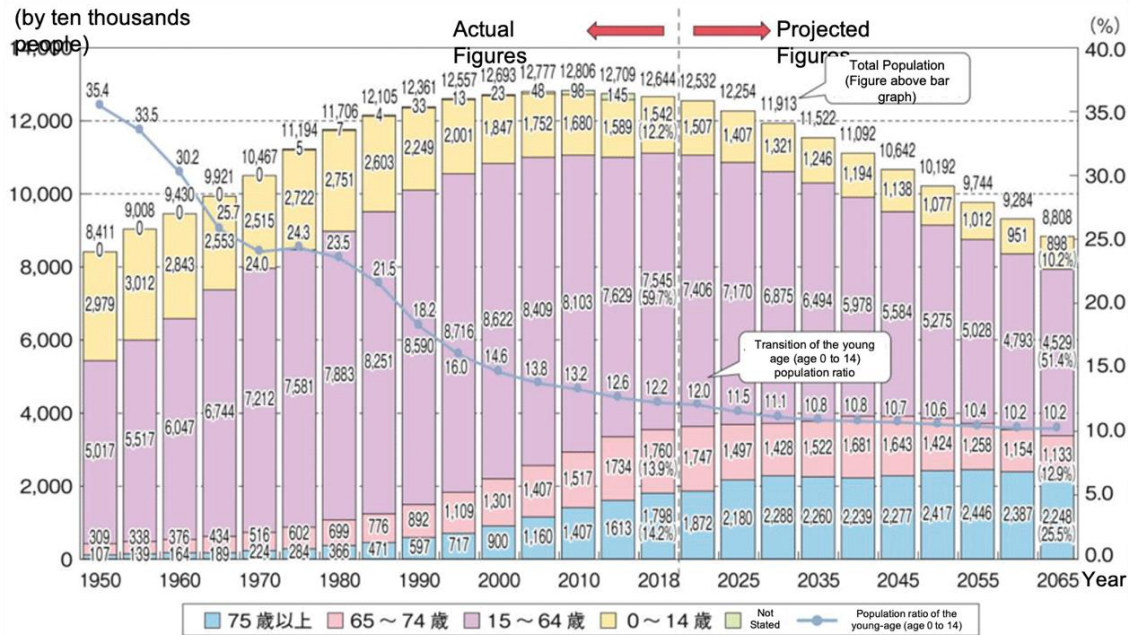
### **Introduction**

Taking a subway train during rush-hour in the Tokyo metropolitan area, you will be amazed by the sheer number of commuters walking as if in perfect unison along the platforms. Just by gazing at the surface of a bustling urban society, one might not imagine that Japan has a declining population with fewer babies being born each year. Unlike the densely populated metropolitan cities in Japan, just travel into the rural areas to see one depopulated village after another, where mainly elderly people live. The greater Tokyo metropolitan area covers 13,556 square kilometers, equivalent to the size of Los Angeles, and has a population of 36.78 million which is slightly lesser than that of the state of California. On the other hand, Hokkaido being the largest prefecture with 78,421 kilometers has a population that is less than one-fifth of the greater Tokyo area.<sup>i</sup> Moreover, a majority of Japan's labor force is concentrated in large cities that employ many young Japanese migrating there from rural areas. But cities hide a rapidly aging population as well, a part of the demographic crisis Japan faces.

### *Overview of Japan's Demographic Challenges*

Official statistics show the Japanese population to be an estimated 126 million in 2019 with a life expectancy of 84.1 (in 2017). Citizens aged 65 or older total 35.86 million, an increase of 312,000 from 2018, and account for 29.0% of the population. In comparison, the working age population, consisting of people aged 15 to 64, has decreased by 0.52% and now totals 75.05 million.<sup>ii</sup> Currently, Japan has the highest ratio of seniors in the world, followed by Italy with about 23% and Portugal with 22.4%.<sup>iii</sup> In just 30 years the population of Japan is predicted to drop 16% to 105.80 million people, with the elderly accounting for up to 36.4%.<sup>iv</sup>

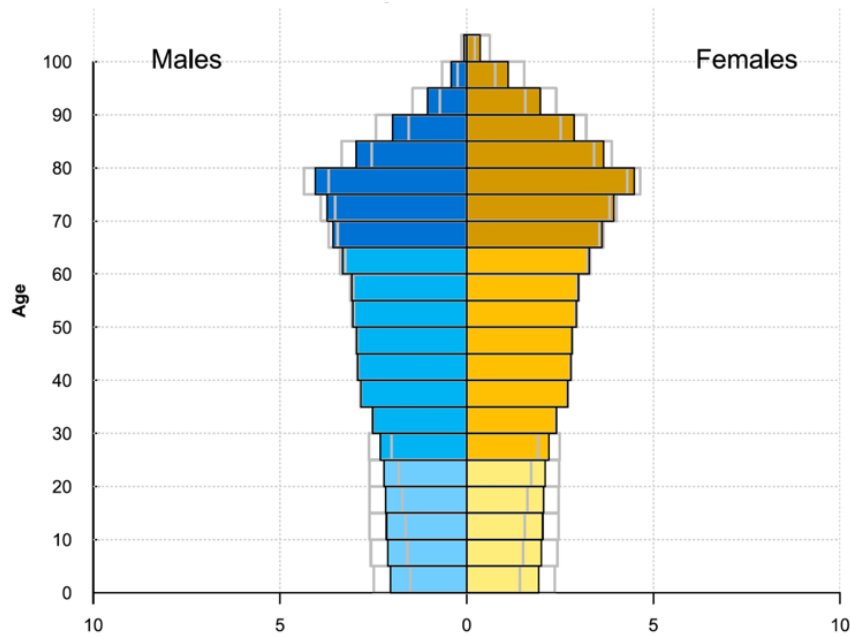
Figure 1. Overview of Japan's Total Population



(Source: The Cabinet Office of Japan Annual Report on the Declining Birthrate 2019)

The population pyramid of Japan projected in 2050 will be shaped like a casket; pointy at age range of 90-100, wide among the age range of 70-80 and almost rectangular from the bottom until the age of 60. Without any substantial countermeasures to halt the slide, Japan is due to lose roughly one-third of its population by 2065, leaving the nation with only 88 million people. This demographic transition implies that improvement in medical services and public health have led to longer life expectancy and requires adjustments of social welfare to serve the needs of an increasingly senior-dominated society. Meanwhile, a continuous low birthrate in Japan would result in an alarming drop in the working age group. This phenomenon is known as *少子高齢化* – *shoushikoureika*, or the combined effects of an aging population, low birthrate, and rising demands for social welfare services.<sup>v</sup> Japan is already experiencing the social and economic impacts of this trend. In addition to the diminishing population, the nation faces a deepening labor shortage and is trying to cope by relying more on the elderly, bringing more women into the labor force, and starting to import more labor. Nevertheless, it does little to alleviate the increasing burden of social welfare and pension on the shrinking pool of young workers.

Figure 2. Population of Japan in 2050

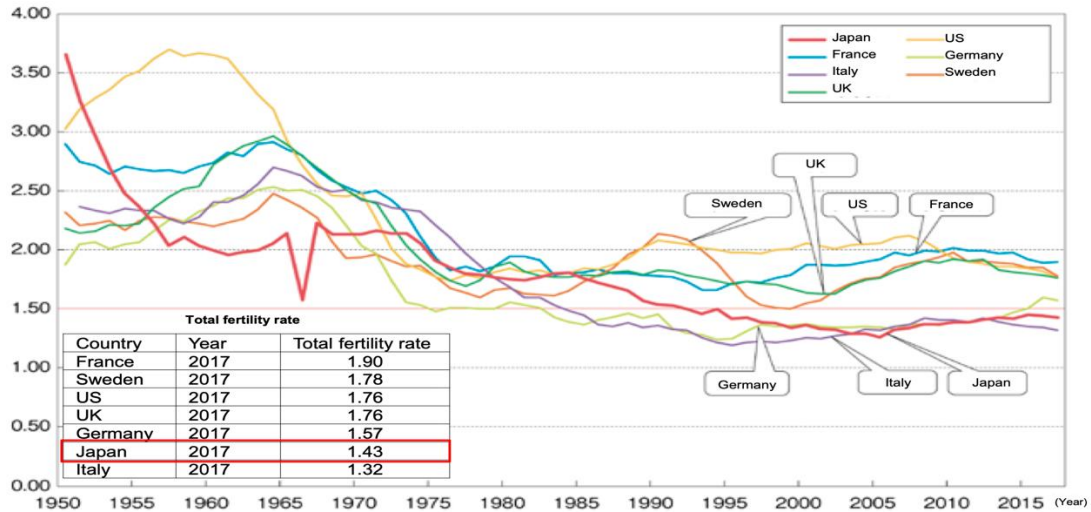


(Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. *World Population Prospects 2019, Volume II: Demographic Profiles*)<sup>vi</sup>

### Government Measures Over the Years

The current demographic challenges in Japan are not unique, but an observed trend in several other developed countries. Several policy decisions that Japan has carried out clearly shows that the government has been taking a leaf out of other's experiences. Most European countries, such as Poland, Sweden, Germany, France, and Denmark, are adopting family-friendly policies that encourage more women to join the workforce or return to the workplace after giving birth. This is one of the most commonly used countermeasures against a declining population.<sup>vii</sup> Figure 3 shows that the total fertility rate in such countries as France and Sweden declined from the 1970s to the 1980s, but the rate began to recover around the 1990s. This could be due to the successful outcome of their implemented pro-family policies.

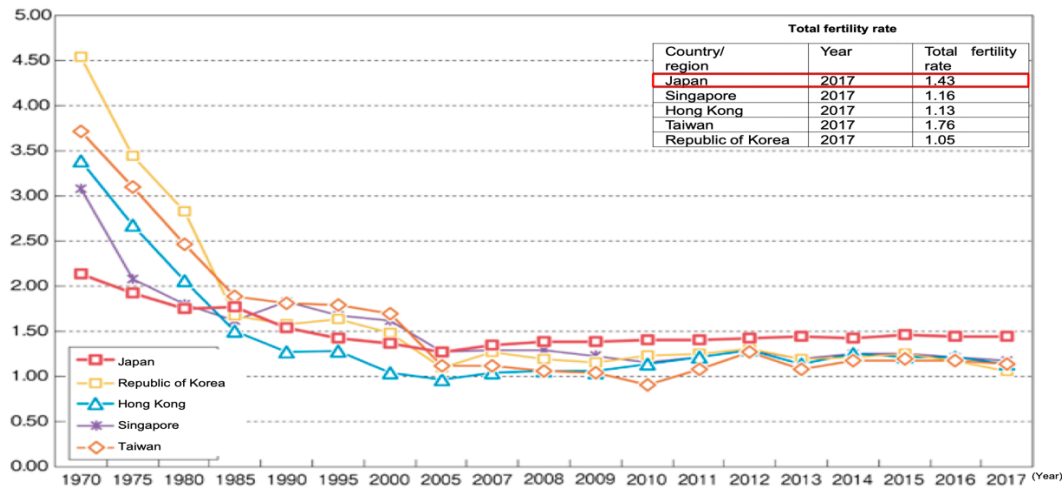
Figure 3. Total Fertility Rate of Western countries in comparison to Japan



(Source: The figures of Western countries were from sources including “Demographic Yearbook” by United Nations for the years up to 1959, OECD Family database 1960 to 2016, and the statistics in each country for the year 2017. The Japanese figures are based on “Vital Statistics” by the MHLW.)

However, it is important to note that the fertility-rate disparity among Asian countries is relatively insignificant. Figure 4 demonstrates the transition of the total fertility rate among countries and regions in Asia, namely Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the Republic of Korea. Although, their total fertility rates were all at a higher level than Japan until 1970, they have shown a continuous downward incline. The total fertility rate in these countries and regions, including Japan, fell below the replacement-level fertility rate almost three decades ago.

Figure 4. Total Fertility Rate of Asian countries in comparison to Japan



(Source: The numbers are cited from statistics in each country and city. The Japanese figures are based on “Vital Statistics” by the MHLW.)

Back in the 1970s and 1980s, the Japanese government recognized that there was a drop in the fertility rate. However, it took a ‘wait-and-see’ stance, assuming the problem would fix itself. The fertility rate finally hit 1.57 in 1989, a number which was even lower than the “fire horse” year of 1966 (when it was considered ill-omened to give birth to a girl).<sup>viii</sup> This rock-bottom figure finally prompted the authorities to address the situation seriously.

Beginning in the 1990s, the Japanese government implemented a series of policies and programs to increase the number of childcare services, as well as aiming to transform the workplace to be more family-friendly. To mention a few, the government launched the first Angel Plan and New Angel Plan in 1994 and 1999. These successive plans were designed to make child-bearing a more attractive option through means such as improving housing and public facilities for families with children and easing the cost associated with child rearing.<sup>ix</sup> In the following years, as shown in Figure 5, the Japanese government further enacted multiple measures and plans to support child-rearing and dealing with the declining birthrate.

Figure 5. Chronological list of Efforts Over the Years

<b>Date</b>		<b>Period of Enactment</b>
Dec 1994	Angel Plan	FY 1995 – FY 1999
Dec 1999	New Angel Plan	FY 2000 – FY 2004
Jul 2003	The Act on Advancement of Measures to Support Raising Next-Generation Children	Since Jul 2003
Sept 2003	Basic Act for Measures to Cope with Society with Declining Birthrate	Since Sept 2003
Dec 2004	Child-rearing Support Plan	FY 2005 – FY 2009
Jun 2006	“New Measures to Deal with the Declining Birthrate”	Jun 2006 – FY 2007
Dec 2007	Key Strategies: “Japan Supports Children and Families”	Since Dec 2007
Jan 2010	Formulation of Outline of Measures for Society with Declining Birthrate (visions for children and childrearing)	Jan 2010 – Mar 2015
Jan 2010	Progress until “The Comprehensive Support System for Children and Child-rearing” was enforced	Jan 2010 – Mar 2015
Mar 2012	Revised Child Allowance Act of 1971	Since Apr 2012
Apr 2013	Efforts for Reducing Wait-listed Children	Since Apr 2013
Jun 2013	Urgent Countermeasures to Break through the Fertility Crisis	Since Jun 2013
Jan 2014	“Committee for Japan’s Future”	Jan – Nov 2014
Jul 2014	Formulation of Comprehensive After-School Plan for Children	Since Jul 2014
Sept 2014	Efforts for Regional Revitalization	Since Sept 2014

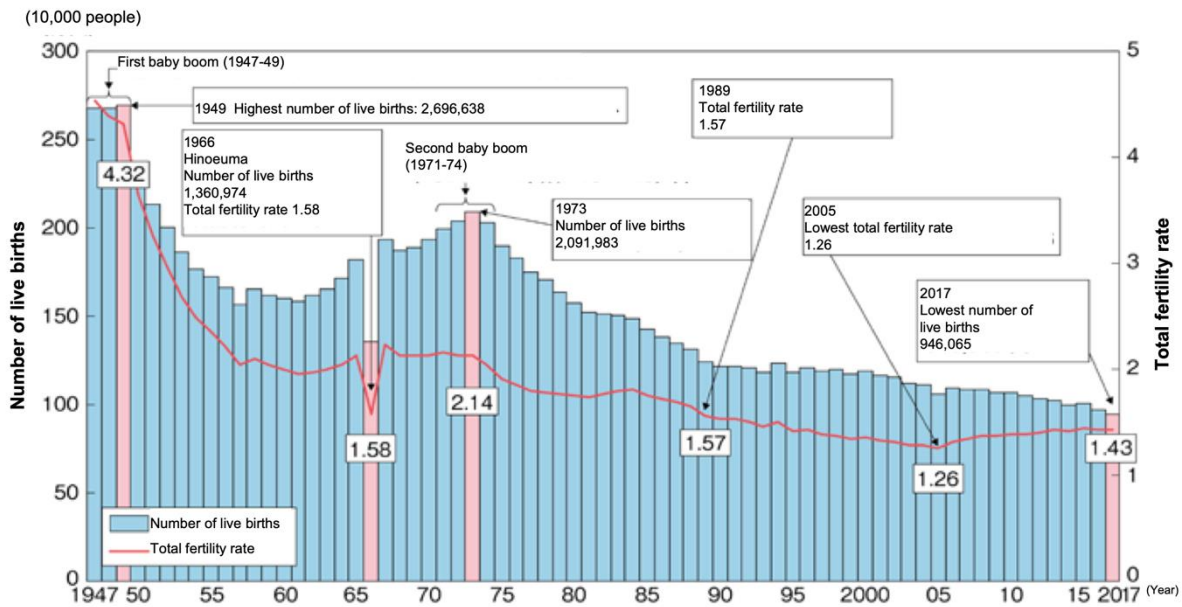


Mar 2015	Formulation and promotion of New Outline of Measures for Society with Declining Birthrate	Since Mar 2015
Apr 2015	Enforcement of Comprehensive Support System for Children and Childrearing	Since Apr 2015
Apr 2015	Installation of Children and Childrearing Administration	Since Apr 2015
Apr 2016	Amendment of the Act on Children and Childrearing Support	Since Apr 2016
Jun 2016	Formulation of Japan's Plan for Dynamic Engagement of All Citizens	Since Jun 2016
Mar 2017	Formulation of "The Action Plan for Realization of Work Style Reform"	Since Mar 2017
Jun 2017	Public announcement of "Plan to rear children with peace of mind"	Since Jun 2017
Dec 2017	Development of "New Economic Policy Package"	Since Dec 2017

*(Source: Cabinet Office of the Government of Japan and compiled by author)*

Despite the Japanese government's successive policies to tackle the growing demographic crisis over the years, the population continues to decline, and the fertility rate remains low. (Refer to Figure 4.) This suggests that its efforts have been largely ineffective. In the next section we will examine the measures carried out by the present Japanese government under Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. We will see that the structure of his solution for reviving the economy and population decline closely resembles the World Bank's suggestion that demographically-challenged countries should employ a three-pronged approach: delaying retirement, increasing the number of people employed in the working-age group, and increasing productivity and skills of workers.<sup>x</sup> However, so far the results of Abe's policies do not seem to be as satisfactory as everyone imagined they would be.

Figure 6. Total Fertility Rate and Number of Births



(Source: “Vital Statistics” by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare.)

### Beginning of “Womenomics”

In August 1999, a group of people in the Goldman Sachs’ Global Investment Research Division came up with the idea of “Womenomics.” The Tokyo-based Goldman Sachs strategists Kathy Matsui, Hiromi Suzuki and Yoko Ushio emphasized that the consumptive power of women in Japan had contributed immensely to the national economy. The strategists further argued that transforming this power into female labor participation and channeling it into the population-stricken Japan could boost real GDP growth.<sup>xi</sup> This idea caught the attention of the Japanese government and would eventually become one of the key pillars of Abe’s economic reforms since 2012.

The first round of reforms done by the Abe administration to revitalize the stagnant national economy has been dubbed “Abenomics 1.0”. The eponymous development policies of Abe came about as a comprehensive policy pack to revive the Japanese economy from the two decades of deflation better known as the ‘Lost Decades.’ He adopted the three-pronged approach as recommended by the World Bank but tailored it for Japan. His program consisted of the three

“arrows” of quantitative easing, fiscal stimulus, and structural reforms. The third arrow of structural reforms targeted business regulations to liberalize the labor market and increase workforce diversity. It paved the way for the greater possibility of diversified employment.<sup>xii</sup>

Abe, during his third year in office, was re-elected as the ruling party president and thus prime minister in September 2015. He immediately launched the second wave of economic reforms or “Abenomics 2.0,” which focused on such issues as the low fertility rate and the rapidly aging population. It also is comprised of “three arrows” to bolster Japan’s GDP to 600 trillion yen by 2021, to increase Japan’s fertility rate to 1.8 in order to halt the population-slide at 100 million, and to create an environment where people would not have to leave employment in order to care for elderly parents by the mid-2020s.<sup>xiii</sup> These new arrows should be seen as targets rather than new policies since there is no strong basis that they will be achieved. The second and third goals address the demographic issues by recognizing the importance of female participation in the labor force as a national imperative, and the need to create a compatible working environment for female workers. This echoes Kathy Matsui and her colleagues’ notion of Womenomics, as Prime Minister Abe once stated:

“Japan is a country with a shrinking population caused by a seemingly intractable decline in its birthrate. But Womenomics offers a solution with its core tenet that a country that hires and promotes more women grows economically, and no less important, demographically as well.”<sup>xiv</sup>

This paper regards “Womenomics” to be the incumbent Prime Minister’s main device in battling against the country’s declining population. As Prime Minister Abe declared that “Abenomics is ‘womenomics,’” he shifted the nature of the gender disparity issue away from social obligation to an economic necessity. He transformed the need for social change into a determinant factor of reviving the Japanese economy.

