The University of Otago

Department of Languages and Cultures

The Role of Values in Japanese Elite Views of Contemporary Japan-China Relations

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Division of Humanities in Candidacy for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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fire under the ash
and written on the wall
the shadow of a friend

- Matsuo Bashō (1644-1694) -

dead my old fine hopes
and dry my dreaming but still
iris, blue each spring

- Ome Shushiki (1668-1725) -
Table of Contents

Abstract vi
Acknowledgements vii
List of Abbreviations viii
List of Figures and Maps ix

Introduction to question, methodology, main concepts and key terms 1

Overview 1
Research question 4
Concepts 6
  Values 6
  Political values 8
  Universal values 10
  Japanese values and *nihonjinron* 13
Methodology 19
Prospectus 22

Chapter One
Dynamics of post-Pacific War Japan-China relations: from normalization back to abnormality? 23

Introduction 23
The events leading up to the 1972 normalization: Japan’s new dependence and its under-the-radar China policy 24
Japan-China relations from their diplomatic normalization until the end of the Cold War (1972-1990): relative peace under control 32
Japan-China relations in the 1990s: removed constraints 43
Japan-China relations in the beginning of the 21st century: hot economics, cold politics 53
Conclusion: back to the future? 65
### Chapter Two

**Japanese academic perceptions of contemporary Japan-China relations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shin’ichi Kitaoka and the question of proactive pacifism</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hitoshi Tanaka: from comprehensive engagement and multilateralism</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>back to realism?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Takashi Hoshiyama: Japan finally liberated from the “spell of history”?</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kazuhiko Noguchi and Kentarō Sakuwa: bringing realism back?</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hidetaka Yoshimatsu and the question of identity</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yoshihide Soeya and the question of internationalism</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion: strengths and weaknesses of Japanese academic scholarship</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Chapter Three

**The role of values in Japan’s political strategies vis-à-vis China**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan’s ambiguity towards values in its relations with China and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Asia from the end of the Cold War until the early 2000s</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values versus pragmatism: the emergence of the concepts of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the East Asian Community and the Arc of Freedom and Prosperity</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The East Asian Community initiative</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The rise and decline of value-oriented diplomacy</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and the “Arc of Freedom and Prosperity”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The start of a prolonged period of political instability: further inconsistencies in Japan’s foreign policy strategies</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Back to relative political stability: the second Abe government</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion: the controversial role of values in</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan’s foreign policy strategies</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Chapter Four

**A challenge to Japan’s commitment to universal values:**

**The LDP’s constitutional values and the State Secrets Protection Law**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The creation of Japan’s post-war Constitution</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The significance of the post-war Constitution</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The LDP’s Draft Constitution</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Preamble</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The most significant value changes proposed by the LDP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reinstating <em>kimigayo</em> and <em>hinomaru</em> as national symbols</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elevating the status of the Emperor and Shinto</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public order versus public freedom and individual rights</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Eliminating the notion of the “individual” and defining new duties for the people 199
The family as the “natural and fundamental unit of society” 201
Granting new powers to the Prime Minister 202
The end of the Peace Constitution? Article 9 204
Paving the way for future constitutional changes 206
Domestic criticism of the LDP’s constitution 207
Japan’s State Secrets Law: another significant step threatening individual and universal values 210
Rule of law versus rule by law: Japan’s post-war values in danger 216

Conclusion 224

Credibility of Japan’s foreign policy strategies 225
Consistency of Japanese academic views 226
The Japanese political elite’s proposed domestic values 228
‘What can Japan do better?’ 229
‘Eastern’ and ‘Western’ universal values in Japan’s international relations 232
How does Japan’s values-oriented diplomacy matter? 244

Bibliography 246
Abstract

In this thesis I clarify understanding of the role values play in Japanese views of contemporary Japan-China relations. I seek to answer the question: how consistently do values play a role in Japanese elite thought, both academic and political, thought in explaining contemporary Japan-China relations?

I first uncover the dynamics of Japan’s relations with China from the end of the Pacific War until the mid-2010s. It then explores Japanese academic perceptions of current Japan-China relations, and follows this with an analysis of various foreign policy strategies that the Japanese government has formulated over the past nearly two decades, with a particular focus on the inconsistencies of the so-called values-oriented diplomacy, with which Japan aimed to forge new alliances in the Asia-Pacific and attempted to compete with the growing influence of China. The case study reveals further significant inconsistencies between certain values with which Japan has been attempting to appeal to an international audience and values the Japanese political elite considers important for its domestic population.

This research draws from Japanese scholarly articles, documents and statements issued by the Japanese government, various news sources, publications of organizations, speeches made by Japanese government officials, and related secondary literature.

I show that that not only are Japan-China relations problematic, but so are some of the contexts and value perceptions with which a number of leading Japanese scholars and members of the political elite view and explain these relations. It ultimately argues that adherence to values is indeed important and that, in order to make significant progress in its relations with China, Japan also needs to have a deeper understanding of the very values it considers important.

Keywords: Japan, Japan-China relations, values, universal values, international relations
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Frequent and vibrant discussions about philosophy, values, fair play, and politics in the Hungarian Foundation for the Philosophy of Sport had a significant influence on shaping my views and greatly contributed to my initial travel to, and subsequent settling in, beautiful Aotearoa New Zealand. Those discussion played a large part in my decision to undertake this research.

I am deeply and forever grateful to my parents, István Kiglics and Gitta Pataki, and my grandparents, Lajos Pataky and Éva Pataky, for teaching me from an early age the importance of values. My thesis is dedicated to them, to my wife Pattama, to my old friend George, and to the members of the Hungarian Foundation for the Philosophy of Sport.
### List of Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ARF</td>
<td>ASEAN Regional Forum</td>
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<tr>
<td>ASEAN</td>
<td>Association of Southeast Asian Nations</td>
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<td>CEAC</td>
<td>Council on East Asian Community</td>
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<tr>
<td>CCP</td>
<td>Chinese Communist Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>DPJ</td>
<td>Democratic Party of Japan</td>
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<td>EAC</td>
<td>East Asian Community</td>
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<tr>
<td>EAS</td>
<td>East Asia Summit</td>
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<tr>
<td>FTA</td>
<td>Free Trade Agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LDP</td>
<td>Liberal Democratic Party (Japan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEAT</td>
<td>Network of East Asian Think Tanks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOFA</td>
<td>Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Japan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ODA</td>
<td>Official Development Assistance</td>
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<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>PLA</td>
<td>People’s Liberation Army (China)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRC</td>
<td>People’s Republic of China</td>
</tr>
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<td>ROC</td>
<td>Republic of China</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCAP</td>
<td>Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers</td>
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<td>SDF</td>
<td>Self-Defense Forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIPRI</td>
<td>Stockholm International Peace Research Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNSC</td>
<td>United Nations Security Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>United States of America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USSR</td>
<td>Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (the Soviet Union)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WTO</td>
<td>World Trade Organization</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Figures and Maps

Figure 1. GDP, current US$ million, 1988-2016:
China, India, Japan, South Korea, USA 70

Figure 2. Military Expenditure, in constant (2015) US$ million, 1988-2016:
China, India, Japan, South Korea, USA 70

Figure 3. Military Expenditure per capita in constant (2015) US$, 1988-2016:
China, India, Japan, South Korea, USA 71

Figure 4. Military Expenditure (% of GDP), 1988-2016:
China, India, Japan, South Korea, USA 71

Figure 5. Military dynamics of the Indo-Pacific, 2016 72

Map 1. American military bases in the Indo-Pacific encircling China 72

Introduction to question, methodology, main concepts and key terms

Overview

Japan shares a long and rich history of predominantly amicable cultural interactions with China that goes back nearly 2000 years. Before the start of Western colonization, Japan was a part of the so-called Sinosphere, a China-centered cultural sphere, that characterized traditional international relations in East Asia, and which had a significant influence on the early development of the Japanese state.1 While Japan had successfully attempted to break away from China’s influence and was able to create its own unique culture by the end of the Heian period (794-1185), it still continued to regard China as its “significant other” and Chinese culture as a source of inspiration. China, therefore, had continued to play a central role in Japan’s worldview, with the latter harboring mostly positive sentiments towards its largest neighbor. Japan’s relations with China were generally peaceful with only a few historical exceptions,2 and the two countries coexisted in an inward-looking and hierarchic regional order with China at its center of gravity.3 However, as a result of its enormous national modernization efforts driven by the influence of the West’s4

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2 The only exceptions were the Mongol invasions of Japan in 1274 and 1281, and Japan’s invasion of the Korean Peninsula between 1592-1598, with the aim of expanding its power further into China. Chinese troops were instrumental in stopping Japan’s expansion. For the Mongol invasions, see Wendy Smith, “The Mongol Invasions of Japan,” Agora 47. No. 1 (2012): 47. Accessed May 21, 2018, https://search.informit.com.au/documentSummary;dn=054751911761602;res=IELHSS. For Japan’s expansion into mainland Asia, see David C. Kang, East Asia Before the West: Five Centuries of Trade and Tribute (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 1-2.


4 The concept of “West,” also referred to as “Occident,” has its roots in the Greco-Roman civilization in Europe, and the advent of Christianity. The term has little geographic relevance today and is
expansion into Asia, Japan had emerged as a newly industrialized and militarized regional power by the end of the 19th century, while China remained largely undeveloped and rather shaken by Western colonization. The new struggle for power in the region resulted in Japan’s successful modernization and China’s relative stagnation and prolonged internal struggles, demolishing the millennium-old regional order in East Asia. As a new contender for regional leadership, Japan quickly moved to challenge China’s weakened positions, which effort culminated in the two Sino-Japanese wars. These wars have profoundly changed Japan-China relations, and their acute memories – along with their very different interpretations on each side – continue to have a significant impact on bilateral relations even today.

Recent history has opened yet another chapter in Japan-China relations. As a result of various substantial global and regional transformations, the world has witnessed China’s breathtaking rise over the past few decades, the pace and scale of which was perhaps as unexpected as that of Japan’s some 100 years earlier. China’s spectacular re-emergence as the economic powerhouse of the world has also put the country in the centre of global attention. It was also during the past few decades that East Asia, after having experienced a period of “cold peace” during the Cold War that was framed by the power struggle between extra-regional forces, has started developing a renewed sense of regional identity. This new awareness of region was based on economic growth that was supported by a rapidly developing network of

widely used to refer to Europe, North America, and countries of European colonial origin with substantial European ancestral populations elsewhere, such Australia and New Zealand. See also discussion of the term on pages 232-233.


trade links and region-wide organizations in East Asia.\textsuperscript{7} However, and particularly in contrast with China’s recent success story, the world has observed a very different Japan: a nation that has been struggling to cope with both new external and internal challenges in the post-Cold War era. For these reasons, therefore, it is no wonder that China again has a central importance in Japan’s international relations. This is the first time in history when both countries are competing head to head for regional leadership while being two of the strongest economic powers in the world. Sino-Japanese relations therefore not only have a significant impact on both countries, but are also generally considered to be the single most important bilateral relation in East Asia.\textsuperscript{8} This is also the region in which the interests of the three largest economic powers of the world, the United States, China, and Japan, meet, overlap, as well as collide at times.\textsuperscript{9} However, relations between Japan and China not only shape the development of the region, but can also have a significant impact beyond East Asia. In the process of globalization, it was East Asia, with China back again at its centre of gravity, that emerged as a region to pose arguably the greatest challenge to Western global dominance.\textsuperscript{10} Nevertheless, the development trajectory of East Asia has been in a sharp contrast with some other regions, perhaps most notably with that of the European Union, since it has so far been unsuccessful in creating an

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{Honghua2010} For instance, Men Honghua, Deputy Director of the Center of International Strategic Studies at the Party School of the Chinese Communist Party’s Central Committee, maintains that the most important relationship for the future of the East Asian order is the one between China and Japan. Men Honghua, “East Asian Order Formation and Sino-Japanese Relations,” \textit{Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies} 17, issue 1 (Winter 2010): 47
\end{thebibliography}
overarching regional security framework or a broader political cooperation.\textsuperscript{11} At the heart of this problem lie Japan-China relations.

Research question

Significant interest in contemporary Japan-China relations means that there is already a substantial body of literature available on various aspects of this subject. Recent scholarship, be it Chinese, Japanese, or international, generally represents contemporary Sino-Japanese relations in the context of a growing competition for regional leadership in East Asia,\textsuperscript{12} as an issue of national security,\textsuperscript{13} as a conflict stemming from different interpretations of history,\textsuperscript{14} as a rivalry between different national identities,\textsuperscript{15} or in the light of territorial disputes and a clashing over the development of the resources in the East China Sea.\textsuperscript{16} As Japanese historian and international relations expert Akira Iriye argues, “it is customary to stress power, (...) the ways in which [countries] respect, defend, or infringe upon each other’s

\textsuperscript{12} Joel Rathus, \textit{Japan, China, and Networked Regionalism in East Asia} (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).
sovereignty and independence” when discussing relations between two or more countries. In other words, notions of power, rivalry and competition consist the central focus of contemporary literature. While it is important to pay close attention to the economic, security and political issues between these two countries, of similar, if not more, importance are the visions, ideas, and values that influence the dynamics of Japan-China relations and that can also play a significant role in the development of the region. Nevertheless, existing scholarship appears to pay little attention to the ideas and values that shape contemporary Japan-China relations. As someone with a background in Japanese studies, what interests me in this context is how Japan perceives and explains its relations with China. In particular, I am interested in the approach and value perceptions that frame contemporary Japanese thought regarding Japan-China relations. More specifically – and this finally leads to my research question – how consistent a role do values play in Japanese elite thought in explaining contemporary Japan-China relations?

Even though there is a growing interest, both academic and general, in various aspects of Japan-China relations, little attention has been given to the approaches and value perceptions that frame contemporary Japanese academic and political thought in regards to Japan-China relations. My research, therefore, aims to contribute towards filling this important gap.

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Concepts

This section introduces and clarifies the meaning of “value,” and its dependent variables, political values and universal values, concepts that are of central importance in my thesis.

Values

It is interesting to see how little scholarship is available on the concept of values and how little theoretical framework has developed on this basis. On the one hand, there appears to be a general agreement among scholars writing on the subject regarding five features of the conceptual definition of values: a value is a (1) belief (2) pertaining to desirable end states or modes of conduct, that (3) transcends specific situations, (4) guides selection or evaluation of behaviour, people, and events, and (5) is ordered by importance relative to other values to form a system of value priorities.\(^{18}\) On the other hand, however, there also appears to be a consensus among scholars in regards to the general lack of a theoretical framework for the analysis of values.\(^{19}\) Hechter et. al. point out that, while in the 1960s values “explicitly occupied a central place in all of the social science disciplines,” there is now a “striking absence of discussion” when it comes to what values are and what values-related theoretical frameworks might consist of, and that, more generally, there has been “too little appreciation of how difficult it is to incorporate values” in the field of contemporary social scientific research.\(^{20}\) Loek Halman explains that the sociological


and psychological literature on values simply reveal “a terminological jungle.”  

Hechter even goes as far as to ask whether, since there exists no compelling and substantive theory of values, should the concept be written out of the social scientist lexicon? The general consensus among scholars appears to be that the concept is still unclear and that it lacks any substantial theoretical framework, due to the fact that values can take many forms, all of which are non-empirical, intangible and therefore hard to define, measure or quantify properly. Some scholars, however, posit that values are “general and durable internal criteria for evaluation,” differing from other concepts such as preferences, attitudes and norms. Nevertheless, most social science scholars seem to agree that values are beliefs, motivations, and orientations that are deeply embedded in the psyche, based on which opinions, attitudes, norms, and actions can be explained. Ultimately, however, because of the lack of proper definition and theoretical framework, any scholarly work on the

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24 “Like values, preferences and attitudes are internal; unlike them, preferences are labile rather than durable, and particular rather general. Whereas norms are also evaluative, general and durable, they are external to actors and -in contrast to values- require sanctioning for their efficacy.” Hechter, “Values Research in the Social Behavioral Sciences,” 3. Similarly, Milton Rokeach argues that a value is a “disposition of a person just like an attitude, but more basic than an attitude, often underlying it.” Milton Rokeach. Beliefs, Attitudes and Values: A Theory of Organization and Change (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc. Publishers, 1968), 124.
subject “gives each writer both the obligation and the license to define [values] de novo.”

As a working definition, and since this thesis focuses on values in the context of Japan-China relations, I propose that values are the best outcome, a kind of superposition, of all interests in question. If values were quantifiable, they would indicate the greatest common divisor and the greatest common multiple of all interests at the same time. In other words, values indicate the best interest of all parties involved. Since they represent an ideal state of affairs, something that is the best for all parties, they are only approximative from a pragmatic point of view. They are approximative in the sense that, no matter how close we are to realising them, they can never fully be achieved or reached (because they are internal, immaterial and unmeasurable). In other words, a value is 1) holistic in a sense that it carries universal validity, and 2) approximative in a sense that - it being the highest ideal - it is only approachable but can never fully be realised. Because of the very fact that they are unrealizable, it is all the more important that each party involved constantly strive to reach them, or get ever closer to realizing them.

**Political values**

Since this thesis also discusses the role of values in the Japanese government’s diplomatic strategies, it is important to define what values in politics are. Similar to the general literature on values, there is relatively little scholarship available on political values, or, more specifically, on the “politics of value”, which is the political process of “establishing and controlling what and whose values matter in

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defining valuation criteria and subsequent value.”27 Political values are guidelines, orientations and principles based on which specific government policies and diplomatic strategies are formed, and based on which certain political behaviours, actions and decisions can be explained. Political values can be seen as indications of a desirable order, determining “whether a political situation or a political event is experienced as favorable or unfavorable, good or bad.”28 Simply put, political values are values that specifically are used in the context of politics, diplomacy, and political strategies.

Political values are of course influenced by certain cultural values. However, in the process of modernization, different cultures, that emphasized different values in the past, can converge in their value preferences and adopt modern and democratic values.29 The more advanced a society is the more these political values tend to converge. Ultimately, and regardless of their traditional cultural background, political value change usually takes place in all advancing and industrializing societies, leading to the development of certain new or post-materialist, values.30 In this sense, certain old values that were more emphasized in the past, such as national security, public order, respect for authority, and conformity, become less important, while there is a shift towards new, or more humanistic, values such as personal freedom and autonomy, independence, self-fulfilment, social equality and

Emancipation at the same time. In other words, advanced societies often experience a shift from authoritarian towards liberal democratic political values. As a result of convergence, these values transcend cultural and national borders and become shared by a growing number of countries and societies, ultimately leading to a belief in a particular set of values, that are often referred to as common, or global, or universal, values.

**Universal values**

As in the case of values in general, the concept of universal values is also not clearly defined. At times, this set of values is also referred to as basic values, fundamental values, common values, shared values, or universal human values. Ali Khan simply, and rather generally, refers to universal values as “the values of the people of the world”, and explains that any value included in a universal treaty is a universal value, “since no value is placed in a universal treaty if too many nations dispute its legitimacy.” Others provide a bit more clarity around the concept, indicating that universal values are “universally valid” in a sense that their validity does not depend on any individual’s free choice and they are values that all cultures must have in common. This set of values can be understood in two ways. First, a value has

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34 Ibid., 88.

universal validity if it is considered valuable by everyone. According to Isaiah Berlin, these values are universal in a sense that “a great many human beings in the vast majority of places and situations, at almost all times, do in fact hold in common, whether consciously and explicitly or as expressed in their behaviour, gestures, actions.”36 Second, a universal consent is not required for something to be of universal value as long as people anywhere in the world “may have reason to see it as valuable.”37 As Amartya Sen explains, when Mahatma Gandhi argued for the universal value of non-violence, or Rabindranath Tagore argued for “the freedom of the mind” as a universal value, they did not mean that people all over the world acted according to these values, but rather that they all had good reason to see them as something valuable.38 Based on these two views, my thesis adopts an approach proposing that a value is a universal value if it carries value for everyone, even though they may not always express it in their behaviour or actions. Also, and as proposed by Kofi Annan, the former Secretary-General of the United Nations, “the validity of universal values does not depend on their being universally obeyed or applied,” and the function of such values is “not to eliminate all... differences, but rather to help us manage them with mutual respect, and without resorting to mutual destruction.”39

While it is unclear when the term “universal values” was first used, claims for fundamental human rights to be universally protected were first made in the 1948 United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The UN explains that the document was a proclamation as a “common standard of achievements for all

38 Ibid.
people's and nations,” translated into more than 500 different languages. In the Declaration, all member states pledge to promote universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms. Based on these, the United Nations Millennium Declaration identifies six shared and fundamental values to be “essential to international relations in the twenty-first century,” namely freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature and shared responsibility.

It is important to note that, while the UN declaration is perhaps the best source to turn to when referring to universal values, other sources describe them in a number of different ways. In its Olympic Charter the International Olympic Committee, which represents the “union of the five continents,” defines the “essential values” of Olympism as “mutual understanding with a spirit of friendship, solidarity and fair play.” Others list love, peace, truth, right conduct and non-violence as the five universal human values. In his speech at the 2002 Shangri-La Dialogue, an annual conference on Asian security, Paul Wolfowitz, then Deputy Secretary of Defense argued that freedom, democracy, and free enterprise are all “universal values borne of a common human aspiration.” Even Annan describes

41 “55/2. United Nations Millennium Declaration,” United Nations General Assembly, September 8, 2000. http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.htm. While the document only lists these six values as shared by all nations, it also states that the UN and its Charter are “indispensable foundations of a more peaceful, prosperous and just world”. Aren’t these also universally shared values then?
universal values somewhat differently from how they were first put forward in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, identifying those values as peace, freedom, social progress, equal rights and human dignity.\textsuperscript{45} The most comprehensive empirical study that has been made to date was carried out by Shalom Schwartz in 2012, who, based on the results from a series of studies that included surveying more than 25,000 people from 82 countries, identified fifty-six values with universal characteristics and ten types of universal value, the latter of which are power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, self-direction, universalism, benevolence, tradition, conformity, and security.\textsuperscript{46}

Ultimately, there exists no single definition of universal values and different scholars identify different values as universal. Schwartz’s research, however, suggests that a high number of various culture-specific values contain some universal characteristics. But are there any Japan-specific values and are universal values important in Japan?

**Japanese values and nihonjinron**

It must be pointed out that this introduction heavily relies on writings of Western scholars. This may appear biased - particularly, and perhaps a bit ironically, from the point of view of universal values. However, this is due to the lack of availability of non-Western scholarship on the subject. For Asian cultures, and for Japan in

\textsuperscript{45} Kofi Annan, “Do We Still Have Universal Values?”

\textsuperscript{46} Shalom H. Schwartz, “An Overview of the Schwartz Theory of Basic Values,” \textit{Online Readings in Psychology and Culture} 2, no. 1 (2012): 1-20. Nevertheless, Schwartz argues that, “although the nature of values and their structure may be universal, individuals and groups differ substantially in the relative importance they attribute to the values. That is, individuals and groups have different value “priorities” or “hierarchies.”” Ibid., 3.
particular, the importance of different cultural values became an issue when their traditional values were threatened by Western imperialism and colonialism. By the nineteenth century, their growing resistance to the West turned into a movement called Asianism, Pan-Asianism, or Greater Asianism, which was spearheaded by the Japanese. Underlying the movement and ideology of Pan-Asianism was a belief that “Asian values” should take precedence over “Western values”. One of the key intellectuals of Pan-Asianism, Kakuzō Okakura, a Japanese art historian who played a central role in introducing Japanese culture and arts to the West – more specifically to the United States – during the Meiji period (1868-1912), criticized Western values and argued for the superiority of “Asian values” in his book *The Ideals of the East*, as follows:

“ASIA is one. The Himalayas divide, only to accentuate, two mighty civilisations, the Chinese with its communism of Confucius, and the Indian with its individualism of the Vedas. But not even the snowy barriers can interrupt for one moment that broad expanse of love for the Ultimate and Universal, which is the common thought-inheritance of every Asiatic race, enabling them to produce all the great religions of the world, and distinguishing them from those maritime peoples of the Mediterranean and the Baltic, who love to dwell on the Particular, and to search out the means, not the end, of life.”

Interestingly, in his argument for all Asians to unite, Okakura claims that ideas of the ultimate and the universal belong to Asian thought. In other words, he regards ‘Asian values’ to be more universalistic than those he attributes to Western civilization. Nevertheless, not only was Japan the strongest advocate for Pan-Asianism at that


time, but it also turned out to be the most open and receptive among all Asian countries to some Western values, as one of the most powerful slogans of the Meiji period, “civilization and enlightenment” (bunmei kaika), indicates. The slogan was used to facilitate Japan’s quick modernization based on certain civilizational achievements of the West.\(^{49}\) However, traditional social values rooted in Confucianism such as group solidarity (ie), obligation (giri), loyalty and obedience to authority, belief in seniority, filial piety and mutual dependence remained just as important and were, in fact, highly emphasized by the Meiji government. One key change was that these traditional values were intentionally incorporated in non-kinship relations and played a significant role in Japan’s rapid and successful modernization at the end of the 19\(^{th}\) century.\(^{50}\) In this “vertical society”, as Japanese anthropologist Chie Nakane calls it, social relations were, and still are, defined in terms of inequality, which not only exists in bureaucratic organizations, but in almost all aspects of life, including even the academic and artistic worlds.\(^{51}\)

While scholars continue to characterize Japanese society based on the above traditional values, similar values can also be found in other societies in East- and Southeast Asia, particularly in those that were significantly influenced by Confucianism, such as China and the Koreas. It would therefore be difficult to argue that such values as filial piety, obedience to authority, group solidarity and social harmony, or even self-sacrifice, were unique to the Japanese.


While this thesis does not focus on answering the question whether there are unique Japanese values – that is, certain values that only Japanese people possess or believe in - it must be noted that there is a substantial body of literature on the topic related to such questions as what it means to be Japanese and how Japanese are different from other peoples of the world. Interestingly, and in contrast with the general lack of theories on values, there are specific Japanese theories centred on Japanese people called *nihonjinron*, or “theories of Japanese-ness,” that explore certain traits, attitudes, norms and values that allegedly make Japanese people special in relation to others. Yoshio Sugimoto, a sociology professor and well-established expert of the field, argues that at the core of *nihonjinron* lies “a set of value orientations that the Japanese are supposed to share.”  

The origins of *nihonjinron* can be traced back for many centuries, but at least to the *kokugaku* (national studies) movement of the 18th century. Significantly, nativist scholars of that time used the ideas of what was later become to known as *nihonjinron* to prove Japanese cultural superiority to China. It is therefore perhaps not surprising that advocates of *nihonjinron* share a fundamental assumption that “Japanese-ness” is fundamentally different from any otherness, particularly from Westernness and Western value orientations. Shūichi Katō, another leading contemporary Japanese social thinker, maintains that two of the five defining archetypal characteristics of Japanese society and culture are an “absence of universalistic values” and

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53 According to the famous Japanese psychology scholar, Hiroshi Minami, it is “possible to trace back and locate works worthy of the name "nihonjinron" to the Edo period [17th-19th centuries] and even before that.” Hiroshi Minami, *Nihonjinron no keifu* [The Genealogy of *Nihonjinron*] (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1980), 3.
“exclusivism and a closed attitude towards the outside world.” Sugimoto, however, also points out that the underlying assumption of *nihonjinron* is that the Japanese people can be described in culturally and racially monolithic terms, which goes against the empirical reality that Japan is in fact a “highly complex and differentiated society” that cannot be completely defined by the values put forward in *nihonjinron*. He argues further that the ideology behind *nihonjinron* was used by the Japanese elite as a tool to justify Japan’s cultural domination and, ultimately, the colonization of the Korean Peninsula and China, along with Japan’s military aggression towards Southeast Asia. Others also point to the role of the Japanese elite in promoting *nihonjinron*, arguing that rather than focusing on certain common values as a means of Japan’s integration into international society, the emphasis of *nihonjinron* appears to be to subtly declare Japan’s cultural superiority and to promote foreign understanding of Japanese culture in this context. Well-known Japanese sociologist Kazufumi Manabe and cultural anthropologist Harumi Befu also conclude that *nihonjinron* is the “world view and the ideology of the establishment.” While theories of Japaneseness were highly popular from the 1960s through to the 1980s, they gradually started losing their prominence with the start of Japan’s economic stagnation from the early 1990s.

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57 **Ibid.**
60 Nevertheless, the discourse on Japaneseness continued even into the new millennium, with reputable writers still producing books with such titles as “What is Japan,” “Who are we Japanese?,” and “Rediscovering Japaneseness.” See Sugimoto, “Making Sense of Nihonjinron,” 81-82.
It must be noted that, before the emerging recognition of the importance of universal values in Japan from the early 2000s, a New Asianism had resurfaced in the 1980s. This was an offshoot of the so-called “Asian values” debate, which, with its vaguely defined Asia-specific values, was supposed to counter the universalist claims of liberalism, democracy, and human rights, “values that were dismissed as alien (...) and inauthentic for Asians.”

Nevertheless, due to factors such as accelerated globalisation from the early 1990s, the declining interest in Asian values in the aftermath of the 1997-1998 Asian Financial Crisis, and especially in the light of Japan’s economic stagnation and China’s re-emergence, references to universal values in both academic and political circles gradually dominated debates on Japan-specific values by the early 2000s. As Nobukatsu Kanehara, Assistant Chief Cabinet Secretary in the Prime Minister’s Office of Japan, and one of the main architects of Japan’s universal values diplomacy, puts it, Japan’s “value system (...) undoubtedly contains values that are shared by humanity as a whole. Searching for the universal elements in the Japanese value system is important.”

According to Kanehara, those universal elements in Japanese values are respect for human dignity, rule of law, and democracy.

As this chapter has shown, neither is the theoretical framework of values well established, nor is the concept of value itself clearly defined. Scholars writing on the

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61 At the peak of the debate, in the first half of the 1990s, Asian values were presented by regional elites as an alternative to Western individualist and liberal values. Asian values were supposed to be the foundation of an East Asian international order. In other words, they were used to demonstrate an East Asian perspective on globalization. Szpilman and Saaler, “Pan-Asianism as an Ideal of Asian Identity and Solidarity,” 24. See also Alfred M. Boll, “The Asian values debate and its relevance to international humanitarian law,” International Review of the Red Cross 841 (March 31, 2001). Accessed April 13, 2018. https://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/article/other/57jgzl.htm.

62 See Chapter Three for details on universal values as a recently emerged diplomatic strategy of Japan.

subject argue that values can have different meanings in different contexts, and that values, or at least their importance, can even change with time. Nevertheless - and as, for instance, domestic discussion related to *nihonjinron* shows - belief in certain values does seem to play a considerable role in Japan’s self-image, particularly when defining itself in relation to others, and can also be used by the elite to advocate for both a certain behaviour among the domestic population and to promote a particular image of the country to others.

**Methodology**

This study focuses on exploring the role of values in both Japanese academic and political views on contemporary Japan-China relations, and it adopts a number of methodologies.

Firstly, it applies a *qualitative text analysis*, focusing on the implied and connotative meanings values play in Japanese political and academic perceptions of Japan-China relations. In this context, whenever this thesis provides an interpretation of meaning – be it of a book, an article, a conference presentation, a report, an interview, or a political speech – that source is regarded as a text.64

Secondly, this research relies on *rhetorical criticism* and *content analysis*. In explaining subtle textual meanings, rhetorical criticism is a useful method for “describing, analysing, interpreting, and evaluating the persuasive force of messages embedded within texts.”65 In addition, content analysis is used to “identify, enumerate, and analyse occurrences of specific messages and message

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characteristics embedded in texts.” Since this study focuses on the meanings associated with various messages in relation to the use of values, a qualitative content analysis is applied in particular.

Thirdly, a case study approach is applied to generate a comparative, holistic and in-depth understanding of the various ways values are understood and applied in Japan’s real-life context. A case study is used to highlight significant differences between Japan’s understanding of values in an international context, particularly in its approach to Japan-China relations, and the values the Japanese political elite appears to emphasize in a Japanese domestic context.

It must be noted that, while a holistic and qualitative analysis provides useful insights into subtle meanings, it also leaves open the possibility of idiosyncratic interpretations. The aim of the analysis therefore is not to give a single correct explanation of the variety of texts and arguments presented, but rather to provide an analysis that helps us see Japanese views from a reflective perspective, to reveal more subtle and hidden meanings of both Japanese academic and political views. Ultimately, the purpose of this thesis is to advance an understanding the importance of universal values, and of how adherence to these values could, and should, help the Japanese better understand contemporary Japan-China relations and resolve their ongoing conflicts with China.

In regards to sources of information, this study relies on primary- and secondary-source materials in both English and Japanese. Primary sources include public statements, annual reports, and white papers published mostly by the Japanese

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66 Ibid., 80.
67 A case study can be defined as an “empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used.” Robert K. Yin, Case Study Research: Design and Methods (Beverly Hills, Calif: Sage Publications, 1984), 23.
government and its related agencies, and policy recommendations of various Japanese research institutions produced for the Japanese government. In addition, English language sources include various books and articles produced by Japanese scholars writing on Japan-China relations, and Japanese language sources include the text of the Liberal Democratic Party’s (LDP) 2012 draft constitution, the LDP’s Draft Constitution Q&A booklet, and the Japanese government’s State Secrets Protection Law of 2013. Secondary sources include the news coverage of various Japanese, Chinese, and Western media agencies, most of which are available online. Books and journal articles written by Japanese and Western scholars on Japan-China relations are also used as secondary sources.

As this research is based on a qualitative analysis through a single and Japan-specific case study, it carries obvious limitations in terms of applicability to other countries. Nevertheless, it can be argued that understanding the importance of values, universal values in particular, ought to play an important role in evaluating, and even resolving, conflicts in any bilateral or multilateral relations, be it state to state, between institutions, or any other form of intra-group relations.