### **Progress of Abe Administration’s “Womenomics”**

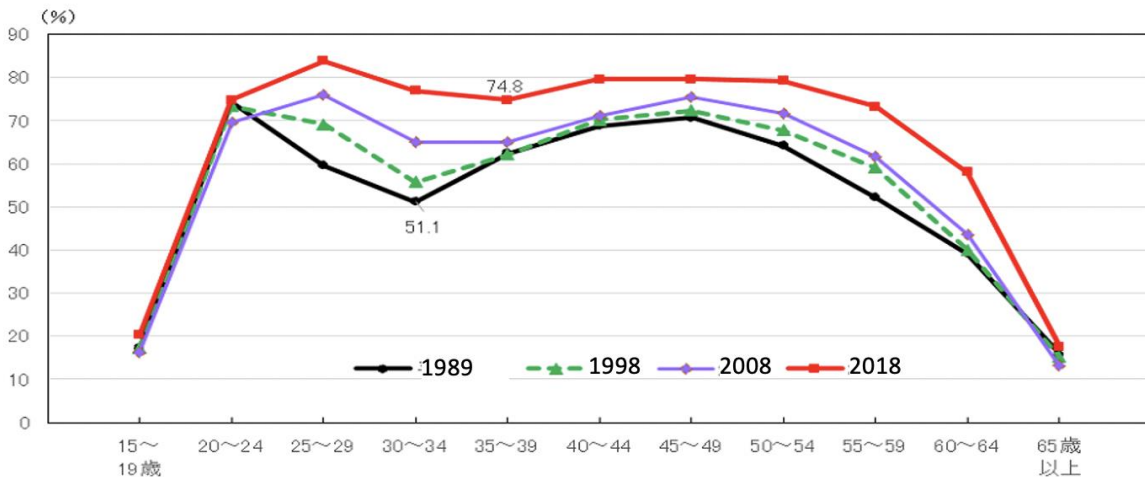
In this section we shall explore the progress of flagged “Womenomics” policies of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. In Goldman Sachs’ latest report on Womenomics, Matsui and her colleagues pointed out the progress and achievements of the Japanese government under Abe’s leadership in terms of their policies to create a better work-life balance. By 2019, Japan’s female labor

participation ratio surpassed the US and Europe, reflecting the introduction of generous parental leave benefits, enhanced gender transparency in businesses, and endorsed reforms to alter working style by mandating overtime limits and equal pay for equal work done by both genders.

*Successful outcomes of Womenomics*

Overall female labor participation in 2019 reached a record high of 71%, up from 63% in 2013. The rise in the percentage of mothers returning to work after giving birth to their first child had increased 13% between 2010-2014. It was attributed to the smoothening out of Japan’s “M-curve” (See Figure 7). Moreover, the 2018 labor participation ratio for 35-39-year-old women was 74.8%, very close to the government’s 2020 target of 77%. Subsequently, the government raised the target to 80% in 2022.

Figure 7. Labor force participation rate by age group of Women (1989-2018)



(Source: The Ministry of Health, Labour and Wealth of the Government of Japan.)

To further boost labor participation rates, overall productivity, and improve work-life balance, the Japanese government enacted legislation in April 2019 to enforce a new overtime hour restriction. Japanese work hours are known to be among the longest among developed nations, and now non-compliance to this legislation will be penalized. In addition, starting from April 2020, large firms must comply to the new “equal pay for equal work” regulation to improve the treatment of part-time employees (smaller firms will begin in April 2021). This new law bans unjustified

treatment of part-timers and entitles them to pay equal to that of regular employees if they perform the same work and possess equal skills.

Finally, there is an increase in gender diversity transparency in Japanese companies. This is largely attributed to the 2015 legislation, “Act on Promotion of Women’s Participation and Advancement in the Workplace”, which took effect in April 2016. In compliance with this law, private or public companies with over 300 employees are compelled to disclose gender diversity composition data, such as “ratio of female employees”, “ratio of female directors”, and “difference in average continuous years of employment.” In addition, the Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare (MHLW) established a certification system to recognize companies that are proactive in the promotion of women’s participation in the workplace, also known as *ERUBOSHI* (means “L-Star” for “Lady, Labor and Laudable”).<sup>xv</sup> By April 2019, MHLW had recognized 815 companies, and many of the *ERUBOSHI*-recognized firms belong to business sectors such as academic research services, news communication, finance and insurance, petroleum products, and utilities services.

#### *Progressives Reforms on Childcare and Family Policies*

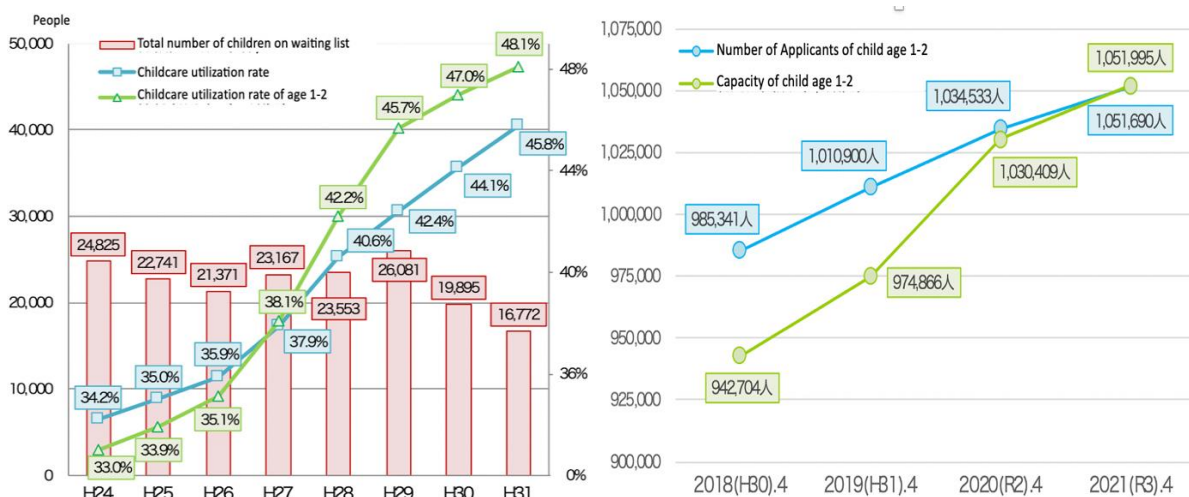
Matsui and her colleagues lauded Japan’s achievements in augmenting parental leave to make it one of the most generous in the world. The Goldman Sachs strategists ranked Japan second among OECD countries (2016) in the total length of paid maternity and parental leave, based on the combined length of women and men leave periods. Employed mothers and fathers in the first six months of parental leave can earn up to 67% of their existing salary, and thereafter 50% of their salary for the rest of their leave, with the choice of extending it up to 1 year. Nevertheless, a survey conducted by the MHLW in 2019 shows that only 6.16% of males were taking parental leave in contrast to 82.2% of maternity leave taken by females. Moreover, the survey further shows that 35.3% of male employees are unable to take advantage of childcare leave, even though they wish to.<sup>xvi</sup> Therefore, there is still room for improvement in terms of achieving a higher rate of paternal leave takers.

The government also recognized the acute problem of daycare shortage as a strong disincentive for households to have children. Many families are struggling to balance their work and raise children at the same time. Even for those who are hoping to leave their children at daycare centers are unable to do so, due to those centers being fully enrolled. In 2012, the number of

children on the daycare waiting list was 24,825. To address the daycare shortage, the Abe administration carried out an emergency project in 2013 to provide support packages to local governments to eliminate the number of children on waiting lists. The government planned then to create nursery school capacity for 400,000 children.<sup>xvii</sup> On April 1, 2019, Japan had recorded an all-time low since 1994 of 16,772 children on daycare waiting lists. (See Figure 8.)

While the Japanese government was able to surpass the goal by creating a total of 530,000 openings by 2017, demand was growing much faster than anticipated and made it impossible to eliminate the problem of waiting children. Therefore, the government decided to supplement an additional capacity for 320,000 children, aiming to clear away the waiting list by the end of fiscal 2020. While there is still more work to be done, the government launched in October 2019 a novel government-supported program to provide free preschool education and childcare for all families with children aged 3 to 5, and for low-income families with children up to age 2. New challenges are anticipated to arise from more parents transferring their child from subsidized childcare services to the free daycare services. Increasing demands on free daycare services might backfire on the effort to reduce the number of children on waiting lists.<sup>xviii</sup>

Figure 8. Children on Daycare Waiting-list (LHS) and Expected number of Children of ages 1 to 2 on Daycare Waiting-list (RHS)



(Source: The Ministry of Health, Labour and Wealth of the Government of Japan.)

## **Causes of Demographic Issues**

### *Economic Reason for Low Fertility*

Economic factors which have an impact on the population number is conceivably less controversial than societal factors for the government to address. The most direct factor is the rising cost of childrearing. There are also concerns being raised by families who say that even though they wanted more children, financial conditions made it impossible. In the survey that was conducted by the Benesse Educational Research and Development Institute together with the Center for Early Childhood Development, Education, and Policy Research at the University of Tokyo, 74.1% of new mothers and 68.8% of new fathers expressed a desire for having more children, while 28.6% of mothers and 22.3% of fathers replied that having another child would be difficult.<sup>xix</sup> Among those parents who responded “difficult”, over 80% choose the reason to be the cost of rearing another child.

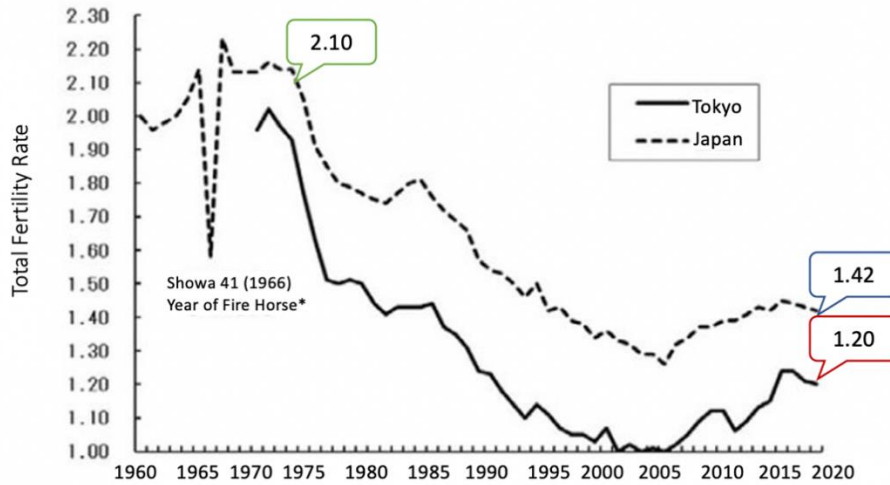
The cost of raising a child is largely expensive due to the money spent on education. The survey conducted by Sony Life Insurance in 2019 elicited views of a thousand Japanese parents of different age groups on spending money on children’s education. The survey shows 65.5% of parents agreed that one’s academic ability is dependent on how much money is spent on their education. This includes early learning from preschool, where 73% strongly or somewhat agreed as important to a child’s future, and cram school, with less than half of the parents favoring this choice.<sup>xx</sup> Furthermore, when parents were asked whether educational spending for their children is a heavy burden, parents with children at higher levels of education responded strongly or somewhat agreed. The general economic environment of Japan over the decades poses uncertainty to financial soundness, further exacerbating the issue of a dwindling birthrate.

### *Social Reason for decreasing Birthrate*

Aside from the obvious reason of cost, Meiji University Professor Hisakazu Kato identifies a shortage of public goods for families in the large metropolitan areas as a cause for families to hesitate in having children. Recalling the densely populated Greater Tokyo area that continuously attracts young people from rural areas, Kato refers to this intra-migration process of the rural population moving to urban cities as the creation of a “pole society”. Kato states that the more populated a city is it inevitably leads to a low fertility rate and presents a correlational relationship

between population density and total fertility rate. In Figure 9, the total fertility rate of metropolitan Tokyo is distinctly below the nation's rate at a low level of 1.20.

Figure 9. Annual Growth of Total Fertility Rate in Tokyo

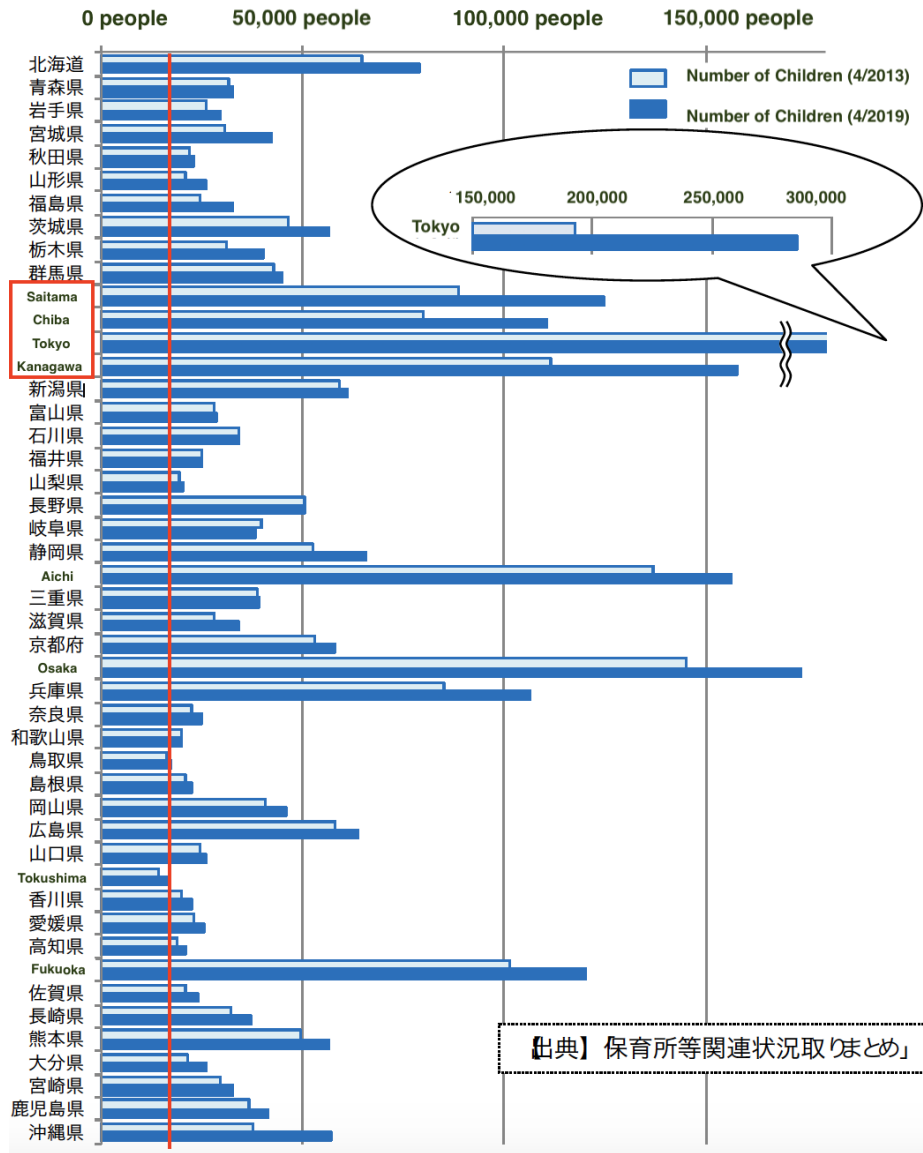


(Source: 2018 Tokyo Metropolitan Vital Statistics Annual Report)

Although correlation does not equal causation, we may assume that concentrated urban areas will have more pressure to increase their capacity to fulfill public demand, which is required for creating a wholesome environment for increasing birthrate and childrearing. Figure 10 displays that the aggregated number of children in the Greater Tokyo Area (Saitama, Chiba, Tokyo and Kanagawa) is the largest in the whole country, Tokyo by itself has roughly 280 thousand children utilizing the childcare facilities. According to a report by MHLW, the cost required for the operation of childcare centers in 2019 amounted to around 270 billion yen, whereas the majority of the prefectures operates at a cost of 60 billion yen.<sup>xxi</sup>



Figure 10. Number of Children utilizing Childcare facilities

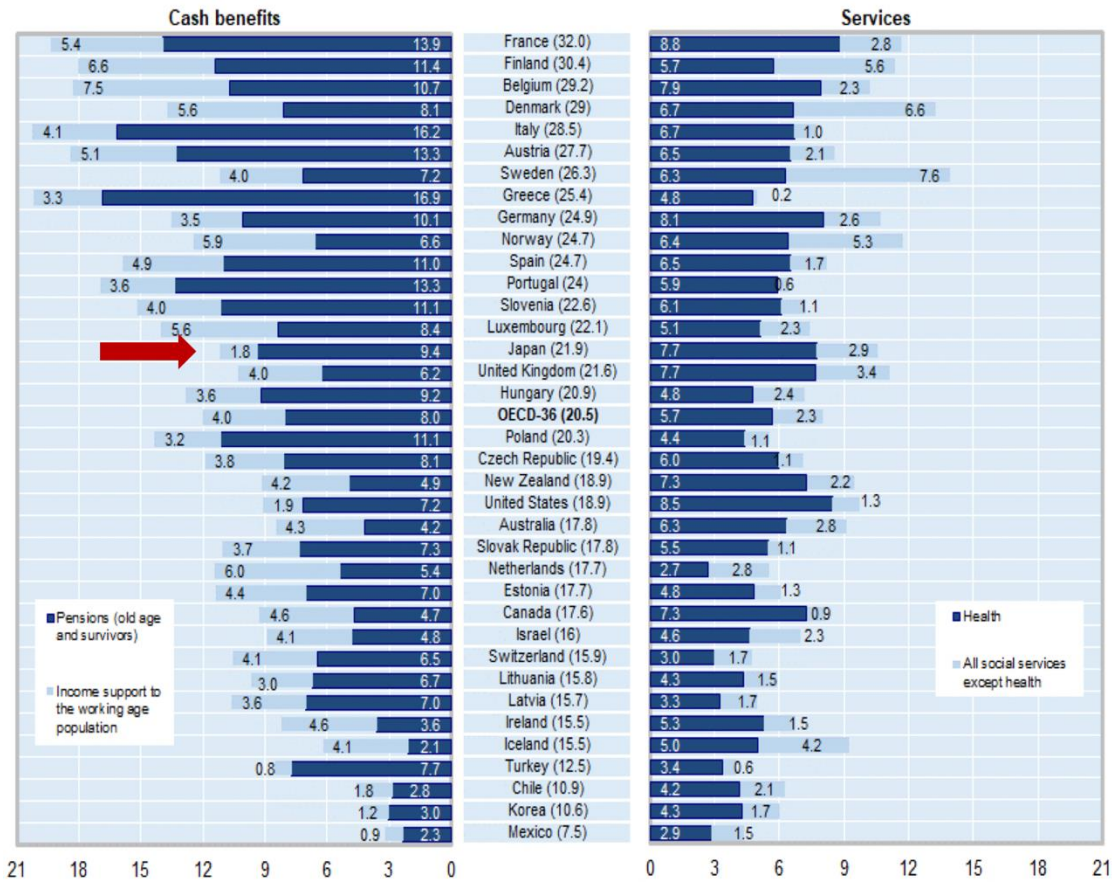


(Source: Summary of situations related to childcare centers (2019) by MHLW)

According to Professor Kato, it was significant for the government to have dedicated more resources that support the environment for having children. It is important to note that Japan's expenditures for social programs for young families is low compared with other OECD nations. As shown in Figure 11, Japan's social expenditure for pensions was 9.4%, while income support to working age population was only 1.8% of total GDP, which is the second-lowest among all

OECD countries. Kato proves that there is a close relationship between social expenditure for young families and the total fertility rate by showing that more spending on transfer payments or childcare services has resulted in higher total fertility rate in 28 OECD countries. Therefore, Kato suggests enriching family policies and improving the childrearing environment in order to encourage families to have children.<sup>xxii</sup>

Figure 11. Annual Growth of Total Fertility Rate in Tokyo



(Source: OECD (2019), Social Expenditure Database (SOCX))

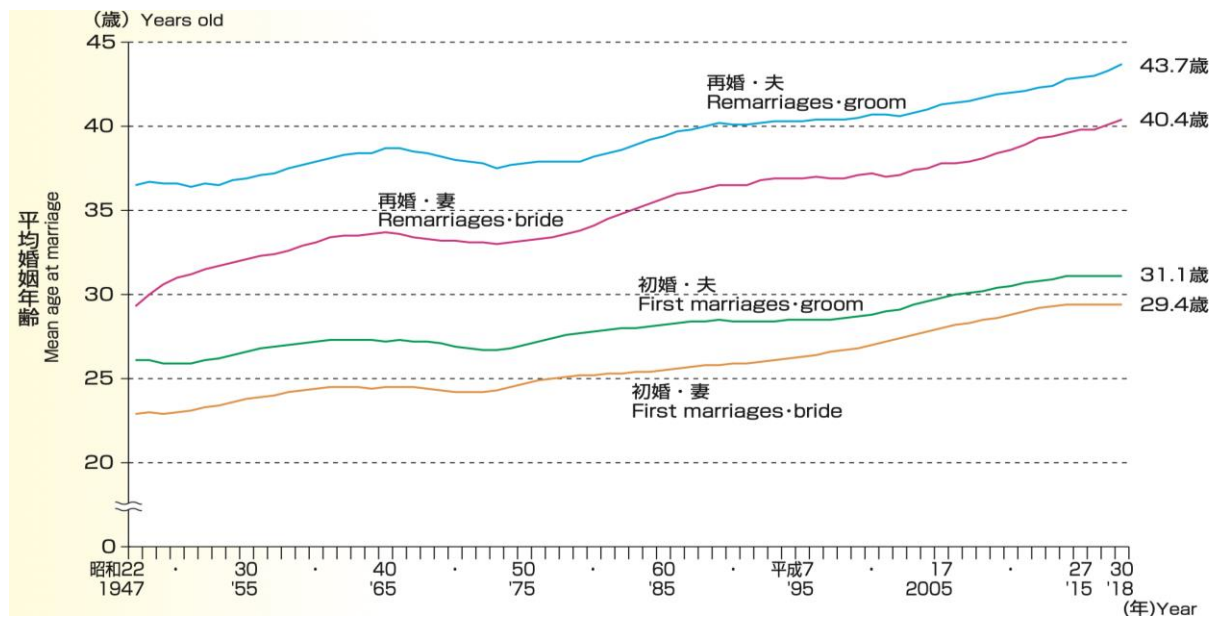
In 2015, a policy brief published by the East-West Center pointed out that Japan’s low fertility rate is mainly caused by declining rates of childbearing among married couples and the declining rates of marriage. This trend was named *shoshika* in Japanese, which means having fewer children. The related causes are the rising number of unmarried people and late marriages. According to government census figures in the mid-1990s, only one in every 20 women in Japan

were unmarried by the time they reached the age of 50, but by 2015, 1 in 7 women remain unmarried by that age. Additionally, the percentage for women ages 35 to 39 was even higher, roughly 25% had never been married, while two decades earlier there were only about 10 %.<sup>xxiii</sup>

Moreover, according to the government’s 2015 white paper on the declining birthrate, the percentage of unmarried persons in the age group 30-34 years-old was 47.1% for males and 34.6% for females. The report stated that the percentage of unmarried people is expected to rise over the long term. The report further pointed out that in 1972, when the first generation of baby boomers reached around 25 years in age, the number of marriages peaked at over 1 million. Conversely, in 2016 the number of marriages was down to half at 620,531. Furthermore, by 2019, the MHLW found the average age of first marriages are getting older for both sexes, 29 years-old for female and 31 years-old for males. (Refer to Figure 12.)

To briefly illustrate how late marriages reduce population regardless of numbers of child-bearings, if a woman is 20 when she has her first child, and her child follows the trend, then there will be three generations within a 60-year period. On the contrary, if a woman bears her first child in her 30s, there will be only two generations instead.<sup>xxiv</sup>

Figure 12. Average Age of Bride and Groom at Marriage, 1947-2018



(Source: “Vital Statistics of Japan”)

Some scholars suggest that the best remedy for these declining numbers of marriage and childbearing seems to be through policies and programs that help couples balance their work and domestic roles.<sup>xxv</sup> Tsuya approaches this occurrence from a gender-related perspective, in which she argues that the increase in the matrimonial age of women is affected by socioeconomic factors. The educational attainment for both genders is now at comparably the same level, because most job opportunities that were once monopolized by men are now open to women as well. This exposure to new values eventually eroded the values of a traditional gender role of women and, thus, widens the gap between young men and women in their view of marriage.<sup>xxvi</sup> This seems to hint that there exists a discrepancy in the Abenomics policies that provides women with more opportunities in workplace in order to increase fertility rate.

Another social cause alluded to by many refers to women's lack of desire to have children. Since many women find childrearing and becoming housewives less enticing, especially in terms of work-life balance, they avoid marriage or having children. The late 1990s saw an increase in employed women in their late twenties and thirties who were still living at home with their parents. The reasons for that being that they can share the house chores and save on rent, which allowed them more free time and disposable income to spend. A Japanese sociologist, Masahiro Yamada, coined a term describing these women in a sort of derogatory tone, the parasite singles.<sup>xxvii</sup> These individuals found the single lifestyle too good to be left behind, and have very few incentives to get into a married life.

### *Stereotypes and Gender Roles*

In 2010, Matsui and her colleagues suggested, contrary to popular Japanese opinion, that higher female employment could actually help raise, not lower, fertility rates as found to be true in many OECD countries, one example being the United States.<sup>xxviii</sup> This belief was echoed by Prime Minister Abe and reflected in his economic reform policy. In January 2019 at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Prime Minister Abe boasted an all-time high of 67% of Japanese women participating in the labor force. Despite, the big jump in the female labor participation rate, the scenario in which Prime Minister Abe was hoping for did not come true. As of 2020, the fertility rate is still low at 1.42. Many of the women in the labor force still perform only limited roles, while also bearing a disproportionate burden at home. This remains one of the biggest hurdles to women seeking meaningful careers.<sup>xxix</sup>

This, perhaps, leads to a more difficult problem to fix, which is to overcome the cultural stigma and popular public mentality in Japan. What could be observed from Japan's childrearing environment is persisting stigma and systemic constraints. Annabelle Timsit, a geopolitics reporter noted that "at the heart of issue is that young Japanese are having fewer babies, put off from family life by a discriminatory work culture (paywall), the cost of childcare, a precarious economy, and the rapid decline of marriage."<sup>xxx</sup> The imbalance of marriage life has also taken a toll on the number of married couples in recent years.

Having the husband share an equal portion of housework and child rearing could be paramount to a family's willingness to have children. Furthermore, the utilization of parental leave for couples also exhibits a great difference between mothers and fathers. According to a survey conducted by MHLW in 2019, nearly 90% of women took childcare leave for more than six months, while men who took less than five days was 56.9%, and less than one month, 80%. Over the past decade, the number of men who take paternity leave in Japan remains low.

Despite that situation, many male employees actually wish to take paternity leave if they could if their wife gave birth. The overall environment in workplaces is the major determinant of male employees' use of family-friendly policies. The 2019 survey had indicated the reasons for regular male employees not using the childcare leave system were: the company did not have a childcare leave system (27.5%), the workplace atmosphere was difficult for them to take a leave (25.4%), there was a shortage of employees in the office (27.8%), and some said there were jobs that they were in charge of only they could execute (19.8%).<sup>xxxix</sup> All these responses stemmed from the underlying pretext of male fears in receiving a negative evaluation from others. Miyajima and Yamaguchi argue that this fear is caused by the social psychological phenomenon of pluralistic ignorance, where male employees overestimated other male's negative attitudes toward paternity leave. Therefore, this leads to very low use of paternity leave among Japanese men.<sup>xxxii</sup>

### **Policy Recommendation and Implications**

Although Japanese government policies have achieved some progress, there are still areas that require more rigorous reform. The aforementioned causes that worked against Abe's "Womenomics" targets proposals to boost female employment and encourage Japanese families to have children should proceed in dual track with the expansion of daycare and nursing care services, creating flexible work-time arrangements, and more inclusive compensation systems.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

Increased provision of childcare services and high participation of women in labor could come up short in the attempt to achieve the government's fertility rate goal. The supply of daycare centers will have to keep up with the demand that is sure to increase with the rapidly rising employment rate among mothers with preschool-age children. The concern for quality of affordable childcare services must be guaranteed, especially in crowded metropolitan areas, and it must be addressed to improve the shortage problem.

Additional government programs should focus on increasing the participation of men in childrearing. The government and private sector should provide more incentives for men to take paternity leave and promote a more flexible work environment. Especially, emphasis on the benefit of having both sexes help out in the household would increase both domestic and public productivity. This attitude could encourage a public reconsideration of gender roles which is an important underpinning for instilling change for women in both homes and workplaces. Moreover, it would help dispel the myth that higher female labor participation lowers fertility rate. This should be followed by a push for better job environments and contracts for women that takes their family plans into consideration and are willing to accept them back to their prior job positions after pregnancy.

Finally, now might be the best moment for the Japanese government to reconsider a more open immigration law. This would not only allow a fresh injection of human capital and resources into the economy but will also bring value to the expansion of daycare capacity. Since the childcare and elderly caregiving system relies heavily on the supply of domestic labor, having a new source of labor would alleviate the pressure on governments to quickly find human resources to keep up with quick-paced demand.

## **Conclusion**

In this paper, I have tried to evaluate the measures executed by the Japanese government from the 1990s until the present Abe administration and explore the socioeconomic and gender-related factors that led to the current population decline. Japan might have become a nation with one of the most generous parental leave programs in the world, but several deeply rooted societal issues have also been brought back into the ring as traditional interpretation of gender roles have been challenged. At present, the policies of the Japanese government have failed to reverse the trend of a declining population. In Japan's context, the rising ratio of women in the labor force has

created an urgent need for an expansion of childcare support. Insufficient programs will inhibit women from maintaining a reasonable work-life balance. Moreover, wage disparity between genders and the glass ceiling experienced by Japanese women are due to biologically perceived gender roles in marriage and child rearing that would ultimately harm a woman's promotion in her career, despite the government's encouragement. The socio-economic obstacles that constrain women from matrimony and childbearing must be removed. If present policies prove to be incapable of doing so, then new approaches for tackling the population crisis must be devised quickly before it is too late.

## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>i</sup> One metropolis, three prefecture refers to Tokyo as metropolis and the three prefectures of Chiba, Saitama and Kanagawa which are in close proximity to Tokyo. Statistics as of October 1, 2019 retrieved from “都道府県市区町村” ([https://uub.jp/rnk/p\\_j.html](https://uub.jp/rnk/p_j.html)) on March 5, 2020.
- <sup>ii</sup> 「人口推計-2020年（令和2年）2月報-」（総務省統計局）  
<https://www.stat.go.jp/data/jinsui/pdf/202002.pdf>（2020年3月10日に利用）
- <sup>iii</sup> “Elderly Citizens Accounted for Record 28.4% of Japan's Population in 2018, Data Show.” The Japan Times, September 15, 2019. <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2019/09/15/national/elderly-citizens-accounted-record-28-4-japans-population-2018-data-show/#.XmeEZi2ZPAJ>.
- <sup>iv</sup> United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2019). *World Population Prospects 2019, Volume II: Demographic Profiles* (ST/ESA/SER.A/427). See also 「日本の将来推計人口（平成29年推計）」（国立社会保障・人口問題研究所）（[http://www.ipss.go.jp/pp-zenkoku/j/zenkoku2017/db\\_zenkoku2017/s\\_tables/app17.htm](http://www.ipss.go.jp/pp-zenkoku/j/zenkoku2017/db_zenkoku2017/s_tables/app17.htm)）（2020年3月10日に利用）
- <sup>v</sup> Richarz, Allan, and Allan Richarz. “Can Japan's Vanishing Villages Survive?” CityLab, November 22, 2019. <https://www.citylab.com/life/2019/11/japanese-rural-area-disappearing-town-population-immigration/602005/>.
- <sup>vi</sup> Medium-variant projections for 2020-2100 are shown as thin colored lines, and uncertainty is shown in lighter shades for 95 percent prediction intervals.
- <sup>vii</sup> Fleming, Sean. “Japan's Workforce Will Be 20% Smaller by 2040.” World Economic Forum, February 12, 2019. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/02/japan-s-workforce-will-shrink-20-by-2040/>.
- <sup>viii</sup> Stewart, Joel. “An Investigation into Japan's Population: The Current State of Decline.” *Geography*, vol. Masters, Research Paper, Portland State University, 2007, p. 24. general editor, Martha Works. The year of 1966 was also the year of Fire horse and women born in the year of Fire horse are said to have troubled marriages or bring bad luck to their spouse.
- <sup>ix</sup> “A 2015 Declining Birthrate White Paper.” edited by Government of Japan Cabinet Office, 2015, pp. 17-42, Chapter 2. Efforts to Deal with the Declining Birthrate, accessed on April 22, 2020.
- <sup>x</sup> Devictor, Xavier. “Poland: Aging and the Economy.” World Bank, June 14, 2012. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/opinion/2012/06/14/poland-aging-and-the-economy>.
- <sup>xi</sup> Matsui, Kathy et al. ““Womenomics: Buy the Female Economy” ” *Portfolio Strategy*, translated by Global Investment Research Division, Report, The Goldman Sachs Group, Inc., August 13, 1999. Accessed on February 24, 2020.
- <sup>xii</sup> McBride, James et al. “Abenomics and the Japanese Economy.” Council on Foreign Relations <https://www.cfr.org/background/abenomics-and-japanese-economy>. Accessed February 28, 2020.



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- <sup>xiii</sup> Hayakawa, Hideo. "Reading between the Lines of Abenomics 2.0." 2016, <https://spfusa.org/nippon-com/reading-between-the-lines-of-abenomics-2-0/>.
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## Japan Takes the Lead in Mega-Trade Deals

*Guo Chen*

### **Introduction**

The global trend of regional integration has resulted in a series of mega-regional free-trade agreements (FTAs) being negotiated. They involve large shares of world trade or investment and are reshaping the rules of global governance. Compared to traditional bilateral FTAs between countries, mega-FTAs cover broader areas and have a deeper synthesis in regulations, thus leading to further steps in trade liberalization.<sup>i</sup> As the third-largest economy in the world, Japan is playing an increasingly active role in pursuing such regional agreements. Despite domestic opposition mostly from the farm sector, Japan joined the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) negotiations in 2013 and reached a successful conclusion in 2015. After the U.S. withdrew from the TPP for reasons that are not yet clear, Japan took the lead to create the TPP's successor, the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) or TPP-11, which reached a successful conclusion and went into effect in 2018. Japan also concluded the Japan-EU Free Trade Agreement in 2017 and is continuing negotiations on the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), a proposed free-trade agreement for the Indo-Pacific region.<sup>ii</sup>

Japan has not always been the leader of such free-trade agreements. Until the 1990s, it was quite protectionist in nature, and only negotiated bilateral FTAs or economic partnership agreements (EPAs) that allowed it to protect certain domestic interests like the agricultural sector.<sup>iii</sup> On the one hand, Japan worried that discriminatory FTAs would harm the multilateral framework built on the rules of the World Trade Organization (WTO).<sup>iv</sup> That organization's rules insist on a most-favored-nation (MFN) clause in trade agreements that requires a country to provide any concessions, privileges, or immunities granted to one nation to all other WTO member countries. Although its name implies favoritism toward another nation, it denotes the equal treatment of all countries. On the other hand, during its high-growth period based on its exports, Japan did not feel the necessity to ensure market access by inking discriminatory trade deals.<sup>v</sup> Then, what were the changes in circumstances that made free-trade agreements crucial for Japan's interests?

Since Donald Trump became U.S. president in 2017, America has descended into protectionism through discriminatory tariffs and pressure on trade partners to sign bilateral trade

agreements that seek to protect only U.S. interests. Trump's protectionist moves threaten the multilateral trade order that the U.S. originally created in the postwar era. Japan, too, finds its own trade blueprint in jeopardy. It is therefore interesting to see to what extent the current mega-FTA trend has done to help Japan achieve its strategic goals. This paper aims to examine the effect of mega-trade agreements on Japan's trade policy and economic interests. It first summarizes the significance of regional trade integration and suggests the potential effects mega-agreements may have on Japan's economy. The paper then assesses the actual impact of mega-FTAs by comparing Japan's concessions in the TPP negotiations and the resulting CPTPP terms. It further examines the recent bilateral trade agreement between Japan and the U.S. to see how many of Japan's liberalization commitments remain. The paper lastly probes into Japan's views on the RCEP and other on-going negotiations. By doing so, the paper hopes to shed light on potential developments in Japan's trade strategy and the effect on future trade relations with the U.S.

## **Significance of Mega-FTAs for Japan**

### *Imperatives for Agriculture Reform*

“Structural reform” has been a keyword for Japan's economic strategy since the administration of Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi (2001-2006). Nobody can disagree that above all others, the agricultural sector is in urgent need of such reform. Agriculture in Japan is rigidly protected, and thus low in productivity and efficiency. Japan's agricultural production still relies on small-scale farming. The work-force is declining and rapidly aging. According to the 2015 census, the average age of people primarily engaged in agriculture is 67, an increase of 7.2 years over the last decade. The situation is particularly serious in the highland and mountainous regions of Japan, where over 70% of farmers are aged 65 or older. Also, official statistics show that the percentage of full-time households in the agricultural sector was only 33.3% in 2015. Moreover, 95.1% of farming households work on cultivated land smaller than 5 hectares (around 12 acres).<sup>vi,vii</sup> As a result, Japan lacks professional agricultural producers who organize production, manage operations, and generate economies of scale.

One major reason for the limits on scaled agriculture is a policy that restricts land-transactions from farmers to firms.<sup>viii</sup> Other protectionist policies further distort the market. Despite being a free economy, Japan imposes state-level control over the trade of critical agricultural products.<sup>ix</sup> Together with production quotas, these interventions help agricultural goods fetch higher-than-

market prices. Beyond this, the government also ensures farmers' income with direct subsidies, which requires a huge amount of national funds. For example, in 2013, the Japanese government allocated 2.2 trillion yen in subsidies to agricultural workers.<sup>x</sup> Thanks to these protections, Japan is able to maintain its inefficient production model with little pressure from external competition.

The agricultural sector enjoys these privileges because it has long been a critical voting base for the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). The agriculture cooperatives (JA) play an indispensable role in bringing together political power and farmers' interests. JA intermediates subsidize farm projects, loans, and other special job opportunities generated by the government for the farmers. JA is essentially the farmer's bank. At the same time, it mobilizes farmers and their families in electoral campaigns for the LDP.<sup>xi</sup> In particular, the Central Union of Agricultural Cooperatives (*JA Zenchu*) serves as a machine that sorts demands from local farmers to send to decision-makers. Equipped with the privilege to influence policymaking, JA has been a powerful lobbying force that successfully blocks agricultural liberalization.<sup>xii</sup>

In assessing the impact of trade agreements on agricultural reform in Japan, it is important to ask the following: whether the political power of JA has been weakened; whether protectionist policies substantially change due to international agreements; and whether Japan continues to provide the farm sector with considerable subsidies and other means of financial support. In addition, the motivation of the central government is important: even during the years of high protectionism, Japan was willing to partially liberalize its agricultural sector in a multilateral setting like the WTO round, for the greater goal of access to global markets. But there are "sacred products" like rice that the government refuses to liberalize as it is considered politically dangerous. In the negotiations that occurred under the TPP, Japan was willing to open up its farm market a bit more, due to the expected benefits of that mega-trade deal to the Japanese economy.

### *Establishing an International Architecture*

Three factors explain Japan's desire for a high-standard trade architecture, such as the TPP (now CPTPP). First, it is a core interest for Japan to maintain a free and stable global economy.<sup>xiii</sup> Japan used to play a passive role in trade liberalization. However, as the international economy developed, Japan has increasingly deepened its presence in the global and regional value chain. In 2009, 43% of Japan's exports were connected to the global value chain. At that time, such a participation ratio was even higher than the US and China.<sup>xiv</sup> Official data shows that by 2016, the

manufacturing sector had more than 10,000 overseas affiliations. The majority of them were in the Asia-Pacific region. Japanese manufacturers' heavy reliance on the value chain requires large-scale trade liberalization covering a broad range of trading partners. A further motivation for Japan to promote regional FTAs is to mitigate the "noodle bowl effect." According to an official working in the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI), Japan has already signed 14 bilateral economic partnership agreements (EPAs). However, the large number of rules peculiar to each pact create confusion for Japanese companies, so they cannot use the benefits effectively.<sup>xv</sup> The METI view is consistent with a survey of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), which showed that only 29% of Japanese firms are using FTA preferences. In addition, 27% of Japanese firms in the survey noted that the varieties of rules have increased their business costs.<sup>xvi</sup> Therefore, the Japanese government is longing for a common set of rules that integrate its partnerships in the region.

The third motivation for Japan to seek a liberalized trade structure is strategic. Japan's alliance with the U.S. was critical to drive a reluctant Japan to the TPP negotiation table when the Democratic Party of Japan was in power. Akira Amari, a former minister of METI, used to admit that Japan always considers the U.S. as crucial for the regional stability of East Asia, and that belief pushed them to the TPP talks in spite of domestic opposition.<sup>xvii</sup> Amari also explained the benefits of TPP as not only economical, but that it would "contribute to regional stability as an indirect security." He also mentioned Japan's concern about China's attempt to acquire regional leadership, and he hoped China will eventually be persuaded to join the TPP framework.<sup>xviii</sup>

Strategic competition with China is one of Japan's major concerns. In 2014, when China announced the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meeting, the initiative alarmed Japan, and it convinced TPP countries to accelerate the negotiations toward reaching an agreement.<sup>xix</sup> Concern about China also motivated Japan to seek a quick conclusion of the TPP-11 when the U.S. decided to withdraw from the agreement in January 2017. While countries such as Canada and Vietnam were asking for a more thorough examination of the details, Japan was eager to get the agreement off of the ground because it viewed the partnership as a strategic counterbalance to China's economic influence. Why would Japan be so concerned about China's relative influence in the world trade order? From an economic point of view, Japan considers highly liberalized rules such as investor-state dispute

settlement (ISDS) as essential for its business overseas.<sup>xx</sup> There are also concerns about the government-business relationship on issues such as government subsidies and technology transformation.<sup>xxi</sup> Hence in Japan's view, the U.S.' absence in the Asian trade order meant that a vacuum was created, and the possibility of dominance by a regional architecture that features lower standards and rules.