While of course further studies on values - including case-specific ones - must be carried out to understand other conflicts, careful application of some of the analyses and findings of this thesis might be useful to them. In addition, conflict resolution in Japan-China relations in a multilateral setting, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the ASEAN Regional Forum, the East Asia Summit, or the United Nations, is also a promising area for future research.
Prospectus

This thesis consists of four chapters, as well as an introduction and a conclusion. The introduction clarifies the significance of the research, defines the research question and various concepts used in this thesis, and the methodology of the research. The first chapter provides an overview of the development of post-war Japan-China relations and its conclusion explains why a re-evaluation of Japan’s relations with China is timely. The second chapter examines the role of values in Japanese academic views of Japan-China relations. It focuses particularly on how recent Japanese scholarship evaluates – as it presents and describes - both China and Japan, what values various academics emphasize when describing these two countries and how they view the role and responsibility of both countries in the context of ongoing bilateral conflict. A number of the selected scholars have a high standing in Japanese academic society: many of them are professors in prominent Japanese universities, heads of research institutes, and leading members of Japan’s international relations research. Not only have these scholars’ writings shaped Japanese and foreign views of Japan-China relations, but some of them also had a direct and personal impact on the recent course of Japan’s relations with China: that is, a number of them are, or were, policy advisers in various government bodies, and were thus able to help formulate certain government policies towards China. The third chapter examines the role of values in a variety of strategies and policy initiatives, including the East Asian Community, the Arch of Freedom and Prosperity and the so-called values-oriented diplomacy that Japan has formulated vis-a-vis China both in a bilateral and in a broader multilateral context since the early 2000s. The last chapter is a case study examining the values put forward by Japan’s Liberal Democratic Party, the party in government for almost all of Japan’s post-war history, in its 2012 draft constitution and the State Secrets Protection Law of 2013. The conclusion will provide a summary of the findings, focusing on the significant tension between Japan’s promotion of universal values vis-à-vis China for an international audience and the values emphasized domestically. Recommendations for future research will also be made here.
Chapter One

Dynamics of post-Pacific War Japan-China relations: from normalization back to abnormality?

Introduction

No discussion about the recent history of Japan-China relations can be free from referring to events that occurred during the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945). Indeed, many of the existing hostilities between the two countries are the result of opposing views on Japan’s wartime actions in China during that period, and negative sentiments on both sides have been putting severe limits on the progress of recent Japan-China relations. Nevertheless, both China and Japan, as we know them today, are the products of post-war Asian and global history. Firstly, the People’s Republic of China was established in 1949 and Japan since 1945 has also shown a development trajectory very different from that of its pre-1945 history. Secondly, a dominant factor in the development of both countries’ relations was the Cold War great power struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union, which put a major constraint on both Japan’s and China’s international relations, and therefore determined the development of their post-war bilateral relations for decades. Thirdly, globalization has been a major driving force since the 1990s, which stimulated the development of East Asia as a region, and from which Japan and China, for the first time in history, have emerged as equally strong powers competing for both regional leadership and global influence. This chapter therefore argues that even the Pacific War 68 conflicts between the two East Asian neighbors and their different interpretations of history can only be understood in the context of post-war regional

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68 The Pacific War was an important theatre of World War II, in which its two main protagonists, the United States and Japan, fought over the control of maritime and land territories located across the Pacific.
and global developments. Given its obvious limits, this chapter does not engage with all the aspects and particularities regarding the history of Japan-China relations over the past seven decades. Rather, the aim here is to define the general characteristics of the development of Japan-China relations during that period, and therefore any reference to Japan’s wartime actions will also be presented in this context. In focusing on describing the dynamics of post-war Japan-China relations, I argue that the two countries have never seized the opportunity to *de facto* normalize their relations, and soon after the Cold War restraints were removed from international relations in East Asia in the early 1990s, their bilateral relations began worsening and have been on a downward spiral ever since.

**The events leading up to the 1972 normalization: Japan’s new dependence and its under-the-radar China policy**

Soon after its devastating defeat in the Pacific War, Japan was placed under the occupation of the United States-led Allied Powers until 1952, during which period the USA not only oversaw the process of rebuilding Japan’s domestic life, but also had effective control over Japan’s international relations, leaving little room for any independent manoeuvre on Japan’s part. The Americans put forward two major policies for Japan: complete demilitarization and democratization, with the aim of fully disarming the country and setting it on a path of peaceful development based on Western democratic ideals.69 Having to face a war-torn economy as well as severe limitations in its diplomacy, Japan was focusing on internal change and was trying to rebuild itself domestically during the immediate post-war years. At the same time, China focused on its own domestic developments, as its two major political forces,

the Nationalist Party and the Communist Party, were preoccupied with struggling for political control over China. Because of the political situation in both countries, Japan and China had no high-level official contacts whatsoever. An important initial feature of domestic change in Japan was the aim to create a pacified and disarmed country, an effort best reflected in Japan’s so-called Peace Constitution of 1947.70 However, the political situation still remained fragile in East Asia: the US-backed Chiang Kai-shek’s nationalistic government was soon expelled from mainland China, and the Communist Party established the People’s Republic of China in October 1949. The newly emerging ideological divide between the capitalist and the communist bloc meant that Japan and China soon found themselves in opposing camps, closely allied with the two superpowers of the day, the United States and the USSR, respectively. In February 1950, the PRC signed the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance, and Mutual Assistance with the USSR, which stated that the two countries should undertake “all necessary measures within their power to prevent a repetition of aggression and breach of the peace by Japan or any other state which might directly or indirectly join with Japan in acts of aggression.” The text confirmed that, should either country find itself in a state of war with Japan, the other party must “immediately extend military and other assistance with all the means at its disposal.”71

The severe ideological divide between the US and the USSR quickly escalated in the Korean War that started in the summer of 1950. Soon after China began mobilizing its PLA troops in October, Washington initiated a massive economic blockade against Beijing and cut off its ties with capitalist countries that provided three quarters of China’s foreign trade in the same year.72 In accordance with the deepening conflict, American policies towards Japan also took a sharp turn and re-building Japan as a military-economic base fighting against communist regimes became a top US priority, often described as the “reverse course”.73 This new policy meant that the US decided not to execute many Japanese war criminals who were tried and found guilty at the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, and to set them free instead.74 At the same time, all of the more than 200,000 wartime public servants who were initially purged from public office in the new Japan were allowed to have full civil rights and return to public office by the end of 1951.75 In line with the new American policies, first the Police Reserve (*Keisatsu Yobitai*) was established in 1950, followed by the Security Force (*Hoantai*) in 1952, and later the Self-Defense Force (*Jieitai*) in 1954.76

Under these circumstances, it was impossible for Tokyo to re-establish formal ties with Beijing. In fact, Japan was continuously pressured by the US not to have any political relations with the PRC and to refuse to recognize the sovereignty of the

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72 However, China managed to keep its economy afloat with new trade links and aid from the USSR. See Sladkovsky, *China & Japan*, 173.
75 Between 1946 and 1948, some 5,700 suspected war criminals were tried by the IMTFE, out of which 920 defendants were found guilty. See Hans H. Baerwald, *The Purge of Japanese Leaders under the Occupation* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, Vol. 8, 1959), 78-79.
The 1951 San Francisco peace negotiations that were meant to conclude the Pacific War were started in this divided and fragile international state of affairs. Due to the general disagreement on whether the CCP or the Nationalists (Kuomintang) were to represent the legitimate government of China, neither the PRC nor the ROC was invited to the negotiations, which meant that both were left out from the entire process of the peace settlement that was eventually imposed upon Japan. While China made it clear that it wanted compensation from Japan for both public and private losses, the issue was tied up with Cold War politics and therefore Japan was not allowed to negotiate with the People’s Republic. The US approached the question of Japan’s war reparations as an issue of Cold War politics rather than punishment, and at the beginning of the treaty negotiations, together with its closest ally, the United Kingdom, it even insisted that Japan should not pay any war reparations whatsoever. It was because of the strong opposition coming mainly from the Philippines that Japan’s victim countries were eventually allowed to demand reparations. Japan first concluded an agreement with Burma (1954), followed by the Philippines (1956) and Indonesia (1958), and reparations came mostly in the form of services and local infrastructural developments. However, Japan’s first war reparations agreement in East Asia, with South Korea, was not concluded until 1965.

For these reasons, the San Francisco Peace Treaty had concluded the Pacific War as far as Japan’s relations with the major Western powers were concerned, and

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77 The pressure on Japan was largely put by John Foster Dulles, foreign policy adviser to the US Secretary of State and special negotiator on Japan during the Truman administration. See Yu San Wang, “Ending the State of War between Japan and China: Taipei (1952),” in *China and Japan: Search For Balance Since World War I*, ed. Alvin D. Cox and Hilary Conroy (Oxford: ABC-Clio, 1978), 343-344.


Besides other Asian countries, Japan’s relations with its largest victim, the PRC, continued to remain unsettled. As the PRC was on the opposite side of the Cold War political divide, Japan had eventually concluded a peace treaty with the Republic of China in 1952, acknowledging the government of the ROC as the legitimate government of China.\(^\text{80}\)

Even though Japan’s official position on China was clear, the nation was still divided internally over the issue. In fact, for many years during the 1950s, whether to recognize the PRC over the ROC as the only legitimate government of China was the “single most explosive issue in Japanese foreign policy.”\(^\text{81}\) There were also strong voices calling for the rejection of the San Francisco Peace Treaty as well as sparkling domestic debates as to whether Japan should remain neutral in military conflicts. Simply put, there was no substantial and widespread consensus in support of the so-called San Francisco System among the Japanese. Leftist thinkers opposed it head-on, but many conservative thinkers were also against it.\(^\text{82}\) The United States was aware of these heated domestic debates regarding Japan’s international relations and its future path. This concern was explicitly stated in a policy paper that was circulated in the U.S. Embassy in the 1950s explaining the two antagonistic pulls exerting influence on Japan: an “oceanic pull” coming from the U.S. and a “continental pull” from mainland China.\(^\text{83}\) In fact, there were even negotiations


between Japan and the Soviet Union concerning the Kuril Islands\textsuperscript{84}, but the US quickly intervened, making it clear that if excessive compromises were made regarding the status of the islands, which the Americans would regard as an obvious sign of Japanese-Soviet rapprochement, the USA would likely retract any compromise over Okinawa.\textsuperscript{85}

Since Japan’s trade and political relations were limited to the group of ‘free world’ countries that were allied with the United States, the various Japanese governments’ stance towards the PRC during the 1950s and 1960s ranged between neglect and ambivalence on the one hand (e.g. Prime Ministers Nobusuke Kishi and Eisaku Satō) and active encouragement of non-official contacts and trade links on the other hand (e.g. Prime Ministers Ichirō Hatoyama and Hayato Ikeda). The task of constructing and maintaining unofficial contacts and trade links with China was therefore left to interested individuals, political party organizations, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).\textsuperscript{86} Among the very few organizations that were allowed to maintain unofficial contacts, the most significant was perhaps the Japan-China Friendship Association (\textit{Nicchū Yūkō Kyōkai}), established on the first anniversary of the Communist Revolution in China, on October 1, 1950. The Association not only played a central role in promoting cultural and economic exchanges between Japan and China, but also facilitated the establishment of other China-related organizations such as the Committee to Commemorate Chinese Prisoner of War Martyrs in 1953, or the Japan-China Association for Cultural

\textsuperscript{84} The Kuril Islands, known as Chishima Rettō in Japanese, form an archipelago consisting of 56 islands and many minor rocks that stretches northeast from Hokkaidō, Japan’s northernmost island. The four largest of these islands, namely Shikotan, Habomai, Kunashir and Iturup, have been subjects of an ongoing territorial dispute between Japan and Russia since the end of World War II, when the latter annexed them. See Kimie Hara, “50 Years from San Francisco: Re-Examining the Peace Treaty and Japan's Territorial Problems,” \textit{Pacific Affairs} 74, no. 3 (Autumn 2001): 363-368. Accessed September 25, 2018. DOI: 10.2307/3557753.

\textsuperscript{85} Watanabe, “Japan Between East and West,” 25.

\textsuperscript{86} Vyas, \textit{Soft Power in Japan-China Relations}, 67-68.
Exchange in 1956. The Association’s work simply supplemented official policy, and it successfully maintained channels of communication with the People’s Republic from which official relations could later be institutionalized. Nevertheless, the impact of domestic mass movements, political debates and grassroots organizations was not sufficient to facilitate any significant change in Japan’s official China policies, and Tokyo’s dependence on US foreign policy continued to remain strong—indeed, it followed “America’s lead unquestioningly.”

In line with the US policies, the Japanese government, led by the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), did not initiate official ties with the PRC. However, Inejiro Asanuma, General Secretary of one of Japan’s major opposition parties, the Japan Socialist Party, did visit Beijing in April 1957, where he met with the PRC’s top leaders, Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai. During this meeting, Asanuma expressed his concerns over the US control of Japan as well as the presence of American troops on Japanese soil, adding that diplomatic relations with the ROK could make it impossible to re-establish diplomatic relations between China and Japan. Mao and Zhou were in agreement with Asanuma’s assessment, and Mao even added that,

“we can conclude a mutual nonaggression treaty. Once Japan becomes fully independent of the United States, when there is no possibility of a militarist revival, and no likelihood of exploitation of it by outsiders, in other words, when there exists no danger of aggression, Japan and China can sign a nonaggression treaty.”

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89 John K. Leung and Michael Y. M. Kau, eds., The Writings of Mao Zedong: 1949-1976 (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1992), 493-494. Partially because of his efforts to tighten relations with the communist PRC, Asanuma was assassinated by a member of the right-wing Uyoku dantai group, a Japanese ultranationalist group in November 1960.
Japan’s tight political control by America, combined with a strong focus on its successful 1960 domestic income doubling plan and with its overseas war reparations activities, resulted in Japan’s low-profile political and high profile economic presence in Asia. This went on to characterize Japan’s Asian diplomacy for the rest of the 1960s, which was largely dependent on US foreign policy, and therefore lacked any official direct engagement with the PRC.

Change in Japan’s attitude towards China was also dependent on external factors. While, on the one hand, relations between China and the Soviet Union became strained and China gradually became alienated from the USSR in the second half of the 1950s, which amounted to an open conflict in 1961. In the opposition camp, the US also had to face the limitations of its Cold War strategies in Asia with its prolonged and unsuccessful war in Vietnam. These two factors meant that the interests of the PRC and those of the US gradually converged, which eventually resulted in the American leadership’s new approach towards China from 1969. In August the same year, in his speech to the National Security Council, President Richard Nixon announced that the Soviet Union was a greater aggressor than the PRC and that allowing the latter to be “smashed” by the USSR in a possible war would be counter to American interests. As if Japan was only waiting for a signal from the US, then Prime Minister Eisaku Satō indicated during his December 1969 election campaign tour in Kyūshū that Japan was willing to re-establish high-level contacts with China and would prefer to maintain friendly relations with both Beijing and Taipei.

91 Henry Kissinger, White House Years, 1st ed. (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1979), 182.
Not long after Nixon’s announcement, behind-the-scenes negotiations started between the American and the PRC’s top leadership, resulting in US Secretary of State and National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger’s secret visit to China in July 1971, which prepared Nixon’s historical trip to Beijing in September 1972.93 However, the announcement of Nixon’s visit to China to seek rapprochement was nothing short of a shock to the Japanese, who were only informed about the decision three minutes prior to Nixon’s live announcement.94 This went against an earlier agreement between Nixon and Satō, in which both of them committed to close coordination of their respective China policies.95 Many Japanese felt deeply betrayed by the US move. Satō later openly said that while he had “done everything” the Americans asked for, they still “let me down.”96

Japan-China relations from their diplomatic normalization until the end of the Cold War (1972-1990): relative peace under control

Even though Japan wanted to formalize relations with China for over two decades, it was not until the international status of the PRC changed that Japan was able to establish official and high-level diplomatic relations with China. This opportunity came when the PRC replaced Taiwan in the United Nations in October 1971.

Having had the two Nixon shocks, on the eve of Henry Kissinger’s second visit to China on October 19 the same year, PM Satō delivered a policy speech, in which, for the first time, Japan acknowledged the PRC as the legitimate

95 Hoppens, The China Problem in Postwar Japan, 74.
representative of China. Nevertheless, it took almost a year until, after extensive negotiations with the US and a change of Prime Minister in Japan, that official ties between Japan and China were ready to be re-established. China also had a vested interest in having stronger ties with Japan, as its leadership aimed to create a more stable environment in East Asia, in which China could be drawn closer to the United States and Japan, and with its new ties the PRC could counter the threat of a nuclear attack by the Soviet Union. Therefore, after more than two decades of abnormality, diplomatic relations were re-established with the signing of the historical Zhou-Tanaka Joint Communique on 29 September 1972. The communique, signed in Beijing, declared that the “abnormal state of affairs” that had existed between Japan and China was now “terminated” and that from that time Japan recognized the government of the People's Republic of China as the “sole legal government of China.” Furthermore, it stated that Tokyo was “keenly conscious of the responsibility for the serious damage” that Japan caused to the Chinese people during its occupation and the subsequent Pacific War, for which it “deeply reproached itself.” In return, the Chinese side renounced its demand for war reparations from Japan and the two governments agreed to establish

“relations of perpetual peace and friendship between the two countries on the basis of the principles of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit and peaceful co-existence.”

In regards to any remaining or future disputes the document declared that,

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“in conformity with the foregoing principles and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, Japan and China shall in their mutual relations settle all disputes by peaceful means and shall refrain from the use or threat of force.”

This new chapter in modern Japan-China relations was also a historical first in that the joint communique set international principles as guidelines in solving any existing and future disputes between the two countries. One of the issues that were left unresolved was the ownership of the Senkaku (in Japanese)/Diaoyu (in Chinese) Islands. These five uninhabited islets are located in the East China Sea, and were formally annexed by Japan in the Treaty of Shimonoseki, which concluded the First Sino-Japanese War in 1895. The islets were placed under US control soon after Japan’s defeat in the Pacific War, but were returned to Japan as part of the Ryūkyū Islands with the 1971 Okinawa Reversion Treaty. The PRC claimed ownership of the islets based on various maps and documents dating back to the 14th century. It also referred to the 1943 Cairo Declaration which stipulated that Japan had to return all Chinese territory it had annexed. The ROC also announced its sovereignty claims over the islets not long before they were returned to Japan. Ownership of the islands became an issue after a 1968 United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East report indicated the likelihood of rich natural-resource deposits in the seabed surrounding the islands.

When the issue of the islands emerged during the meetings leading up to the signing of the joint communique, Premier Zhou said that the islands are only “tiny specks you can hardly spot on maps and they have become a problem just because oil reserves were found around them,” suggesting that the issue of ownership should

100 Ibid.
not stand in the way of concluding the agreement. Similarly, during both his 1978 and 1984 trip to Tokyo, Chairman Deng Xiaoping proposed that the two countries shelve the issue and leave its resolution for a later date.

As part of the agreement between the two countries, China renounced its earlier demand for war reparations mainly in a bid to gain more support from the Japanese public and to avoid antagonizing the still strong pro-Taiwan forces within the ruling government party, the LDP. The 1972 joint communique, however, only referred to the renouncement of public reparations demands towards Japan, and therefore it left the question of private demands open. While this was hardly surprising in an era when civil society was literally non-existent in China, it had significant consequences a few decades later, when Chinese private demands started emerging, many of them resulting in civil lawsuits against the Japanese government.

The treaty saw the opening of embassies in both countries the following year, and with Japanese sumo wrestlers’ exhibition games in Beijing and Shanghai in 1973 and numerous goodwill missions and cultural delegations to both countries, there was a significant increase in cultural exchanges as well. Trade and economic relations made an even greater progress: in the first year after the rapprochement, 28 Japanese trade and economic missions visited China, including one led by the later Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone, a delegation from the Association for Promotion of International Trade (Kokubōsoku), and another headed by the president of the powerful Federation of Economic Organizations of Japan (Keidanren). Japan’s

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103 Welfield, An Empire in Eclipse, 319.
104 Zheng, Discovering Chinese Nationalism in China, 132.
106 For instance, while Tokyo expressed that it fully understood and respected Beijing’s claim for territorial sovereignty over Taiwan, there were still aviation agreements in place between Japan Air Lines and Taiwan’s China Air Lines, to which the Chinese side firmly opposed. Even though an agreement on navigation between Japan and China was eventually reached in 1974, the status of
trade with China in the first year following the rapprochement exceeded US$ 2 billion, representing an increase of 83% compared to 1972.107

Progress was obvious in many areas, but there were still some issues, mostly related to Taiwan, that needed to be solved to conclude a peace treaty.108 While the Taiwan issue appeared to be manageable, the issue of the so-called anti-hegemony clause appeared to be more persistent, postponing the conclusion of the peace treaty for years. While China insisted that an anti-hegemony clause was necessary in order to increase its national security against any possible threats from a third country, Japan was initially reluctant to include the clause in the treaty, mainly out of concerns of contradicting the stipulations of its peace constitution.109 These issues meant that the treaty negotiations reached a stalemate, from which the two countries did not move on for a few years, even though economic ties were further strengthening during these years. Progress came after two of the CCP’s top leaders, Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai, died in 1976. After two years of internal political unrest, Deng Xiaoping emerged as the new top political figure. Deng’s new leadership meant that China became less ideological and more focused on economic development, a change reflected in his 1978 “reform and opening-up” (gaige kaifang) policies.110 On the Japanese side, the leadership was still divided over the anti-hegemony issue, but as a result of change in China’s domestic politics as well as

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significant pressure from both the 497-strong pro-Beijing Dietmen’s League for Japan-China Friendship and the Keidanren, Prime Minister Fukuda eventually decided to accept the anti-hegemony clause. The subsequent Japan-China Peace and Friendship Treaty was signed under these circumstances in 1978, having taken six years to conclude after the establishment of official bilateral ties. In the treaty, both Japan and China expressed their willingness to “contribute to peace and stability in Asia and in the world,” and declared that neither of them would seek hegemony in the Asia-Pacific region or in any other region and that both were “opposed to efforts by any other country or group of countries to establish such hegemony”. While the Soviet Union appeared very disappointed about the treaty, China considered it a huge victory against the USSR. The treaty widely enjoyed the support of both political and business circles in Japan, and while it was also appraised by many intellectuals, there were some voices criticizing the general wave of optimism. Having been sobered by the earlier anti-hegemony controversy, President Ishikawa Tadao of Keiō University, a well-known Sinologist, argued that it was time for Japan to overcome its sentimental attitudes towards China and assess the treaty based on Japan’s best national interests. Professor Iriye Michimasa of Kyōto Sangyō University warned against any naïve optimism, saying that China had already violated some of its international agreements and had expressed hostility toward Japan’s liberal democratic system. Nevertheless, Japan-China relations were to experience a period of relative peace and tranquility for the next decade, during which time both countries’ national interests converged towards the other

under the overarching US security umbrella, and instead of political manoeuvres, bilateral relations were characterized by predominantly focusing on economic development. The thriving economic relations were also supported by the two nations’ economic complementarity: Japan supplied technology and investments, financial support for industrial growth, and high-technology products for China, while China provided raw materials and low cost products for the Japanese market.

Japan’s Official Development Assistance programme was one of its main diplomatic tools with which it re-established and later strengthened relations in post-war Asia. It also played a central role in Japan-China economic cooperation. Some even argue that Japanese ODA served as quasi-reparation (jun baishō) for war damages in some cases. While Japan’s ODA programme in Asia might have served as such a tool, it was also aimed at creating a peaceful international environment in which steady economic development was possible. Seen in the light of pursuing a stable environment, it is no wonder that the two Asian countries with the strongest influence on Japan, China and Indonesia, were the top recipients of Japanese ODA loans for many years. Japan’s ODA to China started in December 1979 when Tokyo granted Beijing $200 million for six construction projects and another $61 million to assist in the building of the China-Japan Friendship

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115 China was significant for both political and economic, while Indonesia mostly for economic reasons. For a long time, these two countries were either first or second after the other. See Drifte, “The Ending of Japan’s ODA Loan Programme to China,” 107.
Hospital. With that, Japan became the largest provider of economic aid to China and its biggest trading partner.

On the Chinese side, Deng’s open reform policy brought a significant change in its foreign relations, as economic development replaced the earlier revolutionary rhetoric in China’s mainstream foreign strategy, while Japan’s success served as a model of economic development and modernization for China. Japan-China relations therefore revolved around economic development and cooperation for most part of the 1980s, and their bilateral relations during this period can be best understood also in the context of the Cold War divide, particularly as being part of the American-led US-China-Japan security triangle, which was formed to balance against the Soviet Union.

While both countries were focusing predominantly on economic cooperation with each other, there were already many signs pointing to issues that could easily undermine their bilateral relations. As China abandoned its earlier domestic political ideology based on revolutionary rhetoric and the conflict between communist and capitalist-nationalist forces, the official narrative defining the Chinese everyday life in the 1978 reforms gradually shifted to the conflict between China and those nations that invaded and humiliated China in the past. This new phase of patriotic education represented past Chinese history as a national struggle to resist foreign aggression that mainly came from Japan. This narrative replaced China’s earlier struggle against the Kuomintang with the CCP’s legacy of its successful fight against Japanese

116 Ibid., 95.
imperialist aggressors during the Pacific War. Chinese school textbooks started giving more coverage to a wide range of Japan’s wartime actions, providing vivid descriptions of the crimes committed by Japanese troops. Movies on the 1937 Nanjing Massacre were produced and related wartime memorials were built. Chinese academic researchers began conducting in-depth investigations into war atrocities committed by the Japanese, which resulted in international conferences and the publishing of a large number of wartime documents.\(^{119}\) In addition, a number of buildings (museums, memorial halls) and statues were erected to commemorate China’s wars, particularly the ones fought against Japan, and its fallen martyrs, and various historical sites were designated to be of national significance all across the country. Visiting some of these sites and buildings became a part of China’s patriotic education.\(^{120}\)

The Japanese government quickly reacted by tightening control of information related to Japan’s wartime actions in its domestic education. In late 1980, Education Minister Tanaka Tatsuo voiced his concerns about the lack of patriotism in existing history textbooks in the Japanese Diet, and a few months later demanded that high school textbooks prepared for the 1983-86 soften their approach toward Japanese wartime actions and focus more on patriotic aspects of Japan’s actions.\(^{121}\)

During its 1980-81 school history textbook screening, the Ministry of Education ordered Saburō Ienaga, a leading Japanese historian at that time, to change certain words and expressions describing the Japanese army’s actions in the Pacific War. For instance, the Ministry ordered Ienaga to replace words such as


\(^{120}\) The number of memorial sites, statues and buildings were estimated to be over 10,000. See Zheng Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation: Historical Memory in Chinese Politics and Foreign Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 97-100 & 104-10.

“military invasion” (shinryaku) with “military advancement” (shinshutsu), aiming to downplay the scale of the Nanking Massacre.\textsuperscript{122} In the Ministry’s view, the massacre was a result of the “fierce resistance by the Chinese troops, which caused great losses of the Japanese troops. The wrathful Japanese troops then killed many Chinese troops and civilians.”\textsuperscript{123}

To be sure, Ienaga had already been fighting with the Ministry for an accurate representation of Japan’s wartime actions in history textbooks since as early as the 1950s. What changed in the early 1980s, however, was that the Ministry approved a major revision to the textbooks and this had a wider coverage in Japanese national media in the summer of 1982, when some journalists warned that state control over education was strengthened. The news was then picked up by the international media, stirring up wartime sentiments among many Asian countries, and resulting in official protests from China and South Korea.\textsuperscript{124} Japan was accused of attempting to whitewash its wartime history by downplaying many of the atrocities committed by its Imperial Army. While the Ministry of Education eventually gave in to both international and domestic pressure, the Chinese government continued focusing on Japanese wartime atrocities and the CCP’s fight against Japanese imperialists in its patriotic education. The history textbook controversy soon disappeared from Japanese public attention, but was followed by another controversy when Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone visited the Yasukuni Shrine in his official capacity on the 40th anniversary of Japan’s Pacific War defeat on August 15, 1985. The shrine,


run by a private religious corporation, serves as the resting place of the spirits (kami) of some 2.5 million soldiers, some of whom are Chinese and Korean, who gave their lives while fighting in one of Japan’s modern wars. What makes the shrine controversial is the fact that among those kami are the remains of 14 Class-A Japanese wartime criminals. Remarkably, their kami were secretly enshrined in 1978, not long before the signing of the Japan-China Peace and Friendship Treaty. Defending his actions in an LDP seminar, Nakasone argued for the importance of the Yasukuni visit for all Japanese people, as it showed their gratitude for the sacrifices of their ancestors. He then declared that it was time the “Japanese state and the Japanese race can walk proudly in the world.”

Nakasone’s visit was seen by many in China as a resurgence of Japanese militaristic sentiments, triggering protests in some of the major centers. Among those were the first anti-Japanese student demonstrations since the normalization. The student protest erupted on 18 September 1985, on the 54th anniversary of the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931. These events showed that even though bilateral relations were normalized and a peace and friendship treaty was concluded between the two countries in the 1970s, Japan was still struggling to come to terms with its past actions, while a number of protests in major centers throughout China showed that “genuine anti-Japanese sentiments were deeply entrenched among ordinary Chinese” even 40 years after the end of the Pacific War.

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126 Allen S. Whiting, China Eyes Japan (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 66-76.

Nevertheless, the dominant presence of the United States and antagonistic relations with the Soviet Union forestalled serious damage to Japan-China relations and prevented the escalation of a bilateral conflict. The two years preceding Nakasone’s 1985 Yasukuni visit were even referred to by some as the “the best period in 2000 years of Japan-China relations.” Even with the episodic collision of the two nations’ war memories, the dynamics of Japan-China relations continued to be characterized by relative peace and a strengthening economic cooperation for the rest of the 1980s.

**Japan-China Relations in the 1990s: removed constraints**

While the world was following closely the unfolding political changes in the Communist bloc, the June 1989 Tiananmen Square Incident came as a shock, affecting Japan’s relations with China. In the following month in Paris, the G-7 summit countries, with Japan among them, unanimously condemned the Chinese government’s actions for violating human rights and imposed sanctions on China. This was also the first time that polls experienced a sharp drop in the Japanese public’s opinion on China. According to the annual Yomiuri-Gallup joint opinion surveys, post-war public opinion in Japan was always favourable towards China, with around 40 per cent of the population viewing Japan’s largest neighbor as the most trusted Asian country throughout most of the 1980s, putting China a close second after the United States globally. The Tiananmen Square Incident, however, had a profound impact on Japanese public opinion, with only 9 per cent trusting China in 1989. China soon dropped out from the top five most trusted countries in the Japanese public eye, and trust towards China never again approached the level of

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that of the 1980s – it remained consistently around 10 per cent in the early 1990s.\textsuperscript{129} The Japanese government, however, appeared to take a more lenient stance towards China, and, out of economic and political considerations, it continued its support for China’s international integration. It was Japan that became the first country after the Tiananmen Incident to help China break its international isolation by resuming its third yen loan programme to China in November 1990.\textsuperscript{130}

By this time, the Cold War had come to an end, resulting in huge political transformations, dissolving the earlier ideological barriers and opening up opportunities to establish new political and economic ties. Many were celebrating the prospects of a new international society based not on ideological differences, but on a liberal world order.\textsuperscript{131} While the United States’ and most of the developing world’s economies were suffering from either a negative growth or stagnation, East Asia’s economic growth continued uninterrupted. In 1991, the Japanese economy still produced a steady rate of 4 per cent GDP growth, while the rest of East Asia’s economies had an average rate of 7 per cent growth.\textsuperscript{132} This, combined with a sense of a power vacuum resulting from the breaking up of the Soviet Union and a decreased US political presence in East Asia, resulted in a growing sense of a regional awareness among East Asian countries, prompting Japan to pursue a more independent diplomacy and strengthen its international presence in the Asia-Pacific. In the new era, Japan, having served as a model for economic growth for many countries in Asia since the 1970s, attempted to strike a better balance between its


\textsuperscript{130} Ibid., 38.


economic and political weight. Takakazu Kuriyama, then vice-foreign minister of Japan, argued in a 1990 paper that ‘the time when Japan could take for granted an international order sustained by U.S. strength (...) is long past’. While calling for a global partnership in the sharing of responsibilities for global peace and prosperity among the United States, Western Europe, and Japan, he also stated that the Asian-Pacific region would be “the main theater of Japan’s foreign policy” in the new era. The 1991 Diplomatic Bluebook of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs reinforced Japan’s pursuit of a new role by stating that one of the most important objectives for Japanese diplomacy was to “clearly demonstrate Japan’s willingness to participate in, and cooperate with, international efforts to protect universal values, such as democracy and fundamental human rights.”

1992 was the year when the IMF first ranked China’s economy as the third largest in the world, after that of the US and Japan. Perhaps coincidentally, it was also the year when Japan started a more proactive foreign policy, while China showed signs of growing concern about its international security. In June 1992, the Japanese diet introduced the International Peace Cooperation Law in order to contribute to the US effort during the Iraq War, and, for the first time in its history, dispatched its Self Defense Forces on a UN peace-keeping operation in Cambodia. In this new international environment, Japan was making tangible steps towards contributing to international security, while China, still in relative international isolation after the Tiananmen Incident, continued strengthening its patriotic

133 Ibid., 936-937.
This was one of the earliest indications of Japan’s values-oriented diplomacy that unfolded from the mid-2000s. Chapter Three provides detailed information on that diplomacy.
education and increased its military budget. Beijing then introduced a Territorial Waters Law in 1992, based on which China claimed sovereignty over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands in the East China Sea and the Spratly and Paracel Islands in the South China Sea.\footnote{Wenran Jiang, “The Japanese Assessment of the ‘China Threat,’” in The China Threat: Perceptions, Myths and Reality, eds. Herbert Yee and Ian Storey (London and NY: Routledge, 2002), 155.} This, along with a steadily growing and not sufficiently transparent military budget, already indicated Beijing’s intention for an increased military presence in East Asia. Showing obvious signs of concern about China’s assertive moves, the 1992 MOFA Bluebook stated that:


The law was seen by Tokyo as a challenge to its territorial integrity and prompted it to protest through a number of different diplomatic channels. On 27 February 1992, Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa publicly stated that the islands were a part of Japan’s “indigenous territory,” to which the Chinese Foreign Ministry responded that China’s ownership of the islands was indisputable.\footnote{Linus Hagström, Japan’s China Policy: A Relational Power Analysis (New York: Routledge, 2005), 121-124.} Nevertheless, with President Jiang Zemin’s visit to Tokyo in April the same year, Japan and China agreed not to press one another any further on the matter of sovereignty and so the island dispute was shelved again.