## **Assessing the Impacts of Mega-FTAs**

### *Impact on Domestic Reform*

The causal relationship between TPP and agricultural reform is bidirectional. On the one hand, Japan's rigid and inefficient agricultural industry needs competition to boost productivity, and the TPP will serve well (in theory) as the external pressure. On the other hand, the ratification of the TPP itself needs some level of reform that weakens the power of Japan's agricultural interest groups. In that sense, the negotiations had contributed to a structural change even before the countries reached an agreement. In 2015, Abe revised the agricultural cooperative law, turning JA into a general incorporated association. The revision also put an end to JA's authority to audit agricultural cooperatives and left the responsibility to independent accountants, undermining the power of the agricultural lobby in the Diet.<sup>xxii</sup> The reform, however, was not thorough. The supervisory power of the *JA Zenchu* declined, but it kept its role as a coordinator and a representative of local agricultural cooperatives. Moreover, another giant organization, the National Federation of Agricultural Co-operative Associations (*JA Zen-noh*), which has been in charge of the trading of agricultural goods and commodities on the state level with high transaction costs, survived without any substantial change in its structure.<sup>xxiii,xxiv</sup>

The actual terms in the agreement are also a mixture of breakthroughs and rigidities. In the TPP, more than 90% of Japan's tariffs would be eventually eliminated. However, agriculture still lags behind—19% of agricultural goods would stay under protection.<sup>xxv</sup> Japan complies with an immediate tariff elimination of 51.3 % for agriculture tariff lines. Still, it is much lower compared to the average level of 84.5% that the other TPP countries comply with.<sup>xxvi</sup> It is not enough to look at the aggregate data, because five core commodities (rice, wheat, sugar, dairy, and beef and pork) represent the vital interests of Japan's agricultural sector. Under the TPP, only the tariffs on beef and pork would be cut (from 38.5% to 9% for beef, and 482yen/kilo to 50yen/kilo for pork). The

other four goods maintain their status as commodities that would not be subject to tariff elimination. Moreover, they are still traded by the state.<sup>xxvii</sup>

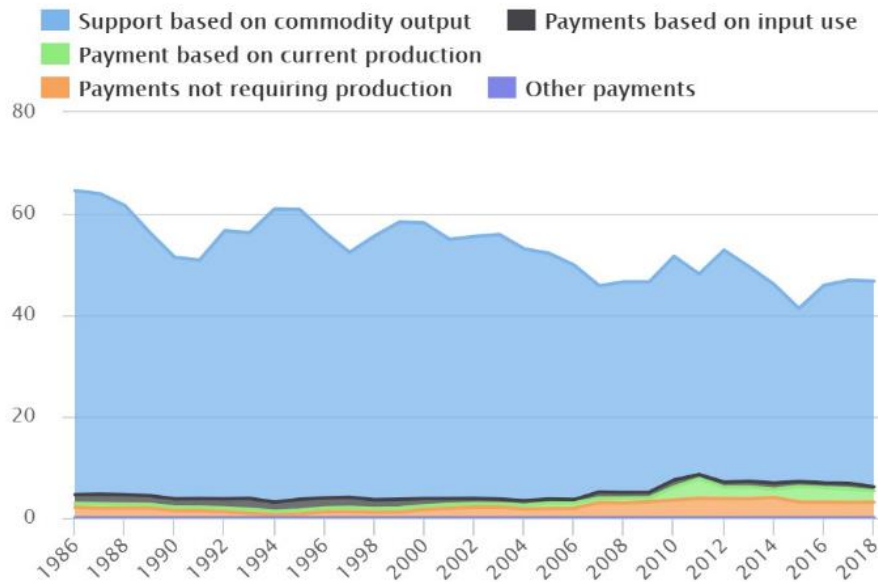
Despite the lack of competition in the farm sector, the government launched countermeasures that were expected to be influenced by the TPP. Although the package promoted reform, it also would bring more distortion into the market at the same time. The government did introduce the “sixth industry” strategy to coordinate collective effort from production to marketing. The aim is to facilitate direct business-to-consumer transactions of agricultural goods. The government also plans to dig deeper into the added value of commodities through tourist farms, farm restaurants, export promotion, and branding of Japanese food as “high-quality” products.<sup>xxviii</sup> On the other hand, the government has also allocated a huge amount of money to TPP adjustment funds. Around \$20 billion have already been distributed to the agriculture sector.<sup>xxix</sup>

The switch from the TPP to the CPTPP provides a further chance to test the impact of the (partial) liberalization of Japan’s agricultural industry. The most obvious change is the immediate decline in the price of meat in Japanese supermarkets.<sup>xxx</sup> Canada also reports a boost in beef exports to Japan. Thanks to the enactment of the CPTPP, Canada saw its export of chilled pork to Japan increase by 122% just two months after the CPTPP was put into effect. Beef exports by volume also tripled almost as soon as the tariff was reduced by the agreement.<sup>xxxi</sup> However, despite increasing pressure on some agricultural goods, a large part of government income support remains.

In 2018 Japan abolished rice production quotas, a policy that had served as an instrument to maintain over-valued rice prices since 1969. Instead, the government launched a new revenue insurance program that compensates farmers for potential losses. The latest data (Figure 1.) shows that Japan’s Producer Support Estimate (PSE) reduced moderately from 2016-18 to 46.7 %, but was still 2.5 times higher than the OECD average.<sup>xxxii</sup> Such a high PSE level indicates Japan’s farmers’ incomes still rely heavily on governmental support. Production models remain unchanged as the ratio of full-time farmers and farm scales stay almost the same.



Figure 1. Japan's Producer Support Estimate, % of Gross Farm Receipts (GFR)



(Source: *Producer and Consumer Support Estimates database, OECD*)

In conclusion, the CPTPP terms provide incentives and have pushed Japan to reform its agricultural sector to some extent. However, the commitment is far from enough. The U.S.' withdrawal from the TPP also brings further challenges. The recently signed bilateral trade agreement is supposed to be a replacement for the earlier effort the two countries had made in negotiating the TPP. However, compared to the TPP, the new agreement lacks an in-depth liberalization commitment. The U.S. managed to get Japan's commitment to reduce around 90% of the tariffs on agricultural goods, which are similar concessions as found in the TPP agreement. However, this tariff commitment (and the Digital Trade Deal which will be discussed later) is almost the only achievement.<sup>xxxiii</sup> Both sides left the tariff and non-tariff barriers for Japan's rice, the U.S.' automobile sector, and other rule-based negotiations off the table. A second stage of U.S.-Japan trade negotiations, scheduled to start sometime during 2020, may address those other items.

The U.S.' withdrawal from TPP, therefore, disrupted Prime Minister Abe's plan for liberalization. As a result, the low-efficiency rice industry remains highly protected and internationally uncompetitive. The significance of the TPP also was reduced when the U.S. pulled out. The TPP agreement covered approximately 40% of world GDP, but under the CPTPP, the 11-

member partnership now only represents 14% of the global economy.<sup>xxxiv</sup> Nonetheless, every coin has two sides. While the U.S. withdrawal weakened the TPP and as a result Japan's expected trading base, it also left Japan a chance to assume leadership of the TPP-11.

### *Japan Assumes Leadership*

In a rare move, Japan took the responsibility to organize the remaining 11 member countries into what became the CPTPP. Abe's negotiators not only arranged meetings and mediated conflicting interests between members, but Abe himself also impressed his peers with his firm commitment. Despite domestic pressure from agricultural interest groups, the Japanese government decided not to change any of the concessions made in the previous TPP negotiations regarding market access. By compromising and removing or easing key trade barriers, Japan prevented other countries from asking for exceptions in sensitive trade areas.<sup>xxxv</sup> Japanese negotiators hence were able to focus the talks only on rule-making provisions in order to achieve an early agreement. The 11 countries further agreed to keep the suspension of the rule-making provisions to a minimum. In the end, only 22 provisions were suspended temporarily. These were rules promoted by the U.S. but had been unanimously questioned by the remaining members.<sup>xxxvi</sup> They also agreed to re-activate these provisions as soon as the U.S. returned. Abe's gamble paid off. Impressed by Japan's commitment, the 11 countries successfully reached a CPTPP agreement in one year. Moreover, through its effort in the coordination process, Japan showed its determination and established its status as the "champion of multilateralism and the rule of law."<sup>xxxvii</sup>

Japan was able to switch from being a poster boy for protectionism to being a representative of liberalization, largely because Abe had already centralized political power under him. For a long time, Japan's policymaking heavily relied on the bureaucracy and a parliamentary Cabinet system. Power tended to be decentralized with much of the policy proposals coming up from the bureaucracy. The ruling LDP apparatus also had control of policymaking and proposals. Prime Minister Koizumi made initial strides to reduce the power of the party and bureaucracy by moving to centralize power and policymaking into the Kantei, or the Prime Minister's Official Residence (like the White House). The Kantei bureaucracy of the Cabinet Secretariat under Koizumi swelled from 200 to more than 800 officials seconded from the ministries and agencies.

In the past, the Kantei and the Cabinet were not supposed to take the lead in the decision-making process. Cabinet meetings were short and symbolic, rubber-stamping decisions that came up from below or from the LDP. There were few new discussions by the Cabinet; it instead served to confirm decisions, usually made by individual vice-ministers earlier.<sup>xxxviii</sup> Instead of a headquarters or control tower, the Kantei traditionally was more of an onlooker to the decision-making process.

Knowing the weakness of executive power, Prime Minister Abe expanded the staff of the Kantei and gave it new powers. While in 1989, there were only 20 Cabinet Bureaucrats (*Kantei Kanryo*), the number has since then increased to 300. He further increased the Cabinet Secretariats as well as Special Advisers to the Prime Minister. He also granted more policymaking power to these chief leaders.<sup>xxxix</sup> The Kantei bureaucrats used to consider themselves independent decision-makers instead of agents of their ministers or the Diet.<sup>xl</sup> However, when forming his Cabinet, Abe picked those who have similar visions to be the major actors and marginalized those who opposed him.<sup>xli</sup> For example, the current Chief Cabinet Secretariat, Yoshihide Suga, is one of his steady supporters.<sup>xlii</sup> Since the Cabinet now has become the center of power, ministries also send their most capable individuals to the Cabinet.<sup>xliii</sup> As a result, the Kantei is empowered with both stronger capacity and higher authority in decision-making. Abe has also instituted a National Security Council and National Security Secretariat under the Kantei for strategic decision-making.

Abe also realizes the importance of unity in policymaking, especially for decisions regarding foreign relations. Trade negotiations in Japan used to be under the charge of four ministries: “trade, agriculture, foreign affairs, and finance,” who often confronted one another in promoting their own favored agendas.<sup>xliv</sup> However, to conduct the TPP negotiations, Abe established a TPP headquarters within the Kantei. The headquarters consisted of more than 100 bureaucrats with expertise from different ministries.<sup>xlv</sup> The new structure enabled Japan to coordinate domestic and international-level politics into one goal: the success of the TPP negotiations. Moreover, it served as a base of operations to quickly re-organize negotiations when the U.S. suddenly withdrew from the agreement.<sup>xlvi</sup>

Further legacies of the TPP framework are the terms regarding digital trade. Although the bilateral agreement ignores most of the prior rule-making efforts, its digital agreement is largely inherited from the TPP talks. This suggests a common interest of the two countries, and a potential

springboard for breaking through current trade frictions. My interview with a former METI official also suggests that Japan is bringing the discussion of digital trade and e-commerce into a number of venues, such as WTO reform, the G-20 forum, and the U.S.-Japan-EU Trilateral Meetings. By doing so deliberately, Japan is hoping to persuade the U.S. that multilateral frameworks are still capable of solving the U.S.' concerns. Such a strategy indicates Japan's strong desire for the U.S. to return to TPP-like frameworks.<sup>xlvi</sup>

## **What Comes Next**

### *More Bilateral Negotiations?*

Compared to the TPP, the first-phase bilateral agreement does not provide Japan with a satisfactory trade relationship with the U.S. A METI official evaluated the bilateral agreement as “more political than economical.”<sup>xlvi</sup> In other words, Japan participated in the bilateral negotiation as a reinforcement of the U.S.-Japan alliance instead of expecting it to bring economic benefits. The lack of in-depth discussions on rules and standards also makes the U.S. a significant missing piece from Japan's blueprint of regional trade order. What could Japan then do to fulfill its goals? In the joint statement announcing the conclusion of the bilateral deal, the two countries suggested their intention to continue negotiations regarding a broader range of topics.<sup>xlix</sup> However, according to Mireya Solis, a “second phase” of negotiations is in neither side's interest. The Trump administration lacks motivation to push for further negotiations, although the USTR has been hinting that such negotiations will start later in 2020. Since they have achieved the tariff reductions that could help Trump generate support from the voters, a second stage discussion means more risk than benefits facing the upcoming election.<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, Japan was reluctant to negotiate even the first phase deal. It did so because the U.S. threatened to impose higher tariffs on Japan's automobile sector under Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act, which grants the U.S. president authority to impose restrictions on imports that may bring national security concerns.<sup>li</sup> Moreover, as the METI official suggested, the COVID-19 pandemic has pushed almost everything behind schedule. It is then reasonable to conclude that even if talks begin, do not expect any substantial progress between then and the fast-approaching U.S. election.<sup>lii</sup> Japan will likely wait until after the next President is installed to push its agenda for multilateral trade frameworks.

## *Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)*

The RCEP is another multilateral effort to which Japan has given enormous attention. With participating countries making up 30% of the world GDP, the RCEP was jointly proposed by China and Japan in 2011.<sup>liii</sup> Similar to the TPP, Japan also views the RCEP as a critical pivot of its strategy. While China proposed the RCEP as an agreement between the ASEAN Plus Three (China, Japan, South Korea), Japan insisted on including India, New Zealand, and Australia.<sup>liv</sup> The reason, according to the METI official, is that these countries are critical for Japan's value chain (or a set of interrelated activities a company uses to create a competitive advantage). Japan also believes that these countries are important in balancing the region.<sup>lv</sup> Both India and Australia are members of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD), a security coalition between the U.S., Japan, India, and Australia. Given the fact that the Japanese government included the TPP in its "Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy," it is reasonable to suggest that Japan expects trade cooperation to help strengthen its partnerships with critical neighbors.<sup>lvi,lvii</sup>

Although the deal has not been finalized yet, India having pulled out in 2019, the RCEP agreement is likely to have lower commitments on tariff reduction compared to CPTPP. Most countries are only willing to reduce 80% of their tariff lines.<sup>lviii</sup> Besides the export of commodities, Japan also hopes the RCEP will set up similarly high standards in Asia in fields such as service, investment, and dispute settlements.<sup>lix</sup> The talks also touch on regulations regarding intellectual property and electronic commerce.<sup>lx</sup>

However, the RCEP negotiations have not been smooth since the official launch in 2012. Talks still continue with no fixed end in sight. One reason contributing to the slow process is that each member country has a different vision of what the deal should look like. This is especially true of China and Japan, with Japan deeming high-standard rules as critical, and China, together with the developing countries, ask for more flexibility. The *Guiding Principles* for the RCEP negotiation indicates that the negotiation will "taking into consideration the different levels of development of the participating countries," and "include appropriate forms of flexibility including provision for special and differential treatment, plus additional flexibility to the least-developed ASEAN Member States."<sup>lxi</sup> Therefore, the RCEP is likely to lead to regional integration with lower quality standards. The high flexibility of the RCEP also leaves more space for bargaining and that, too, can slow down the process.<sup>lxii</sup>

Yet the biggest obstacle on the current stage is the uncertainty brought by India. In 2019, 15 of the 16 participating countries announced that they have concluded text-based negotiation, and were ready to sign the deal in 2020.<sup>lxiii</sup> However, since India declined to join the agreement in November, the negotiation again reached a deadlock.<sup>lxiv</sup> India's biggest concern is that Chinese imports may bring fierce competition. Despite having a pro-RCEP Prime Minister, India's tariffs are still the highest in the world.<sup>lxv</sup> The state of its economy also has made India more reluctant to liberalize its domestic market.<sup>lxvi</sup> This concern made reaching a deal difficult, because that factor had little to do with any particular provision or topic, which might have given more space for bargaining. Instead, India was reluctant to join the package in the first place and kept setting up obstacles. Facing India's hesitation, China has expressed willingness to sign a deal without India. Japan, on the other hand, insists that the agreement should include all 16 countries.<sup>lxvii</sup> It wants to convince India to return to the negotiating table. An interview with a METI official confirmed Japan's strong commitment to reaching an agreement on the RCEP, and according to the official, Japan is determined to conclude the negotiations by the end of 2020.<sup>lxviii</sup> There is still no evidence, though, that such a timetable is feasible.

### **Implications for the United States**

Japan's new multilateral trade strategy has several implications for U.S. policymakers. Trade analysts in Washington should pay more attention to the RCEP negotiations which Japan has made a critical part of its regional trade strategy. Moreover, Japan has increasingly expressed its willingness to enhance cooperation with China, now that the U.S. has slipped into trade protectionism. Although the Trump administration eschews multilateralism, there are members of Congress whose specialty is trade and may wish to play an active role in trade areas of common interest with U.S. trading partners like Japan.

The U.S. tends to pay less attention to the RCEP because it is seen as having low standards and only focusing on Asia.<sup>lxix</sup> Indeed, even though negotiations have gone on for years, little substantial progress has been made. But it would be a mistake to overlook the importance of the RCEP if only because of the scale of this trade pact.<sup>lxx</sup> The RCEP covers 32% of the world's GDP. With the U.S.' withdrawal from the TPP, the RCEP is now the largest regional trade agreement.<sup>lxxi</sup> Moreover, it represents 50% of the total world population, not to mention that the members within the talk such as India and the ASEAN countries have great potential to continue to grow. Besides

this, the effect of integrating the tariffs and rules in such a dynamic region should be significant as well.<sup>lxxii</sup> Petri and Plummer estimate that the RCEP would increase the world's real income by \$286 billion, which is around twice the amount of the income that will be generated by the CPTPP.<sup>lxxiii</sup> It may also increase global trade by 1.9 percent.<sup>lxxiv</sup>

Moreover, the U.S.' retreat from the TPP and other forms of global cooperation is pushing Japan to seek alternatives. Trump's protectionist approach in critical industries, such as automobile manufacturing, has forced Japan to consider the possibility of working more closely with China. One change is Japan's attitude towards China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).<sup>lxxv</sup> Japan used to hold strong suspicions towards the BRI, but its view shifted when Toshihiro Nikai, the secretary-general of the LDP, met China's President Xi Jinping at the BRI Forum in 2017.<sup>lxxvi</sup> Soon after, Abe expressed interest in cooperating with China on BRI projects during a conference called the *Future of Asia*.<sup>lxxvii</sup> The cooperation began in earnest in 2018, when Abe visited China. During his visit, over 50 cooperation memorandums were signed between Chinese and Japanese enterprises.<sup>lxxviii</sup> Japan also has expressed the belief that the U.S. should avoid dealing with "the Chinese trade issue... in a unilateral way."<sup>lxxix</sup> Interviews with METI officials suggest that Japan remains satisfied with the negotiated TPP deal, so there is no incentive to make any new effort in engaging the U.S., except to wait for it to come back to the TPP. Such a wait-and-see attitude is helpful, but the U.S. should realize that if it wants to maintain its regional economic influence, it cannot remain aloof from regional trade mechanisms as they come into effect.

Such advice will not likely mean much to the Trump administration, which is anti-globalist and thus rejects multilateral frameworks. Nonetheless, Solis suggests that there is a coterie of trade professionals on standby who are ready to spring into action, presumably in the next administration. Future trade talks, regardless of who the next U.S. President may be, should not start with such difficult topics as agriculture trade and automobiles. They can be put off for a while. Both sides should start from areas that both countries share common goals in and are less likely to clash, such as digital trade.<sup>lxxx</sup> Since both countries have a strong need to regulate data transfers, they should make joint efforts to further expand the standardization of digital trade and e-commerce.

## **Conclusion and Discussion**

This paper has examined in detail the role that mega-FTAs play in Japan's trade strategy. It argued that Japan changed its longstanding negative attitude towards discriminatory regional trade

deals because of changes in the regional security environment that it could not ignore. The paper then assessed the results expected from these agreements. It then compared Japan's concessions in the TPP, CPTPP, and the recent U.S.-Japan Bilateral Trade Agreement. The comparison suggests that Japan is only halfway in achieving its goals. The paper finally focused on possible actions Japan might take in the near future, and what the implications of Japan's changing trade strategy are for U.S. policymakers.

Despite its aversion to discriminatory trade agreements in the 1980s, Japan has been playing an increasingly active role in promoting mega-free trade agreements in recent years. Economic and strategic factors explain the reason behind such a policy shift. Economically, Japan's industry, especially its agricultural sector, is in desperate need for reform. Japan's increasing reliance on the global and regional value chain also requires comprehensive regional agreements that cover a broad swathe of Japan's trade partners. Strategically, agreements such as the TPP are ideal frameworks for Japan to set up a future trade architecture with, with high standards and based on legal principles. The mega-trade deals are also seen as critical for Japan to enhance its alliance relationship with the U.S., as well as to further boost its ties with other countries in order to balance the regional power structure.

Among the mega-trade agreements of interest, so far, only the TPP has been negotiated and put into effect as the CPTPP. This trade deal has given a modest boost to agricultural reform in Japan. Initially, the need to ratify the TPP pushed the Japanese government to initiate reforms, including reducing the power of agricultural cooperatives (JA), even before TPP negotiations were over. But the government only made modest commitments on opening Japan's protected agricultural market. While the concessions and tariff reductions on most farm goods were unprecedented, most of Japan's tariff and non-tariff barriers on its "core agriculture goods" survived without substantial changes. Moreover, the fear of the potential impact on farmers' income became a major excuse for the government to allocate even more earmarks to the farm sector. Economic data indicates that Japan's agricultural production remains largely inefficient and relies heavily on state supports. The dying agricultural sector only accounts for 1.5% of total GDP.

When the U.S. decided to leave the TPP, the remaining 11 countries under Japan's lead managed to restart the talks and negotiated the TPP-11 or CPTPP. The terms regarding market access and regulations remained mostly unchanged. However, without the U.S., the impact and



scale of the CPTPP was significantly reduced from the original mega-trade deal. Without the U.S. involved, the gap left in U.S.-Japan relations was wide. The Trump administration tried to fill that gap by negotiating a bilateral trade agreement, but the new pact provides far fewer concessions than did the TPP, except for terms on certain agricultural goods and the digital trade.

With the U.S. out of the picture, Japan's vision of a "free and open" regional trade system has been fading. The crisis, however, became an opportunity for Japan to show its leadership. Japan's commitment to concluding the trade deal without the U.S., and its willingness to compromise its own agricultural interests, impressed the remaining TPP members, leading to a successful agreement. By concluding CPTPP negotiations quickly and effectively, Japan raised its international status and established its role as a firm advocator of free trade.

There remains much work for Japan to do if it is to construct its favored trade order in the region. Interviews with METI officials suggest that Japan now strongly prefers multilateral frameworks. With only limited commitments to market access and shallow discussions on rules and standards, bilateral agreements (FTAs, EPAs) are not capable of substituting for a mega-trade deal. In addition, the lack of interest on both sides to continue trade talks and the current COVID-19 pandemic make a second phase of bilateral negotiation unlikely, even though USTR has been talking about starting up again. The RCEP as a result becomes Japan's most likely fallback agreement. Covering an even larger scale than the CPTPP, the RCEP includes a broad range of topics such as market access, investment, and regulations. Similar to the TPP-11 (CPTPP) framework, it carries both expectations of economic benefits and rule-of-law enhancement. However, compared to TPP, RCEP is likely to have a lower level in both tariff eliminations and legal commitments. The divergent interests of China and Japan, together with India's intransigence, also bring uncertainty to the future of this regional agreement.

U.S. policymakers should thus take note of the changes in Japan's overall trade policy. First, since Japan seems to take no interest in enhancing bilateral trade deals with the U.S', the RCEP deserves much more attention as Japan's second choice. The U.S. should also be aware that with its "America First" approach, it is surrendering its global influence, and pushing away its allies. Last but not least, should President Trump get reelected, Japan may find it difficult to convince the U.S. to significantly shift its trade policy. The only possibility for multilateral dialogue may be on less controversial topics, such as digital trade and e-commerce.

Last but not least, the above suggestions apply to the current situation under the Trump administration, which is quite unique. Until the 2020 presidential election, the future direction of U.S. trade policy remains unclear. Although Democratic candidate Joseph Biden has avoided the topic of the U.S. returning to the TPP, he has expressed support for a more globalized approach to trade issues.<sup>lxxxix</sup> Japan at this stage can only hope that Biden as President will make it likely that the U.S. will return to the TPP and reclaim its global place on trade liberalization. It remains to be seen what the long-term impact of mega-FTAs on regional trade will be. For Japan, these are indeed the “gold standard” for what a regional architecture should be.

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## **Japan's Economic Statecraft in the Technology Field**

### **How Should Japan Strategically Enhance US-Japan Technology Cooperation?**

*By Mariko Togashi*

#### **Introduction**

Japan's economic statecraft is becoming more and more important in today's world. Faced with the rise of China as an economic and military power, and given the constitutional constraints on Japan's military option, Japan has made economic statecraft into a critical component of its security strategy. The use of economic statecraft expanded around the mid-1990s, when the U.S. began to strategically use its economic measures, especially in the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>i</sup> For China today, economic statecraft has become the foreign policy toolkit of choice, bringing with it a paradigm shift in the international sphere.<sup>ii</sup> China's technology policy stands out, as seen in its own research and development programs as well as important acquisitions of high-tech companies, such as Germany's KUKA and Aixtron.<sup>iii</sup>

This paper focuses on the field of technology in the context of economic statecraft. In particular, it seeks to answer the question of how Japan can enhance the U.S.-Japan relationship in the technology field. This paper focuses specifically on technology cooperation because U.S.-Japan technology cooperation has historically been essential for Japan's competitiveness, and this is an urgent topic under the current strategic competition. This paper includes four parts, taking both theoretical and practical approaches. First, this paper provides an overview of economic statecraft and how it applies to modern foreign policy strategy. Second, it explains why the technology field is particularly important for national security, both from theoretical and practical perspectives. The third part examines case studies of U.S.-Japan technology cooperation divided into three sections: the defense sector, the commercial sector, and crisis response. Finally, based on the findings of the case studies, this paper makes policy recommendations to Japan, answering the original question – How should Japan strategically enhance its technology cooperation with the United States?

## What is Economic Statecraft?

Economic statecraft is the “purposeful use of economic means by nation-states to pursue political, strategic, or security goals.”<sup>iv</sup> Economic statecraft emphasizes a strategic purpose rather than an economic purpose, though the tools themselves may be the same on the surface. In 1985, Baldwin defined economic statecraft as “governmental influence attempts relying primarily on resources that have a reasonable semblance of a market price in terms of money.”<sup>v</sup> Blackwill and Harris, more recently, used the term “geo-economics” and defined it as “the use of economic instruments to promote and defend national interests, and to produce beneficial geopolitical results; and the effects of other nations’ economic actions on a country’s geopolitical goals.”<sup>vi</sup> Both definitions are consistent. Blackwill and Harris admit that Baldwin’s work is an evergreen economic statecraft theory and argue that geo-economics is “both a method of analysis and a form of statecraft.”<sup>vii</sup>

Although there is some overlap, the concept of economic statecraft is different from Joseph Nye’s “soft power” or Susan Strange’s “structural power.” Soft power is “the ability to affect others to obtain the outcomes one wants through attraction rather than coercion or payment.”<sup>viii</sup> Economic statecraft has more emphasis on the purpose of nations, and its measure is not limited to the aspect of attraction. Structural power is “the power to shape and determine the structures of the global political economy within which other states, their political institutions, their economic enterprises and (not at least) their scientists and other professional people have to operate.”<sup>ix</sup> Economic statecraft is a “purposeful use of economic means,” which can be directed to a specific country or a group of countries. Therefore, all three concepts include non-military means for satisfying national interests, but the unique definition of economic statecraft requires it to be recognized separately.

Economic statecraft includes a broad range of tools, such as “sanctions, taxation, embargoes, trade agreements, asset freezing, engagement policies, currency manipulation, subsidies, [and] tariffs.”<sup>x</sup> Doshi argues that there are three categories in economic leverage: “(1) bilateral leverage, (2) structural leverage, and (3) domestic-political leverage.” All three types of leverage allow countries to increase their autonomy and influence.<sup>xi</sup>

For Japan, economic statecraft is specifically vital during this era of strategic competition due to its limitation on a military option in foreign policy, and the country’s scarce natural

resources. Japan has various strengths, such as its still-solid economy, technology, health care, foreign aid program, and vibrant culture. Some of these resources should be understood through the lens of economic statecraft. By recognizing and analyzing the various resources it possesses in the context of economic statecraft, Japan will be able to formulate foreign policies that contribute to its national interest and uphold the values it holds as a democracy.

## **The Importance of the Technology Field in National Security in Theory and Practice**

### *Theory*

Among various tools in economic statecraft, the science and technology fields are essential elements of a country's national security. The level of science and technology determines military capability, which directly impacts national security.<sup>xii</sup> However, science and technology also have an indirect effect on national security in many ways. Since *soft power* is the ability to affect others to obtain the outcomes one wants through *attraction* rather than coercion or payment, science and technology can be one important source of attraction. Among various factors that attract countries, Ruffini claims that science and technology play a unique role, among other cultural or economic aspects.<sup>xiii</sup>

Below, Herweg, Knoblich, and Unverzagt narrowed down Susan Strange's structural power to the science and technology field, introducing the concept of knowledge power.<sup>xiv</sup> Knowledge power is a power that is derived from a strong position in the global knowledge-structure.<sup>xv</sup> Power shifts are difficult in the global knowledge-structure for those who want to catch up with the leading countries due to the asymmetric distribution of technological capacities and path-dependency.<sup>xvi</sup>

Another way to capture the intersection of technology and national security is science diplomacy. A report by the Royal Society and American Association for the Advancement of Science comprehensively discusses the connections between science and technology and diplomacy.<sup>xvii</sup> Specifically, the report outlines three intersections of science and diplomacy: science in diplomacy, diplomacy for science, and science for diplomacy.<sup>xviii</sup> Among these connections, science for diplomacy refers to science and technology as a tool for national security.<sup>xix</sup>

*In Practice: Japan's National Security Strategy and Related Policies*

In December 2013, the Cabinet of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe approved Japan's first-ever National Security Strategy, which became the basis for Japan's defense and foreign policies for the next decade. The guidelines state the importance of technological strength as one aspect of national security. In the section "Japan's Strategic Approaches to National Security," high technology is stressed as follows:

"The advanced technology of Japan constitutes the foundation of its economic strength and defense forces, and is also a valuable resource that the international community strongly seeks from Japan. Therefore, Japan should encourage the further promotion of technologies, including dual-use technologies, thereby strengthening Japan's technological capabilities.

In promoting measures for strengthening its technological capabilities from a national security viewpoint, Japan will constantly grasp science and technology trends, including information on technology development. Japan will also make effective use of technology in the area of security, by combining the efforts of industries, academia, and the Government. Furthermore, Japan's outstanding energy-saving and other environment-related technologies play an important role in Japan's efforts to tackle global issues together with the international community. Therefore, Japan will proactively utilize these technologies in diplomacy as well."<sup>xx</sup>

Science and technology have long been a key component of Japan's national interest.<sup>xxi</sup> Since the Meiji Period (1868-1912), Japan has recognized technology as critical for national interest and economic development.<sup>xxii</sup> Before World War II, Japan's technology policy was geared toward boosting its military power.<sup>xxiii</sup> However, after the country's defeat and the allied occupation, technology was exclusively developed or imported for commercial purposes.<sup>xxiv</sup> Eventually, that restriction was lifted.

Today, each relevant government ministry or agency has developed technology policies that serve national security under the name of Science and Technology Diplomacy. Although the concept of Science and Technology Diplomacy is not identical to technology policy that is related to national security, this section focuses on Science and Technology Diplomacy because it is a

similar concept that Japan has implemented. Yakushiji points out three purposes of Science and Technology Diplomacy: “to place a premium on mutual benefits for Japan and partner nations,” “the principle demonstrating synergistic effects between diplomacy and science and technology,” and “to support the foundations for science and technology in new regions of Asia and Africa through the use of ODA.”<sup>xxv</sup>

The government agencies responsible for Science and Technology Diplomacy are the Cabinet Office, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI), and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). Between them, the Cabinet Office formulates strategy. The Science and Technology Diplomacy Taskforce in the Cabinet Office uses five criteria in choosing which area to focus on: “(1) Whether the expected economic and social effect is big enough; (2) Whether the project matches the expected effect; (3) Whether we should focus on the specific area given the international positioning; (4) Whether the project emergency is high; and (5) Whether the public sector should focus rather than the private sector”.<sup>xxvi</sup>

MOFA stands out in the progress it has achieved in Science and Technology Diplomacy. In May 2015, MOFA’s Advisory Panel on Science and Technology Diplomacy submitted a policy proposal to the Foreign Minister.<sup>xxvii</sup> MOFA then appointed Professor Teruo Kishi, Professor Emeritus at the University of Tokyo, as a science adviser.<sup>xxviii</sup> Subsequently, MOFA adopted three main categories: a multilateral approach such as the United Nations and G7, bilateral science and technology agreements, and cooperative research projects with developing countries utilizing ODA.<sup>xxix</sup> In 2017, the Science and Technology Advisor submitted a policy proposal and action plan to reach Sustainable Development Goals.<sup>xxx</sup> All of these actions emphasize Japan’s need to bolster science diplomacy.

## **Case Studies**

The U.S. and Japan have a long history of science and technology cooperation. The partnership covers a broad array of complex issues, both bilateral and international. Under the U.S.-Japan Science and Technology Agreement, both countries have collaborated for decades on scientific research in areas such as new energy technologies, supercomputing, and critical materials. This agreement was extended for another decade in 2014. In addition, the U.S.-Japan Comprehensive Dialogue on Space underscores deepening bilateral cooperation in outer space exploration. Moreover,

in 2016, both countries celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the U.S.-Japan Cooperative Medical Sciences Program, which has grown over time to encompass attention to health threats affecting other Asia-Pacific nations, particularly in Southeast Asia.

This section discusses six case studies of U.S.-Japan technology cooperation. This paper selects technology cooperation in critical industries for both countries because the primary purpose is to examine the impact of cooperation on national security. Yakushiji differentiates Science and Technology Diplomacy from cooperation in general by whether or not it increases soft power.<sup>xxxix</sup> This part contains three subsections. The first section discusses technology cooperation in the defense sector, focusing on historical U.S.-Japan defense cooperation. The second analyzes technology cooperation in the commercial sector with three case studies: the semiconductor, automobile, and 5G sector. The third section focuses on technology cooperation in crisis response, including the Fukushima Nuclear Accident and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

### *Defense Technology Cooperation*

Defense industrial cooperation is a relatively new area in the U.S.-Japan security relationship, boosted especially under Prime Minister Abe. The U.S.-Japan relationship has in the past focused more on technology transfer than technology cooperation. Technology transfer in the defense industry has predominantly been from the U.S. to Japan since the alliance was formed after the Occupation.<sup>xxxix</sup> Based on the Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement in 1954, licensed production of US defense goods in Japan became a dominant pattern in technology transfer.<sup>xxxix</sup> Although Japan was once headed toward a self-sufficient defense industry, including budget, development, and procurement in the 1950s and 1960s, this development stalled in the 1970s due to defense budget issues and the appreciation of the yen.<sup>xxxiv</sup> In the late 1970s, the Defense Agency shifted its policy towards “spinning on” from the commercial sector, which implied the importance of dual-use technologies.<sup>xxxv</sup> Another important trend that became prominent in the 1970s is “interdiffusion,” meaning that military-related R&D contributed to companies building a business base in commercial technologies.<sup>xxxvi</sup>

The intensification of the Cold War and the U.S.’ increased interest in Japanese technologies in the late 1970s led to the establishment of the Systems and Technology Forum (S&TF) in the 1980s for joint R&D in defense technologies.<sup>xxxvii</sup> Moreover, in 1983, the Joint Military Technology Commission (JMTC) was established as a mechanism for technology transfer

from Japan to the U.S., which became the only exception to Japan's "three weapons principles," which fundamentally prohibited weapons exports.<sup>xxxviii</sup> However, even with the establishment of the S&TF and JMTC, the predominant trend of technology transfer in the defense industry, Japan's licensed production of U.S. weapons, did not waver.<sup>xxxix</sup>

A drastic change in defense technology cooperation came in 2014 when Japan allowed military goods export as part of the National Security Strategy issued in 2013.<sup>xl</sup> This new rule allowed Japan to export defense technologies in various situations, such as "international peace cooperation, international disaster relief, humanitarian assistance, measures against international terrorism and piracy, and capacity building of developing countries."<sup>xli</sup> The new rule also allowed third-party transfers.<sup>xlii</sup> Schoff points out that this shift "could be the most significant change in this area since 1954" and that this has a potential for a higher level of collaboration.<sup>xliii</sup> However, these significant changes to enable technology transfers have not yet been able to bring an actual expansion of Japan's defense industry.<sup>xliv</sup> Japanese companies are not yet seen as significant players in the U.S. defense market, due to cultural hurdles and the high cost of Japanese defense equipment.<sup>xlv</sup>

Looking back, technology transfer in the defense industry can best be characterized as asymmetrical, although there has been gradual progress to increase technology transfer from Japan to the U.S. However, this change is likely to remain slow due to the structure of Japan's defense industry, the high cost of products, and a national sentiment that is still anti-militaristic. Japan's defense industry has a unique history and structure, which focuses on "spinning on" rather than "spinning out." The development of technology in the commercial sector is deeply rooted in Japan's postwar history and pacifist-oriented policy. The high cost of products made by the Japanese defense industry stems from its commercial-oriented structure. Because private companies were not exposed to competition until 2014, Japan's defense technologies are not competitive in terms of cost. Even though they may have advanced technologies, without knowledge of marketing and market demand, Japanese companies will not be able to expand their sales. For instance, over-spec products may not be attractive to other countries.

Furthermore, national sentiment based on Japan's militarist past and current Article 9 constraints may also slow down an increase in defense technology transfer. In Japan, although the younger generation is generally more realistic when it comes to defense matters, pacifist sentiment

in the country nevertheless remains strong. Such thinking affects policy and tends to hinder further development of Japan's defense industry. For instance, when the first comprehensive defense exhibition, "DSEI JAPAN 2019," was held, approximately 400 protesters gathered outside to denounce the event.<sup>xlvi</sup> These three obstacles, the defense industry's structure, high cost, and national sentiment, are interrelated and deep-rooted in Japanese history and culture and not likely to change in the near future.

### *Commercial Technology*

Although many technologies have dual-use possibilities, this section focuses on purely commercial technology. Specifically, this section takes up the semiconductor, automobile, and 5G industries. These industries were selected due to the importance of the sector for both countries and the different paths of technology cooperation.

### *Semiconductors*

The semiconductor industry shows a drastic change in the power and direction of U.S.-Japan technology cooperation. Since the invention of semiconductors, the US has been dominant in the industry, consisting of 70 percent of the global market by the 1970s.<sup>xlvii</sup> In the 1960s, Japan started to develop its own semiconductor industry through licensing agreements with the U.S. It soon became a global leader a decade later.<sup>xlviii</sup> For instance, Tokyo Electron Limited (TEL) was initially a distributor of U.S. products but became the largest semiconductor production equipment company by accumulating expertise.<sup>xlix</sup> Japan increased its global market share from below 30 percent to around 75 percent from 1978 to 1986 due to "focused investments, fortuitous timing, an emphasis on productivity rather than innovation, and government support."<sup>1</sup> Given Japan's overwhelming market share, in the 1980s, the U.S. imposed "anti-dumping protections and a guarantee of 20 percent market share in the Japanese market within five years," resulting in an increase in South Korea's market share rather than the U.S. in the 1990s.<sup>li</sup> In this case, the competition between the U.S. and Japan helped newcomers, such as South Korea and Taiwan, who are dominant players today, gain market shares.

In the semiconductor industry, U.S.-Japan technology cooperation soon turned to competition. This case may be seen as a natural result of one country successfully catching up with the other, but politicized trade disputes, and the resulting loss of global market share, suggest that



technology cooperation was not possible over the long term. Fujimura points out that the decline of Japan's semiconductor industry was due to "the ignorance of technology change," which may have been avoided if technology cooperation between the US and Japan had remained active.<sup>lii</sup>

### *Automobiles*

In the case of the automobile industry, the flow of technology transfer since the 1980s has been from Japan to the U.S.<sup>liii</sup> During the postwar period, asymmetrical market access and belated capital liberalization helped Japanese automobile companies gain competitiveness.<sup>liv</sup> For years after the war, American automakers were excluded from the Japanese market, as Japan tried to build its own auto industry. Although the Big Three automakers, Ford, Chrysler, and General Motors, were interested in the Japanese market, when they finally were let in during the 1960s, the Ministry of International Trade and Industry and the auto industry itself resisted due to industry weakness.<sup>lv</sup>

Japan's auto industry had built its affiliated supply chain that enabled flexible production systems and lower labor costs, thanks to a rapid recovery during the Korean War.<sup>lvi</sup> The fuel economy and reliability of Japanese cars made them popular in the U.S. market.<sup>lvii</sup> Due to the Japanese autos flooding the U.S. market and U.S. automakers rapidly losing market shares in the early 1980s, the U.S. government convinced Japan to agree to a voluntary restraint agreement to limit their exports.<sup>lviii</sup> Such limits pushed Japanese makers to build assembly plants in the U.S.<sup>lix</sup> While Japanese automakers expanded their overseas production, U.S. automakers adapted Japanese methods of development and production.<sup>lx</sup> Combined with the establishment of the North American Free Trade Agreement in 1994, the local production ratio of Japanese automakers increased rapidly from 10% in the 1980s to 75% today.<sup>lxi</sup>

In the case of the automobile industry, fierce competition, a flood of exports, and the resulting government-imposed restrictions designed to protect the U.S. caused technology transfer through shifts to local production. Once Japanese companies started overseas production, U.S. automakers began to adopt the Japanese method of development and production. According to the National Research Council, this technology transfer led to U.S. automakers' pursuit of continuous improvements and top-class performance.<sup>lxii</sup> This result implies that even with competition and political confrontation, technology transfer from Japan to the U.S. happened through private-sector initiatives. Technology transfer caused by localizing production sites may not have included high-

technology transfer, but it is certainly one kind of technology transfer due to the improved performance of the receiver. In this case, technology transfer did happen even under severe competition.