Even though these events did cast some shadow on the development of Sino-Japanese relations, Japan continued its support for China’s integration into the international economy and overall development. In line with this policy, Emperor
Akihito visited Beijing in 1992, on the 20th anniversary of the diplomatic normalization. This event was also a historical first as never before did a Japanese emperor visit China. During his visit, Akihito acknowledged that in the past Japan “inflicted great suffering on the people of China,” over which he expressed his “deep sadness.”\(^{139}\) His statement, however, stopped short of the apology demanded by many Chinese. The emperor’s words were in fact in line with the official position of the Japanese government, which had, for long, maintained that no outright apology for Japan’s past actions was necessary.

In the meantime, China’s increasing military budget and assertiveness regarding territorial issues prompted Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa and Foreign Minister Tsutomu Hata to ask the Chinese government for a greater military transparency in 1993. Later, in May 1995, although Tokyo asked China to suspend nuclear tests, it conducted an underground test soon afterwards, which was followed by another one in August the same year.\(^{140}\) China also conducted missile tests in the Taiwan Straits in 1995 and 1996, and these events prompted the US to send ships into the Taiwan Strait, resulting in “the biggest display of US military power in Asia since the Vietnam War.”\(^{141}\)

Escalated tensions resulted in a significant change in America’s approach towards East Asia. In February 1995, a high-level U.S. strategic report spearheaded by Joseph Nye, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, was issued. The document, titled the “U.S. Security Strategy for the East Asia-Pacific Region” (also known as the Nye Report), stated that – although two similar


\(^{140}\) Murata, “Domestic Sources of Japanese Policy Towards China,” 40.

strategic reports in 1990 and 1992 envisioned post-Cold War American troop reductions in East Asia – the U.S. was committed to continue keeping its troops at the existing level of about 100,000 troops for the foreseeable future. The report also called for “Japan’s continuing close cooperation with the United States in a strategic partnership,” suggesting Japanese support for U.S. operations in the region.\textsuperscript{142}

In line with America’s new military strategy, Japan’s November 1995 National Defense Program Outline stated that “there still remain large-scale military capabilities including nuclear arsenals and many countries in the region are expanding or modernizing their military capabilities mainly against the background of their economic development,” an apparent reference to issues surrounding the Korean Peninsula and China. The document made it clear that “the Japan-U.S. Security Arrangements will continue to play a key role for the security of Japan and for the peace and stability in the surrounding regions of Japan.”\textsuperscript{143}

Parallel to these developments, and as a response to China’s growing power, the Mori faction, which advocated for a stronger defence posture against Beijing, gained significant strength within the LDP.\textsuperscript{144} At the same time, the power of pro-China factions and politicians, as well as foreign ministry bureaucrats, started declining.\textsuperscript{145} This was also the time when voices advocating for the removal of post-war constraints on Japan’s use of military power became stronger across all spectra of the Japanese political elite. For instance, right-wing politician Ichirō Ozawa, who

\textsuperscript{144} The Mori faction served as the power base for the emergence of the hawkish Prime Minister Jun’ichirō Koizumi (2001-2006). See Gungwu Wang and John Wong, eds., Interpreting China's Development (Singapore: World Scientific, 2007), 224.
\textsuperscript{145} Michael Yahuda, Sino-Japanese Relations After the Cold War: Two Tigers Sharing a Mountain (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2013), 36.
was often dubbed the “Shadow Shōgun” because of his strong behind-the-scenes influence, stated that Japan should become a “normal nation” that “would naturally fulfil its own responsibility to do what is considered natural by the international society.”

In the eyes of Japanese nationalists, “normal nation” meant “a nation that can go to war.”

Because of the burst of the economic bubble, the 1990s saw the rise of opposition parties and coalition governments for the first time in post-war Japan. When Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama’s Social Democratic Party-led leftist government announced its aim to adopt a resolution for the renunciation of war in 1995, it was met with significant resistance from the political right, which formed the National Committee for the Fiftieth Anniversary of the End of World War II (Shūsen Gojushūnen Kokumin Inkkai). The Committee organized a mass rally titled the “Celebration of Asian Togetherness” (Ajia Kyōsei no Saiten) in May to “thank the war dead and praise Japan for its contribution to the independence of many Asian countries.” With the apparent aim to demonstrate that the war was fought for, and not against, Asia, heads of state of all major Asian countries were invited. Nevertheless, none attended.

Murayama resigned in January 1996 and a conservative right-wing LDP politician, Ryūtarō Hashimoto was elected as the new prime minister. Hashimoto was president of the influential right-wing Association of War Bereaved Families, but at the same time, he was also a member of the China-friendly Tanaka faction.

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148 While a few countries were still represented by their diplomatic missions, South Korea rejected the invitation as an insult. China, Singapore, the Philippines, and Malaysia also declined. See Gavan McCormack, The Emptiness of Japanese Affluence, rev. ed. (London; New York: Routledge, 2015), 275.
149 Ibid., 261.
within the LDP.\textsuperscript{150} His appointment suggested Tokyo’s more calculated and carefully balanced approach towards Beijing.

Not long after Hashimoto assumed his role as prime minister, he generated more tension in Sino-Japanese relations by visiting the Yasukuni Shrine in his official capacity on his birthday, on which day Beijing conducted its 45\textsuperscript{th} nuclear test.\textsuperscript{151} Hashimoto then went on to sign the Japan-US Joint Declaration on Security in April 1997, which was followed by an agreement on the New Guidelines for United States-Japan Defence Cooperation in September the same year.\textsuperscript{152} The two agreements significantly strengthened Japan-US security cooperation, of ambiguous status since the end of the Cold War, and opened a new phase of the US-Japan security alliance by allowing the US to access military facilities in Japan.

In the meantime, in an attempt to avoid US containment, China had established the so-called Shanghai Five with Russia and three Central Asian countries in 1996. The Shanghai Five later expanded their political, economic, and military cooperation, and became the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in 2001.\textsuperscript{153}

While these developments indicated that Japan-China relations had become antagonistic, bilateral economic and trade relations continued to grow uninterruptedly. From the early 1990s, a number of Japanese manufacturers began production in China and in a few years many Japanese subsidiary companies were operating there, including Shanghai Sony, Dalian Toshiba, Beijing Matsushita, Shenzen Huaqiang Sanyo, Nanjing Sharp, and Fujian Hitachi, exporting entire productions lines to China. Until this time, economic development in East Asia was

\textsuperscript{150} Murata, “Domestic Sources of Japanese Policy Towards China,” 40.
\textsuperscript{152} Murata, “Domestic Sources of Japanese Policy Towards China,” 40.
often explained as a catch-up process, in which Japan led the way and other Asian countries followed its development patterns in a so-called “flying geese” formation, resulting in an international division of labor for entire industries. China’s economic success, however, put an end to this decades-long development pattern in Asia. The massive capital inflows into the Chinese economy, combined with cheap local labor, a high and steady GDP growth in China in contrast to a prolonged economic stagnation in Japan, led to China’s spectacular rise and Japan’s relative decline in East Asia starting from the mid-1990s.154

These facts show that while bilateral trade links and economic relations continued to grow, relations between Tokyo and Beijing became strained when it came to political and security issues. The 1990s saw the dissolution of the Cold War US-China-Japan security triangle, resulting in a Sino-Russian rapprochement and strengthened Japan-US relations. In the new era, it was Japan-China relations that deteriorated the most in any single bilateral relation within the US-Russia-China-Japan quadrangle.

The 1997-98 Asian Financial Crisis broke out under these circumstances. The crisis, on the one hand, saw a somewhat irresponsible United States that appeared to be reluctant to provide help to those countries that were the most affected. On the other hand, the region experienced a responsible China in relation to those countries that were hit the hardest by the crisis. This gave a significant boost in terms of confidence and aspirations for a regional leadership by China, which had been struggling with its ambiguous image since the Tiananmen Square Incident. Japan also became more active, providing financial aid for many of the affected countries

and coming forward with proposals such as the Asian Monetary Fund for a more coordinated and independent regional cooperation. After the Asian Crisis, during which many perceived that the West, especially the United States, exhibited an ‘exploitive or opportunistic behavior’ towards Eastern and Southeast Asian countries, the so-called “Japan in Asia” school of thought regained strength in Japan.\(^{155}\) Among many Asian countries the crisis also strengthened the international image of China as a responsible power.

The Asian Financial Crisis was the first of its kind that affected all East and Southeast Asian countries, although to a different extent. It thus helped East Asia to develop a sense of a regional identity in the face of external adversities. Since there existed no framework for a region-wide cooperation in Northeast Asia, its three major economic powers, China, Japan, and South Korea, decided to join the 10 ASEAN countries in an attempt to strengthen their economic and financial cooperation. The first meeting of its kind was the ASEAN Plus Three summit in December 1997, while the leaders of the three East Asian countries held their first trilateral meeting in November 1999, in the form of an informal breakfast on the sidelines of the ASEAN Plus Three summit in Manila.\(^{156}\) While Tokyo and Beijing became more engaged within the general framework of the ASEAN Plus Three, their cooperation only strengthened in the economic field. Their separate respective security arrangements with Russia and the United States continued to remain in place, hindering the establishment of an overarching regional security framework in Northeast Asia. This was also the time when the “China-threat” theory was a major


topic among scholars and politicians alike, a discourse followed closely by Japan.¹⁵⁷
By this time Beijing had a significantly more active diplomacy in East- and
Southeast Asia, and with a constantly increasing military budget, its assertiveness
caused concerns to Tokyo.

Japan-China relations in the beginning of the 21st century: hot economics, cold
politics

As a result, the new millennium saw a significant change in Japan-China relations. In
terms of trade and economics, China’s accession to the World Trade Organization in
December 2001 meant that it had a deeper integration in the world economy and
could increase its influence on regional and global politics. Even Japan’s imports
from China in the following year, when its overall imports dropped by 0.6 per cent,
recorded an outstanding 9.9 per cent growth. At the same time, Japan’s exports to
China expanded by 32.3 per cent.¹⁵⁸ With these changes, China became Japan’s
largest trade partner the same year. While the two economies became much more
interdependent, China’s continued and rapid economic growth posed a serious
challenge to Japan’s decades-long position as the leading economic power in Asia.

Newly emerging regionalism following the Asian Financial Crisis saw Japan
becoming interested in free trade agreements with South Korea and Mexico as early
as 1998 and it signed its first FTA with Singapore in 1999. Similarly, China
proposed an FTA with the 10 ASEAN countries in November 2000, which, after
many rounds of negotiations, was finally signed in November 2002.¹⁵⁹ In reaction to

¹⁵⁷ Richard Bernstein and Ross H. Munro. The Coming Conflict with China (New York: A. A. Knopf,
1997). See also Herbert Yee and Ian Storey, eds., The China Threat: Perceptions, Myths and Reality
China’s growing regional influence, Japan’s new Prime Minister, Jun’ichirō Koizumi, also embarked on developing Japan’s own regional strategy in 2001. He initiated talks for a Japan-ASEAN Comprehensive Economic Partnership in January 2002.

These events indicate that economic cooperation in the form of free trade agreements soon became the basis of regionalism in East Asia. By the end of the decade, China had signed FTA agreements with ASEAN, Chile, Pakistan, and New Zealand, and Japan with ASEAN, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, Brunei, the Philippines, Vietnam, Mexico, and Chile. The signed FTAs showed that both Japan and China chose countries as free trade partners that had less impact on their own economies, aiming to protect their domestic markets from external influences. This was clearly underscored by the fact that, while a significant number of free trade agreements between East Asian and Southeast Asian economies were signed in quick succession, FTA negotiations never even started between any of the three largest East Asian economies, China, Japan, and South Korea. Regionalism in East Asia thus practically meant free trade agreements with Southeast Asian countries, indicating a growing sense of rivalry in Northeast Asia, particularly between Japan and China. This also showed the premature state of East Asian regionalism in comparison to other regions, most notably the European Union, where economic cooperation was based on common security interests and similar value perceptions. A growing competition for influence became even more apparent with Japan’s prolonged economic stagnation and China’s spectacular rise that continued well into the 2000s, resulting in the gap between the size of the two economies becoming

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significantly smaller: While Japan’s GDP was eight times more than that of China at the end of the 1980s, this difference had shrunk to only two times by 2005.\footnote{Hitoshi Tanaka, “A Japanese Perspective on the China Question,” \textit{East Asia Insights} 3, no. 2 (May 2008): 2. http://www.jcie.org/researchpdfs/EAI/3-2.pdf.}

In terms of political and security relations, the beginning of the 2000s also marked the start of a new era in Japan’s relations with China. After the September 11 terror attacks, Prime Minister Koizumi supported Japan’s anti-terrorism measures law in order to be able to dispatch the Japanese Self Defense Forces to provide logistical support in the Indian Ocean for a war in Afghanistan. At the same time, China also agreed to a United Nations Security Council resolution allowing the US-led multinational forces to engage in a war against the Taliban forces. This became the first instance where Tokyo dispatched its SDF and Beijing voted in principle for the international use of force by United Nations members against any other sovereign state.\footnote{David Shambaugh, “Sino-American Relations Since September 11: Can the New Stability Last?,” \textit{Current History} 101, no. 656 (2002): 243-44. Accessed October 11, 2015. http://www.currenthistory.com/Article.php?ID=214.} The same year, China strengthened its security alliance by enlarging the Shanghai Five to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. While Japan and China adopted a similar stance on the war in Afghanistan, the 2003 Iraq war saw the collision of their views. The Koizumi administration supported the war and passed legislation permitting the dispatch of the Self Defense Forces and allowing them to use force, more specifically anti-tank weapons. Beijing, together with some other UNSC members, was strongly against any military attack on Iraq.\footnote{Paul Bacon and Takashi Inoguchi, “Japan’s Emerging Role as a ‘Global Ordinary Power,’” \textit{International Relations of the Asia-Pacific} 6, no. 1 (2006): 13. https://doi.org/10.1093/irap/lici133.}

During the five-year-long Koizumi administration, Japan’s relations with China further deteriorated. One of the major reasons was the prime minister’s annual visits to the Yasukuni Shrine. His first visit, on August 13, 2001, was seen by many in China as a “further step in the public resurrection and legitimisation of the
symbols of Japan’s militarist regimes”, but Koizumi quickly dismissed criticisms asking “Why do we have to select among the dead?”164 Prior to Koizumi’s visit, only two Japanese prime ministers had visited the shrine since the remains of the 14 Class A wartime criminals were secretly enshrined there in the 1970s: Yasuhiro Nakasone and Ryūtarō Hashimoto each paid one official visit in 1985 and 1996, respectively. Despite growing criticism from China and South Korea, Koizumi decided to continue visiting the shrine every year, paying six visits altogether while in office. His 2005 visit came only days before his finance minister’s, Nobutaka Machimura’s, scheduled visit to Beijing and Seoul, prompting both governments to cancel his visit. Interestingly, while Koizumi argued that it was his constitutional right to visit the shrine, both the Fukuoka District Court and the Osaka High Court ruled that his actions were in violation of the Japanese Constitution.165

In addition to Koizumi’s Yasukuni visits, other developments further strained Japan-China relations in the early 2000s. As a response to China’s growing regional influence and patriotic education, some Japanese rightwing scholars published the so-called New History Textbook (Atarashii Rekishi Kyōkasho) in 2001 in an attempt to strengthen Japan’s patriotic education.166 The textbook eulogized Japan’s past achievements while downplaying its invasion of China during the Pacific War. Parallel to growing conservative views and strengthening patriotic education in both countries, another Japan-related incident took place in China that further strained bilateral ties. In August 2003, local construction workers in China’s northeastern city

of Qiqihar stumbled upon a cache of mustard gas that had been abandoned by the retreating Japanese Imperial troops at the end of the Pacific War. Upon being unearthed, some containers started leaking, causing site workers to come into direct contact with the highly toxic materials. The incident left one man dead and several others badly burned.\footnote{167} Even though the Japanese government was quick to apologize, a statement was not enough to avoid the further deepening of nationalistic sentiments against Japan among many Chinese. Under high pressure for months from Beijing, the Japanese government finally agreed to give 300 million yen (US$2.56 million) to 44 victims of the accident. While the two governments considered the issue settled after the payment, the incident prompted many Chinese victims of Japan’s wartime actions to form a group and pursue legal action against the Japanese government. Their lawyer, Su Xianxiang, later stated that “what matters is not how much money we will get in compensation, but how the Japanese Government will face its history”.\footnote{168} Then, just a few weeks after the Qiqihar incident, 400 Japanese businessmen went on a three-day sex romp including some 500 local prostitutes in the city of Zhuhai, Southern China. The last day of the sex party fell on September 18, coinciding with the day Japan’s occupation of Manchuria started in 1931. The incident had a strong media coverage across China, with vivid local witness accounts, triggering national outrage. The Chinese Sohu.net website even conducted an online survey, which found that 90 per cent of the 85,000 respondents thought that the Japanese businessmen went on a sex tour in order to further shame China on the day that already lived in Chinese memory as a national


day of humiliation. Problems over history again intensified in April 2005, when Beijing strongly objected to Tokyo’s attempt to reform the UNSC and to its bid to become a permanent member country, arguing that “Japan has not reflected on history”. At the same time, massive protests were organized in various cities throughout China, drawing tens of thousands of people onto the streets. Some protesters wore T-shirts emblazoned with the blood-splattered face of Japanese Prime Minister Jun’ichirō Koizumi, leaflets were handed out with a list of Japanese products to be boycotted, and banners called on Japan to face up to its wartime atrocities. This coincided with a generational change in Japanese politics, which saw an increased number of conservative politicians assuming leading roles in the Koizumi government, and a decreased influence of the pro-China Tanaka faction within the ruling Liberal Democratic Party.

The last top-level member in the Koizumi administration reported to have amicable views towards China was Foreign Minister Makiko Tanaka. She was the daughter of former Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka, who normalized relations with China in 1972. Tanaka was fired in January 2002 and was replaced by the hawkish Nobutaka Machimura. Tanaka, in an interview during the April 2005 street protests, maintained that if she had remained the Foreign Minister, “anti-Japanese demonstrations would not have occurred”. These developments coincided with

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171 “Watashi ga Gaisho Dattara, Hannichi Demo wa Okiteimasen [Had I remained the Foreign Minister, anti-Japanese demonstrations would not have occurred],” *Shukan Posuto*, May 6-13, 2005, 40-1.
Tokyo’s announcement that its long-running ODA loan programme to China would end by 2008, the year Beijing hosted the Olympic Games.  

After the 2005 protests, however, the Chinese government launched a national campaign to convince the Chinese people that stable relations with Japan were in China’s best interests. Indeed, while political ties between Japan and China suffered a significant damage during the Koizumi era, bilateral trade continued to grow uninterrupted, and had expanded from US 89.2 billion in 2001 to US 211.3 billion in 2006.  

At the end of the Koizumi era, Shinzō Abe was elected as the new Prime Minister in October 2006, and on his first overseas visit he went to Beijing. This accommodating gesture was then returned by Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, and it appeared that Japan-China relations started slowly moving in a different direction. Abe later had to resign due to health issues, and he was replaced by Yasuo Fukuda, whose father was the Prime Minister when Japan signed the Peace and Friendship Treaty with China in 1978. A few months before the Beijing Olympics, in May 2008, Hu Jintao made a formal visit to Japan for the first time in ten years as the Chinese head of state. On the occasion, the two governments issued a joint statement that promoted a “mutually beneficial relationship based on common strategic interests”. The document stated that the Sino-Japanese relationship was one of the most important bilateral relationships for both countries and that Japan and China bore a “solemn responsibility for peace, stability, and development of the Asia-Pacific

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174 Ibid., 111.
Accordingly, the statement declared that both countries’ “sole option” was to “cooperate to enhance peace and friendship over the long term.” The statement was a strong indication that the two governments reached a certain level of agreement on past issues and they were willing to focus more on their future relations. Nevertheless, decades-long negative sentiments harbored against one another did not go away easily. This was shown in the controversial Olympic torch relay run in Japan, where a series of pro-and anti-Chinese demonstrations took place. At times, protesters punched and kicked each other, leaving some injured and others arrested. Some 3000 police officers were reported to have been deployed, raising the level of security to that usually seen at public appearances of Emperor Akihito.176

The year 2009 saw the collapse of the so-called 1955 political system in Japan. After over half a century of rule, the LDP was defeated by the Democratic Party of Japan, led by Yukio Hatoyama, the grandson of the founder and the first prime minister of the LDP in 1956, Ichiro Hatoyama. Having leftist and pacifist inclinations as indicated by his so-called fraternity (yūai) philosophy, Hatoyama appeared to genuinely want to promote cooperation with Asia. One of his first initiatives upon assuming office was the establishment of an East Asian Community. He also stated at the China-Japan-Korea summit in Beijing in October 2009 that “Japan was unduly dependent on the United States. The US-Japan alliance is important but I would like to formulate policies stressing Asia”.177 The party’s 2009 manifesto also stated that the DPJ wanted to “make great efforts to develop relations

177 Hidetaka, “Japan’s China Policy in Domestic Power Transition,” 113.
and mutual trust with China, South Korea, and other Asian countries.”\(^{178}\) While the Koizumi administration had very little high-level contact with China for five years, during the first year of DPJ rule, summit meetings were organized six times, and the two countries’ foreign ministers met on seven separate occasions. In November 2009, the Japan-China Defense Ministers’ meeting was held in Tokyo, where an agreement was reached on the first joint training exercise.\(^{179}\) The Hatoyama administration clearly wished to pursue more independent policies from the United States, while it aimed to create a stronger regional security framework based on political dialogue with Beijing. However, amid controversy about his earlier campaign funding and about his economic policies that failed to deliver on their promises, Hatoyama was forced to resign in June 2010. Not long after his resignation, a Chinese fishing boat rammed into a Japanese Coast Guard ship near the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands in the East China Sea. The Coast Guard arrested the captain of the Chinese boat, and the Japanese government stated that since the incident occurred in Japanese territorial waters, it would be dealt with in accordance with Japan’s domestic laws. Tokyo again stated that there were no territorial issues surrounding the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, since they were an inherent part of Japan’s territory. In response, China’s Foreign Ministry issued a statement in which it claimed that Japan’s actions “seriously infringed upon China’s territorial sovereignty and violated the human rights of Chinese citizens”. Furthermore, Wen Jiabao stated that the islands were part of China’s “sacred territory”, and therefore the arrest of the captain


\(^{179}\) Hidetaka, “Japan’s China Policy in Domestic Power Transition,” 113-114. In December the same year, Secretary-General Ichiro Ozawa made a visit to Beijing with some 600 delegates, including 143 diet members and one third of DPJ politicians. During a meeting with Hu Jintao, he expressed his wish for a balanced triangular relationship between the US, Japan, and China. Chapter Three will provide more details on Hatoyama’s foreign policy strategies.
was unlawful. In response to Japan’s arrest of the boat’s captain, China arrested four Japanese businessman, introduced trade bans on the export of rare earth elements to Japan, and suspended the exchange of people from the ministerial level to the high-school student level. Japan, conceding to pressure from China, finally released the captain and dropped all charges against him. After a short period of rapprochement, conflicts again riddled Japan-China relations. This prompted Tokyo to re-examine its political and security relationships with the United States, and it approved a new National Defense Program Guideline in December 2010. The guideline stated that China’s military modernization and growing maritime activities caused “concern for the regional and global community” and that the Japan-US alliance remained “indispensable in ensuring the peace and security of Japan”.

Soon after the adoption of these security guidelines, Japan declared that “an unshakeable Japan-US alliance will be essential’ for the security of Japan and for the peace and stability of the Asia-Pacific region.

The United States also showed an increased presence in the region. With the winding down of its war in Iraq and the withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan, the US administration announced that it would move the majority of its navy to the Pacific as part of its new pivot to Asia. In line with that policy,

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Washington paid more attention to territorial disputes in Asia, declaring that it had a “national interest in freedom of navigation” and in the “open access to Asia’s maritime commons.”

In 2012, former governor of Tokyo, Shintarō Ishihara started a fundraising campaign to buy some of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands in the East China Sea. In an attempt to prevent this move, the Japanese government announced its intention to purchase three islets in the area. On September 9, during the APEC summit in Vladivostok, President Hu Jintao met Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda and expressed his firm opposition against any purchasing of the islets. However, on September 10, the Japanese government went ahead with purchasing the islets for 2.05 billion yen (US$18.3 million). The same day the Chinese government issued a statement that strongly opposed the “nationalization” of the islets, which it described as a “gross violation of China's sovereignty over its own territory and is highly offensive to the 1.3 billion Chinese people.”

Tensions between Japan and China continued to further escalate. In a response to Japan’s island purchase, China stepped up its maritime presence in the East China Sea by sending six surveillance ships that carried out a “patrol and law enforcement mission” near the disputed territories, while China’s Global Times newspaper argued that under the new circumstances “backing off was no longer an option” for Beijing. The Chinese government issued a white paper in the same month, which stated that the islands were “China's inherent territory in all historical, geographical and legal terms”, and that China enjoyed “indisputable sovereignty over Diaoyu

On the same day, at a press conference after the 67th United Nations General Assembly, Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda reiterated that the Senkakus are an inherent part of our territory in light of history and also under international law. (…) There are no territorial issues as such. Therefore, there cannot be any compromise that represents a retreat from this position.”

The United States, that hitherto occupied a neutral position regarding the islands, stepped in to the dispute and threw its weight behind the Japanese side. In December 2012, the US Senate passed a defence policy bill that guaranteed that the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands were covered by the existing security treaty between the US and Japan. The same month, the LDP came back to power with a sweeping victory in the Upper House elections, and Shinzō Abe assumed his second term as prime minister. Strengthened US presence and the new conservative Japanese government only caused more friction in Japan-China relations. Beijing soon moved to step up its economic activities in the East China Sea: Despite an earlier agreement between Japan and China in 2008, the latter unilaterally started the development of the Shirakaba natural gas field in the East China Sea, an area where territorial boundaries disputed by both governments.

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Conclusion: back to the future?

This chapter provided an overview of post-war Japan-China relations, with a particular focus on the growing rivalry between these two countries. It argued that any significant reconciliation between Japan and China was impossible with the conclusion of the Pacific War for a number of reasons. In particular, 1) China’s continued domestic power struggle for leadership between the CCP and the Kuomintang, 2) Japan’s placement under foreign occupation until 1952, and 3) the great power struggle between the US and the USSR that emerged after World War II, were the main factors behind the complete lack of official China-Japan contacts. The two countries’ relations were, for nearly a quarter of a century, predominantly determined by their opposing strategic alliances with the two Cold War superpowers, which also set their post-war development on two significantly different paths. Although economic and cultural relations were re-established in the early 1950s, the ideological and political chasm between them was the main factor defining their relations, fuelled by constant distrust and suspicion until the beginning of the 1970s. Until the normalisation of bilateral ties in 1972, Japan practised a policy of separating politics and economics (seikei bunri) towards China. This meant important ‘lost decades’ for any reconciliation between the two countries. Even with the 1972 normalisation, a number of significant issues remained unresolved, including ownership of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands and the so-called anti-hegemony clause. Economic relations continued to be at the centre of Japan-China relations into the 1980s, while political tensions resurfaced with the strengthening of patriotic education in both countries. This brought back painful memories and a number of issues from the Pacific War, all of which remained unresolved due to the two countries’ significantly different interpretations of the not-so-distant past.
Nevertheless, Japan’s development aid and steadily growing bilateral trade, as well as a Sino-Japanese rapprochement under their security alliances with the US, meant that political tensions between Japan and China were easily managed and occasionally erupting conflicts were quickly shelved. Until the early 1980s, Beijing avoided the Second Sino-Japanese War of 1937-1945 becoming an issue in bilateral relations, but its patriotic education that replaced its earlier revolutionary ideology brought the issue of history back in to the CCP’s domestic political rhetoric. Its struggle against the Japanese Imperial Army and the latter’s wartime actions against the Chinese populace became one of the CCP’s ideological centrepieces. On the other hand, Japan’s emerging nationalism, highlighted by the textbook issues and PM Nakasone’s Yasukuni visit, only provided more fuel to the two countries’ growingly antagonistic sentiments.

After the end of the Cold War, Japan-China relations had further deteriorated. With the demise of the Soviet Union, the US-China-Japan strategic triangle lost its common enemy and America appeared to show less interest in the region. This meant that the two East Asian neighbors were left to face their hitherto irreconcilable issues all alone, despite having had already lost a generation-long period of time for reconciliation. China’s fast economic rise and Japan’s stagnation, together with ongoing unresolved issues from the past, meant that, by the end of the decade, Japan and China openly considered one another as major competitors as well as strategic rivals.

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192 Until the 1980s, the CCP’s official narrative made a clear distinction between a “small handful of Japanese militarists and ordinary Japanese people,” the latter of whom were also regarded as “victims of the imperialists along with their Chinese fellows.” See Yinan He, “Remembering and Forgetting the War: Elite Mythmaking, Mass Reaction, and Sino-Japanese Relations, 1950-2006,” *History & Memory* 19, no. 2 (2007): 47.

The two countries’ clash of historical memories, growing nationalistic sentiments, territorial disputes, and economic and political rivalry only strengthened during the 2000s.\textsuperscript{194} This meant that, by the early 2010s, Japan-China relations appeared to be at their worst since the 1972 normalization of diplomatic relations. While, for instance, Beijing was PM Abe’s initial overseas destination when he was first elected in 2006, he never visited China after his re-election in December 2012. Even during the Koizumi administration, high-level bilateral meetings were regularly held at least on the sidelines of international summits, and there were a number of visits between both countries’ foreign ministers. Due to the worsening relations, however, the two countries’ foreign ministers “did not exchange a word” during the July 2013 ASEAN summit in Brunei.\textsuperscript{195} In the same month, a Pew Research Institute global research showed that, among all the countries polled, Japan harboured the least friendly feelings towards China by far, with only five per cent of its population having a favourable view of its largest neighbor.\textsuperscript{196} Among Asian countries, South Korea came in a distant second with 46 per cent, and even 37 per cent of the US population viewed China favourably.

Tourism figures between the two countries also reflected the strained relations. Data released by the Japan National Tourism Organization in July 2013 showed that, while the number of foreign visitors to Japan in the first half of 2013 increased by 22.8 per cent and reached a record high, the number of visitors from China dropped by 27 per cent during the same period. Chinese government data available for the

\textsuperscript{194} Chapter Three provides a more detailed analysis on Japan-China relations and Japan’s foreign policy initiatives from this period.
same period shows that the number of Japanese tourists to China also decreased by a significant 25.5 per cent.\textsuperscript{197}

The 35\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of the Japan-China Peace and Friendship Treaty passed quietly in August 2013, without any official events organized on either side. There was originally a two-day forum planned to mark the occasion, with some 100 experts invited to Beijing, but the event was postponed at China’s request. The annual event had been organized by the Japanese think tank Genron NPO and the China Daily newspaper since 2005. Nevertheless, the two organizers released the results of their annual opinion survey at the same time, which showed that over 90 per cent of both Japanese and Chinese harboured negative feelings towards the other.\textsuperscript{198} That year’s results were the worst since the annual survey started in 2005.\textsuperscript{199}

Japan-China relations appeared to have reached a critical point after the territorial dispute and have not been normalized ever since. High-level official meetings between the two countries were put on hold for years until their trade ministers had a brief and unfruitful meeting on the sidelines of the annual 2014 APEC summit in Qingdao.\textsuperscript{200} Chinese Premier Xi Jinping and Japanese Prime Minister Abe also met then for the first time since both assumed office, but the meeting was short and no progress was made in thawing bilateral ties. The two

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leaders did not meet for nearly another two years and their second meeting in September 2016 was reported as “déjà vu all over again”.201

Japan-China relations in the early 2010s carried so much hostility and unresolved conflict that, in order to make qualitative progress, yet another normalization seemed necessary.

Figure 1. GDP, current US$ million, 1988-2016: China, India, Japan, South Korea, USA (China is indicated in darker blue, the US in light blue)


Figure 2. Military Expenditure, in constant (2015) US$ million, 1988-2016: China, India, Japan, South Korea, USA (China in darker, the US in lighter blue.)

Figure 3. Military Expenditure per capita in constant (2015) US$, 1988-2016: China, India, Japan, South Korea, USA (China: dark blue; US: light blue)


Figure 4. Military Expenditure (% of GDP), 1988-2016: China, India, Japan, South Korea, USA (China: dark blue; US: light blue)

Source: Author’s own calculation based on data from https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.XPND.GD.ZS.
Figure 5. Military dynamics of the Indo-Pacific, 2016


Map 1. American military installations in the Indo-Pacific surrounding China

Source: https://newint.org/features/2016/12/01/the-coming-war-on-china. Today, over 400 US military bases encircle China with missiles, bombers, warships and nuclear weapons.
Chapter Two

Japanese academic perceptions of contemporary Japan-China relations

Introduction

Tensions in Japan-China relations influenced academic research and scholarly debate on both sides to such an extent that a Genron NPO-China Daily joint conference where some 100 Japanese and Chinese scholars and other experts were expected to participate had to be cancelled in August 2013. Japan-China relations entered a prolonged period of stalemate after the 2010 Senkaku/Diaoyu incident, and it is this period’s Japanese academic scholarship that this chapter examines.

Contemporary scholarship generally presents recent developments in Japan-China relations as resulting from growing competition for regional leadership in East Asia, an issue of national security,\(^{202}\) as a conflict stemming from different interpretations of history,\(^{203}\) as a struggle between different national identities,\(^{204}\) or in the light of territorial disputes and a clash over the development of the resources in the East China Sea\(^ {205}\). Even though there is a great academic interest in, and therefore a growing body of scholarship on these aspects of Japan-China relations,


little attention has been given to the approach and value perceptions that frame current Japanese academic thought regarding Japan-China relations. The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to examine contemporary Japanese academic perceptions of Japan-China relations. More specifically, I aim in this chapter to engage with the value perceptions that underscore various contemporary Japanese scholarly positions. I argue that not only are Japan-China relations problematic, but so are some of the approaches and value perceptions with which a number of leading Japanese scholars view and explain them. I point out that the current state of Japan-China relations provides a good reason to question some of the existing approaches and frameworks that attempt to explain the complexity of the issues between the two countries. After identifying some of the shortcomings in contemporary academic views, this chapter finally argues that, in order to achieve real progress and qualitative change in Japan-China relations, it is essential to re-evaluate some of the very fundamental approaches that underscore Japanese research and scholarly arguments.

This chapter focuses on the analysis of the writings of contemporary Japanese scholars about Japan-China relations that have been published in international journals. The selected scholars have a high standing in Japanese academic society: many are professors in prominent Japanese universities, heads of research institutes, and leading members of Japan’s international relations research establishment. While these scholars’ writings have shaped Japanese academic views of Japan’s relations with China, some of them also have had a direct influence on the course of Japan’s relations with China. Professor Shin’ichi Kitaoka, a former professor of law and politics at the University of Tokyo, for instance, has not only held top-level academic positions during his career – such as Executive Director of Research at the Institute for International Policy Studies, president of the International University of
Japan and president of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) – but he has also served in high political roles. To name some of the most important ones, Kitaoka was the Deputy Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations, then served as the government-appointed chairman of the 2009 Japan-China Joint Study of History. He was also the deputy chairman of Prime Minister Abe’s Advisory Panel on Reconstruction of the Legal Basis for Security and the chairman of PM Abe’s Advisory Panel on National Security and Defense Capabilities.206 Kitaoka’s work was essential in formulating Japan’s new National Security Strategy as well as reviewing the National Defense Program Guidelines.

Another academic who also held high-level political ranks is Hitoshi Tanaka, the Chairman of the Institute for International Strategy at the Japan Research Institute, and a Senior Fellow at the Japan Center for International Exchange: he was the Director-General of the Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau (2001-2002), the Director for Policy Coordination of the Foreign Policy Bureau and later served as a top advisor to Prime Minister Jun’ichirō Koizumi on a broad range of issues, including relations with China. He went on to serve as the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan for three years under PM Koizumi (2002-2005).207 Tanaka continues to be influential in both political and academic circles in present-day Japan. Other high-profile academics include Ryōsei Kokubun, professor of law and politics at Keiō University and the Director of Keiō Center for Area Studies, whose main focus is Chinese politics and international relations in East Asia; Takashi Hoshiyama, a Keiō and Harvard graduate, who was the Director of the Cultural Policy Division and the Director of the Information and Communication Division in the Ministry of

Foreign Affairs, and senior researcher in the Institute for International Policy Studies; Yoshihide Soeya, the Director of the Institute of East Asian Studies at Keiō University, who was a member of the Prime Minister’s Commission on Japan's Goals in the 21st Century; Kazuhiko Noguchi, the Chair Professor at the Department of International Studies at Tokai University and a professor at the Defence Academy of Japan; and Hidetaka Yoshimatsu, a professor at the Graduate School of Asia Pacific Studies at the Ritsumeikan Asia-Pacific University.

**Shin`ichi Kitaoka and the question of proactive pacifism**

As noted above, Kitaoka chaired the Japanese group of scholars during the Japan-China Joint Study of History project in 2009. The initiative was a result of an agreement in October 2006 between Japanese Prime Minister Shinzō Abe and his Chinese counterpart, President Hu Jintao, to set up a joint research project on history between the two countries. The reason for the initiative was the May 2005 nationwide protests in China against Japan’s bid for a seat on the UN Security Council, during which protesters claimed that “Japan has not reflected on history”. Despite the initial agreement that the results would be published jointly, due to disagreements on both sides they were published separately in Japanese and Chinese in 2010. While it is unclear what exactly was the basis of disagreement, Kitaoka maintains that the Chinese side was the one that changed their mind on some of the agreed points, particularly about how to view certain historical events between the two countries in the 20th century. Kitaoka argues that the standard of the Japanese

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research was higher from the beginning, and despite a number of attempts by Japan to clarify differences, the Chinese side was not open for discussion, possibly, argues Kitaoka, for political reasons. While Kitaoka maintains that “there seem to be virtually no Japanese historians” who think that Japan was not the aggressor against China during the Pacific War, he does not provide any particular detail about what the exact disagreement from the Chinese side was. One point of disagreement, however, might have been regarding the way in which China and Japan look back at Japan’s wartime conduct. Kitaoka indicates this when writing that there are some people who would argue that Japan’s actions during the Pacific War cannot be termed aggression as the “definition of aggression has only been established recently”, arguing that there exists a fine line between aggression and non-aggression. Also, while he concedes that the Manchurian Incident was a clear case of aggression and that Japan bears the lion’s share of blame for the Nanking Incident, Kitaoka does not address a significant question, which is whether Japan has taken enough action towards historical reconciliation. He also fails to mention that the Japanese government tends to send conflicting messages to its neighbors about Japan’s responsibilities for its wartime actions. Instead, Kitaoka argues that

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209 Ibid., 6.
210 Ibid., 11-14.
211 Ibid., 14.
212 Ibid.
213 Ibid., 16.
214 It was not until 1995 that a Japanese prime minister acknowledged that Japan’s “colonial rule and aggression caused tremendous damage and suffering to the people of many countries,” expressed “feelings of deep remorse” and offered a “heartfelt apology”. Those words came from Social Democratic Party Prime Minister Tōjō Hideki. Although the statement was upheld at times but not without some evident reservations, the statement did not include a reference to Japan’s military aggression or deep remorse, by successive Liberal Democratic Party-led governments. See the text of Murayama’s full statement here: http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/press/pm/murayama/9508.html (Accessed February 14, 2018). See also Toko Sekiguchi, “PM Abe’s Statement for WWII Memorial Day May Drop Words of Apology,” The Wall Street Journal, January 26, 2015. Accessed 14 February 2018. https://blogs.wsj.com/japanrealtime/2015/01/26/pm-abe-statement-for-wwii-memorial-may-drop-words-of-apology/. Murayama came forward criticizing his more hawkish successor, PM Abe,
while Japan was the aggressor in the past, it has changed significantly since then and he implies that China should simply move on and leave issues of the past where they belong, whether those issues have been dealt with properly or not. Kitaoka writes that the reason for deteriorating relations between China and Japan was the former’s patriotic education that started in the early 1990s. He believes that Japan has done enough reflection on history and ignores the issue of whether it has followed any reflection up with sufficient action towards China. Nevertheless, lacking any reference to errors on the Japanese side, his argument ultimately implies that Japan has already done enough in this regard and puts the onus on China to appreciate and acknowledge Japan’s efforts. As a result, Kitaoka’s assumption seems to be that China is ultimately the one responsible for the deterioration in bilateral relations.

In an article published a year later, Kitaoka becomes more straightforward on how he thinks China should be viewed: He gives a thorough analysis of Beijing’s perceived intentions. He immediately rolls out the big picture, explaining that China’s rise should be viewed in the context of its hierarchic worldview, growing nationalism, and Beijing’s weakening control over the Chinese military. He warns that while anti-hegemony was one of Beijing’s key principles in its diplomacy throughout most of the Cold War, with China’s recent emergence Asia must face a new China that is opportunistic and actively seeks to establish hegemony in the

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216 Ibid., 17.
Referring to Singapore’s former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, Kitaoka argues that Chinese do not respect the rule of law and therefore cannot be trusted.\textsuperscript{219} He draws a parallel between the situation in today’s East Asia and the changes the region was going through during China’s Warring States period some 2,500 years ago, when the ultimately victorious kingdom of Qin was able to break down a joint opposition by other states with its “salami tactics” proposing bilateral ties with every other competing kingdom.\textsuperscript{220} While Kitaoka likens contemporary China to ancient Qin and warns that China intends to lead the world based on now presumably obsolete and backward perceptions of power, he draws a sharp contrast between Japan and China: Japan, argues Kitaoka, has experienced “decades, if not centuries” of the modern values of democracy and liberalism.\textsuperscript{221} According to Kitaoka, China envisions a kind of “packing order” of countries in a vertical hierarchy led by China itself, Japan’s role is to lead another group of countries: those that are opposed to China’s rule. These countries, for some reason, and quite ironically, are also vertically aligned in Kitaoka’s vision, yet their cooperation is based on supposedly egalitarian universal rules and principles such as democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. The reason for Japan leading this vertical alliance is unclear as Kitaoka only says that Japan is the biggest country in this alignment. But would this be sufficient, and even necessary, for Japan to lead? Isn’t this also an obsolete perception of power, which is based on size, strength, and, to an extent, hard power?

Kitaoka’s vision is that two vertically aligned groups of countries, one led by China and the other by Japan, compete for presumably different values, while “one

\textsuperscript{219} Kitaoka, “A New Asian Order and the Role of Japan,” 10.
\textsuperscript{220} Ibid., 11.
\textsuperscript{221} Ibid., 4.
old superpower in the north is watching the situation carefully.” Ultimately, Kitaoka’s analysis depicts China in unequivocally negative terms: it is described as a country that does not want to accept the changing realities of the twenty-first century, one that rejects democratic progress as well as other values and achievements of the past some 150 years, and one that essentially wants to rule by force. Japan, on the other hand, is represented in an unquestionably positive light: a country that is standing up for others based on perceived universal values and principles and that is best-suited to defend the region from China’s threat. China is presented as an unchanging, monolithic and menacing force from the past, against which Japan holds the key leading Asia towards a brighter future. Nevertheless, concludes Kitaoka, a rules-based international order is not disadvantageous for China and the next international order must be based on the achievements made by human beings to date. Kitaoka proposes that compassion, something Japan received from many countries in the wake of the 2011 triple disaster, can be a key factor. While compassion is a recent, but arguably all the more needed, concept in the context of international relations, Kitaoka only applies it to China, saying that it can have a positive impact on Chinese leaders and people alike. But why, for instance, does he not call upon Japanese leaders and people to have a deeper understanding of China’s supposed inability to finally let issues of history go by exercising compassion? Or why does he not make a bit more effort in his article towards understanding through the lens of compassion China’s anxieties and even Beijing’s own mistakes? Compassion is an exciting concept that indeed has the potential to transform international relations, but it should be applied both ways and by all

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222 Ibid., 12.
223 Ibid., 12-13.
224 Ibid., 13.
parties involved. This should particularly be the case if one argues from a ‘universal’ values perspective.

Unfortunately the concept of compassion was not explored further in Kitaoka’s subsequent writings. On the contrary, after he was appointed chairman of PM Abe’s Advisory Panel on National Security and Defense Capabilities, he appeared to focus more on hard power balancing against China instead. In an article written in 2014, he introduced the concept of proactive pacifism (*sekkyokuteki heiwashugi*), something that Kitaoka alleges PM Abe had “hammered out”, and which concept was based on the principle of active international cooperation. Kitaoka contrasts this concept with passive pacifism, something that had defined Japan’s international presence to date, which for decades posited that “the less militarized Japan is, the more peaceful the world becomes.” Kitaoka argues that passive pacifism is “mistaken in the light of reality,” pointing out that China and North Korea now pose a direct military threat to Japan. Interestingly, the concept of pacifism here resonates more with self-defense capabilities and military power than with the concept of compassion or soft power, although Kitaoka maintains that the new National Security Strategy focuses on “software” such as regime and policy, and emphasizes the maritime rule of law and cooperation with countries that share universal values with Japan. Yet, he criticizes the strategy, arguing that the equipment of Japan’s maritime and self-

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226 Ibid.

227 Ibid.
defense forces should be expanded further, and that capabilities for counterattacks against enemy bases should have been incorporated in the guidelines. While Kitaoka also mentions the necessity of more flexible attitudes towards China, such as the resumption of dialogue on historical issues, the predominant focus for him is to show resolve against China, adding that “outwitting the enemy is fundamental to the art of war.” While Kitaoka does not go as far as naming who the enemy might be, the countries his article refers to that pose a direct threat to Japan are China and North Korea, six and two times, respectively. Indirect references to China and North Korea as enemies and using expressions such as “art of war” may not be the best choice of words when a country wants to justify its new national security strategy and emphasize its active pursuit of pacifism at the same time. Kitaoka explains that the Abe administration was simply developing Japan’s post-war diplomacy further “within the framework of international harmony” and that this policy push had won international acceptance except from such countries as China and North Korea. Kitaoka concludes that the defence panel plans to submit its recommendations to the Abe administration in the near future, which will result in a revision of the Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation. The context here, therefore, appears not to be the pursuit of a harmonious international society, supposedly a result of exploring universal values and principles or any United Nations-related guidelines. Rather, the pursued changes seem to be aligned with the coming revision of the US-Japan Defense Cooperation bilateral agreement, suggesting that the real driving force behind this proposal may not be an independent and autonomous proactive pacifist policy initiative of Tokyo.

228 Ibid.
229 Ibid., 1.
Overall, perhaps Kitaoka’s argument for proactive pacifism should have focused more on seeking cooperation based on compassion and mutual understanding, as he suggested in one of his earlier writings, rather than on actively joining the race to build up military capacities and self-defence capabilities. Also, and quite ironically, Kitaoka acknowledges the part in the National Security Strategy which mentions that “Japan should always keep the door open for dialogue with China,” a statement indicating passivity, which seemingly contradicts Japan’s new concept of proactive pacifism.

It is perhaps worth mentioning that Kitaoka’s article depicts Japan as a “major power” in the context of military strength, a claim which Japanese politicians and academics alike had long tended to avoid, using terms such as ‘economic power’ or ‘major economic power’ instead when referring to Japan. A few months after Kitaoka’s article, remarkably, Japan’s then-Minister of Defense, Itsunori Onodera, referred to Japan as a “great power” (taikoku) in a prewritten speech about Tokyo’s security and defense policy at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington. This self-reference was quite possibly a first in Japan’s post-Pacific War diplomacy. Equally remarkably, the defence minister’s choice of words did not trigger any comments from the audience, and they even seem to have slipped Beijing’s attention, which usually attempts to limit the use of great power (daguo) to either the United States or China.

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230 Ibid.
Hitoshi Tanaka: from comprehensive engagement and multilateralism back to realism?

As noted earlier, Hitoshi Tanaka is one of contemporary Japan’s most influential foreign policy experts. He is both a well-known scholar and a former top-ranking Japanese government official, serving as director-general of the Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and later as Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs from 2002 to 2005. He is currently the chairman of the Institute for International Strategy at the Japan Research Institute. He is also a Senior Fellow at the Japan Center for International Exchange, and a significant contributor to the same institution’s online publication series, the East Asia Insights. Tanaka is a well-established scholar in East Asian studies, with a particular focus on Japan-China relations. His earlier high ranking in the Japanese government allowed him to not only have significant insights into Japan-China relations but, to some extent, also to have an influence on formulating government policies towards those relations.

Tanaka sees relations with China as being one of the most important challenges facing Japan and the Asia-Pacific as a whole, and warns that Japan-China relations have deteriorated to new post-war lows. He views relations with China as crucial, arguing that “finding the right approach to China is perhaps the biggest task for Japan and other countries in the Asia Pacific.” He writes that Japan-China relations can be viewed as the “most immediate risk factor with the potential to seriously jeopardize regional stability,” and that to eliminate this risk, a strong political commitment, “including the espousal of a future vision for the relationship,”

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is necessary. Tanaka argues that tension between Japan and China is deep-rooted for a number of reasons:

1. *The role of identity:* the Japanese people have a benign superiority complex towards China that is based on Japan’s remarkable achievements prior to World War II and Japan’s phenomenal post-war economic recovery. These developments, maintains Tanaka, have generated a complicated mixture of veneration and resentment toward Japan among the Chinese people, particularly given the perception that Japan’s successes upset the traditional balance of power in the region. What Tanaka calls developments include Japanese imperialism and militarism before the end of the Pacific War that traumatized China and many other countries in Asia. This, as was pointed out in Chapter One, does continue to be a significant issue in Sino-Japanese relations to this day. Somehow this fact is entirely missing from Tanaka’s analysis. One might also ask to what extent Tanaka thinks a superiority complex can be benign when Japan-China relations, as he himself writes, are riddled with unresolved issues, causing a deep-rooted tension between the two countries.

2. *China’s economic power:* China’s rapid and prolonged economic growth, coupled with Japan’s prolonged economic stagnation, has resulted in predictions that the Chinese economy will be several times larger than that of Japan by 2030. Tanaka claims that it is “unclear that the Japanese people, who have long enjoyed their country’s reputation as the world’s second most powerful economy, are ready to accept these changes.” He also points out that Japanese leaders are very worried about China’s domestic problems such as corruption and pollution, as domestic

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233 Ibid., 3.
235 Ibid., 1-2.
236 Ibid., 2.
unrest there could disrupt growth, which in turn would have a negative effect on Japan’s economy. It seems that Tanaka’s major concern here appears to be China’s potential disruption of Japan’s economic growth, focusing more on hard power and a narrow Japan-centred perspective, rather than showing a genuine concern for China’s domestic problems. This is certainly not a principle- or values-based approach.

3. China’s military power: Tanaka is concerned about China’s rapid development of its military and Beijing’s lack of transparency around its military budget, pointing out that a non-democratic country’s military expansion is a cause for concern. While Tanaka does raise legitimate concerns around China’s expanding military power, he does not put that into context. For instance, if we compare China’s military spending to that of the United States, we can see a significant gap between the two. According to the SIPRI’s figures, the US has been the world's biggest military spender by far. In 2014, for instance, the US military budget, US$610 billion, accounted for 34.34 per cent of the global total. China’s budget for the same year was estimated to be US$216 billion, or 12.16 per cent of the world totals. While the US budget amounted to 3.5 per cent of its gross domestic product, China spent only 2.1 per cent of its GDP on its military.237 One also wonders how transparent any country’s military budget is, particularly in the case of great powers?

Tanaka next refers to China's foreign policy and argues that, since China’s political system is not a liberal democracy, the extent to which the international community can trust Beijing’s commitment is limited. He is also concerned about China’s growing nationalism, noting that Chinese hostility towards Japan has

seriously damaged Japanese popular impressions of China and also caused a rise of nationalism in Japan.\textsuperscript{238}

Despite the deep-rooted tensions, however, Tanaka maintains in an earlier article that it would be somewhat irresponsible to subscribe to the China threat theory, and that a containment strategy aiming to prevent China’s growth is entirely unfeasible.\textsuperscript{239} This leaves the reader wondering if non-feasibility should be the real reason for Japan not to attempt to contain China? In other words, if China’s containment were feasible, would Japan attempt to develop any containment strategy? Tanaka maintains that such strategy would do no good to Japan as it would not only damage the country’s fragile relationship with the “most populous nation on Earth” that “also happens to be its neighbor,” but it would also reverse the region’s economic growth.\textsuperscript{240} Tanaka’s major concern therefore seems to be a possible disruption in Japan’s economic growth, indicating that he values relations with China firstly for economic benefits. He then goes on to suggest that Japan needs to engage China in regional and global rule-based communities in order to ensure that it develops into a responsible player in the international system.\textsuperscript{241} In order to achieve that goal, argues Tanaka, Japan should support a consolidation of strategic links among the region’s four largest democratic states, which he sees as being Japan, India, Australia, and the United States. This statement is problematic as Tanaka writes about East Asia, and he does not specify here otherwise what region he is talking about. However, considering the countries he named, that region would have to be much larger than East Asia, covering the whole of the Indo-Asia-Pacific area. Or does Tanaka suggest that Japan should rely on only extra-regional partners to

\textsuperscript{238} Tanaka, “A Japanese perspective on the China Question,” 3.
\textsuperscript{239} Hitoshi Tanaka, Japan’s Policy for East Asia,” 33 and 37, respectively.
\textsuperscript{240} Ibid., 37.
\textsuperscript{241} Ibid., 38 and 37, respectively.
foster relations with China? Another question that immediately arises is why Tanaka did not include South Korea, its immediate neighbor and one of East Asia’s largest democracies, in his vision of a rule-based regional democratic cooperation that has also relatively close ties to China? Could it also be due to the long-standing historical issues that cause frequent tensions between these two democracies? Ignoring the ongoing tensions over the two countries’ significantly different perceptions of history, Tanaka posits that a spread of a regional identity would also be beneficial for East Asia, because it would help “absorb and dissipate confrontational nationalistic sentiment,” and he goes on to suggest that the best way forward for East Asia is a pragmatic and action-oriented regionalism, through which countries are bound together by rules and operations, rather than values, religion, or political systems.\(^\text{242}\) On the one hand, this suggests that Tanaka’s aim is to look beyond the nation-state framework and approach the China question from an internationalist point of view. On the other hand, Tanaka does not clarify what specific values or common interests that regional identity might be based on. This vision also appears to somewhat contradict his earlier suggestion of bringing together like-minded and rules-based democracies that share the same values and similar political systems to team up with the goal of making China a responsible and fair player in the international community. Tanaka also leaves an important issue unaddressed: how can the two countries look beyond their own nation-state framework and adopt a more internationalist perspective when both are experiencing the rise of nationalism? As Tanaka himself argues earlier, Chinese and Japanese nationalism are interlinked and are feeding into one another.

\(^{242}\) Ibid., 39-40.
Despite unresolved issues of history and the rise of nationalism, Tanaka maintains that the real issues in the region revolve around the questions of energy, environment, and public health. Tanaka posits that it is Japan, and not China, which is the most qualified country and has the greatest resources in this regard. He argues that Japan should therefore be the leader of the region, an indication that the question of leadership between Japan and China is indeed important to Tanaka. However, he acknowledges that Japan’s leadership would be insufficient and fragile as Japan alone could not achieve regional peace and stability without the continued presence of the United States.²⁴³ What makes Tanaka think that Japan alone is unable to lead the region? Also, and similarly importantly, why does Tanaka think that the region would not work without the presence of the United States and a Japan-US alliance? These questions are left unaddressed. In conclusion, Tanaka points out that Japan, being the most powerful democracy in the region, needs to develop a long-term vision and implement clear policies to that end, thus acknowledging that Tokyo is yet to develop such vision and policies.²⁴⁴ While Tanaka himself argues for the importance of developing such a vision, he does not attempt to provide its contours. His earlier writings, however, do include some important ideas of what his vision might be, at least as far as the question of China is concerned. In 2008, Tanaka asks how Japan should respond to China’s economic, political, and military expansion and how Tokyo can ensure that concerns about Beijing taking an aggressive course in the future will not become a reality.²⁴⁵ He goes on to suggest that Tokyo needs to develop a policy of comprehensive engagement and focus on further strengthening multilateralism and a rules-based regional cooperation that aims to “minimize the

²⁴³ Ibid., 41.
²⁴⁴ Ibid., 43.
negatives and maximize the positives” around China’s rise.\textsuperscript{246} He maintains that the single most important and urgent objective of Japanese policymakers should be to achieve a grand bargain with Beijing that puts issues that damage ties between the two countries in the context of building healthier ties, creating a “win-win framework” for both.\textsuperscript{247} Tanaka also warns against a policy of increasing Japan’s defence expenditures, arguing that it would only lead to a destabilizing arms race. Here, however, Tanaka instead stresses the importance of Tokyo’s reliance on its alliance with the US as well as other security relations in Asia to hedge against future uncertainties.

It is remarkable to see how Tanaka’s views changed over time. In his series of writings in \textit{East Asia Insights}, published by the Japan Center for International Exchange, he started off taking a normative approach that focused on drawing up a vision of cooperation and constructive engagement, and ended up taking a much more descriptive analysis without reiterating what he thinks needs to be done to amend bilateral ties and move forward. In 2008, for instance, he suggests that while there are concerns around China’s military expansion, Japan should not increase its own defense expenditures as that would lead to a destabilizing arms race in East Asia. Instead, argues Tanaka, it is enough for Tokyo to rely on the US-Japan alliance against future uncertainties and the main goal of the alliance should be to work together to consolidate inclusive regional multilateral frameworks and establish a norm of addressing issues in a cooperative manner. Tanaka maintains that Japan must proactively engage China and also suggests that a regular trilateral security dialogue should also be established between China, the US and Japan, pointing out that Japan has an “enormous stake” in realizing the ultimate goal of China’s peaceful

\textsuperscript{246} Ibid., 4.
\textsuperscript{247} Ibid.
emergence and enmeshment within the existing global system.\textsuperscript{248} Even though here Tanaka does not seem to have any issues with the current US-led regional and global status quo, he clearly focuses on a peaceful approach and cooperative solutions. In 2007 he points out that East Asia, as well as Tokyo, lacks a clear and long-term vision and he goes on to lay out his own vision for the region and Japan’s role in it.\textsuperscript{249} He argues that the rise of China does not have to be a zero-sum game and that it gives opportunity for Japan to reinvent itself as a global and regional leader in areas outside the economic sphere, using its soft power and reputation as a democratic power to facilitate positive change. Tanaka makes a case for an action-oriented regionalism focusing on pragmatic issues, but with the long-term goal of establishing an East Asian Community and a rules-based regional economic system in which China also plays a central role. He concludes by arguing that there has been no other time when Japan’s policy toward East Asia had a greater importance.\textsuperscript{250} A few years later in the same publication series, Tanaka strikes a significantly different tone. Instead of maintaining his earlier positive visions stemming from an inclusive and internationalist perspective on issues surrounding China, his views are framed in a predominantly nationalistic perspective, focusing on why Japan still matters as China continues to rise. He argues that the myth that Japan is in decline and is no longer important in the face of China’s emergence is a dangerous misperception, and that Japan is still one of the world’s most industrialized and technologically advanced nations, which is still ahead of all other Asian nations from both aspects.\textsuperscript{251} While criticizing Tokyo for the lack of an overarching vision for Japan’s engagement with

\textsuperscript{248} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{250} Ibid., 5.

China and East Asia, Tanaka’s article itself lacks any policy suggestions in that regard; it instead focuses on the importance of the strengthening of the US-Japan alliance as the main tool of engaging with China and the region as a whole. Tanaka’s main suggestion is that intensive US-Japan alliance consultations are needed as an important first step moving forward, warning that allowing misperceptions that Japan and the bilateral alliance were no longer important could have grave consequences.\textsuperscript{252} Tanaka suddenly sees things from the perspective of Japan’s and the alliance’s importance. While arguing that “intensive and regularized US-Japan consultations” were critical to coordinate a joint approach toward China, Tanaka no longer deems it necessary to develop positive visions, including forms of direct engagement with Beijing, in Tokyo’s policy-making. Of course Japan does matter, and not only in the context of China’s emergence, but what about Tanaka’s earlier focus on what values matter for the region from a Japanese perspective, as well as on the importance of developing positive visions in Japanese policy-making? A year later in the same article series, Tanaka largely analyses Japan-China relations in the limited context of the 2010 Senkaku/Diaoyu islands incident, arguing that Japan should not bend to Chinese pressure regarding the islands dispute, as it would set a highly negative precedent and embolden China to use coercive methods of diplomacy.\textsuperscript{253} In another article, Tanaka even maintains that there is no room for a compromise for Tokyo regarding the islands issue, given the clear historical records.\textsuperscript{254} It is important to note here that while Japan is indeed the one administering control of the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands at present, the historical record regarding their ownership is not as clear as Tanaka maintains. Japan took effective

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{252} Ibid., 3.}  
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{254} Hitoshi Tanaka, “China and Shared Regional Prosperity: Five Risk Factors,” 3.}
control over the islands through prior occupation after defeating China in the first Sino-Japanese War in 1895. With the end of the Pacific War, Tokyo only continued to have control over the islands after the conclusion of the Okinawa Reversion Agreement in 1971, but it is not entirely clear whether the five islets in question do come under Okinawan territory as they were not covered under the agreement. Taiwan, the closest country to the five islands, has also made claims of sovereignty over them.255

Interestingly, while Tanaka points out that it is counterproductive to frame the Japan-China relationship as focusing on the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands dispute, he himself views bilateral relations with Beijing largely in this context. On the one hand, he proposes that a complete reset for East Asia is needed in the face of growing conflicts in the region. On the other hand, however, he does not lay out any particular policy initiative. Instead, his main argument is that any changes should be based on liberal strategic considerations, not nationalist motives, which appears to be a somewhat vague policy recommendation in the light of deepening tensions between Tokyo and Beijing, particularly in view of Tanaka’s earlier and plentiful suggestions for ways of bilateral and regional cooperation.256

Throughout his scholarship on Japan-China relations, an overarching theme is the importance of China from an economic point of view.257 One of Tanaka’s recurring arguments is that neither Japan nor China can afford to allow issues

257 On the size of the Chinese economy see Tanaka, “China and Shared Regional Prosperity,” 2; On comparing the size of the Japanese and Chinese economy, see Tanaka, “Myths of Decline,” 1-2; On China’s economic threat and economic pull theories and Japan’s economic dependence on China see Tanaka, “A Japanese Perspective on the China Question,” 2.
between them as that may lead to the undermining of their bilateral economic cooperation and negatively affect the Japanese economy. He maintains that the Japan-China relationship is:

“critical to both countries as well as to the region given the two countries’ huge trade and investment flows, their economic complementarity, the interdependent nature of regional production networks, and their respective political influences.”

Therefore, Tanaka ultimately appreciates China from a market economy perspective, which is rather a pragmatic and interest-based approach than a values-based perspective. Yet he wants to regulate China from a universal values and principles perspective, with the help of like-minded countries that share values such as democracy and the rule of law. While Tanaka makes a case for rules-based cooperation among extra-regional players, his argument does not elaborate on the particular goals, norms, or principles these strategic regional links should be based upon. Without specifying values as well as long term goals and visions, leadership is likely to be confined ultimately to power contexts. Similarly, not making a strong case for certain policy recommendations based on well-defined and distinctive values would make scholarly debate on political leadership vulnerable to contexts of power, particularly in the troubled state of contemporary Japan-China relations. This is even more so given that, while Tanaka does criticize China for its military development and political leadership, the only criticisms he makes of the Japanese government is that it 1) does not have a clear vision about China and the region as a whole, and that 2) Tokyo must not risk its security relations with the United States. Even when it comes to the aforementioned territorial dispute with China, he squarely puts the blame on Beijing. Ultimately, in his writings Tanaka suggests that while

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258 Tanaka, “China and Shared Regional Prosperity,” 3.
Japan is, and has been, open to China, it is Beijing that is to be blamed for deteriorated relations. Even when it comes to the handling of historical issues between the two countries, Tanaka argues that Japan has already done enough. At one point he admits that Japan’s “Asian neighbors” can be sensitive given Japan’s “history of aggression”, but he suggests that the issue of history has already been dealt with properly as far as Japan is concerned, since sufficient statements apologizing for Japan’s wartime actions have been made by the Japanese government. Tanaka maintains that it is “unfortunate” that “Japan’s efforts to take on a leadership role in the region” are still “frequently frustrated” by the issue of history. But since he ultimately maintains that Japan is not at fault, how can deep-running problems in bilateral relations be solved if Japan is not really open to listening to Beijing, be it regarding issues of history or territorial disputes? Is it realistic, let alone fair, to expect change only from the Chinese side?

**Takashi Hoshiyama: Japan finally liberated from the “spell of history”?**

Hoshiyama maintains that there was a qualitative shift in Japan-China relations after the Koizumi era (2001-2006), in which changes on the Japanese side were particularly important. He argues that after a five-year period of gradually deteriorating bilateral relations, visits by both countries’ prime ministers, PM Shinzō Abe in 2006 and PM Wen Jiabao the following year, Japan-China relations appeared to take a turn for the better. He points to three major factors in this qualitative change:

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260. Ibid., 3-4.
1) Due to a generational change 60 years after the end of the Pacific War, Japan was “finally liberated from the spell of history” and therefore its public perceptions of China became “more realistic and cautious”.

2) In light of such “threats” as China’s rise, the majority of the Japanese people began to hold a realistic view on national security.

3) Japan was “forced to adopt a more positive and assertive” diplomacy due to changes in the “harsh international environment in which Japan finds itself.”

Remarkably, the third point depicts Japan as a country that has predominantly been a passive and reactive country in its diplomacy, apparently a victim waking up to the realities of a bleak international environment, one that is pushed towards taking preventive actions. Also quite interestingly, Hoshiyama uses the word “history” no less than 90 times in his 28-page long analysis, including in the term “spell of history” (9 times) and the expression “liberation/liberated from the spell of history” (5 times). While Hoshiyama himself states initially that the spell is over, one starts to feel somewhat spellbound by his continued and frequent referencing of the term, and begins to wonder whether Japan is really finally free from the issue of history. In fact, Hoshiyama’s own opinion on the question of history appears somewhat conflicted. On the one hand, he initially writes that China “fully appreciated” post-war Japan’s peaceful steps in relation to what he regards as an “historical issue” and that Beijing acknowledged Japan’s remorse and apology. On the other hand, his first main concluding remark is that Japan-China relations would only improve on the condition that “China changed its view of history.

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dramatically.” He also asserts that the issue of history is merely a diplomatic drawcard that China tends to use to gain leverage against Japan in the international arena, and which “proved highly effective” in Japan until recently. Hoshiyama’s argument seems a bit too simplistic, reducing the issue of history to a political drawcard at the hands of the Chinese government. At one point he argues that China’s patriotic education that started in the 1990s was the major reason for the deterioration in bilateral relations. It appears that Hoshiyama thinks that there would be no issues of history between the two countries as long as China dropped the history card and the Japanese public became more practical-minded and gave up its somewhat masochistic views of wartime history. In other words, he seems to think it would be enough if the two countries dealt with the issue separately.

Also significantly, most of Hoshiyama’s references to issues around history are framed in the context of the Japanese public’s opinion, blurring the lines between general society, academic research, and the political elite’s views. His argument not only disregards the variety of long-existing views and debates within the academic community and the political elite, but also diminishes the importance and responsibility of those circles in educating and forming the Japanese public’s views on Japan’s wartime history. He also notes that a “liberal leftist ideology with a pro-China flavour” was long dominant in post-war Japanese society. Is this the spell that Hoshiyama thinks is finally broken?