## 5G

5G, the next-generation mobile network, is critical for countries due to its broader application than past generations, including the “Internet of Things.”<sup>lxiii</sup> The cooperative relationship between the U.S. and Japan in the 5G field seems strong, given that Japan was the first country to accede to U.S. demands to boycott Huawei products.<sup>lxiv</sup> However, this reaction has to be understood as separate from technology cooperation. Japan’s fast acceptance of the U.S.’ demand was strictly political and strategic. Technology cooperation in the 5G field is limited to the private sector. For instance, NEC, a Japanese system integrator, announced in February 2020 its partnership with Mavenir, an American cloud-based network software provider “to deliver a 5G Open virtualized RAN (vRAN) Solution to the Japanese Enterprise Market.”<sup>lxv</sup> Although its market share is still small, Rakuten, a Japanese e-commerce company with a mobile business subsidiary, has partnered with CISCO and IBM, U.S. system companies.<sup>lxvi</sup>

Although U.S.-Japan technology cooperation in the 5G sector is happening between private companies, it must be noted that, unlike the auto or the semiconductor fields, neither the U.S. nor Japan have much of a global market share or presence in this sector. China’s Huawei, Sweden’s Ericsson, and Finland’s Nokia hold 80% of the global market share.<sup>lxvii</sup> Having an inferior position in strategic competition with China may in fact be encouraging such technology cooperation between the U.S. and Japan. Tcheyan and Bresnick suggest that the U.S. should build a 5G consortium to gain competitiveness as it did in the semiconductor field in the 1980s against Japan.<sup>lxviii</sup> In the case of 5G today, competition against China is working in favor of U.S.-Japan technology cooperation.

### *Comparing Three Industries*

These case studies show that competition is the key factor in technology cooperation in the commercial sector. In the semiconductor field, competition between the U.S. and Japan became an obstacle for technology cooperation after Japan became the top player. In the auto sector, severe competition between the two countries and restrictive regulations led to Japanese automaker’s

shifting to local production and promoted technology transfer. Finally, the 5G case exhibited that the lack of competition between the U.S. and Japan due to weak market position and inability to match China is supporting technology cooperation between the U.S. and Japan. Therefore, how the two countries manage competition determines the depth and width of technology cooperation in the commercial sector.

### *Crisis Response*

This paper examines technology cooperation required in crisis response separately due to the difference of priorities, decision-making processes, and organizations involved in commercial or defense technology. This section examines two cases that seriously damaged Japan in one instance and greatly impacted both countries in the other: the Fukushima nuclear plant accident and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

#### *The Fukushima Nuclear Meltdown*

The Great East Japan Earthquake in March 2011 resulted in one of the worst nuclear accidents in global history, in which radiation leaked into the atmosphere and seawater.<sup>lxxix</sup> Nuclear power ties between the U.S. and Japan are based on the 1968 Agreement for Cooperation between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of Japan Concerning Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy.<sup>lxxx</sup> Another agreement, the 1988 Japan-U.S. Nuclear Energy Agreement, enabled Japan to research and develop nuclear fuel.<sup>lxxxi</sup> In the Fukushima crisis, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) played central roles in the emergency response.<sup>lxxxii</sup> The NRC was able to immediately advise the Japanese government on what measures to take after the accident.<sup>lxxxiii</sup> From the day after the accident, NRC gathered experts on reactor safety and protective measures, starting discussions with the Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency (NISA). Although there were some issues from a crisis management perspective, U.S.-Japan cooperation was smooth in this case.<sup>lxxxiv</sup>

In addition to the initial response, both countries decided to extend the Agreement for Cooperation Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of Japan Concerning Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy.<sup>lxxxv</sup> This decision was not a foregone result due to political disagreement, especially regarding reprocessing issues, and some see this automatic extension as destabilizing the situation as both countries can now end the agreement in

six months so long as they notify each other.<sup>lxxvi</sup> However, both countries deciding not to renegotiate was significant because it allowed both countries to continue “nuclear technology exchanges and collaborative scientific research.”<sup>lxxvii</sup> In this case, we can conclude that even with political disagreements, technology cooperation has been successful.

### *COVID-19*

As the COVID-19 crisis remains an unresolved global issue, comprehensive research is difficult and public information limited, so this section will focus on one example of U.S.-Japan technology cooperation in response to the outbreak of COVID-19. In March 2020, Japan started participating in a project led by the U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH) to test the Ebola virus drug for use on COVID-19 patients.<sup>lxxviii</sup>

The NIH, which was established in 1965, has a long history of a strong relationship with Japan.<sup>lxxix</sup> The U.S.-Japan Cooperative Medical Science Program is one of the oldest programs at NIH.<sup>lxxx</sup> It has nine joint panels, which have achieved numerous scientific achievements, such as testing of cholera, vaccines for cholera, effective treatment for filariasis, HIV, influenza, tuberculosis, and immunology research.<sup>lxxxi</sup> In 2000, more than 450 Japanese scientists were researching at the NIH, making up 15% of the foreign scientists there.<sup>lxxxii</sup> This number implies a deep relationship between the US and Japan in basic research in the health care field through personnel exchange. Moreover, in 2015, the Abe administration established an NIH counterpart in Japan, the Agency for Medical Research and Development (AMED), which will take on the role of leading research and development in Japan and work with the NIH.<sup>lxxxiii</sup>

### *Technology Cooperation in Defense, Commerce, and Crisis Response*

By comparing technology cooperation in the defense field, the commercial sector, and crisis response, we can conclude that deeper U.S.-Japan technology cooperation is most likely to happen in the commercial sector. Technology cooperation in the defense sector is moving forward, but it is likely to be slow due to a variety of factors, such as the structure of Japan’s defense industry, its high cost, and national sentiment. Although it may not be as smooth as expected due to political reasons, technology cooperation in crisis response is already at a high level. The Fukushima nuclear accident case and the ongoing COVID-19 case show that the basis for basic research cooperation between the two countries is well developed. In order to add to this deep technology

cooperation at the research level, this section introduces science and technology initiatives led by both countries.

### *Science and Technology Conferences*

In addition to specific sectors, cross-sector or fundamental US-Japan cooperation is worth focusing on, as this may deepen the cooperation in those existing fields and even expand cooperation to new ones. A U.S.-Japan-led science and technology conference is held regularly, “attended by representatives from the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of State, and the National Institute of Standards and Technology, and Japanese representatives from the Council for Science and Technology Policy, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.”<sup>lxxxiv</sup> In this conference, bio-terrorism defense, cybersecurity, and police science operations are the main agenda. This case is an example of deep cooperation in a sensitive area, which requires fundamental trust between the two countries.

Technology cooperation in the defense sector and the area of crisis response is unlikely to change in the near future. The development of technology cooperation in the defense industry will be slow, and technology cooperation in crisis management is already at a high level. On the other hand, the development of technology cooperation in the commercial sector depends on how both countries manage competition, implying room for deeper cooperation. One example of technology cooperation in the commercial sector is the Japan-U.S. Strategic Energy Partnership (JUSEP). Through JUSEP, both countries have started to develop energy infrastructure projects in third countries, including Southeast and South Asia. Commercial cooperation under JUSEP will strengthen joint strategic efforts in the region and enhance U.S. and Japanese private sector competitiveness by making U.S. and Japanese government resources available to them.

### **Policy Recommendations to Japan**

Based on the above case studies, the most likely area in which the U.S. and Japan can deepen technology cooperation immediately lies in the commercial sector. Given the high level of technology in both countries, the two countries are and will remain both partners and rivals at the same time in the commercial sector. Therefore, in the era of strategic competition, how both countries manage industrial competition is critical for both countries’ national interests.

Although the U.S. and Japan may have to be selective in choosing where to deepen their technology cooperation, especially when such technology is dual-use, technology cooperation is essential for both countries to remain internationally competitive. In order to enhance the strategic importance of U.S.-Japan technology cooperation and to enhance that competitiveness, Japan should strengthen technology alliances with the U.S. and deepen the cross-discipline dialogue.

#### *Strengthen Technology Alliance with the U.S.*

Having entered a new strategic competition era, the U.S. remains Japan's most important partner. It follows then that Japan should strengthen its technology alliance with the U.S. The two countries should maintain and enhance the framework that encourages technology cooperation from primary research in academia and governmental organizations to specific applications in private companies. A strengthened technology alliance and greater flow of information exchange will set the environment for future innovations. In addition to bilateral ties, both countries should take the initiative to build and deepen multilateral ties. The multilateral approach will contribute to broader technological development and enhance the bilateral alliance.

#### *Deepen Cross-discipline Dialogue*

In order to cooperate with the U.S. effectively, Japan should focus on specific sectors and deepen a cross-discipline dialogue leading to choosing an optimal policy. Cross-discipline dialogue includes public-private, private-private, and cross-ministry conversations, as well as academic institutions. Including the private sector in the process of selecting specific technology sectors is necessary, because companies are directly exposed to global competition. The private sector's importance is also supported by the fact that METI changed its R&D style away from focusing on specific technology and focuses now on social and policy needs. It has left technological targets to the private sector.<sup>lxxxv</sup> Moreover, cross-ministry dialogue at the working level is necessary for forming effective technology policy, allowing technology cooperation to be discussed and promoted at the strategy level.<sup>lxxxvi</sup> Only by deepening cross-discipline dialogue, will Japan be able to form an effective and feasible technology policy.

#### *Enhance Competitiveness*

While a technology alliance with the U.S. is essential for Japan's national interest, Japan has to maintain and enhance its competitiveness, as well. A complimentary bilateral relationship

is good, but dependency is not a sustainable form of alliance. Partnerships, regulations, and politics are critical in the technology field, but the genuine competitiveness of products stems from their quality. We have seen this in the auto sector where consumers often choose Japanese cars over American cars. As China's electronic products become more competitive, people will choose those goods, a trend that may have already started. In order to enhance its competitiveness, Japan should increase its R&D budget and build a system that encourages innovation, such as education, exchange of human capital, and expansion of financial resources for technology start-ups. In order to establish an ecosystem of start-ups, funding availability is critical, and an urgent task for Japan is to create fund flows from large traditional Japanese companies to start-ups.<sup>lxxxvii</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Economic statecraft is becoming more critical for Japan under the current climate of strategic competition. Among the many tools that can be used for national interest, the technology field has a unique role, and U.S.-Japan technology cooperation has been historically important for Japan's competitiveness. Among technology cooperation in defense, commercial, and crisis response, the commercial sector is the area that both countries can achieve deeper technology cooperation. To deepen technology cooperation in the commercial sector, how both countries manage competition is key. In order to overcome the hurdle of competition and enhance the strategic importance of U.S.-Japan technology cooperation, Japan should strengthen its technology alliance with the U.S., deepen cross-discipline dialogue, and enhance its competitiveness.

While this paper provided insights on how Japan can strategically enhance technology cooperation with the U.S., there are various technology policy tools that serve its national interest. For example, Japan should establish technology alliances with other countries, increase relevant budget items, offer R&D tax credit, and implement structural reform of research institutions. In future research, such tools should be analyzed in depth. Given the importance of the technology field in the national security sphere today, the systemization of the various technology policy tools is an urgent task.

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## Japan Strives to Become a Cultural Export Superpower

*Rui Rong*

### **Introduction**

During Japan's high-growth period of the 1970s and 1980s, its culture spread throughout the world in the form of products and entertainment. Although the Japanese government did not treat "culture" as an object of profitable export at that time, people everywhere were still able to consume such cultural exports as consumer electronics, cinema, TV drama and pop music. As Japan's cultural exports became a global common good, the payoff for Tokyo included the emergence of a kinder, softer image of Japan. However, three decades later, Japan's economic development has slowed down, and the pattern of Asian cultural industries is also changing. Since 2000, the South Korean cultural industry has begun to blow up. In the 2000s, the Korean Wave swept through Asia, and in the 2010s it entered the European and American markets. With the rise of the Chinese economy, China is also trying to vigorously develop its cultural industry and expand to overseas markets. Japan's international cultural influence has been challenged, and the contents of Japan's cultural exports need adjusting to meet new demands and expectations.

In 2020, Japan is ready to spread its culture once again to the world as part of its national strategy. In the early 2000s, Japan put forward the idea of saving the "lost decade" of economic recession in the 1990s by exporting popular cultural products. In 2010, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) established a new Creative Industries Promotion Office to promote cultural and creative industries. This strategy was better known as "Cool Japan", to strengthen its overseas marketing of cultural industries. This strategy focuses more on Japanese pop culture such as anime, pop music, and video games. With the arrival of the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, now postponed to 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Japan is again trying to influence the world with the uniqueness of its culture.

This research paper discusses the history of Japanese cultural exports and at the same time, evaluates the public diplomacy-related effectiveness of such a policy and strategy. In order to examine this issue, this paper will lay out a theoretical framework of constructivism. Diplomatic relations between countries are not simply a comparison of power, but also constituted by social

views. Changes in diplomacy come from changes in people's perception of a country. Cultural exports have that capability. Was Japan ultimately successful in pursuing that policy line?

This paper contains a number of case studies, chosen in order to analyze the results of Japan's cultural output. This includes multiple interviews with field staff and professionals in related projects. The paper will answer the following key questions: How effectively do Japan's current cultural exports influence the views of foreign audiences toward Japan? How have Japan and its neighbors laid out and implemented a strategy to export cultural products and ideas? What are feasible suggestions for the future cultural export policies of Japan?

## **History of culture as a diplomatic tool**

### *Early attempts in the 20<sup>th</sup> century*

Japan's attempts to use culture as a diplomatic tool date back to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. As early as the 1920s, Japan had already begun to influence Western art and thinking with its culture. In Europe especially, Japanese architecture, art, and literature became well-known and even copied. When Imperial Japan began to colonize Korea, Formosa, and Manchuria, the societies there were indoctrinated by Japanese language and culture. During the wartime period, Japanese culture as an influence retreated as militarists set the agenda. In the early postwar period, though Japanese culture, both traditional (Kabuki, No drama, Bunraku, Zen philosophy, etc.) and modern (cinema, translated literature, and popular music), became popular and influential in the West, the government had no serious programs to export it until the 1970s. During the high-growth period of the 1970s and 1980s, trade friction with the United States and anti-Japan sentiments among Asian countries victimized by Japan during the war presented Japan with a major image problem to address. One example is the rapid expansion of Japanese companies in Southeast Asia, which has caused a rise in negative sentiment among locals. Japan in the mid-1970s began to use foreign aid, trade, and investment to ease tensions with Southeast Asia, with some success. Trade disputes with the United States, however, were more difficult to address. A flood of Japanese consumer electronics and automobiles in the US market, and a ballooning trade imbalance, poisoned the political atmosphere in the U.S. toward Japan.<sup>i</sup>

As Japan's overseas image worsened, one of Japan's responses was the groundbreaking establishment of the Japan Foundation in 1972, to promote international exchange and mutual

understanding. Educational exchanges such as overseas study for Japanese youth and exchange students coming to Japan were the foundation's primary mandate. Moreover, thanks to the foundation, traditional arts such as tea ceremonies and Kabuki, and modern Japanese literature were promoted all over the world. In Southeast Asia, Japan established a series of programs and donations to promote cultural exchanges with ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) countries.<sup>ii</sup> Thanks to these programs, Japanese has become the first choice of foreign languages for students to learn in Southeast Asian countries. In the United States, with the influence of these various cultural exports, Japanese icons have gradually entered the lives of the public. With the spread of Sony consumer electronics and other Japanese brand products in the late 1980s, Japanese industries were also able to help build a new image for Japan. Japanese products like Walkman, Sony Trinitron, Japanese pop songs, and toys became part of American life during those years.

*TV series: a particularly effective product*

Japanese TV shows and movies, even in regions that were once colonized and invaded by Japan like China and Southeast Asia, were very popular during the 1970s and 1980s. This cultural output has enabled the world to understand what Japanese society is like by seeing how people live. TV shows offered glimpses into the Japanese way of life, especially through home dramas, to show how Japan had changed. One notable example is with China. After the country opened its economy as part of the reforms of Deng Xiaoping, who normalized relations with the U.S. and then Japan, China's improved relations with those countries and other capitalist states meant a lifting of restrictions on the import of cultural products as well. In the 1980s, Chinese TV broadcasters introduced a series of Japanese dramas. As the first batch of foreign cultural products to enter China, these Japanese TV series were warmly welcomed by domestic audiences. Japanese actors, such as Ken Takakura and Momoe Yamaguchi, were highly popular among audiences (Figure 1). The popularity of Japanese TV stars at the time seems to have effectively reduced the Chinese people's hatred against Japan since the 1930s. Although there were massive Japanese development assistance projects in China, their influence was more limited to government circles. In contrast, Japanese cultural products left a positive impression of Japan among the Chinese people, because television by then had become more widely accepted and entertaining than traditional media. Cultural imports from Japan also seem to have resolved much of the older generation's genuine distaste for anything Japanese. For younger generations who had not

experienced World War II, imports of Japanese cultural products whetted their interest in things Japanese and promoted future cultural and educational exchanges.

Figure 1. DVD cover of the Mainland China version of "Akai Giwaku"

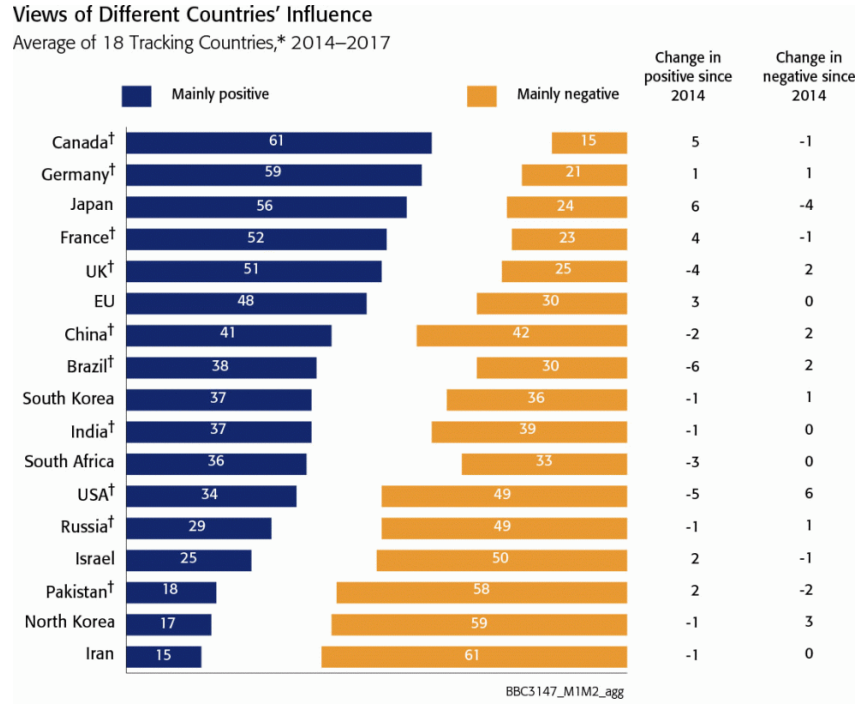


(Source: Tencent entertainment database)<sup>iii</sup>

It is worth noting that optimizing the image of a country through cultural exports is part of public diplomacy. Unlike traditional diplomacy, which is aimed at foreign governments, the target of public diplomacy is the ordinary citizens of other countries. From the 1970s to the 1990s, cultural exports proved to be an effective tool. Such use of soft power has helped Japan not only to smooth out the rough spots of bilateral relationships, it also brings considerable economic benefits. More importantly, culture has played a long-term role: positively influencing younger generations of other countries which will pay off with better relations in the future. Such long-term benefits are more meaningful than a short-term economic benefit. Polls today in foreign countries show positive views toward Japan. (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Global poll for BBC World Service

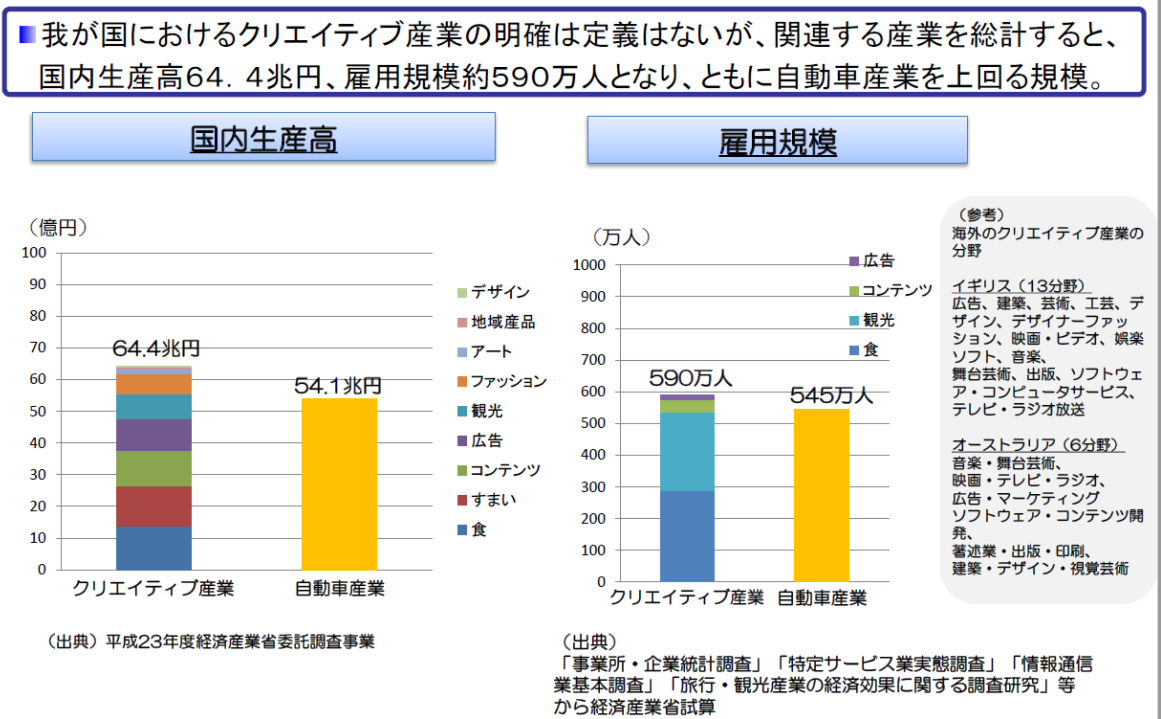


(Source: BBC)<sup>iv</sup>

### “Cool Japan”: Japan’s goal in the 21<sup>st</sup> century

With the Japanese economic slump that lasted most of the 1990s, Japan fell into what is known as the "lost decade." As Japan gradually lost its lead in manufacturing and exporting consumer goods, it desperately needed ways to revitalize its economy. During that decade, the concept of "soft power" proposed by Joseph Nye was picked up and valued by Japan for its applicability to the Japanese diplomatic toolbox. For Japan, development assistance was a major soft power tool, but policymakers felt that also taking advantage of Japan’s cultural industry could bring both economic and diplomatic benefits. By the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the cultural industry centered on pop-cultural goods became Japan's major public diplomacy effort, fleshed out in a 2012 report by METI.<sup>v</sup> According to a 2013 METI report, the potential economic benefits of the cultural industry, or creative industry, were very strong, even exceeding the automotive industry (Figure 3).

Figure 3. The scale of the creative industry is bigger than the automotive industry



(Source: METI)<sup>vi</sup>

Since the 2000s, the Japanese government has led a series of cultural export projects. In 2006, then Foreign Minister Aso Taro gave a speech about cultural diplomacy. He mentioned that “we want pop culture, which is so effective in penetrating throughout the general public, to be our ally in diplomacy.”<sup>vii</sup> Aso emphasized that the cultural products exported from Japan are mainly pop culture, including music, animation, and fashion. In terms of communication channels, mass media such as international television broadcasting (NHK World) and the internet are the major types.<sup>viii</sup>

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) organized the Japan International MANGA Award since 2007 to promote cultural diplomacy. This award recognizes comic authors who promote international exchange through comics. In 2008, MOFA began the "Anime Ambassador" project, hoping to use this project to increase overseas audiences' interest in Japanese animation.<sup>ix</sup> In 2010, the Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry (METI) established a new Creative

Industries Promotion Office under the concept of “Cool Japan” to strengthen overseas sales of its cultural industries.

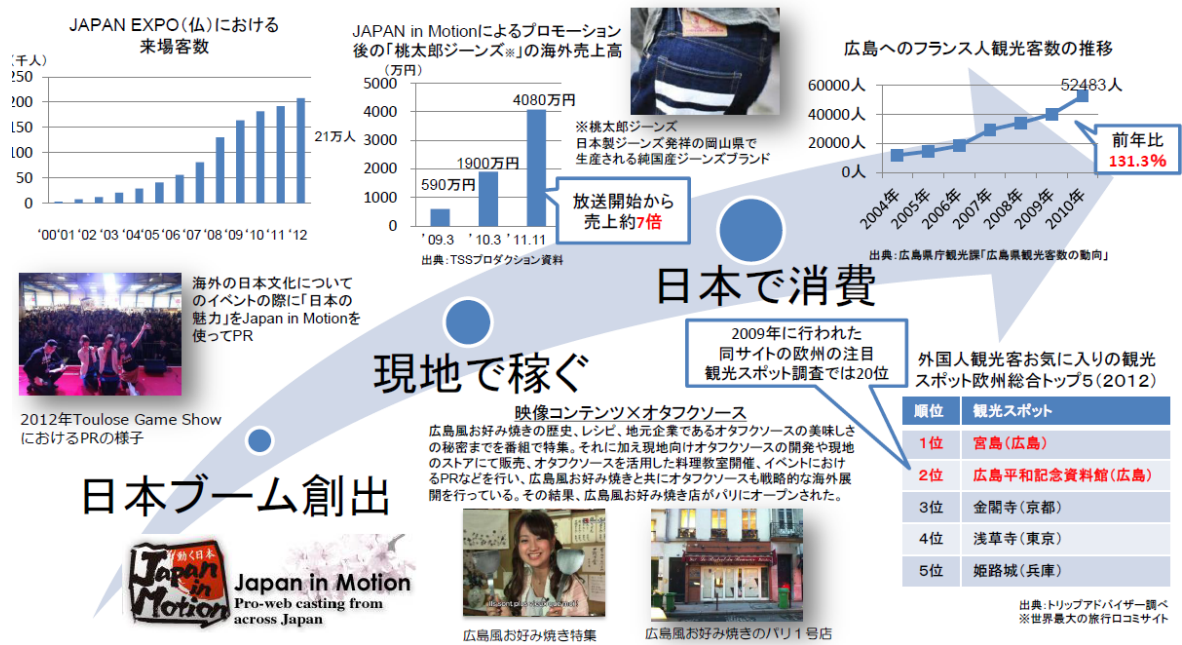
“Cool Japan” policies serve two major goals. Its first purpose is to bring economic benefits by supporting the cultural industry through policies by METI. Its second purpose is to bring diplomatic benefits, led by MOFA. These two points are often confused by the public, and it is doubtful whether the “Cool Japan” strategy can really be effective in diplomatic issues.

### **The current policy of the Japanese government**

According to an interview with an embassy official of the Japanese embassy in Washington DC, Japan's overall strategy for cultural exports is still dominated by economic interests. In cultural exports, economic benefits and political influence are managed separately by METI and MOFA. The "Cool Japan" strategy was initiated by METI and is continued by METI and the Intellectual Property Strategy Headquarters of Cabinet Office to this day. MOFA has limited influence in this strategy. Therefore, this strategy is mainly based on economic interests. MOFA only mentioned on their website that they are using pop-culture, in addition to traditional culture and art, as its primary tools for cultural diplomacy. However, there are no more specific goals from MOFA or the embassy official I interviewed, only those mentioning the use of culture as a tool. It did not mention specific goals, such as reducing hostility against Japan, or improving its international image with culture.

The overseas development strategy of the Japanese cultural industry can be roughly divided into three stages, according to a report by METI (Figure 4). First, through international broadcasting, foreign countries can appreciate the charm of Japanese culture. Second is to ensure the local sales channels of Japanese cultural products. The third step is to attract foreign tourists and foreign businesses to consume in Japan through the promotion of the previous part and create greater economic benefits.<sup>x</sup>

Figure 4. Three stages of international market development



(Source: METI)<sup>xi</sup>

Starting in 2019, the Japanese government began reviewing the Cool Japan strategy, and the focus has become broader than ever. The Cabinet Office established the Cool Japan Working Group and the EUREKA round table (EUREKA! 懇談会) to improve the "cool japan" strategy.<sup>xii</sup> These projects included more foreigners in order to make better changes in the international market. Among the issues mentioned are the inadequate understanding of the perspectives of foreign audiences by Japanese creators and the over-reliance on existing influences.<sup>xiii</sup>

## Problems with pop culture

### *Economically unsatisfactory*

From the economic aspect, the output of Japanese pop culture did not meet expectations. Japan's cultural export channels are complex, and it is difficult to accurately estimate profit. One example is anime works exported from Japan. From 2003 to 2006 Japan exported 30 works to the United States each year, but only 6 were exported in 2013. Japanese movies are also often shown on a small scale in the United States, which is more like art films for enthusiasts than commercial

films for the general public. In addition, cultural exports also encountered resistance in Japan, as many are worried about the copyright and piracy issues facing exports in Southeast Asian countries.

Critics point out that Japan's cultural output in diplomacy is inefficient. In particular, cultural exports are not as effective on some diplomatic issues as the Japanese government envisioned. Also mentioned in his 2006 speech that culture can be a boost to diplomacy. However, Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi visited the Yasukuni Shrine several times from 2001 to 2006, causing strong anti-Japan sentiments among Chinese and Korean public opinion.<sup>xiv</sup>

### *Lack of Japanese values and identities*

Another problem is that under the pop-culture dominated export policy, the lack of Japanese cultural and societal values in its pop culture is problematic. Economically, Japanese cultural exports can be considered successful. Foreign consumers' demand for Japanese cultural products is increasing. However, the only reason for increased consumption is that Japanese pop culture products are highly entertaining. Unlike the cultural products exported from Japan in the 1980s, the number of identifiable Japanese elements in contemporary Japanese pop culture has been greatly reduced. One recent example is that on the closing ceremony of the 2016 Rio Olympics. The introduction video of 2020 Tokyo shows Olympics various animations and game characters, such as Super Mario and Pac-Man with little or no Japanese characteristics, as well as contemporary celebrities and athletes. Traditional elements are significantly less compared to the amount included decades ago. In the 1950s and 1960s, Japan's world-class cinema, as well as literature, made a huge impression on Western audiences. There was also a Zen boom among intellectuals. Western thinking about Japan was greatly reshaped while pop culture has no such effect.<sup>xv</sup>

On the one hand, the diversity of themes increased the variety of Japanese cultural products, making them easier to accept for foreign audiences. On the other hand, the lack of Japanese characteristics also weakened the emphasis on Japanese identity and values. The ahistorical nature of pop culture has failed to strengthen Japan's influence. The lack of emphasis on Japanese identity makes the impact of these cultural exports superficial. As a result, the export of pop culture has produced economic benefits, but has not achieved political and diplomatic influence as expected. Cultural exports have failed to reduce foreign diplomatic tensions with Japan in the 21<sup>st</sup> century like before. On the contrary, as readers become more rational and objective in other Asian

countries, some cultural products have led to foreign readers' antagonism to Japanese pop culture. Foreign readers, especially those in China and South Korea, are able to separate their interest in consuming Japanese culture from historical and political concerns. One of the most recent incidents occurred in February 2020, when a popular Japanese comic *My Hero Academia* contained a reference to a Japanese war criminal, leading to an official apology from the author and publisher.<sup>xvi</sup>

The biggest difference between the current “Cool Japan” strategy and classical cultural exchange activities, such as studying abroad and experiencing traditional activities, is that the pop culture diplomacy is mostly one-way projection.<sup>xvii</sup> Bilateral exchanges can promote cultural exchanges, prompting people from different countries to re-examine their views on life, values, and historical perspectives. What pop culture diplomacy lacks is cross-border communication. Traditional cultural exchanges could eliminate the gap between Japan and foreigners and add diversity to culture, while the one-way projection of cultural exports can only encourage foreigners to appreciate Japan. This has deepened stereotypes and misunderstandings to a certain extent, especially when the content is problematic, which is also a sign of the lack of diversity and awareness of values of surrounding countries. This, coupled with the economic problems and export concerns mentioned at the beginning of this part, means that most Japanese pop culture is created for domestic audiences and remains inward-looking.<sup>xviii</sup>

### *Problem of one-way projection*

A lack of diversity that exists in Japan’s cultural diplomacy reflects the basic homogeneity in its domestic culture. There is a strong tendency in Japan to distinguish between foreigners living in Japan and native Japanese. This can be seen in the government’s policies as well as Japan’s traditional and modern culture. Keeping "Japanese" and "foreigners" separate in their minds and culture has long been a problem in Japan. Even today, despite the rising number of foreigners coming to live, study and work in Japan, not to mention the record numbers of visitors, the average Japanese does not have many chances to interact with foreigners. Younger people in particular seem to be less interested these days in going overseas or forging relationships with foreigners.

Perhaps reflecting such thinking, cultural diplomacy seems to rely more on projecting messages and images than on creating dialogues and exchanges. Such a one-way projection cannot guarantee the outcome will be effectively promoting mutual understanding. With a one-size-fits-

all approach to cultural diplomacy, there seems to be little or no effort to remove historically based impediments to smooth relations, particularly with Asian neighbors. Unresolved issues have been left to fester. For example, Yasukuni Shrine, where convicted Class-A war criminals are enshrined, continues to be a lightning rod of controversy, especially when a prime minister or cabinet member visits the war shrine.

While younger Asian audiences are able to keep separate their appreciation for Japanese pop culture from historical issues, a deep current of anti-Japanese sentiment remains ready to bubble up at any time, should something set off those emotions. Compared with the cultural output of the 1980s which seemed to have assuaged some of the negative feelings of Asian societies toward Japan caused by its negative historical legacy, the shallowness of the current Japanese cultural output seems to do little to erase memories of the past.

### **The traditional approach**

#### *Cultural exchange started in the 1970s*

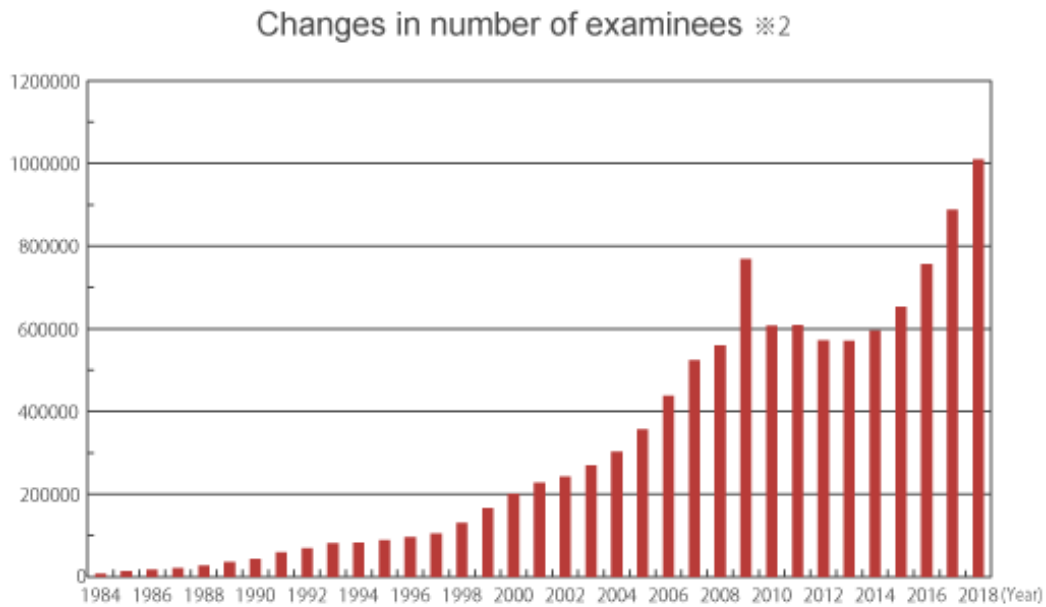
Other than the pop culture exports taken from mass media, the people-to-people cultural exchanges are another major focus of Japan's public diplomacy. Cultural exchanges between Japan and other countries began soon after the war. They started in the 1950s, with famous Japanese artists and performers appearing abroad, and distributors introducing the West to world-class cinema by such directors as Akira Kurosawa, as well as translated literature, classical arts and drama, and popular music recordings. The U.S. even went through a "Zen boom" in the 1960s.

Through cultural and educational exchanges, Japan and the United States were able to build close and friendly ties in the postwar decades. Since the 1970s, activities such as studying abroad and experiencing traditional customs also further promoted the connection between people. Currently, Japan's official international cultural promotion organization is the Japan Foundation, established in 1972 under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>xix</sup> The goal of the Japan Foundation is to promote Japanese arts and cultural exchange, Japanese-language education, and Japanese studies and intellectual exchange. The Japan Foundation has 19 overseas offices in 18 countries, and the cultural exchange activities hosted by the Japan Foundation and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are diverse and adjusted specifically for different countries. In addition, there

are other non-governmental and local organizations to promote cultural exchanges between Japan and foreign countries.

A major goal of the Japan Foundation is to promote Japanese language education overseas. For example, the Japan Foundation administers the Japanese-Language Proficiency Test (JLPT) overseas. It is a standardized test to evaluate and certify Japanese language proficiency for non-native speakers. This test is considered authoritative; its grades are universal; and it is recognized in Japanese universities and companies. According to a survey conducted by the Japan Foundation, the number of Japanese learners overseas has increased from 580,000 in 1984 to 3,650,000 in 2015. The number of candidates participating in JLPT is also increasing year by year (Figure 5). The increasing number of Japanese learners also means that more people can consume Japanese cultural products. This indicates that there is a large and still growing audience for contemporary as well as traditional Japanese culture.

Figure 5. Increase in the number of Japanese learners.



(Source: JLPT official website)<sup>xx</sup>



The Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program is an initiative that brings English-speaking foreigners to Japan as assistant language teachers. It is undoubtedly Japan's single most effective exchange program. The JET program was launched in 1987 and is still going strong, consisting of college graduates brought to Japan to teach English in local governments, boards of education, and schools.<sup>xxi</sup> The goal of the JET program is to promote grass-roots communications and cultural exchange. So far, over 70,000 people from all over the world have participated in the JET program. It is considered the largest and most successful cultural exchange programs in Japan, and one of the largest exchange programs in the world. The secret of its success is that the Japanese government has invested a lot of resources into it, and multiple governmental departments have collaborated in operating JET, including the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), and the Council of Local Authorities for International Relations (CLAIR), which runs the program. By letting young foreigners come work and live in Japan, the cumulative effect is a lasting interest in Japan and a deeper appreciation for its culture and society. When these participants return to their home country, they share their experiences in Japan, keep contact with students and friends, form an alumni network, and often return to Japan or Japanese affairs in their future efforts.

### *Grassroots organizations*

In addition to the official Japanese organizations, non-governmental organizations have also played an important role in Japan-U.S. cultural exchanges. The National Association of Japan-America Societies (NAJAS) is a non-profit network in the United States that offers educational and cultural programs about Japan.<sup>xxii</sup> It consists of 38 independent Japan-America Societies located around the United States and Canada. In Washington D.C., the National Cherry Blossom Festival held every spring is a well-known event to celebrate the close ties between the United States and Japan. At that time of year, more than 500,000 people come to D.C. to enjoy the cherry blossoms and participate in various festival-like activities. The Cherry-Blossom Festival—Sakura Matsuri—held by the Japan-America Society of Washington D.C. (JASWDC), serves as the finale. It is the largest one-day celebration of Japanese culture in the U.S., with performances of traditional Japanese games, music, and dance, and the sale of Japanese food and souvenirs. This event allows ordinary American citizens the chance to experience true Japanese culture and increase their

interest in Japan. The performances at the Sakura Matsuri include professional groups of performers from the United States and Japan, as well as amateur student groups.<sup>xxiii</sup>

Another JASWDC program is the Japan Bowl, which is a significant example of Japan's bilateral cultural exchange. Japan Bowl is a Japanese language competition sponsored by the Japan-America Society of Washington DC since 1992, with participants from high schools who are learning the Japanese language. Japan Bowl uses the format of a "quiz bowl", in which students hear the question and respond in a limited timeframe. The questions are in both English and Japanese, covering the Japanese language, culture, society, daily life, history, geography, and current events. Japan Bowl aims to inspire students to learn more about Japan and strengthen their connection with Japan. Through detailed research on the Japan Bowl and interviews with program staffs, this program has indeed achieved its intended goal.<sup>xxiv</sup>

According to an interview with the program director, students choose to study Japanese for a variety of reasons. Some students learn Japanese because their parents are of Japanese descent and they want to know more about their ancestral home. Others learn Japanese through their infatuation with popular Japanese cultural products such as manga and anime. Some take Japanese as the only non-European foreign language offered by their school. As they learn more Japanese, they participate in the Japan Bowl as an extracurricular activity. In the past five years, the number of participants in the Japan Bowl has remained relatively constant at around 200. For Japanese cultural exchanges, the influence of the Japan Bowl is not limited to the competition itself. According to a survey of participants, almost all participants have plans to continue learning Japanese after going to college. And about 80% of people plan to go to Japan to study abroad for a long or short period.