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263 Ibid., 1 and 26, respectively.
264 Hoshiyama argues that Beijing used the “history card” mainly to prevent a resurgence of nationalism in Japan, prevent a drive by Japan to become a military superpower, to limit the Japan-US security cooperation, to restrain increases in Japanese defense spending, and in relation to the Taiwan issue. Ibid., 4-5.
265 Ibid., 8.
266 See, for instance, pages 8, 9, 10, 12, 15, and 22.
267 Ibid., 8.
While Hoshiyama acknowledges the difference between public views of wartime history in Japan, China, and the United States, his only dilemma is whether the latter two will in the future be able to relate their respective views of history to the “perception of history asserted by Japan.” 268 He continues to argue that understanding the Japanese view would be an important indicator of whether the USA will be able to “move forward with a stable policy towards Japan and with its Asia policy, and in any comparison with China’s policy towards Japan.” 269 He later argues that the slightest change in the American position towards Japan-China relations would affect Japanese diplomacy. 270 It appears that, even in the question of history, Hoshiyama is more concerned about American than Chinese perceptions of Japan’s views. He maintains that it is a mistake to equate Japanese nationalism with Chinese nationalism and argues that the former is moving from a leftist to a centrist school of thought, and that it is important for the US to understand this as a “healthy nationalism”. 271 Nevertheless, he does not indicate what he thinks about the importance of China’s understanding of Japanese nationalism. Instead, Hoshiyama starts a longer discussion on the importance of the US perception of Japan, be it regarding history, Japan’s security perceptions, the nature of its nationalism, or the values that the two countries share with one another. Before concluding his analysis, Hoshiyama asks: “Which side will the USA choose – Japan or China?” He immediately gives an answer, leaving the reader in no doubt, saying that America should favour Japan because it shares similar values and prefers the status quo of the

268 Ibid., 15.  
269 Ibid.  
270 Ibid., 18.  
271 Hoshiyama argues that Japanese nationalism stems mainly from growing concerns over the security environment, Japan’s fair treatment in the international community, and the Japanese people’s breaking of a “long-formed psychological barrier to historical (sic) discussion”. Ibid., 21-22.
international order - in other words it supports US power and an America-centred
global order. 272

Overall, Hoshiyama’s article does not attempt to break the spell of the
aforementioned ambiguity of Japan’s perceptions of the importance of its relations
with China. On the one hand, his article does provide valuable suggestions on what
policies Japan should adopt towards China. These include the strengthening of
bilateral diplomacy, promoting engagement and partnership, and emphasizing the
importance of continuous dialogue and cooperation with Beijing. When it comes to
the difference in values between the two countries, Hoshiyama even notes that while
Tokyo should assert certain values such as democracy and freedom in its diplomacy,
this does not mean that it should try to impose those values on Beijing. Instead its
focus should be on coexistence with China while acknowledging some fundamental
differences. 273

On the other hand, however, Hoshiyama’s ultimate argument is that Japan-
China relations will change only if China changes. Even after proposing a less
passive foreign policy, including more direct and proactive engagement with China,
one of Hoshiyama’s concluding remarks is that, if Japan were to “lose sight of the
importance of the Japan-US relationship” and started “leaning toward an
autonomous foreign policy,” that would upset the balance of power in East Asia. 274
Another concluding point he makes is that Japan, the USA, and the EU are facing the
issue of overcoming differences and maintaining mutual trust and solidarity, arguing
that Japan and the USA must reaffirm their alliance of shared values. When it comes
to Japan-China relations, however, Hoshiyama’s conclusion is that the USA should

272 Ibid., 25.
273 Ibid., 19-20.
274 Ibid., 26.
contribute as an active member of the bilateral relation, “rather than simply contributing to the relationship as a third party”\textsuperscript{275} His view is that in the “many problems that create friction between Japan and China, Japan remains in a passive position,” and that therefore the United States could “ideally play an active part in encouraging self-restraint on the part of China in general.”\textsuperscript{276}

Overall, it appears that Hoshiyama’s major concern about Japan-China relations is not how to make progress in that bilateral relation but how to make sure that Washington understands Tokyo’s position and will therefore remain a strong force behind Japanese diplomacy. The \textit{status quo}, in this context, does not only mean the maintenance of a US-led international order that has been working in favor of Tokyo, but it ultimately also means Hoshiyama’s implicit rejection of qualitative change in Japan-China relations -that is, not until Beijing is willing to change and be open towards a new Japan, understanding that its East Asian neighbor has already become free from the spell of history, and thus to stop creating frictions in Sino-Japanese relations.

\textbf{Kazuhiko Noguchi and Kentarō Sakuwa: bringing realism back?}

Of all the scholars cited in this chapter, perhaps Kazuhiko Noguchi is the most outspoken. He maintains that the most important factors of the contemporary Asia-Pacific are China’s rise and its “hegemonic ambition.”\textsuperscript{277} Noguchi’s main argument is that offensive realism, the most aggressive theory considering the use of a state’s power in international relations, provides the best approach to explain China’s behaviour. Offensive realism posits that states seek to maximize their power vis-à-

\textsuperscript{275} Ibid., 27.
\textsuperscript{276} Ibid.
vis one another until one of them establishes regional or global hegemony. A central tenet of the theory is that the anarchic nature of the international system and the states’ aim to maximize their power for their ultimate survival results in aggressive state behaviour in international politics. Offensive realism argues that, given the absence of a central authority that sits above states to protect them from one another, they constantly fear each other’s intentions. A state, therefore, must recognize that the more powerful it is in relation to its rivals, the better its chances are for survival. In other words, anarchy encourages states to pursue aggressive territorial expansion in order to ensure a greater security through their increased power. Offensive realists argue that great powers almost always have revisionist intentions so they will not refrain from using force in order to alter the balance of power in their favor. Since great powers always seek opportunities to gain power at the other states’ expense, “the world is condemned to perpetual great-power competition.”

Noguchi maintains that such conventional theories for China’s behaviour as liberalism, which maintains that China prefers a stable and peaceful environment for economic prosperity, and constructivism, which emphasizes the role of constructing a common identity by political and economic interactions through various institutions such as the ASEAN, the ASEAN Regional Forum and the United Nations, do not provide sufficient explanation when it comes to Beijing’s intentions. Noguchi argues that considerable evidence suggests that China is seeking a regional hegemony by aiming to maximize its relative power so that it governs all the other

279 Ibid., 14.
regional states and prevents other powers from influencing the region.\textsuperscript{280} The long-term trend and pattern of China’s military spending, according to Noguchi, shows that Beijing is pursuing a monolithic strategy designed to maximize its military power and that one should regard China’s recent low-profile cooperative policy not as a grand strategy \textit{per se} but as a tactic to buy time for completing the modernization of the Peoples’ Liberation Army.\textsuperscript{281} Noguchi’s ultimate conclusion is that Beijing’s aim is to replace the US-centric system with a new Sino-centric order in the Asia-Pacific in the future, and what is lacking for China now is not its revisionist intention but its “comprehensive national power”, particularly China’s current power projection capability.\textsuperscript{282}

Similar to Noguchi, Kentarō Sakuwa also views Japan-China relations from a realist perspective. Sakuwa’s main questions revolve around which aspect of the realist theory can be applied best to analyse China’s rise and whether that rise poses a real threat to Japan. He argues that the realist theory of power transition should be applied to best understand Sino-Japanese relations.\textsuperscript{283} The theory holds that wars and severe international conflicts are most likely to occur when the relative capabilities, be it political, economic or military, of the states in a bilateral relation is close to being equal. The likelihood of conflicts also strengthens when the power ratio in a bilateral relation is rapidly moving toward parity.\textsuperscript{284} Sakuwa adds, however, that the Sino-Japanese bilateral relation should be viewed in a larger context, particularly because of the fact that Asia is not a closed system as extra-regional powers, such as the United States or Russia, can intervene when they think their security interests are

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Noguchi, “Bringing Realism Back In: Explaining China's Strategic Behavior in the Asia-Pacific,” 63.
\item Ibid., 72-73.
\item Ibid., 76.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
at stake. The US, argues Sakuwa, requires a special consideration, since it has a permanent commitment to the region through a number of bilateral alliances, of which the US-Japanese alliance has, for decades, been the leading power which dominates the regional order in Asia.

Sakuwa explicitly assumes that this alliance is so strong that instead of anarchy, where there is no single strongest state and all are competing to be the main power, a regional order of hierarchy exists in Asia, defined by the strongest power of all, the US-Japan alliance. Sakuwa compares both the military and economic power projection capabilities of Japan and China and concludes that Japan still has a “clear advantage” over China when it comes to air and naval forces. This advantage is even more obvious, argues Sakuwa, when the US is brought into the picture and its alliance with Japan is taken into account. The US military capacity, according to Sakuwa, should be theoretically counted as Japan’s power augmentation. Sakuwa maintains that Japan will not become a military great power threatening China in the foreseeable future, while China, on the other hand, attempts to regain the great power status it lost in the dynastic era. His conclusion is that, while China’s hegemonic prospects are worrisome, it has “not yet achieved enough to threaten the leading US-Japan coalition in East Asia,” and that to maintain their power of deterrence against Chinese military activities, Japan and the US should focus on building up their respective naval and air capabilities. In other words, Sakuwa’s ultimate assumption is that the US-Japan alliance should continue defining order in the region and his suggestion is that the alliance should continue their respective

286 Ibid., 504-507.
287 Ibid., 524.
military developments. Sakuwa assumes that power will hold China in line, and that more power is needed to successfully fight against perceived threats of power.

On the face of it, both Noguchi’s and Sakuwa’s arguments imply that they view the intentions of the US-Japan alliance as something fundamentally different from that of China. However, a closer look at their work reveals that the way they attempt to tackle the China question, their approach and the framing of their argument, is not that much different. They both lay out a detailed analysis on China’s power, both military and economic, by simply comparing it to that of Japan and the US-Japan alliance. They both admit that China’s military power is still less than that of Japan’s when it comes to air and naval capabilities, and it is lagging far behind that of the US. At the time their articles were published, the US accounted for some 39 per cent of the global total military budget, while China’s share was 9.5 per cent, one fourth that of the US.\(^{288}\) China’s military budget at the time was constantly between 1.9 and 2.1 per cent of its GDP. During the same period, the US, also having a significantly larger GDP than China, spent between 4.2 and 4.6 per cent of its GDP on military expenses, and Japan about 1 per cent. At that time the same figure for India and South Korea, for instance, was 2.6-2.7 per cent and 2.6 per cent, respectively.\(^{289}\) The difference between China, the US and Japan is even more significant when we look at the per capita military budget: in that regard, Japan’s spending was approximately three times, while the US budget was a stunning 22 times, higher than that of China.\(^{290}\)


\(^{290}\) Japan: US$323, China: US$111, United States: US$2,448. All these are approximate figures based on author’s own calculations for the period between 2009-2011. See respective figures for Japan.
The major difference between China and the US-Japan alliance according to Sakuwa and Noguchi is that while they view China’s intentions as hegemonic, with Beijing’s alleged ultimate goal being dominance over East Asia, they regard the US-Japan alliance as something that can, and must, defend the region from that change happening. The underlying assumption in their argument is the continued maintenance of the power and influence of the US-Japan alliance over the region. In other words, neither scholars have any issue with the status quo that is founded on the dominance of an extra-regional and global military superpower, as long as that benefits Japan. Nor do they indicate whether China’s rise poses any threat to certain values that Japan and the US may uphold and should therefore defend. The central question both Noguchi and Sakuwa are seeking to answer is simply to what extent China poses a threat to the existing US-Japan dominance over East Asia. Ultimately, Noguchi’s and Sakuwa’s underlying assumption is that the status quo is good because it serves the interests of Japan. Since they provide no explanation as to why the existing regional order is good, their arguments ultimately remain in the context of power and interests, both of which are something Sakuwa and Noguchi point to in their criticism of China’s behaviour. Interestingly, Noguchi does not provide any policy recommendations as to how Japan should tackle the China question, apart from concluding that Tokyo recognize the offensive realist intention in Beijing’s behaviour and develop better security policies accordingly. Sakuwa does provide some general policy recommendations, such as that Japan should maintain close communication with China to make sure that there is no “radical change in the Asian regional order,” and that Japan should demonstrate that maintaining a good politico-

\[\text{291 Noguchi, “Bringing Realism Back In: Explaining China’s Strategic Behavior in the Asia-Pacific,” 78.}\]
military relationship with Tokyo and Washington serves China’s interests as well.292 However, and despite having pointed out the unquestionable dominance of the US-Japan alliance, Sakuwa’s concluding remark is that these two countries “should focus on naval (and air) construction.”293

It is important to note that both Noguchi’s and Sakuwa’s arguments are embedded in international relations theories laid out entirely by Western scholars. Their writings draw upon, and even cite from, works of realist scholars such as John Mearsheimer and David Shambaugh. For instance, in his book *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, Mearsheimer argues that if the Chinese economy continues to grow, China will attempt to dominate Asia the way the US dominates the Western Hemisphere; therefore the US will go to great lengths to prevent China from achieving regional hegemony and ultimately “great power politics will return in full force”.294 To support this argument, John Mearsheimer points out that the US, the world’s leading superpower, has acted according to the dictates of offensive realism for most of its history. He concludes that chances of a future Sino-American war are more likely than a war between the superpowers was during the Cold War.295 Similarly, David Shambaugh, one of the most prominent experts on China's foreign policy, military and security issues, argues that “China today is a dissatisfied and non-status quo power which seeks to change the existing international order and norms of inter-state relations”, and that Beijing “does not just seek a place at the rule-making table of international organizations and power brokers; it seeks to alter the rules and existing system.”296 His Chinese counterpart, Yan Xuetong, one of

293 Ibid., 524.
295 Ibid., 362.
China’s most influential international relations theorists, also argues that the anarchical nature of international politics means that “a rising power [like China] will inevitably challenge the existing hegemon and threaten its neighbors.”^{297} It is Mearsheimer’s questions, however, that are the most revealing:

“[w]hy should we expect China to act differently than the US? Are the Chinese more principled than we are? More ethical? Are they less nationalistic? Less concerned about their survival? They are none of these things, which is why China is likely to follow basic realist logic and attempt to become a regional hegemon in Asia.”^{298}

**Hidetaka Yoshimatsu and the question of identity**

Hidetaka Yoshimatsu approaches issues surrounding contemporary Japan-China relations in the context of identity and influence. His scholarship revolves around Japan’s diplomatic efforts to retain influence in East Asia and beyond, and the challenge that China’s emergence has posed in this context. Yoshimatsu points out that Japan has, for a long time, been able to maintain its prominent status in Asia by taking advantage of its economic power and foreign aid policies, through which Tokyo was also able to maintain political influence on certain governments.^{299}

However, the rise of the Chinese economy, coupled with the Japanese economy’s prolonged period of recession, has resulted in Beijing’s growing influence over the region, which, argues Yoshimatsu, is likely to force the Japanese government to formulate and implement external specific policies in order to sustain its position and

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^{297} Yan Xuetong is the Dean of the Institute of Modern International Relations at Tsinghua University and the Editor-in-Chief of The Chinese Journal of International Politics. Yan Xuetong, “From Keeping a Low Profile to Striving for Achievement,” *Chinese Journal of International Politics* 7, no. 2 (June 2014): 182. https://doi.org/10.1093/cjip/pou027.


influence in the region. Yoshimatsu points out that many Japanese scholars apply a realist perspective in their analysis of contemporary Japan-China relations, but, significantly, his approach is embedded in a constructivist one.

As opposed to material power relations, constructivist thought gives a central importance to ideational factors such as identity and norms, and the significance of institutions in the creation of common norms and principles, in a state’s foreign policy and interactions with other countries. Yoshimatsu posits that, when a state is in ‘rival relations’ with another one that has a different identity, it may take advantage of its own identity ‘to maintain influence’ internationally, particularly vis-à-vis its rival state. He hypothesizes that the Japanese government ‘redefines’ its ‘distinctive identities that are unique in Asia,’ based on which it creates specific policy ideas to formulate diplomatic strategies, all with the aim of maintaining its presence and influence in the region. Yoshimatsu argues that Japan is ‘forced to take into account the role of ideational power,’ and admits that this new strategy is ultimately a form of power exercise, particularly in the light of Beijing’s growing soft power strategies such as the Beijing Consensus and the Confucius Institute.

While Yoshimatsu does not attempt to define China’s state identity, he argues that Japan’s distinctive identity in Asia is that it has the longest history as a peaceful and democratic nation, which protects human rights under its constitution. However, Yoshimatsu admits that Japan’s “extended identity” of a nation that respects

300 Ibid., 360.
303 Ibid., 361-362. The Beijing Consensus is also referred to as China’s “alternative development model”. Generally associated with China’s peaceful rise, the Beijing Consensus proposes to solve existing issues between countries pragmatically, innovatively, and with much flexibility, as opposed to the so-called Washington Consensus that prescribes rigid policy recommendations. See Joshua C. Ramo, The Beijing Consensus (London: Foreign Policy Centre, 2004).
universal values such as democracy, freedom, human rights, and the rule of law, had only become important over recent years, particularly in promoting the idea of an East Asian Community and in forming strategic partnerships with other countries, most significantly with the United States. He argues that the inclusion of Australia, New Zealand and India in the East Asian Summit was expected to enhance the influence of Japan’s democratic partners, and India was expected to become a counter-power against the influence of China.304

In his earlier writing, interestingly, Yoshimatsu maintains that East Asia is one of the rare ‘multi-cultural regions’ of the world that has accepted various cultural and ideational values while avoiding to make some values as primary or universal and seeking to create the co-existence of different values instead.305 He therefore argues that the critical challenge for cooperation in the region is, instead of seeking to establish common values, the formation of a shared identity and common norms. Similarly, he concludes, the idea of an East Asian community of countries could only be realized if the states in that region developed a sense of common identity and norms. On the one hand, while Yoshimatsu does not define what those region-specific norms or a shared common identity should, or could, be based upon, his argument implies that those cannot be based on shared values, since every state has different values. But can shared norms and identity be established without at least a basic common understanding of values?

On the other hand, Yoshimatsu himself argues that democracy, human rights, and the rule of law are ideals that are important to many countries. Ultimately, while it is unclear how important universal values are for Yoshimatsu, his main concern appears to be maintaining Japan’s influence in the region vis-à-vis China, and the question of upholding certain values is therefore also framed in this ultimate context. Yoshimatsu himself admits that Japan had to create particular policy ideas as banners to differentiate its diplomatic policies from those of China, and search for its specific identities to legitimate such ideas. Even though at one point he admits that Japanese diplomacy used universal values simply as political rhetoric, which should raise serious questions in regards to Tokyo’s genuine commitment to these values, Yoshimatsu does not appear to be too concerned about this. What he does take issue with, however, is the instability of Japanese domestic politics, pointing out in his conclusion that it is ‘crucial to guarantee long terms of office for prime ministers.’

**Yoshihide Soeya and the question of internationalism**

Yoshihide Soeya argues that we have now reached a very important historical turning point, where the major issue is between the economic and the military power of China. Soeya maintains that the major question is whether China remains an economic power or Beijing turns its economic power into military might. This dilemma, argues Soeya, is not only important to Japan, but also for many other

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307 Ibid., 373.
308 Ibid., 372-373.
countries, and the world is yet to see which path China will choose to take. China’s rise is welcomed by Japan, as long as the world is not reversed back to ancient times.

The Senkaku/Diaoyu islands dispute, maintains Soeya, is a case in point: while China claims ownership over the islands based on historical evidence, Japan bases its claim on modern international law. The way Beijing will ultimately handle the territorial dispute will define China’s future course: cooperation or aggression. Soeya argues that Japan will not use force to settle an international dispute and the only solution is to talk and cooperate. He maintains that the major difference between the two countries is that, while China’s regional outlook is conditioned by modern elements of diplomacy such as strong nationalism, a sense of rivalry with the United States, military modernization, and territorial integrity, Japan’s foreign policies can largely be characterized as post-modern and post-industrial, focusing mostly on issues such as human security or problems around the evolution of civil society. Soeya here simply dismisses the issue of history as well as territorial disputes by saying that these issues “tend to surface in an emotional vicious cycle” between China and Japan at times, causing Japanese politics and society to show modern elements.\footnote{Yoshihide Soeya, “An East Asian Community and Japan-China relations,” \textit{East Asia Forum}, May 17, 2010. Accessed March 26, 2018. http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2010/05/17/an-east-asian-community-and-japan-china-relations/} While it is not clear what exactly Soeya means by this, his argument indicates that Japan’s society and politics are much more mature than its Chinese counterpart’s, and the former only falls back into the modern contexts of nationalism whenever challenged by the latter on these issues.

While Soeya believes that the prospect of a Japan-South Korea genuine relationship is rather idealistic than realistic at this point in time, it could serve as a trigger in moving forward East Asian regionalism, particularly as the bilateral
relationship would provide an important balance in the U.S.-China great power relation. Nevertheless, while Soeya acknowledges the importance of community-building efforts with Japan’s most troubled relationships, i.e. those with South Korea and China, he ultimately argues that Tokyo’s diplomacy should put the greatest emphasis on the Japan-US alliance, which is indispensable for Japan to mitigate modern elements of international politics and security in East Asia. With the backing of the United States, according to Soeya, Tokyo would have a better chance to push for an East Asian regionalism that is open and committed to the values important for human life.\textsuperscript{311} Remarkably, Soeya himself in an earlier speech indirectly admitted how dependent Tokyo is on Washington and the former’s lack of criticism towards the latter, envisioning a more autonomous national security strategy, meaning that a confident Japan is not afraid to question American policy.\textsuperscript{312}

In another article, Soeya points out that the biggest issue for Tokyo is the “perpetual, and widening, trust gap” Japan suffers from in its relations with China (and South Korea). He maintains that the crucial point for Tokyo when attempting to address the history problem in the 1990s was to be able to transform itself from the pacifism of the Cold War era into active internationalism after the Cold War.\textsuperscript{313} In other words, Soeya not only assumes that the issue of history was dealt with properly from the Japanese side, but that the main goal of Tokyo was never to start an honest conversation with Beijing and Seoul about lingering issues from the past, which these two countries presumably wanted to deal with, but rather to convince the likes of China and South Korea about Japan’s present and future policy goals and course

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\textsuperscript{311} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{313} Soeya Yoshihide, “A View from the Inside on Japan’s Perpetual Trust Gap,” Global Asia 8, no. 3 (September 2013): 38-39.
\end{flushright}
of action. Soeya then simply lists a number of Japanese official statements and apologies that were mainly issued by the short-lived leftist governments in the 1990s. Nevertheless, he admits that revisionist voices on the history problem did become louder and stronger in Japanese society as well, particularly in response to China’s and South Korea’s response to former Prime Minister Koizumi’s visits to the Yasukuni Shrine. This “vicious cycle,” as Soeya refers to it, has caused an atmosphere in which the Japanese public has adopted more conservative views on the history question, to the extent that this started creating significant problems in Japan’s diplomacy. As a senior Japanese government official commented in a private conversation with Soeya:

> “in my attempts to deal with the history issue with China and South Korea, much more energy is needed in dealing with Japanese conservatives than with my counterparts in Seoul and Beijing. You always have to be careful about friendly fire from behind.”

The question arises again: is the issue of history simply a diplomatic problem or there is more to it? Soeya assumes that words and official statements suffice, and disregards the fact that history is still not only a part of living memory for many people in East Asia, but still a part of their lives: incidents such as the earlier mentioned explosion of a toxic gas cache, which the retreating Japanese imperial army left behind in China, killing a construction worker and injuring a number of others in 2003, still occur. Referring to official statements made in the past appears not to be enough. Japan could, and should, take action instead.

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Discussion: strengths and weaknesses of Japanese academic scholarship

In this chapter I summarized the positions of some of the major Japanese scholars on contemporary Japan-China relations, with a particular focus on how they view Japan and how they present China to their readers, what issues they identify between these two countries and how they approach those issues, including what words and expressions they use when describing Japan vis-à-vis China. Without exception, all scholars’ arguments focus on issues around the emergence of China: what it means for Japan and the region, and how Japan should respond to this challenge. In this regard, many are genuinely concerned about China’s future path, recognizing the dilemma that Beijing may choose to turn China’s economic power into military might, pointing to the fact that there appears to be a growing gap between China’s economic cooperation and militaristic developments in the past few years. Ultimately, the most important question they ask is whether China will become a rules-based, responsible and constructive actor that respects certain values of international society, or will it indeed eventually become a hegemon? In other words, Japan’s major dilemma is whether China will take a common value-based or a self-centred and self-interest based approach in dealing with other countries. This is indeed a very important question with which many other Asian and Western academics have also been grappling in regards to China, and to which the world is yet to know a clear answer.

What I have shown, however, is the way the above cited Japanese scholars view Japan and China and, more significantly, the clear and sharp distinction they draw between the two countries. Without exception they all describe Japan in predominantly positive terms while they present China in a negative light, at times even in somewhat condescending ways. Words and expressions they use in reference
to Japan include liberalism, rules-based internationalism, most powerful democracy that should lead East Asia, being ahead of Asia, peaceful, upholding universal values such as democracy, rule of law, human rights, and the importance of civil society. China, on the other hand, is described as nationalistic, hierarchic, hegemonic, militaristic, irresponsible and not to be trusted, a menacing force from the past, a threat, power-maximizing to rule in East Asia in pre-modern dynastic ways, rejecting universal values, showcasing a sense of rivalry and, as Kitaoka implicitly refers to China (and North Korea), as the enemy. Perhaps the most significant, although quite subtle, criticism towards Japan is that, while emphasizing the importance of it being a peace-loving country, many of the scholars urge Tokyo to adopt a more assertive foreign policy to face the realities of a harsh international environment - as for instance Hoshiyama puts it – in which Japan finds itself. To this end, some do urge Tokyo to develop more relevant and proactive policies, which can be seen as a subtle criticism in regards to Japan being too passive and reactive, and perhaps even lacking in important positive visions for the future. Also, and similarly remarkably, when referring to the issue of history between the two countries, they univocally assume, or even argue, that Japan has done enough and China, for some reason, does not want to understand, let alone accept, Japanese apologies. Some even argue that it is China that should be open towards Japan in this regard, and dismiss the issue of history as simply something that Beijing uses as a diplomatic drawcard against Japan. Nevertheless, one of the most important and sensitive issues obstructing the progress of Japan-China relations is the issue of history. Although some scholars maintain that Japan is finally liberated from the spell of history, the issue not only seems to continue being one of the most significant factors defining contemporary Japan-China relations, it also appears to have a constraining effect on contemporary
Japanese scholarly thought: critical reflections on the history issue are disappointingly scarce in Japanese scholarship and arguments are predominantly framed in the context of China being irresponsible and not understanding. Those scholars who mention the issue of history argue that Japan has already done enough in this regard. They view China’s attitude as simply using the issue of history to extract concessions from the Japanese, or to spoil Japan’s international image as was seen in 2005 when China used the ‘history card’ against Japan’s bid for a seat in the UNSC.

Simply put, Japanese academic thought appears to echo Tokyo’s official stance regarding its Pacific War responsibility, which is that all the issues were addressed and fully dealt with in the San Francisco Peace Treaty and that Japan has sufficiently apologised a number of times. This view is also supported by the Japanese Supreme Court’s ruling in 2007, which stated that the individual right for compensation of Chinese victims was settled with the 1972 Joint Communique, at the time of Sino-Japanese diplomatic normalization, when the Chinese government declared that:

“in the interest of the friendship between the Chinese and the Japanese peoples, it renounces its demand for war reparation from Japan.”

This official standpoint, however, is a bit controversial in the light of the fact that even the arguably most famous Japanese international relations scholar, Takashi Inoguchi, argues that Japan’s post-war international relations research had, for many decades, revolved around the question of “what went wrong?”, in reference to the first half of the 20th Century. It is therefore obvious that Japan could not settle the

issues of its wartime conduct by merely signing a few high-level treaties and issuing a few apologies. In fact, moral and emotional issues are not simply a matter of jurisdiction and political statements. The recurring debate about whether Japan has properly apologized for its wartime actions is also a flawed approach and clearly shows the over-politicized nature of the problem in both countries, as it distracts the focus from the actual victims of Japanese wartime aggression. This is even more interesting since Japan proudly puts focus on such ‘universally accepted values’ as the importance of civil society and human security. Also, as Edgar Morin points out, Japanese apologies tend to miss their supposed goal: while they might be sincere apologies, they never ask for pardoning and forgiveness from the victims themselves. Words of their apologies only reaffirm what Japan did in the past, and the Japanese sense of remorse is internally complete “without any reference to those to whom the apologies should be directed and from whom forgiveness should be sought.”316 Another important example is the ambiguity surrounding the meaning of the official apologies. For instance, at the fiftieth anniversary of Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor, in an interview with the Washington Post, Foreign Minister Michio Watanabe expressed a deep remorse about the tremendous suffering that was inflicted upon the peoples of America and Asia by the Japanese Army. Soon after the interview was published, Foreign Ministry officials issued a comment saying that the word used in Watanabe’s interview, hansei, should have been translated as “introspection, reflection, reconsideration and soul-searching,” rather than “remorse”, and

emphasized that Watanabe’s statement was not intended to be an apology.\textsuperscript{317} Also, while the aforementioned 1995 Murayama statement is considered to be one of Japan’s most significant wartime apologies, it is important to bear in mind that it was passed in the Japanese Diet with a small margin of majority, mostly thanks to Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama’s leftist coalition. The majority of those opposing the statement came from the long-ruling Liberal Democratic Party. While it may not seem too important, the language order in which the Murayama statement is readable on the Japanese Foreign Ministry’s website is still quite telling: on the Japanese version’s page the first offered translation is in English, while it is the Japanese one on the English version page. Chinese and Korean translations are only listed as second and third, respectively.\textsuperscript{318} The order of the translations begs the question whether apologies presented to an English-speaking and a Japanese domestic audience are considered more important than reaching out to the Chinese and Korean visitors of the website.

It is also important to note history is alive not only in the memories of many Chinese. For instance, there are still hundreds of thousands of chemical weapons that were left abandoned by the Japanese imperial army at various locations across China, only 46,000 from which arsenic has been recovered to date, and even that is improperly stored and left in containers in China. China has so far claimed up to 2,000 Japanese chemical weapon-related victims since the end of World War II.\textsuperscript{319}

Therefore, Japanese arguments dismissing the issue of history as simply a political

\textsuperscript{317} As cited in Anri Morimoto, “Toward a Theology of Reconciliation: Forgiveness from the Perspective of Comparative Religion,” 160.


drawcard in the hands of Beijing should be viewed with criticism, particularly if one focuses on a values approach in discussing the issue, placing human rights and civil society at the heart of the problem. Ryōsei Kokubun, President of Japan’s National Defense Academy, concludes that, “[o]n the Japanese side there is a failure to understand the Chinese ‘obsession’ with history, while there is a failure on the Chinese side to recognize the prior Japanese apologies.”

In other words, the only failure the Japanese are ready to accept is that they do not understand why Chinese are so obsessed with history.

All this shows that a consistently overlooked fact about the history issue is that the real victims were, and continue to be, members of civil society on both sides, those who were caught in the power struggle between the two countries’ political elites. Scholars who have examined Japan’s own narratives of its wartime history describe them as narratives of victimhood, which emphasize the role of Japanese soldiers and the sufferings of Japan’s domestic population, giving little to no attention to sufferings of other societies and groups of people. As a result, narratives tend to dismiss the importance of understanding the deeper emotional and psychological needs of non-Japanese victims and evades the responsibility for both past and present suffering of them and their families. What we see today is a continued power struggle of the elites in both China and Japan for the narrative over the issue of history, while the historical suffering of their respective civil societies continues to be overlooked.

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There is much left for Japanese academic scholarship to hold the Japanese government to account. In a way, Japan still appears to be under the spell of history: sincere apologies and having a sense of genuine remorse, let alone striving for reconciliation, cannot be a matter of semantic exercise. In other words, the issue of history is not yet resolved and is made even more complicated by Japanese elite views. As Shin Chiba points out quite clearly, the failure of the post-war Japanese government to “resolve the issues of war responsibility, reparation, and individual compensation should be reconsidered the single most fatal defect in the politics of democracy in post-war Japan,” the failure of which, argues Chiba, has “become the biggest impediment to the inauguration of good and proper international relations in the post-war historical context of East Asia”.322

Another significant shortcoming of contemporary Japanese scholarship is its monolithic views on the United States. While scholars adopt only a slightly critical approach towards Japan and a very critical one on China, a perhaps similarly revealing fact is their consistent lack of any criticism towards the US. Without exception, the U.S. is viewed as an indispensable actor in Japan-China relations as well as in the region, and its role is always presented in an unquestionably positive context. The US is referred to as Japan’s number one ally, a regional and global status quo leader on which Japan must rely, and with which it is critical to have a joint approach towards China. Some even argue that Japan’s relations with the US are more important than that with China and that the US must choose sides between Japan and China and fully support Japan. The ultimate argument here, as Sakuwa explicitly puts it, is that the US-Japan led regional status quo is good as it is, and preserving it is in the interest of Japan. The reason for the lack of criticism towards

the US is, of course, Japan’s long-time dependence on the world’s leading superpower. While it is very unlikely that Japan would become a military superpower and make a bid to dominate in the foreseeable future, Japanese scholarship should pay more attention to the importance of the US not as an ally, but in terms of America’s historical and contemporary presence in East Asia, particularly in the context of US-China relations. Regardless how peaceful Japan’s intentions may be, it is very unlikely Japan could avoid being caught up in a conflict, should there be one in the future, between these two powers. It is very telling when Soeya points out that, if Japan opted to pursue a more autonomous security policy, perhaps even the US would “welcome a confident Japan that is not afraid to question American policy.”323 It is also important to note that not only Japan appears to align its foreign policy strategies with those of the US, but even the US seems to attempt to influence Japanese policy-making. Sakuwa himself points out that, particularly after the September 11 terrorist attacks, the Bush administration had urged Japan to revise the constitution and to expand its role in global security.324 Similarly, some Chinese scholars also observed that the United States is driving rather than constraining Japan’s rearmament.325 Some argue that, prior to the 1930s, Japanese foreign policy was based on ‘cooperation with the leading powers of the day, Britain and the United States,’ and that Japanese militarism was only a short-lived departure from aligning with those perceived to be the most powerful.326 Others point out that, soon after its defeat in the Pacific War, Tokyo returned to its earlier abandoned “Kasumigaseki [Ministry of Foreign Affairs] orthodox foreign policy,” which

323 Soeya, “Japan’s Middle-Power Diplomacy,” emphasis added.
basically meant cooperation with the strongest power of the time, the United States. The question is, therefore, whether Japan really joins and maintains alliances based on the strict and consistent observance of universal values and with the aim of serving the shared interests of international society.

Japanese scholarship’s general lack of criticism of the status quo is a case in point. There appears to be an overwhelming satisfaction with the US-Japan alliance as the leading power in Asia, and even as the most powerful bilateral alliance in the world. But is that alliance really based on universal values? The power of the US-Japan alliance, as well as the power of the current global and regional status quo, normatively speaking, is only good to the extent it is based on the consistent upholding of universal values and international norms and principles. In other words, the power of any status quo is only credible and acceptable as long as it is based on universal values. But is the status quo in Asia based on those values? Also, if any alliance is truly based on universal values, there must be an assumption of equality among all participating countries. Is the US-Japan alliance based on equality? The assumption that the US is the leading power, as well as the lack of the slightest criticism towards the US, indicates that perceptions of power play a more significant role than universal values, not only in the bilateral relation itself, but also in Japanese scholarly writing. While going into a deeper analysis of the status quo itself would be out of the scope of this thesis, it must be noted that there is no status quo in international relations theories that is based on the upholding of universal values. Status quo always benefits those in power and affects negatively those that are not, and the term itself assumes efforts to maintain existing power structures and a

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resistance to any change that might challenge the power of those in charge. Status quo itself is the result of the struggle for power. As such, status quo itself is, in fact, part of the problem from a values perspective.

The lack of Japan’s self-criticism and any criticism towards the role of the United States, coupled with a strong criticism towards China, indicate that perceptions of power, rather than universal values, significantly influence Japanese scholarly thought. If Japanese scholarship was really values-driven, it would be more critical towards Japan itself. Self-criticism does exist, but not in the context of Japan-China relations. For instance, the Institute for International Policy Studies, a Tokyo-based influential foreign policy think tank, issued its urgent policy recommendations for the second Abe administration in 2013, in which it argues that the Japanese education system had undergone no fundamental reform since the end of World War Two. The paper maintains that in the wake of global advances Japanese education no longer fulfils the basic goal of properly equipping students to become useful members of society. It argues that there is a lack of internationalism among the Japanese domestic workforce, and that it would be desirable to instil a sense of internationalism in Japanese students in the course of their education, including introducing “proper values” at the elementary level and ultimately producing the right kind of people for a globalized society at the tertiary level, those who are able to survive in international society. While the paper does not specify what particular values should be instilled into Japanese pupils, it does assume that certain values that would enable Japanese people to have a global perspective have been missing in Japan’s post-war education system. The question therefore arises: how

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329 Ibid.
can Japan view, and even promote, itself as a country that upholds universal values, and a leader of Asia in this regard, if those fundamental globalist/internationalist values are missing from its education system? No society’s values are embedded entirely in universal values and no society has a fully and consistently global perspective at its core. Japanese scholarship must, therefore, also be critical towards Japan itself, to avoid any loss of credibility from a truly universal values-oriented perspective.

There also appears to be an issue around the question of normativity. When writing about conflicts, scholars cannot, should not, avoid engaging with writing about possible solutions. In other words, while a descriptive style is important to understand causes of problems, a normative style that offers solutions is just as important. This is particularly important in the case of Japanese scholars writing about Japan-China relations, and especially significant from a values-based perspective. As Noriko Kamachi, a scholar of modern Japanese studies on China, argues, the strength of Japanese scholars should come from “the fact that they are confronted with the real question of how to get along with China in a changing world,” because to the Japanese China is “much more than merely a research object to satisfy their intellectual curiosity.” Significantly, she argues that China is also important for the Japanese scholars’ own moral integrity.330

However, while all scholars acknowledge the key importance of Japan’s relations with China and many of them also the significance of solving problems in order to move forward, they provide little substance when it comes to the latter. Kokubun writes that, while issues of the past are crucial, they should not be subordinated to the future, and that Japan and China should focus on values they

both share, including regional stability. In the long term, he maintains, the two countries should look at the creation of common norms and values.\textsuperscript{331} Kokubun comes short of proposing what those norms and values should be, or, apart from the issue of history, what obstacles need to be removed in order to get there.

Kitaoka argues that an international order based on the rule of law is something that would also benefit China, and that world order in the 21st century needs to be based on certain values that have been achieved since the Enlightenment.\textsuperscript{332} Nevertheless, he comes short of discussing what Japan could do to facilitate China’s peaceful rise, although he does argue, in general, that Japan needs to be more proactively pacifist. Hoshiyama maintains that “there is room for great improvement […] if China restricts its use of hard power,” but, in the meantime, Japan should focus on maintaining its alliance with the US, arguing that:

“if Japan forgets the importance of the Japan-US alliance, it may lead to Japan changing its position leaning toward a more autonomous foreign policy.”\textsuperscript{333}

Sakuwa also writes that Japan should focus on its relations with the US, and that together they should build up their military capabilities. Similarly, Noguchi does not provide any possible solution on how to move forward. Soeya writes that Japan has a “post-industrial outlook” on regionalism and therefore needs to work together with like-minded countries for an open and more inclusive regionalism. Similarly, Tanaka opines that China understands the necessity of a peaceful external environment and that Japan’s response to China’s rise should be comprehensive engagement and multilateralism. However, when it comes to actual policy-level recommendations, neither of them provide any, apart from lip-service. Tanaka writes that the single

\textsuperscript{331} Swanström and Kokubun, “Conclusion,” 211-217.
most important and urgent objective of Japanese policymakers should be to achieve a grand bargain with China with the goal of creating a win-win framework, while Tokyo should rely on the US-Japan alliance and other US security relationships in the region as a hedge against future uncertainties. He maintains that Tokyo must engage Beijing through multilateral frameworks and aim to establish a trilateral security framework among the US, China and Japan, Tokyo must proactively persuade Washington to maintain its military presence in the region.334 In other words, Tanaka believes that direct talks with Beijing are not that important and that Japan is only able to deal with China when others, particularly the United States, are involved. The obvious lack of direct engagement with China may also enhance Beijing’s threat perceptions, while it also ignores the fact that a number of outstanding issues between the two countries can only be dealt with in a bilateral context.

Overall, Japanese scholarship tends to be more descriptive than normative. In line with Kitaoka’s argument about Japan needing to be a pacifist country – which also entails that Tokyo’s policies have, for a long time, been predominantly passive, reactive, and reliant on US policies –, Japanese scholarship must also become more proactive and normative when it comes to working on possible solutions in Japan-China relations. This also includes being more critical towards Japan’s foreign policies and the US-Japan alliance. From a values perspective, the fragile situation between Japan and China is all the more reason for Japanese scholars to have a stronger focus on possible solutions, particularly because of the fact that they are well positioned to see the complexities of Japan-China relations. They must avoid current political conflicts to put limits on their views of Japan-China relations, as

those views appear to be framed mostly in the contexts of power and competition for influence.

Japanese scholarship is very sensitive to Beijing’s assertiveness and is very concerned about what future course China may take. Its views on China not being open to conversation and cooperation are not unfounded. What it appears not to question, however, is how much Japan is open to converse and cooperate with China and, indeed, how much scholars themselves are open to understand China – not to mention being compassionate towards it, as Kitaoka suggests. If values really played a central role in Japanese academic writings, scholars would focus more on what Japan, and others like the US, could do better, rather than simply putting the onus on China to change. In a situation where an authoritarian and isolationist China and a supposedly internationalist and values-oriented Japan are facing each other, the only scenario towards a solution is that the more mature and open one, presumably Japan in this case, will adopt a more self-critical attitude and do some in-depth soul-searching.

In other words, a central challenge for Japanese scholarship appears to be to focus more on inclusive value-based solutions rather than short-term and ultimately exclusive, power- and interest-based approaches that can be traced behind to universal values-based arguments. As long as perceptions of power and prestige limit the focus of research, Japanese academic writing will be just as problematic as Japan-China relations. Japanese research needs to establish progressive value-based approaches, which include reflections on its own perceptions of power and critical analysis of the roles of Japan and the United States, as well as of its own premises. This challenge is perhaps the single most urgent one facing contemporary Japanese academic scholarship.
Masaru Tamamoto, a professor of Asian studies at the University of Cambridge, writes that what Japan sees as progress is in reality its mistaken ability to imitate outside models. But, he argues:

“if progress is defined by pursuing a vision of a desirable future, then the Japanese never progressed. What we had was a concept of order and placement, which is essentially stasis. (…) We have run out of outside models to imitate. We must start from scratch, embracing an idea of progress that is based on innovation, ambition and dynamism.”

Drawing on Tamamoto’s critical reflections, Japan not only needs to be more proactive but it also needs to reflect on what progress really entails, and to come up with its own solutions accordingly. Working on better approaches and research models based on universal values would be an ideal way of moving forward.

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Chapter Three

The role of values in Japan’s political strategies vis-à-vis China

Introduction

This chapter examines the diplomatic strategies Japan has formulated in regards to its relations with China since the beginning of the 2000s, such as the concept of an East Asian Community, the Arc of Freedom and Prosperity, and the so-called values-oriented diplomacy (kachi gaikō). The chapter has a particular focus on the development of values-oriented diplomacy, a concept that emerged in the mid-2000s and played an important recurring, yet ambiguous, role in Japan’s relations with China over the past decade, starting from the first Abe administration that took office in 2006. In this chapter I argue that, while the values-oriented diplomacy initially aimed at strengthening Japan’s international influence and fostering a closer cooperation with like-minded’ countries, it ultimately served as a tool to counterbalance China’s growing economic power and political influence. Japan’s values-oriented diplomacy could therefore be viewed both as a direct and indirect diplomatic strategy to counter China’s influence and an attempt to create a new Japanese national identity and an international image clearly different from that of China’s ‘values’ and international image. Ultimately, Japan’s values-oriented diplomacy resulted in distancing Japan from China, hence it not only became counterproductive, an obstacle to strengthening Sino-Japanese relations, but it also conflicted with the principles it was supposed, by its own value-assumptions, to uphold. The chapter also looks into the development of Japan’s other regional strategies and argues that, particularly in the light of frequent changes of government in the 2000s and early 2010s, Japan’s regional strategies became hectic and erratic,
showing a significant lack of consistency and ultimately a disregard for some of the very values its foreign policy strategies were meant to uphold and advocate for.

**Japan’s ambiguity towards values in its relations with China and East Asia from the end of the Cold War until the early 2000s**

As argued earlier, Japan’s dominant approach towards its international relations has been realism throughout most of its modern history, and its approach towards China was no different. Japan’s handling of the 1989 Tiananmen Square events and of their aftermath is a case in point.

The international community had imposed a number of sanctions on China in the wake of the Tiananmen Square incident. In line with international sanctions, Tokyo’s political relations with Beijing were suspended soon after the Chinese government’s crackdown on the Tiananmen Square protests. At the same time, however, Tokyo embarked on a conscious policy that aimed to bring China back from its international isolation, and Japan became the first major country to befriend China after the Tiananmen incident. Japan’s policy at the time was not known as terribly sensitive to human rights issues. Japan’s approach was rather pragmatic and focused on practical engagement with China instead of advocating for certain values or principles. This was highlighted by a number of mutual foreign ministerial and prime ministerial level visits between Tokyo and Beijing in 1991 and 1992.

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337 Lam Peng Er, “Introduction,” in *Japan’s Relations with China: Facing a Rising Power*, 16.


339 Ibid. Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu was the first to visit Beijing in August 1991 to establish special ties with China as a part of a new international order.
and finally by the Japanese Emperor’s highly symbolic visit to Beijing on the anniversary of the establishment of the two countries’ diplomatic relations in October 1992.\textsuperscript{340} While for the United States, Japan’s major Cold War ally, China’s importance had significantly declined with the collapse of the Soviet Union, Beijing continued to play a significant role for Tokyo as a vital pillar for both regional stability in East Asia and for an emerging new international order in which Tokyo could play a more proactive and possibly leading role, given that East Asia was no longer constrained by the ideological divide that defined international relations in the region during the Cold War.\textsuperscript{341}

Even though the Japanese economy experienced a sudden and abrupt downturn in the early 1990s, a first in the post-war period, as still the leading economic power in Asia by far, Japan was confident in its quick recovery and continued strengthening its economic diplomacy in China.\textsuperscript{342} While seeing value in its relations with China from an economic point of view, Japan also considered it important to relate to some of the cultural and historical values it had long shared with China. As Takashi Sugimoto points out, based on a sense of shared cultural roots such as a ‘Confucian concept of social order, Japan opted to give it time and wait patiently for China to organize its domestic order so that Beijing could avoid a lasting and damaging internal political turmoil. In line with that policy, Tokyo deliberately kept quiet

\textsuperscript{340} The Emperor’s visit was the first of its kind during the post-Pacific War period. Koji Murata, “Domestic Sources of Japanese Policy Towards China,” in Japan’s Relations with China: Facing a Rising Power, 39.


about ongoing and serious human rights issues in order not to further isolate China and force it into a possible open confrontation with the West.343

At that time Japan considered itself to be an advanced Western type of country, boasting a strong market economy and the oldest democratic system in Asia. Having the best of the two worlds, Japan thought it was best positioned to be both an economic and political model country for its Asian counterparts, a bridge between East and West344. Japan’s outstanding performance in Asia, which had resulted in the country becoming the world’s second strongest economy by the late 1960s, was considered to be a result of its successful amalgamation of modern Western and traditional Asian values. This ambiguous relation between Western values, such as democracy and the respect for human rights and freedoms, and traditional Asian values,345 such as a social hierarchy based on Confucian ideals, the principle of collectivism and the restriction of personal freedom for the sake of society and the nation, had continued to influence Japan’s views on China and on its role in East Asia for the rest of the 1990s, and even into the 2000s. For example, the 2003 Tokyo Declaration envisioned an East Asian Community of nations ‘upholding Asian traditions and values, while respecting universal rules and principles’ at the same time, thus advocating both Asian traditional values and universal rules and principles.346 While being a strong advocate for both Asian/Eastern and Western values, Tokyo never made it clear how those two different sets of values could successfully be observed in practice, let alone attempting to synthesize them in a

new system where both Asian/Eastern and Western values coexisted harmoniously. In fact, Japan had many times attempted to brush aside this ambiguity by opting for a more pragmatic approach and leaving the reconciliation of Asian/Eastern and Western values open. Japan’s continued ambiguity towards values can be best observed in the 2004 Issue Papers of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in which the ministry argued that there was no single and unified understanding about universal values and that while Asian values could provide for some common ground for East Asian community building, the understanding of those values could still differ between different groups of people:

“[e]ven on universally recognized principles, like democracy and human rights, our positions sometimes differ. Asian values and traditions may also provide certain grounds for commonness. But they are often shared only among people of the same ethnic and other belongings.” 347

While this argument pointed to the fact that there was no clear definition as to the meaning of those values, Japan’s actions at the time were still guided by the motivation to ultimately overcome these differences and work towards establishing shared values and common interests with its neighbors in order to achieve the long term goal of successful community building among East Asian countries.

Japan’s own answer to this ‘universal values challenge’ started to take shape with the creation of the Council on East Asian Community, a half-private, half-public think tank that was funded by the Japanese government. The CEAC, inaugurated in Tokyo in May 2004, was led by ex-diplomat and political scientist Kenichi Itō, sponsored by former Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone, and its membership consisted of representatives of public policy think tanks, business

corporations, ex-bureaucrats, scholars, journalists, and politicians. The think tank was an intellectual response to the China-initiated Network of East Asian Think Tanks (NEAT). At the NEAT’s 2nd Annual Conference in Beijing, Itō saw ‘for the first time in my life Asians coming from different countries speaking in one voice and working for one purpose’, and was deeply touched by the aspiration of the participating countries to work towards a common purpose of building an East Asian community. Having returned to Japan from the conference, Itō and his colleagues called for an all-Japan intellectual platform where proper research and discussion regarding the concept of an East Asian community could be facilitated. In his commentary on the Japanese perspective of community building in East Asia, Itō argued that this goal could not be achieved by the “mere promotion of the functional cooperation alone,” and that the creation of the sense of community or a shared identity among the people of East Asia was necessary. In this publication Itō further argued that something more powerful than a common interest was needed, pointing out that a regional community needs to be based on “common values” that are shared by every country in East Asia. He broadly identified those necessary common values as a sense of respect and the principle of equality. A year later Itō was still vague about defining particular regional values, and while he reiterated his stance on the importance of creating an East Asian identity based on shared values, the underlying vision of his argument was that countries of the region should work together on the realization of such Western-originated universal values as liberal

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348 Itō has also been president and CEO of The Japan Forum on International Relations (JFIR) since its inception in 1987, and also served as chairman of the Global Forum of Japan (GFJ). See the three organizations’ homepages at http://www.ceac.jp/e/ (CEAC); http://www.jfir.or.jp/e/ (GFIR); http://www.gfj.jp/e/ (GFJ).
350 Ibid., 3.
351 Ibid.
This interesting ambiguity between advocating universal values and seeking at the same time to establish common values in East Asia based on the specific history of the region was a unique characteristic of Japanese policy-making until the mid-2000s. However, the China-wide anti-Japan protests and China’s opposition to Japan’s bid for a seat in the UNSC marked a turning point in Sino-Japan relations in 2005, which resulted in a significant shift in Japan’s views on shared values.

Based on Itô’s and the CEAC’s suggestions, Tokyo decided to focus on advocating for universal values in the beginning of that year, a change marked by Kanehara’s speech at the Japan Information and Culture Center. In his policy speech on January 27, Kanehara, the political minister at the Japanese Embassy in Washington at that time, laid out Japan’s Grand Strategy for the 21st Century. He argued that “Japan is no longer a small defeated nation” as Prime Minister Yoshida saw the country some 50 years ago, and therefore “it needs to stand up to do something good to (sic) the international community to which it owes today’s prosperity.”

Japan’s goal, according to Kanehara, should be to promote democracy, free market, and to enhance stability and prosperity in the region, which, maintained Kanehara, were not only in Japan’s and America’s interests.

“Today’s spread of democracy in the region is nothing but the result of tireless and colossi (sic) efforts by the United States to be a beacon of democracy worldwide,” argued Kanehara, and added that it therefore came natural that ‘the

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Japan-US Alliance, the alliance of the two biggest industrial democracies in the Asia-Pacific region, is and will be the best vehicle to achieve this daunting goal’. Kanehara concluded that while China had different values and political regime, Japan needed to help reform powers like China and make them constructive partners.

Based on Kanehara’s guidelines, Japan argued for expressing the importance of universal values at the inaugural East Asia Summit in December 2005, and succeeded in convincing other participant countries to include in the EAS statement that the summit “will be an open, inclusive, transparent and outward-looking forum in which we strive to strengthen global norms and universally recognised values.”

The EAS meeting clearly showed the difference between China’s and Japan’s vision for the region: China was in favour of a closed regionalism that was exclusive to East and South East Asian countries, while Japan preferred an open regionalism that welcomed extra-regional countries as well. Behind the two differing visions for East Asian regionalism appeared to be a growing struggle for regional leadership between Japan and China. Based on its staggering economic growth that coincided with Japan’s prolonged economic decline, Beijing’s aim was to organize regional institutions and cooperation based on Chinese leadership. Although Beijing opposed this, Japan’s purpose was to bring in extra-regional countries such as the United States, India, Australia, and New Zealand, in order to counter China’s growing influence. At the time East Asia was still very much in the making, and Tokyo’s and Beijing’s visions were the two main competing ones in creating an overarching structure for the region that would have long term consequences for regional leadership, values, structures, and decision-making processes. The inaugural East Asia Summit in December 2005 showed both Japan’s and China’s partial success in

advocating their own visions and values for the region. Japan was partly successful in that extra-regional countries such as India, Australia, and New Zealand were also invited as participants. On the other hand Japan’s major ally, the United States, was left off the list, which indicated China’s partial success. The US reacted with obvious concern to being left out from the first East Asia Summit in 2005, and firmly objected to an East Asian regionalism that was exclusive of the United States. The events of 2005 had drawn the interests of Japan and the United States close to each other, and references to both common and universal values became more frequent in their joint statements, to a point where Koizumi reiterated the importance of a value alliance (kachi dōmei) during his last trip to Washington in June 2006. The US-Japan Joint Statement clearly stated that the bilateral alliance was based on universal values and common interests:

“The United States and Japan stand together not only against mutual threats but also for the advancement of core universal values such as freedom, human dignity and human rights, democracy, market economy, and rule of law.”

The text also explicitly stated that these core universal values were deeply rooted in the long historic traditions of both countries. A values-based alliance with the United States provided an essential pillar of Japan’s direct, as well as indirect, engagement with the rest of Asia in the following years, while Tokyo’s pursuit of a rather


pragmatic diplomacy also continued to play an important role in its international relations. This continued tension between value-oriented diplomacy and pragmatic realism growingly defined Japan’s foreign policies in the 2000s and beyond, as this chapter explores in detail next.

**Values versus pragmatism: the emergence of the concepts of the East Asian Community and the Arc of Freedom and Prosperity**

As established earlier in the chapter, Japan’s ambiguous approach to values in its relations with China, and other countries in Asia, continued from the 1990s into the 2000s. However, with the development of the universal values concept in Tokyo’s foreign policy, this ambiguity could not only be observed in the contexts of Asian’ versus Western values, but also in terms of a growing tension between advocating for certain values at some times while giving priority to practical interests in Tokyo’s foreign policy strategies at other times. This newly emerging ‘dualist foreign policy’ of pursuing values and pragmatic interests at the same time can best be observed in Japan’s two, remarkably different, visions for regional cooperation: the concept of an East Asian Community (*Higashi Ajia Kyōdōtaikō*) and the concept of an Arc of Freedom and Prosperity (*Jiyū to Han’ei no Kō*).

**The East Asian Community initiative**

The 1997-1998 Asian Financial Crisis brought an abrupt end to the so-called Asian values debate and instead of a continued debate on what Asian values meant for Asia and how those fit with Western values, for instance, South East and East Asia started focusing on deepening regional economic development and cooperation. This coincided with China’s becoming a member of the World Trade Organization in the
year 2000, resulting in China’s deeper integration into the world economy and providing new opportunities for economic cooperation. China’s handling of the Asian Financial Crisis was in sharp contrast with that of the United States and some Western institutions, such as the U.S.-led World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, that appeared to attempt to exploit the financial fragility of the most affected Asian countries in order to achieve more market penetration into the region. China’s image among Asian countries who had been cautious and measured toward Beijing since the Tiananmen Square events therefore changed to that of a more reliable and responsible country. As a result, regionalism based on economic cooperation had deepened among Asian countries from the late 1990s. An important milestone in this was when the leaders of both China and ASEAN member states signed the Framework Agreement on China-ASEAN Comprehensive Economic Cooperation at the sixth China-ASEAN Summit in November 2002. This would eventually lead to a free trade agreement in the coming years.358

While Japan had been reluctant to propose any initiative for regional cooperation until the late 1990s, the Asian Financial Crisis and China’s subsequent elevated position as a possible future leader in Asia meant that Tokyo had to face a new set of circumstances and opportunities that required it to take a more proactive approach towards the region if it wanted to stay in a leading position. As a result of its efforts to be at the helm of regional cooperation and community-building, Japan’s concept of an East Asian Community had emerged by the beginning of the 2000s. At a meeting with ASEAN countries in Singapore in January 2002, then Japanese Prime

Minister Jun’ichirō Koizumi proposed the creation of a “community that acts together and advances together.”

In his speech, Koizumi envisioned a community of East Asian countries that was able to put aside historical, cultural, and political differences and instead focus on pragmatic goals, predominantly on regional cooperation and economic development. In the same speech Koizumi also pointed to the importance of Japan’s deepening cooperation with China, praising the active role Beijing was willing to play in regional cooperation, and emphasized China’s wealth and huge economic potential. While Koizumi’s speech placed a particular importance on Japan’s relations with China and the Republic of Korea, the occasion and place of his presentation suggested that Tokyo believed the Japan-ASEAN relationship should form the core of an East Asian Community, based upon which cooperation with other Asian countries like China and South Korea should be built.

Subsequent debates about the establishment of an East Asian Community were centred around membership. While China was in favour of a closed type of regionalism that limited membership to the ASEAN+3 countries, Japan advocated for an “outward-looking” community which was open to countries outside the region, particularly Australia and New Zealand. As a response to growing debates on membership, Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs created its Issue Papers, first presented to the ASEAN+3 Foreign Ministers meeting in 2004, in which it expanded

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360 The ASEAN+3 countries consist of the ten members of ASEAN (Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam), plus China, Japan, and South Korea.

on its vision for an EAC. The papers acknowledged difficulty in creating an EAC based on shared values and principles, and proposed to focus on practical community-building based on functional cooperation instead. At the same time, as Akihiko Tanaka explains, Japan continued to incorporate like-minded countries like Australia and New Zealand in its vision for an EAC. Similarly, Hitoshi Tanaka, who was deeply involved as Director-General of the Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau in MOFA, also maintains that, while the emphasis was placed on cooperation among the ASEAN member states, China, Japan and South Korea, the proposal to include Australia and New Zealand was a strategic addition by Tokyo in order to strengthen Japan’s influence by mitigating China’s growing leverage in the region.

The very first East Asian Summit meeting in December 2005 saw the further deepening of debates around the membership of Australia and New Zealand. China and Malaysia firmly opposed expanding membership beyond the ASEAN+3 group, while the Japanese delegates advocated for the inclusion of the two extra-regional countries. However, the summit was preceded by anti-Japanese demonstrations in China and the Republic of Korea, which caused significant damage to Japan’s international image and outreach in East Asia. By this time, Sino-Japanese relations reached a significant turning point due to a number of reasons.

Japan-China relations reached a turning point during the tenure of Prime Minister Koizumi (2001-2006), when bilateral relations, especially in regional arrangements, had gradually become more competitive than cooperative. Koizumi’s generally unapologetic attitude towards Japan’s role in the Pacific War, and his

362 “Issue Papers prepared by the Government of Japan.”
365 Yoshimatsu, “Identity, policy ideas, and Asian diplomacy: Japan’s response to the rise of China,” 364.
annual visits as prime minister to the controversial Yasukuni Shrine, a Shinto shrine that is considered to be one of the strongest links to Japan’s imperial past and wartime atrocities by the Chinese, caused a growing resentment in China. In November 2004, a Chinese nuclear submarine intruded into Japanese territorial waters, which incident triggered the Japanese government to execute its Maritime Security Action Plan for only the second time in history. Remarkably, between 2004 and 2005, the number of Chinese electronic warfare planes violating Japan’s air defense zone had increased eightfold, going up from 13 times in 2004 to 107 times in 2005. As a result, Japan’s 2004 National Defense Guidelines identified China as a potential threat to Japan for the first time, stating that Japan has to “remain attentive to [China’s] future actions.”

Interestingly, this period coincided with Japan’s bid for a permanent seat on the UNSC, which met with a strong resistance from Beijing, generating street protests in a number of major Chinese cities. Some of these protests eventually turned into anti-Japanese riots, during which Japanese business properties were intentionally damaged. Japan eventually failed to secure a seat on the Security Council, largely due to Beijing’s political opposition. Growing tensions in Sino-Japanese relations could also clearly be observed in the sharp drop in the expressions of affinity towards each other in a public opinion poll conducted by the Japanese

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366 As noted in Chapter One, Koizumi started making annual visits to the controversial Yasukuni Shrine as prime minister in 2001. He made six visits to Yasukuni during his 6 year term, the last of which was arguably on the most sensitive day of the calendar: August 15 is the commemorative day of Japan’s World War II surrender. For more details see Caroline Rose, “Stalemate: The Yasukuni Shrine Problem in Sino-Japanese Relations,” in Yasukuni, the War Dead, and the Struggle for Japan’s Past, ed. John Breen (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 23-45.


368 Masako Ikegami, “Taiwan’s Strategic Relations with its Neighbors: A Countervailing force to Rising China,” in European Perspectives on Taiwan, eds. Jens Damm and Paul Lim (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2012), 113.

government in 2004 and 2005, plummeting to some of the lowest levels since the Pacific War.\textsuperscript{370} Another indication of a strengthening Sino-Japanese competition was the fact that Chinese GDP growth was rapidly catching up with that of a stagnating Japan: while Japanese GDP was four times larger than that of China in 2000, this gap had dropped to 200 per cent by 2005, with strong indications that China’s GDP was on track to overtake Japan’s in the next few years.\textsuperscript{371}

In the light of these developments, Japan looked for ways in which it could curb China’s influence and growing power in the region while strengthening Tokyo’s position. As a result, Takio Yamada, Director of the Regional Policy Division in the Asian and Oceanian Bureau at MOFA, officially set out four principles for an East Asian Community in November 2005. These were 1) open regionalism inclusive of extra regional countries; 2) functional cooperation; 3) confidence-building in the area of security; and 4) encouraging a forward-looking transformation of East Asia. Yamada argued that the region’s emerging new middle class was the generation of globalisation and expressed his hope that universal values would therefore become much more deeply rooted in the region. He pointed out that Japan should encourage such forward-looking transformation and “strive to


create conditions where universal values like democracy are respected and can flourish throughout the entire region."372

As a result, and particularly in the shadow of a rapidly emerging China, Japan had opted to work towards an East Asian Community that openly upholds universal values and aimed to receive support also from extra-regional democracies such as India, Australia, and New Zealand.

However, strengthening competition had further widened the gap between Japan’s and China’s vision for an East Asian Community, and the two countries were unable to reach consensus in relation to issues around membership and leadership. Under such circumstances there was no apparent will or passion to make any progress with community-building in East Asia, and growing frictions between the region’s two largest powers had by 2005 turned the concept of an East Asian Community into a dead-end idea.373

The rise and decline of value-oriented diplomacy and the “Arc of Freedom and Prosperity”

Having realized its failure to improve relations with China, Japan set about constructing a new diplomatic strategy, in which a strengthened alliance with the United States and the promotion of universal values such as democracy and human rights came to play a central role. The importance of such values in Japan-US relations, however, was not new at the time. One of the more recent examples was a joint statement issued in the light of the September 11 terrorist attacks, which states

that basic values of freedom and democracy are shared by the two nations and that
the attacks posed a serious threat to these values shared by the US, Japan, and the
international community.\textsuperscript{374} Nevertheless, the active promotion of universal values
became a common policy initiative with the issuance of the Joint Statement of the
U.S.-Japan Security Consultative Committee in February 2005, which defined the
promotion of fundamental values such as basic human rights, democracy, and the
rule of law in the international community as a top global common strategic
objective.\textsuperscript{375} Interestingly, the joint statement came not long after Kanehara had
delivered his aforementioned speech on Japan’s 21\textsuperscript{st} Century Grand Strategy in
January the same year. In it Kanehara placed a central importance on the Japan-US
alliance, the alliance of the two biggest industrial democracies in the Asia-Pacific
region, as being the best vehicle to maintain a strategic stability and economic
prosperity in the entire region.\textsuperscript{376} Most importantly, Kanehara added that promoting
these goals along with the values of democracy and free market was the historic
mission of the Japan-US Alliance, in which mission Japan also needed to cooperate
with other industrial democracies such as South Korea and Australia.\textsuperscript{377} His speech
in Washington and the subsequent joint US-Japan statement on actively promoting
universal values would be hard to see as a mere coincidence given the deepening
tensions in Japan-China relations.

Having forged a values-based alliance with the United States and with the
inauguration of Shinzō Abe, who was generally regarded as having a hawkish stance

\textsuperscript{376} Kanehara, “Japan’s Grand Strategy in the 21\textsuperscript{st} Century.”
\textsuperscript{377} Ibid.
on China, as Japan’s new prime minister in September 2006, universal values came to play a central role in Japan’s developing foreign policy strategies. Japan started looking for partners that were likely to share the same values in an effort to strengthen those values in the region. In the same year he was elected, Abe published a book titled *Towards a Beautiful Country (Utsukushii Kuni e)*, in which he explains his political philosophy and his vision for Japan as a beautiful and confident country. In the book he states that Japan needs to show leadership in contributing to and cooperating on the sharing of universal values with other countries, especially in Asia. In order to achieve this, maintained Abe, it would be important to convene a summit or ministerial meeting among Japan, Australia, the United States, and India in order to achieve the strategic goal of promoting such values across the region.\(^\text{378}\)

In a speech to the Japanese Diet in early 2007, Abe introduced a new concept of “Proactive Diplomacy,” signalling his intention to make Japan more actively contribute towards pressing global issues, “a country that will serve as a new role model in the international community of the 21st century.”

Abe’s Proactive Diplomacy was founded on three pillars: (a) strengthening partnerships with countries that share the fundamental values of freedom, democracy, basic human rights and rule of law, (b) creating an Asia that is open and rich in innovation, and (c) contributing to global peace and stability. While Abe did not make a direct reference to China, he argued that the security environment surrounding Japan was changing drastically and that the cornerstone of Japan's diplomacy is the Japan-U.S. Alliance for the World and Asia.\(^\text{379}\)


During Abe’s first government, Tarō Asō assumed the role of Japan’s foreign minister. Asō was the grandson of Shigeru Yoshida, Japan’s first Prime Minister after the Pacific War, who became famous for adopting a strategy that defined Japan’s foreign policy in the latter half of the 20th century. Asō, another right-wing Liberal Democratic Party politician with a hawkish view on China, had developed a new foreign policy concept, in which the ideas formulated in Kanehara’s speech and Abe’s book played a central role. A few months after the reaffirmation of the US-Japan alliance along the lines of promoting universal values, in November 2006, Asō delivered a speech to the Japan Institute of International Affairs, a foreign policy think tank founded by his grandfather. In his speech Asō stressed that Japanese diplomacy needed a vision. Japan’s answer to this challenge, argued Asō, was its formulation of a value oriented diplomacy which involved placing emphasis on universal values. He argued that, looking back on history, Japan had long honoured universal values such as freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law, and in that regard, Japan “deserves to be considered as one of the true veteran players out there on the field.”