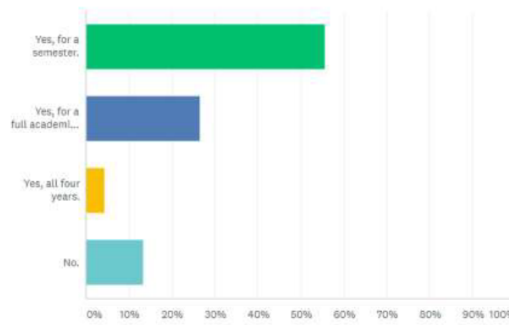
Based on a 2017 interview of Japan Bowl alumni, some of them have joined or are preparing to join the JET program, and acknowledged that participating in the Japan Bowl helped them build an interest in Japan, allowing them to pursue a career in Japan (Figure 6). In addition to the participants, the Japan Bowl is also effective for the future development of Japanese culture exchange. In recent years, many high schools have cut numbers of foreign language programs and courses they offer due to budget cuts. Compared to other languages, such as Spanish and French, Japanese has a relatively small audience and is often the first to be cut off. Winning a place in the

Japan Bowl can help preserve Japanese language programs in high school and attract more students to learn Japanese in the future.

Figure 6. 2019 National Japan Bowl Report

Do you think you might want to study abroad in Japan during your college years?

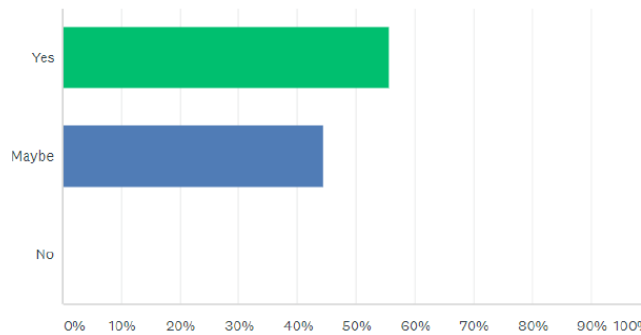
Answered: 45 Skipped: 0



Yes, for a semester	55.56%
Yes, for a full academic year	26.67%
Yes, for all four years	4.44%
No	13.33%

Do you plan to continue to study Japanese when you go to college?

Answered: 45 Skipped: 0



Yes	55.56%
Maybe	44.44%
No	0%

(Source: JASWDC)

In short, Japan's bilateral cultural exchanges are a very effective tool to positively influence foreign views of Japan and its culture. It encourages foreigners to learn about Japan and may lead to careers in Japan-related jobs. Japan's cultural exchanges have a long postwar history and a cumulative track record of successes. In recent years, though, the programs seem to be facing signs

of stagnation and are in need of reinvigoration. The number of related projects and the number of participants is not increasing significantly. The problem calls for a close review of the efficacy of current programs by the sponsors.

### **Comparing South Korea and China's Cultural Diplomacy**

Since the 1990s, South Korea and China have been expanding their respective cultural exports. Although these neighboring countries started late, they achieved significant results. Through analysis and comparison, we shall examine where their initiatives differ, excel, or fall behind Japan's cultural diplomacy.

#### *South Korea*

Before the 1980s, South Korea was under the control of a military regime that curbed the development of cultural industries. With the end of that government and the introduction of democracy, South Korea was able to finally develop a cultural industry. In 1994, the South Korean government began to sponsor cultural goods as a strategic export industry. In the late 1990s and 2000s, South Korean movies, TV dramas, and pop music began to show up overseas to the delight of foreign audiences. In the beginning, Korean cultural influence was limited to East and Southeast Asian countries. But since the 2010s, thanks to a concerted government effort, South Korea's cultural products can be enjoyed all over the world. Korean cuisine and Korean-style fashions have also become popular. The huge influence of Korean culture is generally called the Korean Wave (Hallyu). The boom has brought with it great economic benefits to South Korea.

Compared with Japan, Korea's pop culture industry was a late starter, but the content is strikingly similar to "Cool Japan" and is mainly based on so-called K-pop music. This limited content hardly carries with it Korean values. Moreover, K-pop music draws elements from the music of other countries. Although it is very entertaining, foreign audiences are unable to draw out from it a unique Korean identity.

South Korea's film industry has more international influence compared to the pop music industry. In February 2020, the Korean film "Parasite" won Best Picture at the U.S. Academy Awards, the first time for a non-English film. This film portrays the universal issue of social and income inequalities, topics that can be understood by any audience. It also blends the director's personal style and distinct cultural elements of Korea. Such features give the film a firm Korean

identity. The Korean film industry has become more developed over the years, covering more serious topics and universal values that can be enjoyed by audiences around the world. This means that Korean movies have a larger audience as a cultural export than Japan. But one of Japan's problems is distribution of its best films abroad. Few foreign audiences are able to even see the best that Japanese film directors have to offer.

There is no doubt that cultural exports have brought economic benefits to South Korea, including performing artists, concerts, and tourism. But these efforts seem to be more of a marketing strategy than a conscious attempt to disseminated Korean culture and values. Mass media such as television and the Internet are the most important channels for spreading Korean culture. This also makes such efforts mostly a one-way projection. At present, the Korean government's public diplomacy goal for those cultural exports is to promote Korean culture, prevent anti-Korean sentiments, and promote peace on the Korean Peninsula.<sup>xxv</sup> Korean cultural exports have played a positive role both in its economic and national image (Figure 7).

Figure 7. The positive effect of Korean cultural industry on economy and politics

## II - 4 クリエイティブ産業の波及効果(韓国の例)

■官民挙げたコンテンツの海外展開によって作られた韓流ブームは、主要企業の売上げの増加に大きく貢献。

<韓流ブームの事例>

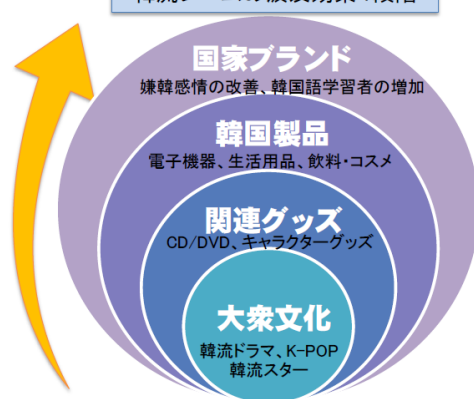
韓国はドラマ、音楽の海外展開支援を通じて韓流ブームを創出するとともに、そのイメージを活かした製品輸出や観光を促進し、官民挙げて波及効果の最大化を図っている。

韓国のコンテンツ輸出額の推移(単位:百万ドル)

	2005	2006	2007	2008	年平均増減率
輸出額	1,235	1,373	1,562	1,884	15.1%
前年比	-	11.1%	13.7%	20.6%	-

出典:文化体育観光部(2010)、「2009コンテンツ産業白書」

韓流ブームの波及効果4段階



韓流ブームによる関連商品・一般商品の輸出額の推移(単位:百万ドル)

	2005	2006	2007	2008
コスメ	306	319	346	420
自動車	27,256	30,597	34,482	31,288
飲料	875	1,030	1,154	1,302
その他	37,608	34,563	34,869	37,277
計	66,045	66,509	70,851	70,287

出所:「韓流Forever-韓流の現状と経済効果の分析」韓国文化産業交流財団(2008年)、「韓流、アジアを超えて世界へ」韓国分産業交流財団(2009年)

韓国主要企業の売上高推移(単位:億ウォン)

	2005	2006	2007	2008
サムスン電子	806,300	854,260	985,078	1,212,943
現代自動車	588,310	636,480	696,015	797,362
LG電子	355,630	367,300	408,480	493,330

出所:各社Annualレポートより抜粋

10

(Source: METI)

## *China*

The pattern of Chinese cultural exports is quite different than that of Japan and South Korea. China's purpose for such exports is clear, namely, to improve China's international image. Its cultural output is controlled and funded by Beijing, and its contents are strictly regulated by the government. China's cultural industry started relatively late, when then-President Hu Jintao emphasized the importance of strengthening China's soft power in 2007. China's major initiatives include internationalizing its media, supporting a film industry, and opening Confucius Institutes abroad for teaching language and culture. Instead of taking the lead to support business interests like Japan and South Korea, the political purpose comes first. The overseas branches of Chinese media outlets have often been accused by Europe and the United States of broadcasting propaganda. Of the regions targeted, Africa has brought the best results.

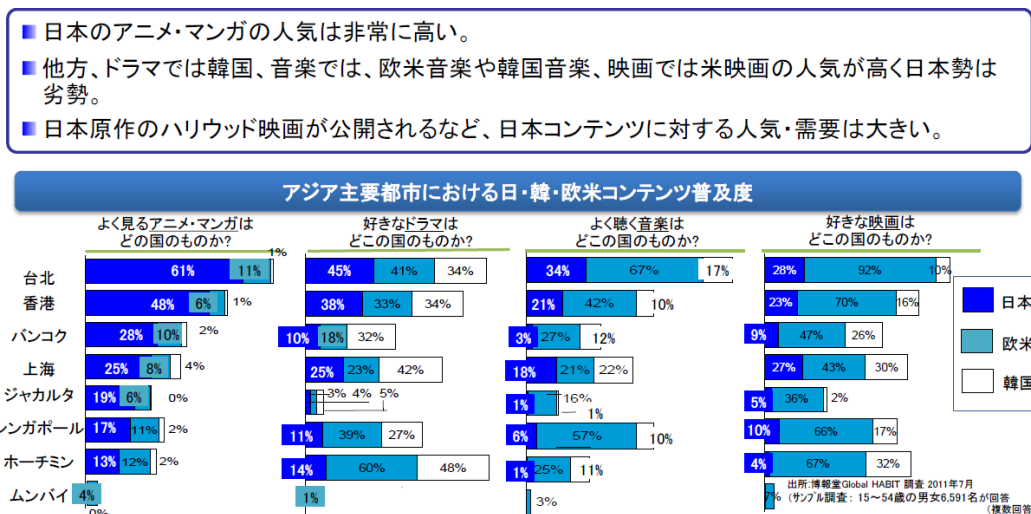
The cultural products currently exported by China tend to be based more on traditional culture rather than the popular varieties. Many are filled with ideological messages. The contents tend to be polemical, promoting Marxism and socialism as Chinese characteristics, though there are small aspects of Western culture adapted to Chinese society too. These cultural products are less entertaining compared to their Japanese and Korean counterparts, but it is undeniable that they have a stronger political influence over targeted audiences. However, in addition to China's own cultural products, China is also actively using the country's growing affluence to cooperate with international producers, such as Hollywood. In co-produced films, China can gain more control over the plot and messaging. This ensures that the Chinese actors will not become villains, and create more scenes boosting a positive image of China.<sup>xxvi</sup>

Since 2014, Hollywood action movies including "Iron Man," "Pacific Rim," and "Transformers" have included more actors, products, and scenes from China. Despite the mixed responses from the audience, the exposure of Chinese elements has risen. The Kung Fu movies produced in Hong Kong from 2008 to 2019, the Ip Man series, and serious period dramas have content such as the Chinese people's resistance to Japanese occupation, racial discrimination under Western colonial rule, and resistance to ancient feudalism. As more Chinese films are released in overseas markets, cultural products spread those historical views and political opinions that Beijing wants to transmit.

As for people-to-people cultural exchange, the Confucius Institutes (CI) are the most important institutions sponsored by the Chinese government. The aim of CI is to promote Chinese language and culture, improve China's international image, and facilitate cultural exchanges. The teaching content includes Chinese language courses and other traditional Chinese culture courses such as tea ceremony or folk dance. Since 2005, the number of CIs has grown rapidly around the world. The Chinese government hopes to resolve foreign stereotypes about China, such as its authoritarianism and human rights violations, through cultural exchanges. Although the attitude towards CIs by various parties is controversial, it has had positive results for China's cultural diplomacy.<sup>xxvii</sup>

In comparing Japan's cultural exports to those of South Korea and China, Japan faces two major challenges: originality and quality of content. Especially in the 2010s, Korean pop culture was seen to outperform Japanese pop culture, especially in the music and film industries (Figure 8). In addition, the fast-growing influence of Chinese backers in the film industry is noteworthy. In terms of person-to-person cultural exchanges, the number of Confucius Institutes in China is growing rapidly. In contrast, the number of Japanese cultural exchange programs and the number of participants have remained unchanged or even declined in recent years.

Figure 8. Japan is not as influential in music and film as other countries



(Source: METI)

## **Policy recommendations for Japan's future cultural exports**

By evaluating Japan's past and present cultural exports and comparing it with neighboring countries, some conclusions can be drawn. First, although the exporting of Japanese popular culture is very successful commercially, it has little to do with Japanese values and identity. One can enjoy its contents but learn very little about Japan. Although the traditional person-to-person cultural exchange could better at emphasizing the value and identity of Japan, the scale has hardly increased in recent years. Second, in the face of challenges from South Korea and China, some of Japan's cultural export strategies need to be adjusted.

My first recommendation is that Japan should set tangible goals for cultural exports. That is, what goals does the Japanese government trying to achieve through its cultural exports? Because economic interests and political influence are separately managed by METI and MOFA, respectively, Japan currently does not have a clear overall cultural-export strategy. The economic goal can be the output of cultural products as a percentage of GDP or to promote Japan's tourism and education industries. The political goal can be to overcome anti-Japanese sentiments in certain countries, and to promote a positive image of Japan.

My second recommendation is that if Japan is seeking further political influence, Japan's cultural exports need to be adjusted to meet new demands and expectations. For pop culture, it is important to add more Japanese cultural and social values to those goods, highlighting Japanese identity.<sup>xxviii</sup> Although Japanese culture and entertainment at home is a blend of traditional and modern elements, those types have not been widely disseminated overseas. For the film industry, Japan should try to expand the international market through better distribution, advertisement, and choosing better movies to export for the general public. Art houses do not turn a profit, and the theme of universal values is required. Most Japanese movies are aimed at domestic audiences, and the themes are only understandable to those who live in Japan, so they are not suitable for promotion in overseas markets.<sup>xxix</sup> If Japan wants more of a share in the international market, it is necessary for domestic Japanese cultural companies to recognize the potential benefits of the international market. If the government promotes the importance of the international market, cultural companies may pay attention to the potential of the international market.<sup>xxx</sup> The market-led development model should be more sustainable than a government-led model. As many



government-led incentive projects emerge, companies often pay more attention to government subsidies rather than market profits.

In terms of traditional cultural exchange projects, Japan has had quite a lot of experience and successful projects since the 1970s. However, the growth of these exchange projects has faced stagnation in recent years. Facing the development of cultural exchange projects in other countries, Japan no longer has an advantage in this aspect. The existence of programs such as studying Japanese and studying in Japan is being challenged by programs related to other countries. Since people-to-people cultural exchange programs have proven to be an effective way to arouse foreigners' interest in Japan, I believe Japan should invest more in these programs. Not only should Japan maintain the quality of existing projects and the number of participants, but it should also consider new exchange projects based on new demands and expectations. For example, most of the participants in the JET project are native English speakers from North America, Europe and Australia. In addition to the JET project, Japan also has the KAKEHASHI project and the latest grassroots exchange projects with the United States.<sup>xxxii</sup> But these projects are limited to exchanges between the United States and Japan.<sup>xxxii</sup> I think Japan has had enough of cultural exchange projects in Europe and America. Japan should consider starting a new exchange program, targeting those areas that had previously been less involved, such as South Asia, the Middle East, and Africa, to expand Japan's cultural influence.

## **Conclusion**

Japan has been actively pursuing cultural exports, both as an economic strategy and as a public diplomacy tool. Historically, Japan's best years for marketing its cultural goods covered the 1970s to the 1990s. It generally succeeded in building a positive international image. The economic recession from the 1990s to the 2000s inspired Japan to use cultural exports as a way to boost the lagging economy, and culture was marketed for the economic benefits. The Japanese government came up with its "Cool Japan" strategy that made pop culture a key export product.

At present, Japan has a solid foundation for cultural exports, including a highly developed cultural industry and a large overseas audience. However, the expectations of the export of cultural products is mostly focused on economic benefits. Such products, while entertaining, have limited international influence on Japan's cultural identity or national image.

In person-to-person cultural exchange programs, the Japanese cultural exchange program proved to be successful and effectively attracted foreigners, especially young people, to Japan. A series of projects opened in Japan since the 1980s, such as the JET program, continues to this day. However, the number of projects and participants have stayed about the same in the past five years. As the influence of cultural exchange projects in other countries has grown, Japan has begun to lag behind in this regard.

By comparison with South Korea and China, if Japan tries to increase its cultural influence, Japan needs to strengthen the internationalization of its cultural industry and adjust the content itself to the international market. In terms of cultural exchange projects, Japan may need to increase the number of projects, especially in areas where it had previously been less involved. For example, it might focus on the Middle East and Africa. In order to adjust the cultural export strategy to meet new market demands, domestic awareness of the potential benefits in the international market is the key. The reviews on the "Cool Japan" have found that Japan has insufficient understanding of the international market. The rest is to let Japanese companies and contents creators realize this. In the long run, Japan could maintain its lead if it can adapt to the changing demand of the world in the cultural field and maintain a sustainable development model.

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# Highlights from Reischauer Center Events: Photo Album

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The Rise of China and  
Japan's Response,  
September 26, 2019

Featured right, Dr. Calder  
and Dr. Narushige  
Michishita

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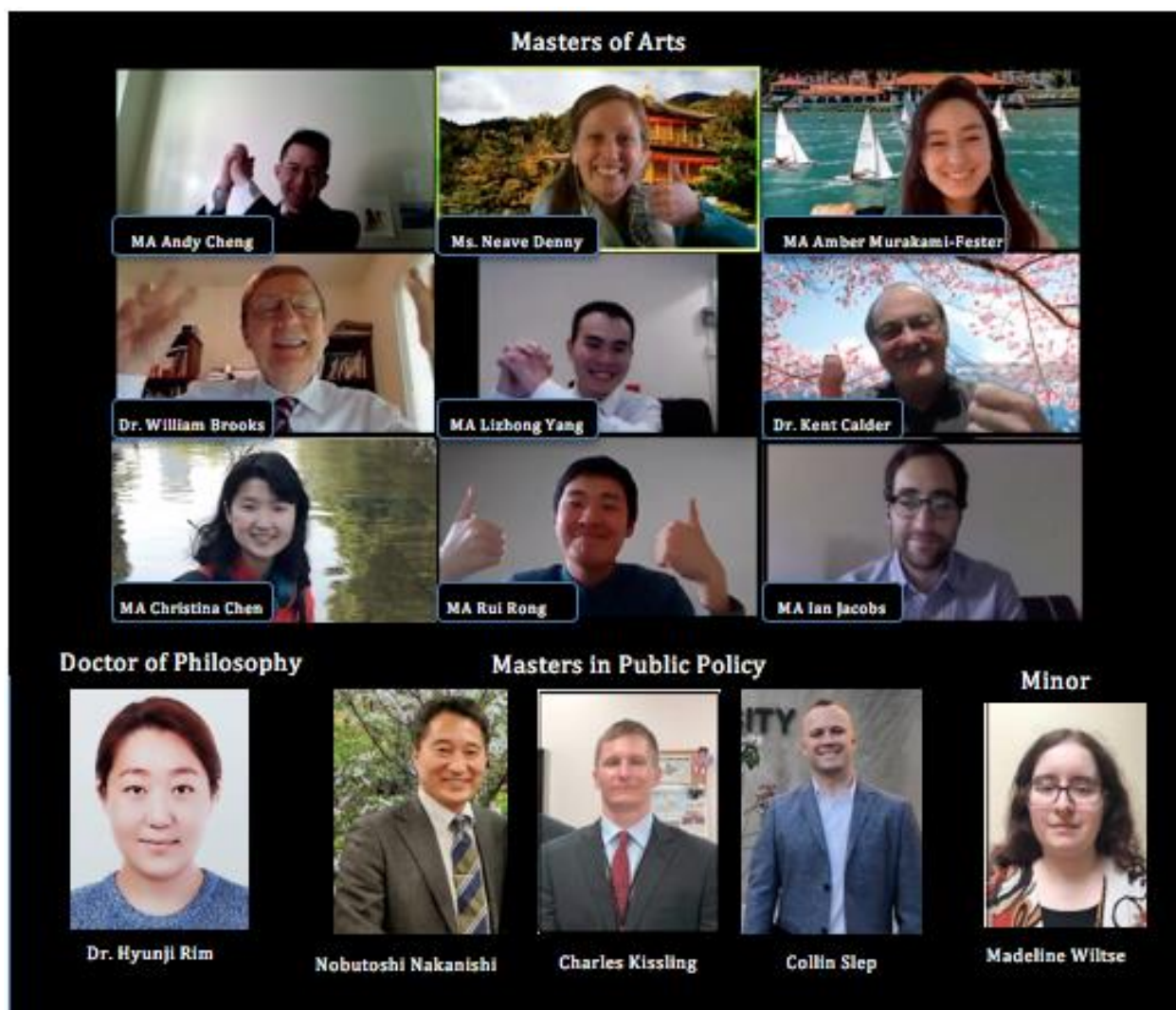
Above: Okinawa in the Context of a Foreign Service Career, September 26, 2019

Below: U.S.-Japan Trade Relations Relations: Where Do They Stand, and How Did They Get Here. November 8, 2019

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The graduating class of 2020 in the Japan Studies course, featuring many students who wrote papers for this yearbook

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Edited by Dr. William Brooks, Neave Denny, and Madeline Wiltse

The United States and Japan in Global Context: 2020

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