In his view, Japanese democracy went back as early as the Meiji period, but concepts such as the rule of law had existed earlier, possibly going back as far as

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380 The so-called Yoshida Doctrine placed central importance on economic development to reconstruct Japan’s war-torn domestic economy while relying on the security alliance with the United States. See Bert Edström, Japan’s Evolving Foreign Policy Doctrine: From Yoshida to Miyazawa (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), 8-25.


1,400 years ago. Asô expressed his determination to actively promote universal values and introduced the term “Arc of Freedom and Prosperity” as being the other new visionary concept of Japan’s proactive foreign policy strategy. In his speech he explained that this new concept was designed to help democratic nations come together in the outer rim of the Eurasian landmass, with the aim to strengthen universal values in those nations.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ 2007 Bluebook further expands on Asô’s vision:

“This new pillar of Japanese diplomacy involves placing emphasis on universal values such as freedom, democracy, fundamental human rights, the rule of law, and the market economy and creating an Arc of Freedom and Prosperity. This Arc would start from Northern Europe and traverse the Baltic states, Central and South Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus, the Middle East, and the Indian subcontinent, then cross Southeast Asia finally to reach Northeast Asia. Here, a region of stability and plenty with its basis in universal values - the Arc of Freedom and Prosperity - would take shape, and indeed it is just such a region that this initiative seeks to create. It is crucial that there be the protection of freedom and fundamental human rights as well as the establishment of a market economy through a system that features both democracy and the rule of law. It is only when citizens are free that political stability and economic prosperity will come to last. The path Japan travelled in the 60 years since the end of World War II demonstrates this plainly.”

The document states that the concept of the Arc of Freedom and Prosperity is a new pillar supporting Japan’s existing foreign policy strategy to reinforce the Japan-US alliance and international cooperation under the auspices of the United Nations, as

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383 Ibid.
384 See the “Arc of Freedom and Prosperity” envisioned on the map by MOFA on page 174.
well as to enhance relationships with neighboring countries, including that with China. It also emphasizes that the creation of an international society having universal values at its core should not be limited to only the geographical regions covered by the concept of the Arc of Freedom and Prosperity; these values should also be shared with China, Latin America and Africa.\textsuperscript{386} While acknowledging the importance of enhancing relationships with neighboring countries such as China and the Republic of Korea, when it comes to diplomatic strategies towards Japan’s neighbors, the Bluebook does not outline any particular vision, let alone policy, of direct engagement with China. Instead, the Bluebook positions relations with ASEAN countries as the core of Japan’s Asian diplomacy, and notes that ASEAN had been developing as the growth centre of the globe and is the engine of regional integration, while its member states had been making steady progress in democratization.\textsuperscript{387}

Despite lacking any particular vision or policy of engagement with China, Prime Minister Abe did initially make a noticeable attempt to deflate tensions between Japan and China by visiting Beijing in October 2006. This was his first trip overseas as Japan’s prime minister and his visit was welcomed as yet another turning point in Sino-Japanese relations by the Chinese government.\textsuperscript{388} In a sharp contrast to Japan’s newly emerged foreign policy strategy for Asia, however, the subsequent Japan-China Joint Press Statement did not contain any reference to universal values. Instead, the document noted that both sides acknowledged that “Japan-China relations have become one of the most important bilateral relations for both

\textsuperscript{386} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{387} Ibid.
countries,” recognized the mutual interdependence between both countries, stated that Japan and China would “strengthen coordination and cooperation on international and regional issues” and that it was “the solemn responsibility of both countries and of the bilateral relations in the new era to contribute constructively to the peace, stability, and development of Asia and the world.”

The statement even committed to start a joint research of history by setting up a group of research scholars in both countries. It seemed that despite Japan’s rhetoric about a firm commitment to universal values and an underlying criticism of China for violating those values, Japan was still able and willing to strike a more cooperative tone with China and focus on practical issues of cooperation and strengthening trust between the two countries. Overall, Abe’s visit to Beijing was intended to remove the deadlock between the two countries and give new momentum to bilateral relations by putting the focus on practical challenges rather than on common values. However, as Ryōsei Kokubun points out, this new orientation based on “common strategic interests” was only agreed in principle and no specific content was clarified at that point.

A similar statement was issued when Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao visited Japan in April the following year, in which the two sides promised to build a mutually beneficial relationship based on common strategic interests. No detailed agreements or particular cooperation followed.

Instead, what the Abe government had in mind, however, was to place the real emphasis on cooperation with extra-regional and like-minded countries such as the

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US, Australia, and India, as Abe himself explains in his book *Towards a Beautiful Country*. In line with that idea, Abe embarked on a tour to strengthen relations with those countries. Accordingly, Abe and Australian Prime Minister John Howard agreed to enter into formal talks about a bilateral economic partnership agreement in December 2006, which led to the signing of the Japan-Australia Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation in March the following year. The Declaration affirmed that the two countries’ strategic partnership was based on democratic values, a commitment to human rights, freedom and the rule of law, and committed to the continuing development of their strategic partnership to reflect shared values and interests.392 Among others, the agreement stated that Japan and Australia will strengthen cooperation on issues of common strategic interest in the broader Asia-Pacific region and beyond, including border security, counter-terrorism, peace operations, maritime and aviation security, exchange of strategic assessments and related information, and contingency planning. The Declaration concluded that the two countries would develop an action plan with specific measures to advance security cooperation, and that bilateral strategic dialogue between Japan and Australia would further be strengthened, including an annual dialogue between their respective Foreign Ministers and Defence Ministers.393 The document was followed by a number of bilateral meetings and other agreements, including the Memorandum on Defence Cooperation in December 2008,394 which promised to strengthen defence cooperation within a trilateral framework among Japan, Australia and the United States and expand cooperation in regional multilateral frameworks such as the

393 Ibid.
ASEAN Regional Forum, a key forum for security dialogue in Asia in which Australia, the United States and India participate as dialogue members. At the same time, Tokyo strengthened its relationship with New Delhi as well: Abe and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh signed the Joint Statement Towards a Japan-India Strategic and Global Partnership, in which the two leaders affirmed that India and Japan are “natural partners as the largest and most developed democracies of Asia” and agreed that the two countries share a “common commitment to democracy, open society, human rights, rule of law and a free market economy.”

The two prime ministers also launched the India-Japan Friendship Year 2007 campaign aimed at strengthening cultural and economic ties between the two countries, and announced the India-Japan Special Economic Partnership Initiative. The joint statement was later followed by the Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation between Japan and India, signed in Tokyo in October 2008, which was the third declaration on security cooperation that Japan signed, following similar declarations with the US and Australia. The document reaffirmed bilateral cooperation consonant with the values that the earlier joint statement emphasized.

Quite remarkably, the start of Japan’s value-oriented diplomacy coincided with NATO’s new initiative of an Alliance with global partners launched in April 2006, which aimed at reaching beyond its traditional partnership and establishing deeper relations with countries such as Australia and Japan and regions such as Central

397 Ibid.
Asia. Seizing this opportunity, Abe visited the NATO headquarters in Brussels in January 2007, a first such visit by a Japanese prime minister. There he made a speech in which he asserted that NATO and Japan are partners that have in common such fundamental values as freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law, therefore “[i]t is only natural that we cooperate in protecting and promoting those values.”

He acknowledged that while China presented great opportunities to all, there were some uncertainties around its increasing defence expenditures and lack of transparency, therefore “[w]e need to pay close attention to the future of this nation,” and concluded that Japan and NATO “have to elevate democracy in places where it is emerging; consolidate respect for human rights where it is suppressed.”

As part of Foreign Minister Tarō Asō’s Arc of Freedom and Prosperity initiative, Japan also sought to strengthen and formalize relations with countries in the Mekong region, where China had started expanding its political and economic influence. Accordingly, Japan invited the foreign ministers of Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam to Tokyo, where the First Japan-Mekong Foreign Ministers’ Meeting was held in January 2008. During the meeting, Japan pledged to further expand its Overseas Development Aid programme and economic cooperation through three regional economic corridors, and the participating countries announced the Japan-Mekong Region Partnership Program as well as the launching of the Mekong-Japan Exchange Year 2009. As a later Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan document explains, one of the three priority areas of the deepening partnership

401 Ibid.
program was the pursuing of universal values and common goals of the region.\footnote{Together toward the future, Mekong and Japan,” MOFA, February 2009. Accessed November 21, 2017. http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/mekong/pamphlet.pdf.} Asō also placed emphasis on other existing multilateral frameworks such as the “Central Asia Plus Japan” dialogue between Japan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan;\footnote{Asō was a member of former Prime Minister Ryūtarō Hashimoto’s administration as the Director General of the Economic Planning Agency. As a part of Hashimoto’s “Eurasian diplomacy” initiative put forward in 1997, Asō went on a tour visiting Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan, with the aim of deepening economic relations. See Yūasa Takeshi, “Consolidating “Value-Oriented Diplomacy” towards Eurasia? The “Arc of Freedom and Prosperity” and Beyond,” in Japan’s Silk Road Diplomacy: Paving the Road Ahead, eds. Christopher Len, Uyama Tomohiko and Hirose Tetsuya (Singapore: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, 2008), 50. Accessed May 9, 2018.} the “Visegrad Four and Japan” (consisting of the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland and Hungary) talks; dialogue with the GUAM countries (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Moldova); and cooperation with the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).\footnote{Ibid., 59.} In the meantime, no progress was made in Sino-Japanese bilateral relations, as the signing of the 2007 Japan-China Joint Press Statement was not followed by any concrete action or more substantial agreements. Relatively regular high level VIP visits between the countries also ceased from 2007.\footnote{“Japan-China Relations (Basic Data),” MOFA, October 2012. Accessed November 21, 2017. http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/china/data.html.}

The value-oriented diplomacy and the concept of the Arc of Freedom and Prosperity were aggressively pushed forward by Abe and Asō, but suffered a serious blow in July 2007, when the coalition government was defeated in the election of the House of Councillors. Soon after that Abe was forced to reshuffle his Cabinet and Asō resigned from his post of Foreign Minister, taking office as the Secretary-General of the Liberal Democratic Party. The second blow to the value-oriented diplomacy came just months later, when Abe suddenly resigned citing health issues in September 2007. Yasuō Fukuda succeeded Abe as prime minister. He was
considered to be a political rival of Asō and, as such, frequently voiced his criticism of Asō’s foreign policy, including his flagship concept of the Arc of Freedom and Prosperity. The new Foreign Minister, Nobutaka Machimura, who was the leader of a rival faction to Asō within the LDP, did not continue advancing Asō’s foreign policy strategies. Instead, the new Fukuda cabinet gave priority to more stable relations with China and emphasized the importance of reconciliation with East Asia. As a result, Fukuda built a team from those LDP members who were more open to the idea of an East Asian Community. Abe’s value-oriented diplomacy was no longer emphasized and the Arc of Freedom and Prosperity literally vanished from Japan’s foreign policy strategy.

The start of a prolonged period of political instability: further inconsistencies in Japan’s foreign policy strategies

When it came to foreign policy making, Fukuda was known to prefer pragmatism over values or certain principles, and rejected the idea that East Asian regionalism was in a “zero sum” type of conflict with the Japan-US alliance. He preferred to advocate for both, being convinced that proactive and constructive relations with Japan’s East Asian neighbors and its most important ally could be mutually reinforcing. As opposed to Koizumi, who paid annual visits to the Yasukuni Shrine, sparking criticism from China and South Korea, and Abe, who refused to comment on the Yasukuni issue, Fukuda publicly announced that he would not make

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any visits to the shrine while prime minister\textsuperscript{409} and was open to strengthen bilateral ties with China. Beijing also appeared to favour improved relations and it proposed the joint development of the Shirakaba/Chunxiao undersea gas fields in the East China Sea.\textsuperscript{410}

A period of Sino-Japanese rapprochement started with a series of consultations that resulted in the June 2008 issuing of a joint statement on bilateral cooperation in exploiting the resources of the gas field.\textsuperscript{411} The joint agreement came after Chinese President Hu Jintao made a visit to Tokyo a month before, where he had a highly symbolic meeting with the Emperor and held talks with Fukuda. The result of his visit was a joint statement on the comprehensive promotion of a mutually beneficial Sino-Japanese relationship which not only recognized the Japan-China relationship as one of the most important bilateral relationships but acknowledged that the two countries’ sole option was to cooperate to enhance peace and friendship over the long term.\textsuperscript{412}

However, the LDP was going through a period of instability within the party at that time, which ended in Fukuda’s subsequent resignation in August the same year. Ironically, the result of the LDP’s internal power struggle was that Fukuda was succeeded by Asō, whose earlier foreign policy strategy focused on strengthening relations with like-minded democratic countries, neglecting China. As a result,

\textsuperscript{409} When Fukuda earlier served as Koizumi’s chief cabinet secretary, he reportedly warned Koizumi about his visits to the shrine. See Tanaka, “Japanese Foreign Policy under Prime Minister Yasuō Fukuda,” 2.


\textsuperscript{412} “Joint Statement between the Government of Japan and the Government of the People’s Republic of China on Comprehensive Promotion of a ‘Mutually Beneficial Relationship Based on Common Strategic Interests’,” MOFA.
Beijing soon retreated from the joint Shirakaba/Chunxiao gas field development agreement and started drilling in the East China Sea.\textsuperscript{413} Because of ongoing internal factional disputes within the LDP, Asō attempted to silence his critics within the party. A part of his carefully balancing policies was the abandonment of his earlier foreign policy concept of the Arc of Freedom and Prosperity. As opposed to his diplomatic strategies as foreign minister in the earlier Abe cabinet, Asō attempted to have more direct engagement with China and conducted meetings with President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao a number of times.\textsuperscript{414} Nevertheless, Beijing remained cautious and no significant progress was made in bilateral relations.

A year after Asō became prime minister, Japanese domestic politics took yet another dramatic turn when the LDP suffered a historic defeat to the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) in September 2009. The DPJ was looking for new directions in Japan’s foreign policy, not least to distance itself from the long ruling LDP. With Yukio Hatoyama becoming the new prime minister, that direction indeed changed significantly. Hatoyama published an article in \textit{The New York Times} titled “A New Path for Japan” just before the elections in August, voicing his strong criticism of the United States’ “fundamentalist pursuit of market capitalism,” according to which people are treated not as an end but as a means, resulting in the loss of human dignity.\textsuperscript{415} Hatoyama distanced himself from a US-led globalism and put the principle of fraternity at the centre of his political views, explaining that with this concept his aim was to reduce the excesses of globalized capitalism and favour local and traditional economic practices.

\textsuperscript{413} Watanabe, “Japan’s Security Strategy toward the Rise of China: From a Friendship Paradigm to a Mix of Engagement and Hedging.”
He argued that a national goal emerging from the concept of fraternity is the creation of an East Asian Community. When becoming prime minister a month later, he indicated that he would exclude the US from such a community. While recognizing the US-Japan alliance as remaining the cornerstone of Japanese foreign policy, Hatoyama’s and the DPJ’s diplomatic strategy placed a great significance on Japan’s relations with China. When Hatoyama arrived as new prime minister in New York to attend the UN General Assembly, he first met with Chinese President Hu Jintao before meeting US President Obama. Later on that year, upon meeting in Tokyo with Wang Jiarui, the Director of the International Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, DPJ Secretary-General Ichiro Ozawa stated that the Japan-China relationship should be the core of DPJ’s foreign relations.\(^4\) Hatoyama visited Beijing weeks after his inauguration, and Ozawa took more than 140 DPJ Diet members to China in December 2009, where each member had a personal photo taken with Hu Jintao.\(^5\) With the change of government and the start of Hatoyama’s so-called fraternity diplomacy (Yuai gaikō), Japan’s value-oriented diplomacy had come to a sudden and complete halt.

As Hatoyama explained to the members of the Japan Press Club, fraternity diplomacy was in sharp contrast with the LDP’s values-oriented diplomacy as he believed that “diplomacy implies a skill of how the states with different values establish the relationship of co-existence and co-prosperity.”\(^6\)
In his address on Japan’s Asian policy in Singapore in November 2009, Hatoyama reaffirmed that his new government attached great importance to Asian diplomacy, and that the “main pillar of this policy is the initiative for an East Asian Community.”

The DPJ’s new diplomatic strategy came at a time when China started becoming more assertive in its foreign policy, including strengthening its military and expanding its maritime activities in the South China Sea, and therefore it also coincided with the Obama administration’s development of its rebalancing strategy, which later became known as the pivot to Asia. Hatoyama, however, did not assume the role of prime minister long enough to be able to make substantial progress with his new foreign policy strategy. He became entangled in a political battle about his promise to relocate Okinawa’s US Marine Corps Air Station Futenma at a time when the US appeared to expect much more cooperation from Japan as its strongest ally in Asia. Hatoyama was forced to resign in June 2010, less than nine months into his presidency, with US-Japan ties significantly damaged and China still being cautious about the lack of consistency and predictability in Tokyo’s foreign policy because of the turbulence in Japan’s domestic politics. Making Beijing even more suspicious was the fact that Hatoyama did not instruct the Foreign Ministry to implement certain policies for East Asian community building or lay groundwork for recruiting potential member countries. There was also an apparent lack of consensus between Hatoyama and his Foreign Minister, Okada Katsuya, as to

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Hatoyama was succeeded by Prime Minister Naoto Kan, who quickly abandoned Hatoyama’s vaguely designed concept of fraternity diplomacy and assumed a more pragmatic and balanced approach in his foreign policy. At a press conference on the day of his inauguration, Kan made clear that a main focus of his foreign policy was to repair damaged ties with the US by recognizing that the Futenma Air Station issue had caused anxiety among the Japanese public concerning Japan-US relations. While acknowledging the issue as “very difficult,” Japan must proceed to solve it on the basis of its alliance agreement with the US. Kan also made a quick, but quite revealing, reference to China, saying that when he visited the country not long before, despite its booming economy:

> “Japanese companies were not getting much more than subcontracts offered by European firms. What is going on here? I believe this is the result of an absence of political leadership over the past two decades.”\footnote{“Press Conference by Prime Minister Naoto Kan,” Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, June 8, 2010. Accessed November 23, 2017. http://japan.kantei.go.jp/kan/statement/201006/08kaiken_e.html.}

Kan was invited for an official visit to Beijing soon after his election, but he decided to send Hatoyama as his deputy instead.\footnote{Muru Yamada, “Kan shushō: Hochū miokuri Hatoyama shi dairi kentō [Prime Minister Kan passes his visit to China, and instead sends Hatoyama as his deputy],” Mainichi Shimbun, June 7, 2010. Accessed November 23, 2017. http://mainichi.jp/select/seiji/news/20100607dde001010038000c.html.} The idea of an East Asian Community was again thrown out of the window and with the appointment of the pro-American Seiji Maehara as Kan’s Foreign Minister in September, the work on fixing the
damaged Japan-US alliance had started. While Kan, who was generally considered as a centrist politician, may not have intended to cut ties with Beijing, the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands fishing boat incident in September 2010 further pushed Tokyo towards Washington while distancing it from Beijing. Japan’s subsequent National Defense Program Guidelines reaffirmed the Japan-US alliance and stated that Tokyo “will strengthen its cooperation with the Republic of Korea and Australia, which are allies of the United States and share basic values and many security-related interests with Japan.” With that, the essence of value oriented diplomacy – i.e. focusing on cooperation with like-minded countries based on a sense of sharing common values- was back again in Japan’s foreign policy. In line with that, the Kan government started negotiations on civilian nuclear cooperation with India, which was followed by a Japan-India joint declaration on a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement in October 2010. On a highly symbolic first bilateral trip overseas, in November, Foreign Minister Maehara visited Australia, where an agreement was made to speed up negotiations on the General Security of Military Information Agreement and to plan for a Japan-Australia 2+2 meeting in 2011.

In yet another turn, which was in part due to political issues around the Fukushima nuclear disaster, Kan resigned from office in August 2011. His successor was Yoshihiko Noda, who, unlike Hatoyama and Kan, came from a more conservative faction of the DPJ and was thought to have a strong realism-oriented

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426 Hosoya, “Japan’s Two Strategies for East Asia: The Evolution of Japan’s Diplomatic Strategy,” 152.
429 Konishi, “From Rhetoric to Reality: Foreign-Policy Making under the Democratic Party of Japan,” 34-35. 2+2 meetings are usually held between two countries’ foreign and defense ministers.
foreign policy approach, focusing on defense and national security. He made clear his intentions of further strengthening the Japan-US alliance as the “cornerstone” of Japan’s foreign policy and national security, and argued for a more proactive defense policy a year before becoming prime minister. He reaffirmed this position soon after getting elected in September 2011 in an article, proclaiming adherence to the Japan-US alliance while stating that the idea of an East Asian Community “need not be developed” until the region achieves a greater political stability. Noda was also supportive of the US-led free trade initiative, the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement, which was seen to counter the China-led Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership free trade initiative.

Tensions over territorial disputes with China regarding the ownership of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands deepened in 2011, further damaging relations between Japan and China. Instead of initiating any high-level bilateral meeting with Beijing, however, the Noda administration was more interested in addressing China’s growing maritime activities and assertiveness in a multilateral setting. Part of this effort was when Noda proposed a joint initiative outlining the principles for maritime security in East Asia at the East Asia Summit in November 2011. Relations with China reached a new low in 2012 when, facing a growing number of intrusions by Chinese vessels into territory around the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands,  

430 Ibid., 40-41.  
432 The three principles were 1) freedom of navigation, 2) observance of the related international law, and 3) the peaceful reconciliation of territorial disputes. Konishi, “From Rhetoric to Reality: Foreign-Policy Making under the Democratic Party of Japan,” 43.
Japan nationalised three of the five islets, prompting China’s Ministry of Defense to accuse Japan of “playing with fire.”

**Back to relative political stability: the second Abe government**

The LDP won the next general elections with a landslide victory in December 2012, and Abe became the Prime Minister again, becoming the seventh prime minister in six years and inheriting a significantly damaged Sino-Japanese relations, especially in light of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands conflict. Before his first term as prime minister, he defended Koizumi’s annual visits to the Yasukuni Shrine but refrained from visiting the shrine during his first term. He made no secret of his intention to revise Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution, the so-called peace article that is generally seen as a guarantee prohibiting Japanese militarism. His first step was to amend the definition of self-defense to include collective self-defense, opening up the possibility for Japanese self-defense forces to join the US military in combat under certain conditions. From the time of Abe’s re-election, Japan’s defense budget started increasing and, in August 2013, the Maritime Self Defense Force launched Izumo, Japan’s largest battleship since the end of the Pacific War. As opposed to excercising self-restraint during his first term, Abe paid a visit to the Yasukuni Shrine on the first anniversary of his re-election in December 2013. In the same month he established the National Security Council, which was followed by the passing of the highly controversial State Secrets Protection Law two days later. On December 17, Abe adopted Japan’s first National Security Strategy and approved the

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National Defense Program Guidelines. One of Abe’s main strategic advisers, Shin’ichi Kitaoka, explained that it was necessary for Japan to upgrade its defense forces as a result of having to face a growingly assertive China, and he labelled Japan’s new defense strategy “proactive pacifism”. Kitaoka argued that the concept of passive pacifism was mistaken in light of the rapid expansion of the Chinese military, so that, for instance, Japan's defense spending had remained nearly flat in the preceding 25 years, while China's defense spending had grown by a factor of 33 during the same period.

Proactive pacifism meant that Japan started shoring up its military defense capabilities and continued to strengthen relations with ‘like-minded countries’ based on a sense of shared values, particularly with India and the United States. In Abe’s first two years, a series of bilateral meetings were held with India’s Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, including Abe attending India’s Republic Day parade as chief guest. In July the same year, India invited Japan to take part for the first time in a joint US-India naval exercise, reflecting a deepening relationship between the two countries. Finally, in September 2014, Abe and Modi signed a number of key agreements, including one in which they agreed to upgrade the Japan-India relationship to a “Special Strategic and Global Partnership.”

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436 Ibid.

437 Kitaoka, “Japan’s new national security policy based on ‘proactive pacifism’.”


At the same time, no significant effort was made by the Abe administration to make progress in Sino-Japanese relations. In one of his first speeches in the beginning of his second term in February 2013, Abe declared that the "doors are always open on my side for the Chinese leaders." He made this comment during a speech at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, where he also pointed out that it was “high time (...) for Japan to bear even more responsibility to promote our shared rules and values.”\footnote{“Japan is Back,” MOFA, February 22, 2013. Accessed November 24, 2017. http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/pm/abe/us_20130222en.html.} Both Tokyo and Beijing appeared to be passively open, waiting for the other side to initiate talks, resulting in the two countries’ leaders’ failure to meet for nearly two years. When Abe and President Xi Jinping finally met on the sidelines of the APEC summit in Beijing in November 2014, the meeting was reported to last for merely 25 minutes, during which time both leaders appeared to be reserved, and produced a “vaguely worded
“statement” in which both sides recognized their “different views” over the emergence of territorial disputes.\textsuperscript{444} In the meantime, Abe had visited a “quarter of the world,”\textsuperscript{445} 49 countries, including trips to the ASEAN countries, Mongolia, a number of countries in the Middle East, Africa, Europe, South America, and North America, with two visits to the United States, during which trips he frequently referred to the importance of shared values.

**Discussion: the controversial role of values in Japan’s foreign policy strategies**

The concept of regionalism with Japanese leadership is not new in Japan’s foreign policy strategies. In fact, some of the earliest visions of region-building in East Asia were proposed by Japan. Before the Pacific War, for instance, Tokyo formulated a number of concepts for region-building, such as the “New Order in East Asia” (Tōa Shin Chitsujo) and the “Great East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere” (Dai Tōa Kyōeiken).\textsuperscript{446} Central to these concepts was a strategic control over Japan’s East Asian neighbors, most notably China. As these concepts were formulated to serve Japan’s imperialism during the war, Tokyo not only abandoned them with Japan’s defeat at the end of the Pacific War but it also opted to maintain a low-profile foreign policy. This diplomatic strategy was referred to as “leadership from behind,” “quiet diplomacy,” or at times “check book diplomacy,” as Japan focused on re-


\textsuperscript{446} The concept of the “New Order in East Asia” was officially announced by Prince Konoe on November 3, 1938, timing it to the birthday of Emperor Meiji, and was later incorporated into the concept of the “Great East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere”. See Kenneth Colegrove, “The New Order in East Asia,” *The Far Eastern Quarterly* 1, no. 1 (November 1941): 5–24. DOI: 10.2307/2049073.
establishing and maintaining regional ties based largely on economic development. Until the 1990s, Japan pursued bilateral ties with Southeast and East Asian nations, rather than pursuing regionalism in a multilateral framework. Diplomatic strategies towards China during this period were no different. With the normalization of relations with the People’s Republic of China in 1972, and in line with its low-key diplomatic strategy, Tokyo started to pursue a bilateral policy of “separating political and economic spheres of interaction” (seikei bunkai) with Beijing. This passive and low-key diplomatic strategy, focusing on maintaining peaceful relations based on economic cooperation rather than advocating for certain values, defined Japan’s foreign policy-making throughout the Cold War and into the 1990s. However, with the removal of the Cold War political divide that defined and significantly restrained intra-regional ties in Asia, a new type of regionalism emerged in the 1990s. This coincided with the Japanese economy entering a prolonged period of stagnation from the beginning of the 1990s and with China’s economy constantly producing an annual double-digit growth at the same time. The proliferation of bilateral free-trade agreements across the region and China’s booming economy posed a growing challenge to the stalled Japanese economy and Tokyo’s decades-long low-key diplomacy. With a weakening economy in the face of China’s rapid emergence, Japanese foreign policy makers had to adopt new strategies. In response to these new challenges, Tokyo became much more assertive and proactive in its foreign policy strategies. By the mid-2000s, major strategies had

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449 As explained earlier in the chapter, particularly after China’s handling of the 1997-98 Asian Financial Crisis and its membership in the World Trade Organization in 2001, China became the number one challenger for Japan in terms of regional leadership.
emerged: the idea of an EAC, proposed by Prime Minister Koizumi in Singapore in 2002, and the concept of universal-values-based diplomacy that was forged in Japan’s foreign policy think tanks in the beginning of the 2000s. The former can be regarded as predominantly an “interest based” foreign policy as it stressed the importance of community building focusing on direct interaction and emphasizing pragmatic cooperation between East Asian countries, with the aim of maximizing economic benefits. The latter can be viewed as Japan’s “value based” diplomatic strategy as it stressed the importance of community building based on a sense of shared values with like-minded countries across the region and beyond. These two strategies were initially pursued parallel to one another, but the focus shifted to the latter after growing tensions with China during 2004 and 2005. As a result, the concept of a “values oriented diplomacy” was put forward by Prime Minister Abe as Japan’s central foreign policy strategy in 2006. Part of Abe’s values diplomacy was to rely on the US-Japan alliance and strengthen cooperation with like-minded countries such as India and Australia, countries which had a long tradition of upholding universal values such as freedom, human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. A central tenet of the values oriented diplomacy was the concept of the Arc of Freedom and Prosperity, developed originally by foreign ministry officials such as Nobukatsu Kanehara and Abe’s senior adviser Shōtarō Yachi, and which became an integral part of Tokyo’s foreign policy under Abe’s foreign minister, Tarō Asō, in 2006. The idea behind the concept was to create a belt of countries committed to “universal values” stretching from Japan through Southeast Asia to Central Asia and Eastern Europe. In this belt, Asō started actively pursuing the strengthening of “universal values” in bilateral and multilateral settings. Nevertheless, there are a number of issues concerning Japan’s value-oriented diplomacy.
Firstly, there was a problem of definition. Japan’s concept of “universal values” was defined vaguely. Apart from repeatedly emphasizing the importance of democracy, freedom, human rights and the rule of law in bilateral and multilateral agreements, Tokyo’s foreign ministry never clarified what exactly it meant by these concepts and how these values should be strengthened with the ‘Arc countries’.

Secondly, there was a problem of credibility. While Japan stressed the importance of these values, it failed to propose certain initiatives, including regional frameworks, by which these values could be further strengthened in collaboration with those countries chosen to constitute the ‘Arc of Freedom and Prosperity’. One would think that developing particular strategies aimed at strengthening universal values would have been important in Japan’s chosen ‘Arc countries’ such as Cambodia, Myanmar and Thailand in Southeast Asia, former USSR countries in Central Asia and former communist countries in Eastern Europe and Western Asia, where the state of human rights, the rule of law and democratic institutions could certainly be improved. Even setting its own domestic political and institutional examples of good practice and showing how Tokyo was committed to strengthening those values domestically could have been useful if values were truly at the heart of its values-oriented diplomacy. Instead, it appears that frequent references to universal values were merely used to advance Tokyo’s own political interests in a larger geopolitical game: it is hard to think it was a pure coincidence that Japan emphasized exactly those values that China rejected. The concept of the Arc of Freedom and Prosperity incorporated a large number of countries that had significantly different political systems with a huge variability in terms of traditions, political institutions and laws when it came to concepts of democracy, freedom of speech and human rights. Had Japan genuinely intended to strengthen cooperation
based on shared universal values, it would have struggled to find any common ground among the ‘Arc countries’. In fact, forging cooperation among these countries would have only made sense from a certain a geopolitical aspect. Taking a look at the image of the Arc of Freedom and Prosperity visualized in the MOFA Bluebook’s map, it is striking to see that the belt broadly encircles China on the ‘outer countries’ of the Asian continent, which can be considered as China’s geopolitical backyard: the Arc incorporates countries and regions where influence is crucial to China from a geopolitical perspective (see Appendix at the end of this chapter). Credibility also posed a personal challenge to two of the most prominent advocates of values diplomacy: Abe and Asō. Abe is widely considered a conservative right-wing politician domestically. His grandfather, Nobusuke Kishi, was a prominent politician in Japan’s wartime government, and Abe is known to have particular views when it comes to Japan’s wartime atrocities. For instance, he rejected the use of the words ‘aggression’ and ‘invasion’ when referring to Japan’s wartime actions in China, and, at the time of the emergence of Japan’s values-oriented diplomacy, he denied that the Japanese imperial government was involved in coercing “comfort women” into brothels during the Pacific War. Similarly, Asō argued in 2003 that Koreans voluntarily adopted Japanese names during Japan’s occupation of the Korean Peninsula, a statement he refused to retract later.450 Also, in his 2007 book titled Incredible Japan, he states that Japan should express a “humble regret” for its wartime actions, but later praises Sensō Ron (Theory of War), a book written by far-right nationalist Yoshinori Kobayashi, which provides an extremely distorted view of Japan’s wartime history.451 Such views had called the genuine


451 Taro Asō, Totetsumonai Nihon [Incredible Japan] (Tokyo: Shinchosha, 2007), 23 and 58, respectively.
intentions behind Japan’s values-oriented diplomacy into question, and had presumably damaged Abe’s and Asō’s personal credibility in the eyes of other countries as far as commitment to values such as human rights and the rule of law. In that regard as well as in light of unsettled historical issues between Japan and its East Asian neighbors, values diplomacy’s indirect criticism towards China for its disregard of universal values appears to be somewhat difficult to defend.

When the concept of the Arc of Freedom and Prosperity was revealed, a number of foreign ministry officials insisted that Japan’s economic interests should be given priority over ideology, and therefore Tokyo should continue pursuing strong relations with China. Differences in views within the ministry were so great that when Shōtarō Yachi was appointed in Abe’s second term as head of the National Security Council, the latter did not bring back value-oriented diplomacy. Instead, Yachi recognized the importance of friendly ties with China, and emphasized the more pragmatic concept of a “mutually beneficial relationship based on common strategic interests” in Sino-Japanese relations. Where the lack of consistency becomes even more apparent, however, is in the frequent change of governments. While Japanese domestic politics were relatively stable under Koizumi between 2001 and 2006, after that Tokyo went through a period of political uncertainty signified by rapid changes in the government: in the space of six years, seven different governments were formed under different prime ministers, including three coming from the Democratic Party of Japan between 2009 and 2012, something that was unprecedented in post-war Japan. Each successive prime minister changed his respective foreign policy approach towards China and therefore

placed different importance, if at all, on “universal values”. Tokyo’s oscillations between pragmatism and “universal values” was motivated less by a deep commitment to those values and more by its strategic concerns with China.

While Tokyo became more assertive in its foreign policy, diplomatic strategies showed a significant lack of bilateral engagement with China. Apart from a few and largely symbolic high-level meetings, Japan has engaged with China mostly on a regional level, in multilateral frameworks such as the ASEAN+3, ASEAN+6 meetings, the East Asia Summit, the ASEAN Regional Forum, the Asia-Pacific Economic Council and the now largely defunct China-South Korea-Japan Trilateral Summit. At the same time and after a few unexpected turns during the Hatoyama government, Tokyo significantly strengthened its relations with the US, and the updated US-Japan defence guidelines of 2015 can be viewed as Tokyo’s commitment to the US’s rebalancing to Asia.

In hindsight, Japan’s values-oriented foreign policy appears to have been operating predominantly on a rhetorical level, aimed at mitigating China’s influence in Asia by expanding the scope of cooperation with extra-regional countries. It can be regarded as one of Tokyo’s soft-power initiatives, with the goal of appealing to Asian countries and elevating Japan’s national image vis-à-vis China. While the values-oriented diplomacy has gradually faded out as a central pillar of Japan’s foreign policy strategies over recent years, references to “universal values” are still

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454 The last Japan-China-Republic of Korea Trilateral Summit was held in 2015, during which talks focused on the resolution of historical issues between Japan and its two neighbors, and an agreement was made to hold trilateral meetings annually in order to work towards strengthening economic and trade relations with the goal of establishing a trilateral free trade agreement. No further meeting has taken place since then however. For details of the summit, see “The Sixth Japan-China-ROK Trilateral Summit,” MOFA, November 2, 2015. Accessed November 27, 2017. http://www.mofa.go.jp/a_o/rp/page3e_000409.html.
made at times. Kanehara, who works as Deputy Secretary General of Japan’s National Security Secretariat as well as Assistant Chief Cabinet Secretary in the Prime Minister’s Office, just recently made a speech titled “Japan’s Grand Strategy and Universal Values”, in which he argues that states in the twenty-first century “must always keep in mind the common interests of humankind as a whole” when defining their national interests. Kanehara maintains that those interests must be approached from a universal-values perspective as there was “reason to believe” that a “basic or core universal value system common to all humankind” exists. At the end of the speech, Kanehara concludes that “Japan has been upholding and will continue to uphold universal values and principles to lead.”

At times, even Prime Minister Abe continues to refer to the importance of universal values when speaking to an audience, whether overseas or domestically. For instance, at a symposium organized by the Tokyo Foundation, Abe eloquently spoke of how “values of freedom, democracy, and the rule of law were “universal” among the peoples of Asia and Africa in the true sense,” maintaining that “the universal values we speak of have become values that cover more people than any other region in the world, and “universal” in the true sense of the word.” He then added: “[c]an you think of anything else that could please us more?”

The fact that universal values were used merely as a rhetorical concept becomes even more obvious when we look into two significant documents that were produced by the Japanese political elite to advance its own domestic agenda: the LDP’s draft constitution of 2012 and the Japanese government State Secrets Protection Law of 2013. These two documents testify that in its own domestic arena,

455 Kanehara, “Japan’s Grand Strategy and Universal Values.”
Tokyo appears to have been drifting away from the very values it upheld and so eagerly advocated in its foreign policy. The next chapter provides a detailed analysis of these two documents.

Map 2. The “Arc of Freedom and Prosperity”

Chapter Four

A challenge to Japan’s commitment to universal values: The LDP’s constitutional values and the State Secrets Protection Law

Introduction

In Chapter Three I showed how Japan’s universal values argument has developed over the past decade, through which Japan perceives and promotes itself as a democratic, rules-based, values- and norms-oriented mature nation, and as a responsible member and an integral part of international society. Japan has used this argument to distance itself from China, which it sees as a country where universal values and norms are not respected, and ideas such as democracy and the rule of law do not hold. Japan’s strong criticism towards China, whether from its political or scholarly establishment, is therefore deeply rooted in its self-proclaimed upholding and respecting of universal values and norms. While Chapter Two pointed out the inconsistencies and shortcomings of leading scholarly arguments in this respect, the current chapter reveals a significant gap between Japan’s official universal values and norms argument to an international audience and the Liberal Democratic Party’s 2012 Draft Constitution, which was written for a domestic audience and for domestic purposes. By taking a closer look at some of the most significant changes put forward in the text of the LDP’s draft, the aim of this chapter is to point out a number of disturbing inconsistencies and contradictions between Japan’s aim of maintaining a values and rules-based international country image and the reality behind its ruling party’s aim of creating a rather specific set of values and norms based on Japan’s unique historical, social, and political traditions. The LDP’s intention of re-establishing this set of Japan-specific values and norms is quite far
from the country’s universal norms and values argument against China, even though this has been widely promoted to an overseas audience.

The creation of Japan’s post-war Constitution

On July 26, 1945, the leaders of the Allied Powers issued the Potsdam Declaration that defined the terms for Japan’s surrender. The Declaration also outlined some of the major goals of the post-surrender Allied Occupation of Japan, stating that:

“The Japanese Government shall remove all obstacles to the revival and strengthening of democratic tendencies among the Japanese people. Freedom of speech, of religion, and of thought, as well as respect for the fundamental human rights shall be established.”

Parts of the text of the Declaration and the initial measures taken by Douglas MacArthur, the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers at the beginning of the Allied Occupation, reflected the aim of setting Japan on the path of pacifism and democracy and encouraged Japanese leaders to take part in establishing a new political system and initiate reforms accordingly. The SCAP prohibited any governmental support for Shinto in December 1945, and subsequently made the Emperor proclaim that he was a human being, not a living god, in January 1946. The SCAP’s initiatives of setting Japan on the path of a peaceful and democratic country included the replacement of the 1889 Meiji Constitution, which reserved almost unrestricted power for the divine Emperor, and based on which Japan’s leaders were able to create a highly standardized, centralized, and militaristic nation in the first half of the Twentieth Century. To avoid this happening again, one of the most fundamental tasks was the drafting of a new constitution, which was based on the aim of promoting Western ideals of liberalism, democracy, and human rights.

Rewriting the constitution as a document that guarantees these rights and introduces Western values was met with strong opposition from the household of the Emperor, Prime Minister Kijūrō Shidehara, and most of his cabinet members. Shidehara appointed Jōji Matsumoto as head of a committee of constitutional scholars to suggest changes to the Meiji Constitution. The so-called Matsumoto Commission’s (Kenpō Mondai Chōsa Iinkai) recommendations were so minimal that General MacArthur rejected them outright and ordered his staff to draft an entirely new constitution. This so-called MacArthur draft was nevertheless still influenced by the views of various Japanese groups, including lawyers and especially by the draft presented by the Constitution Research Association (Kenpō Kenkyū Kai), which consisted of Japanese constitutional scholars. After a number of rounds of discussions and amendments by the Japanese counterparts, including amendments made by both chambers of the Japanese Diet, the new post-war Constitution was approved by the Lower House on 6 October 1946, followed by the approval by the House of Representatives the next day. It then went on to receive the Emperor’s assent on 3 November, and ultimately came into force six months later, on 3 May 1947. This episode of struggle against the new national constitution showed that many in the Japanese elite were not ready for such a change.

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460 Ibid.
461 Ibid.
The significance of the post-war Constitution

The Constitution, for the first time in Japan’s history, was founded on the principle of popular sovereignty: It was proclaimed in the name of all Japanese and declared that the sovereign power resides with the people. This statement was particularly significant as Japan’s previous constitution claimed that sovereignty resided with the Emperor.\(^{462}\) The new constitution also stated that:

“The government is a sacred trust of the people, the authority for which is derived from the people, the powers of which are exercised by the representatives of the people, and the benefits of which are enjoyed by the people.”\(^{463}\)

It was claimed that the above statement was a universal principle of mankind upon which the new constitution was founded. The Preamble of the Constitution also declared that the laws of political morality are universal. In other words, Japan’s new constitution was founded in the context of Western values, offering full protection of the rights of individuals as fundamental human rights and guaranteeing representative democracy. In line with these new values, the Meiji Constitution’s notion of imperial subject (shinmin) was also changed to the notion of citizen or national (kokumin).

The initial concept of the constitution as the supreme law of the nation was originally developed in the United Kingdom, but the first actual constitution was enacted as a supreme national law in the United States after its independence in 1787. It was followed by the 1791 constitution of France after the French Revolution. Both the notion of a national constitution and its putting into practice were based on the


concept of the power of the people, on the concept of individual and fundamental human rights, and its aim was to guarantee liberal democratic decision-making by putting restraints on the power of the government and not on private power. In other words, the primary purpose of these nations’ constitutions was to guarantee various rights of their citizens such as freedom of speech, religion, assembly, and to keep government power over citizens checked and limited. By adopting its new constitution, Japan joined this group of Western nations soon after the end of the Pacific War, acknowledging the significance of what were later to be referred to as universal values.

The current Japanese constitution has never been amended since its promulgation in 1946. This is largely because it was designed in a way that made any amendment difficult, requiring firstly a two-third majority of votes in both Houses of the Diet and then approval by a majority vote by the Japanese public in a national referendum. Specifically, any amendment to the constitution could only be:

“initiated by the Diet, through a concurring vote of two-thirds or more of all the members of each House and shall thereupon be submitted to the people for ratification, which shall require the affirmative vote of a majority of all votes cast thereon.”\(^{464}\)

While the above described events that led up to the creation of Japan’s post-war constitution clearly indicate the Japanese elite’s resistance to change, the country’s new constitution based on Western ideals was widely accepted and embraced by the Japanese general public. Nevertheless, Japan’s long-time ruling political party, the LDP, has since its founding in 1955 aimed to change the constitution many times, arguing that it was imposed upon Japan by foreign powers. In fact, the idea of changing the constitution is so deeply embedded in the thinking of the LDP that it

\(^{464}\) Ibid., Article 96, Section 1.
has been one of the party’s principles since its inception in 1955.\textsuperscript{465} Owing to the strict amendment requirements posited in the current constitution, however, all the LDP’s attempts to change it have been unsuccessful to date.

The LDP’s Draft Constitution

In 2004, the LDP created a Constitution Drafting Committee. Based on this committee’s suggestions, the LDP released its first draft proposal to reform the Constitution in November 2005, when the party celebrated its fiftieth anniversary.\textsuperscript{466} Nevertheless, the draft proposal was shelved for years thereafter and was never presented to the Diet or to the public, and therefore never generated any significant discussion.

It was not until 2012 that the LDP’s draft proposal gained political momentum. In the lead-up to the political elections of December 2012, the party published its second draft called the ‘Draft Reform of the Japanese Constitution’ (\textit{Nihonkoku kenchō kaisei sōan}), which presented a much more detailed set of the party’s proposed revisions of the current constitution.\textsuperscript{467} Since the LDP had sought a revision of the post-war constitution for almost six decades, it is not surprising that the date of the release of its proposed constitutional draft, 28\textsuperscript{th} of April 2012, was not simply a randomly selected day: the date coincided with the 60\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of the end of Japan’s occupation by the Allied powers. The LDP also went on to release an 88-page-long Q&A pamphlet in October 2012 with the intention of explaining the


language of its draft proposal, since ordinary Japanese readers might find it complicated.468

The LDP’s 2012 draft proposal would affect most of the 103 articles of the current Constitution, with many deleted sections and added texts.469 While many of the amendments appear to result in minor changes to the 1947 Constitution, the draft also contains a number of proposals that appear to fundamentally alter the spirit of the post-war Constitution, which, should the draft become legislation, would result in significant changes in the delicate balance of power between the Japanese government and Japan’s civil society.

While Prime Minister Shinzō Abe and the LDP’s top leaders have never fully endorsed the draft, at least not in public, the fact that it was uploaded to the LDP’s website and that the party has gone to such lengths that it even issued an 88-page-long Q&A document to explain the proposed changes shows that the draft is much more than a simple experimental exercise and it does have a great significance.470 Moreover, the LDP not only established an official body, the so-called Headquarters for the Promotion of Revision to the Constitution, to discuss and promote the idea of a new constitution, but its chairman, Okiharu Yasuoka, stated that the draft “clarifies the party’s tentative stance” on constitutional revision and it will therefore remain an “official document” of the LDP, to which its “lawmakers are welcome to refer when drawing up new proposals.”471 In line with Yasuoka’s October 2016 statement, the draft has since been continuously available on the LDP’s homepage.

469 All the proposed changes are marked in bold in the draft.
Taking a closer look at some of the proposed changes sheds light on how the original values advocated and upheld by Japan’s post-war Constitution are perceived by the LDP. To begin with, I compare the proposed preamble of the LDP’s 2012 draft constitution with the wording of the existing Constitution’s preamble.

The Preamble

The Preamble of Japan’s current Constitution reads:

“We, the Japanese people, acting through our duly elected representatives in the National Diet, determined that we shall secure for ourselves and our posterity the fruits of peaceful cooperation with all nations and the blessings of liberty throughout this land, and resolved that never again shall we be visited with the horrors of war through the action of government, do proclaim that sovereign power resides with the people and do firmly establish this Constitution. Government is a sacred trust of the people, the authority for which is derived from the people, the powers of which are exercised by the representatives of the people, and the benefits of which are enjoyed by the people. This is a universal principle of mankind upon which this Constitution is founded. We reject and revoke all constitutions, laws, ordinances, and rescripts in conflict herewith. We, the Japanese people, desire peace for all time and are deeply conscious of the high ideals controlling human relationship, and we have determined to preserve our security and existence, trusting in the justice and faith of the peace-loving peoples of the world. We desire to occupy an honored place in an international society striving for the preservation of peace, and the banishment of tyranny and slavery, oppression and intolerance for all time from the earth. We recognize that all peoples of the world have the right to live in peace, free from fear and want. We believe that no nation is responsible to itself alone, but that laws of political morality are universal; and that obedience to such laws is incumbent upon all nations who would sustain their own sovereignty and justify their sovereign relationship with other nations. We, the Japanese people, pledge our national honor to accomplish these high ideals and purposes with all our resources.”472

To summarize, the 1947 Preamble focuses on the sovereignty of the Japanese people and their determination to achieve peace with all countries and aims to secure these for generations to come. It states that the government represents the will of people, its authority is derived from the people, and that it shall strive to work for the benefit of the people. The Preamble also implies that the 1947 Constitution was created in the spirit of this principle, which is not unique to Japan but rather represents a universal principle of all mankind. The Preamble openly rejects all legislations that are in conflict with these universal principles, and it is founded on the implicit belief that the laws of morality are universal. In contrast, the preamble of the LDP’s 2012 draft sets out a remarkably different tone:

“Japan is a nation with a long history and a unique culture, with the Emperor symbolising the unity of the people. Besides the sovereignty of the people, governance is based on the separation of the legislative, executive, and judicial powers. Our country, having developed through overcoming devastations of previous wars and a number of natural disasters, now occupies an important place in international society, besides being pacifist, promotes friendly relations with foreign countries and contributes to the peace and prosperity of the world. The Japanese people protect their country and birthplace with pride and a strong spirit, respect fundamental human rights and peace, and families and the whole of society work together to create the national family. We respect freedom and the rule of law, protect our beautiful national territory and nature, promote education, science and technology, and grow our country through vital economic activity. The Japanese people created this constitution in order to pass on our traditions and country to our grandchildren for eternity.”

Taking a closer look at the text of the two preambles reveals significant differences. Firstly, it strikes the reader that there are important statements in the current Constitution that are completely removed from the proposed draft, such as “we, the Japanese people (...) proclaim that sovereign power resides with the people,” as well

473 "Nihon Koku Kenpō Kaisei Sōan [Draft Reform of the Japanese Constitution],” 1. (English translation by author.)
as the “government is a sacred trust of the people” which is a “universal principle of mankind,” and that the Japanese people “have determined to preserve our security and existence, trusting in the justice and faith of the peace-loving peoples of the world.”

From its very first sentence it seems clear that the focus of the LDP’s proposed preamble is given more to Japan’s own history and the country’s uniqueness than to the universal principles underlying the 1946 preamble. The figure of the Emperor assumes an essential role in the preamble by being the symbol of the unity of the Japanese people, invoking times when the Emperor was the head of state and was at the core of Japan’s national identity. The preamble goes on to indicate that it is the duty of the Japanese people to protect their country and beautiful national territory while respecting peace and aiming for friendly relations with other countries. The focus here has shifted towards protecting the national family and preserving Japan’s traditions, and also towards passing on those traditions to future generations, although leaving unspecified what those traditions might be.

The focus of the current Constitution is clearly on universal principles: These define Japan’s place in international society, and the Japanese peoples’ desire for peace for all time and their peaceful cooperation with all nations are founded on these very principles. In contrast, the new draft brings the emphasis back to a much more narrowly defined nation-state centred approach in which protecting traditions appears to override the principles of international society and the notion of universal values.

In an apparent attempt to significantly alter the checks and balances guaranteed by the current Constitution, the LDP’s draft deletes the full text of Article 3 which declares that the “advice and approval of the Cabinet shall be required for all acts of
the Emperor in matters of state, and the Cabinet shall be responsible therefore.” A part of the current Article 4 which states that the “Emperor may delegate the performance of his acts in matters of state as may be provided by law” is also omitted. These proposed changes would remove an important legal restraint that guarantees the power of the government over the actions of the Emperor, thereby allowing more autonomy for the Emperor and, by extension, the Imperial Household to act in matters of the Japanese state.

The Preamble of the LDP’s 2012 draft already calls the universality of human rights into question by focusing on the differences that make Japan unique in relation to other countries and by putting the figure of the Emperor as the defining symbol of the unity of the people.

**The most significant value changes proposed by the LDP**

As far as the Japanese people’s rights are concerned, the LDP’s Q&A Pamphlet explains that:

“rights are gradually formulated through the history, tradition and culture of each community. Therefore we believe that the provisions concerning human rights should reflect the history, culture and tradition of Japan.”

While the pamphlet does not provide any definition or immediate explanation as to how Japan’s unique culture and tradition-based human rights might be different from the universal human rights, it does imply that a new, Japan-specific set of human rights would have significant implications for the Japanese people, and, by extension, for Japan’s relations with the rest of the world.

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474 “The Constitution of Japan.”
475 Ibid.
476 “Nihon Koku Kenpō Kaisel Sōan Q&A Zōhoban [Draft Reform of the Japanese Constitution Q&A Detailed Supplementary Edition].”
Recognition of the universal nature of human rights is the fundamental principle that underlies the post-war global human rights regime. Article 1. of the 1945 *Charter of the United Nations* promotes and encourages ‘respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion’ as one of the organization’s four primary purposes.477

In 1948, a year after Japan’s Constitution came into effect, the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 217A, generally known as the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. The declaration claims to be a ‘common standard of achievements for all peoples and all nations’, and sets out that fundamental human rights are to be “universally protected.”478 Its Preamble declares that “the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world” and that every member state shall strive to “promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, (...) secure their universal and effective recognition and observance.”479 While the LDP’s Q&A does not address what unique historical and traditional aspects of Japanese culture should serve as a basis of Japan’s nation-specific human rights, abandoning the UN’s notion of universal human rights would have significant implications for the Japanese people and may affect Japan’s conduct of its international relations. Other proposed changes in the draft constitution also indicate a shift from Japan’s commitment to universal norms.

478 “Universal Declaration of Human Rights.”
479 Ibid.
**Reinstating kimigayo and hinomaru as national symbols**

Article 3 of the LDP’s draft proposes that ‘the national flag is the rising sun and the national anthem is kimigayo,’ and that the Japanese people ‘must respect the national flag and the national anthem.’

The rising sun flag (nisshōki) and the anthem (kimigayo) have represented Japan unofficially since at least the early years of the Meiji period, and both symbols are linked to past Japanese militarism and imperialism. Kimigayo literally means the ‘Reign of Your Majesty’. According to the Japanese Cabinet’s research office, the rising sun, referred to as hinomaru or nisshōki, first appeared in Japanese literature in the late Heian period (12th century), when the *Tale of Heike* cited warriors carrying military fans with a hinomaru emblem on them. The national anthem was first played on the Meiji Emperor’s birthday in 1880, at the dawn of Japanese militarism. The Ministry of Education incorporated the anthem into the public school curriculum and required that it be sung at public school ceremonies from 1893. The anthem’s text praises the Emperor’s rule and wishes him eternal prosperity.

The rising sun and the anthem were already formally recognized as national symbols with the promulgation of the Act on National Flag and Anthem (*Kokki Oyobi Kokka ni Kansuru Hōritsu*) on 13 August 1999. The legislation was considered to be one of the most controversial of the 1990s, lacking widespread support from both Diet members and the general public to the extent that, upon its passing, then Prime Minister Keizō Obuchi and other LDP leaders promised that it...
would not entail any mandatory duties. In fact, the Japanese government decided not to specify on what occasions and how hinomaru and kimigayo were to be used, and it did not make their observance mandatory because of its concerns that the bill would not pass. One of the strongest oppositions against the bill came from the Japan Teachers’ Union, yet the Ministry of Education made hoisting the flag and singing the anthem mandatory at school ceremonies. This was something that many teachers refused to do, as they regarded such ceremonies as a revival of rituals that encouraged militarism and imperialism in Japan’s not-so-distant past. As a result of their non-compliance, the Tokyo Prefectural Education Board - whose members are appointed by the governor of Tokyo - punished more than 200 teachers who acted against the Ministry’s policy at school graduation ceremonies by removing them from classrooms and cutting their salaries. These punishments of public school teachers were imposed by local governments that were headed by conservative-nationalist politicians such as Tokyo’s Governor Shintarō Ishihara, but the LDP’s draft constitution would take this issue one significant step further by proposing to empower the central government to exercise the right of punishment for any form of such disobedience by Japan’s entire population.

Overall, the LDP proposes to embed kimigayo and hinomaru into the constitution as the mandatory symbols of the state, and it also wants to make it the duty of all Japanese to pay due respect to them. Besides having created much controversy in Japan, the pressure to use the above symbols compulsorily even had a victim in 1999, when Toshihiro Ishikawa, a public high school principal in Hiroshima, hanged himself in his home the day before his school’s graduation.

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484 Repeta, “Japan’s Democracy at Risk.”
485 Itō, “Japan’s Neo-Nationalism: The Role of the Hinomaru and Kimigayo Legislation.”
ceremony. He was enmeshed in a dilemma between “instructions” coming from his local education board to fly the nisshōki and sing kimigayo and, on the other hand, to honour demands by some of the teachers and students that he not obey the instructions.\\footnote{487}

**Elevating the status of the Emperor and Shinto**

Before the present constitution was promulgated in November 1946, Japan was governed under the Imperial Constitution of 1889, often referred to as the ‘Meiji Constitution’. Sovereignty was then in the hands of the Emperor, who claimed to rule by divine right. He held supreme power, while all popular rights were circumscribed and the duty of people to serve and obey him was absolute. In sharp contrast, the post-war constitution proclaimed the sovereignty of the people, defined a set of unequivocal rights, established formal separation of powers and also a strict separation of state and religion, and declared pacifism to be a central policy of the state.

The LDP’s draft would amend Article 1 of the Constitution by proposing that the Emperor shall not only be the symbolic figure of the State and of the unity of the Japanese people, but also “the head of the State.”\\footnote{488} In addition to that, Article 6 of the draft states that the Emperor shall “attend ceremonies held by the State, local governments or other public entities, and shall perform other public activities.”\\footnote{489} Interestingly, while the first article of the LDP’s constitution begins with elevating the status of the Emperor, mention of him disappears in Article 102, which currently

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\textsuperscript{488} “Nihon Koku Kenpō Kaisei Sōan [Draft Reform of the Japanese Constitution],” 2.

\textsuperscript{489} Ibid., 4.
declares that the “Emperor or the Regent as well as Ministers of State, members of the Diet, judges, and all other public officials” are obliged to respect and uphold Japan’s Constitution. 490 References to the Emperor and the Regent are omitted from the LDP’s draft and replaced with “all people.” 491 While the Emperor does not have any real political power according to the current Constitution, by declaring him head of State and stating explicitly that he shall attend ceremonies of the State and of other political and public entities, the LDP clearly aims to elevate the status of the Emperor and make him more visible in Japanese society. At the same time, the LDP’s draft is unclear on whether the Emperor should respect and uphold Japan’s constitution, leaving open the possibility that he might be positioned above the binding powers of the constitution.

This is all the more concerning since, in Japan’s first modern constitution, the Meiji Emperor was an active ruler who held considerable political power and the military-industrial modernization of the nation was carried out in his name, setting Japan on a path that ultimately led to the catastrophic events of the Pacific War. The Meiji government also designated Japan’s native religion, Shinto, as the state religion, exploiting it to serve as a lynchpin of state ideology in which Shinto priests were encouraged in carrying out their religious practices to emphasize the Emperor as a divine being. 492 While Japan’s current constitution guarantees full freedom of religion and separates state from church, Article 20 of the LDP’s draft would allow the “State, local governments and other public entities” to participate in certain religious rituals, as long as they “do not exceed the scope of social rituals or

customary practices.”\textsuperscript{493} Article 89 of the current constitution prohibits the use of any public money or other property to “be expended or appropriated for the use, benefit or maintenance of any religious institution or association.”\textsuperscript{494} The LDP’s draft would make the state, local governments and other public entities exempt from this rule, as long as this does not conflict with the stipulations of the above mentioned Article 20 of the LDP draft.\textsuperscript{495} The proposed changes to articles 20 and 89 would practically allow for the state to finance traditional religious, in other words Shinto and Buddhist, institutions and associations to perform customary social practices and religious activities. In other words, public money could now be given to religious institutions as long as the state has supervision, and presumably a certain level of control, over the way that money is spent, which borders on breaching the current constitution’s mandatory separation of state and church and explicit guarantee of religious freedom.

While the LDP’s draft is still far from aiming to restore the power of the Emperor to anything close to that declared in the Meiji Constitution, or to re-establish Shinto as the state religion, it is clear that the LDP wants both to play a more significant role in Japanese society. In fact, the LDP’s leader and Prime Minister Shinzō Abe has a central role in a number of political groups that have close ties with Shinto organizations or with conservative right-wing groups that believe Japan’s unique national character and values are based on ancient traditions such as Shinto and the traditional central role of the Emperor, and who in turn argue that these should be central again in organizing state and society in Japan. For example, Abe is a member of the liaison group of Diet members that was formed to

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{493} “Nihon Koku Kenpō Kaisei Sōan [Draft Reform of the Japanese Constitution],” 7.
\item \textsuperscript{494} “The Constitution of Japan,” Article 89.
\item \textsuperscript{495} “Nihon Koku Kenpō Kaisei Sōan [Draft Reform of the Japanese Constitution],” 22.
\end{itemize}
cooperate with the Shinto Association of Spiritual Leadership (SASL). SASL is the
main group or “mother body” (botai) of Jinja Honchō, the Association of Shinto
Shrines, that was established after the Second World War and incorporates more
than 80,000 Shinto shrines across the country. The latter is by far the largest Shinto
organization in Japan. It was founded as an umbrella organization of Shinto shrines
and promotes the religion and its main temple, the Grand Ise Shrine, as the “Soul of
Japan.” Among SASL’s major goals are to “proudly show to the world the
Imperial Family and create a society that values Japan’s cultural tradition,” to “create
a proud new Constitution that is based on Japan’s history and national character,”
and to “establish state rituals that revere the heroes of Yasukuni [Shrine].” Most
remarkably, Abe was the head of the SASL’s parliamentary liaison group, Shinseiren
Giinkon, in 2012, at the time when the LDP’s draft constitution was published.

The liaison group’s influence on Japanese lawmakers is significant: in 2016, 19 of
the Abe Cabinet’s 20 ministers and more than 300 politicians of the Japanese Diet
were active members of the group.

It is not surprising that one of Abe’s long-time and fundamental political goals,
that he inherited from his grandfather Nobusuke Kishi, a wartime leader and Class A
war crime suspect, has been to “escape from the post-war regime”: to reverse the

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political reforms introduced to Japan during the post-war Allied occupation. These goals were first laid out in detail in Abe’s aforementioned book *Towards a Beautiful Country*, which is widely considered to be written as his political manifesto. His visions for Japan are very similar to the ones that are promoted by groups like the Shinto Association of Spiritual Leadership.

Abe, along with the majority of his Cabinet members, is also a member of *Nippon Kaigi*, or the Japan Conference, which is Japan’s largest and most powerful conservative right-wing organization. *Nippon Kaigi*’s ideological foundations are rooted in two major modern Japanese religious organizations, of which one is the aforementioned *Jinja Honchō*, the Association of Shinto Shrines. *Nippon Kaigi*’s agendas are thought to be closely aligned with Abe’s political views, most notably with his aim to revise Japan’s post-war Constitution. As the organization’s website states, *Nippon Kaigi*’s first two major goals are to restore the pride of the Imperial Family on which the Japanese nation was built and promote the worship of the imperial family accordingly, and to repeal Japan’s current constitution that was created by the post-war occupying forces and replace it with a new constitution that reflects the history and traditions of Japan. *Nippon Kaigi* was founded in 1997 by a merger of two earlier groups: the Society for the Protection of Japan (*Nihon wo Mamoru Kai*) and the People’s Conference to Protect Japan (*Nihon wo Mamoru Kokumin Kaigi*). The former group was created as a union of Shinto and Buddhist

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503 Ibid.

organizations, and the latter consisted of right-wing activists, business leaders and Imperial Army veterans, whose aim was to make the Emperor the head of state again and change the constitution.\textsuperscript{505} Significantly, Article 1 of the LDP’s draft explicitly proposes the Emperor to be ‘the head of the State’.\textsuperscript{506} While \textit{Nippon Kaigi} does not appear to have a wide supporting base among the Japanese population, it does have a strong and direct influence in the Japanese Diet through its direct connections of the 280 members of the Parliamentary League for \textit{Nippon Kaigi} (\textit{Kokkai Giin Kondankai}), of which Abe is a special advisor, and the Local Assembly Union (\textit{Nippon Kaigi Chih\=o Giin Renmei}).\textsuperscript{507} Among the positions advocated by such conservative right-wing groups as the \textit{Nippon Kaigi} are that Japan should be applauded for liberating much of East Asia from Western colonial powers, that the 1946-1948 Tokyo War Crimes tribunals were illegitimate, and that the killings by Imperial Japanese troops during the 1937 “Nanjing massacre” were exaggerated or fabricated.\textsuperscript{508} This is all the more disturbing since \textit{Nippon Kaigi}’s presidents are usually high-profile public figures, with professor emeritus Tadae Takubo being the current chairman, succeeding T\=oru Miyoshi, the former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.\textsuperscript{509} In fact, many of the Japanese academics who are proponents of constitutional change are also members of \textit{Nippon Kaigi}. For instance, when public protests erupted against the LDP-proposed constitutional revision, Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga claimed that a number of constitutional scholars also supported the

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\textsuperscript{505} Yamazaki, \textit{Nippon Kaigi: senzen kaiki e no jounen} [Japan Conference: A Passion Towards Prewar Regression], 66-67.
\textsuperscript{506} “\textit{Nihon Koku Kenp\=o Kai sei S\=oan} [Draft Reform of the Japanese Constitution],” 2
\end{flushleft}
proposed changes. He cited three academics, all of whom turned out to be *Nippon Kaigi* members. These academics also happened to be members of *Nippon Kaigi*’s two offshoot organizations: the National Society to Create a Constitution for a Beautiful Japan (*Utsukushii Nihon no Kenpo wo Tsukuru Kokumin no Kai*), and the Association of Experts on the Constitution for 21st Century Japan (*21 Seiki no Nihon to Kenpō Yūshikisha Kaigi*).\(^{510}\) As their names indicate, both organization’s major aims are to change the constitution and create a society that is based on reviving Japan’s traditional values. It was also conservative right-wing groups, forerunners of *Nippon Kaigi*, that successfully pushed through the 1999 law that recognized *hinomaru* and *kimigayo* as Japan’s official national flag and anthem, respectively.\(^{511}\) It was these groups’ activists who collected 5.2 million signatures opposing the famous Murayama Statement, which is widely regarded as Japan’s strongest official apology to its neighbors on its wartime conduct to date, and who campaigned to collect 10 million signatures to revise Japan’s constitution.\(^{512}\) In November 2015 the above-mentioned *Nippon Kaigi*-affiliated group, the National Society to Create a Constitution for a Beautiful Japan, packed Tokyo’s *Nippon Budōkan* Hall in an effort to collect the 10 million signatures supporting constitutional change. By that time, the group had collected 4.45 million signatures, including those of 422 Diet members. The rally was greeted by PM Abe, whose congratulatory video message was played in front of a crowd of more than 11,000 people. In his message, Abe said that “…the time has come to seek a Constitution suitable for the 21st century,” and


\(^{511}\) Ibid., 3.

\(^{512}\) Ibid., 5-6.
proposed that proponents of a new constitution make "steady steps toward constitutional revision."\(^{513}\)

It is clear that the aforementioned conservative and right-wing groups are influential and instrumental among Diet lawmakers in pushing for constitutional change. By holding the highest ranks in some of these groups and attending their meetings, PM Abe is one of the most closely affiliated and influenced politicians among all Diet members.

**Public order versus public freedom and individual rights**

While Article 12 of the LDP’s draft constitution maintains the guarantee of the freedoms and rights of the people, as worded in the current constitution, it then adds that the people “shall refrain from any abuse of these freedoms and rights, shall be aware of the fact that there are responsibilities and duties that accompany these freedoms and rights, and shall not infringe the public interest and public order.”\(^{514}\)

While the draft does not clarify those responsibilities and duties, it stipulates that people’s freedoms and rights shall be subordinated to the public interest and public order. Although the public interest and order also remain undefined in the draft, the LDP’s Q&A pamphlet does provide some clarification: the notion of “public order” (kō no chitsujo) equals ‘social order’ (shakai chitsujo), which is further defined as “peaceful social life” (heion na shakai seikatsu). In addition to rewriting Article 12, in its attempt that appears to strengthen the purpose of restricting public freedoms, the LDP’s draft also proposes to amend Article 21. The related passage of the current

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constitution says that “freedom of assembly and association as well as speech, press and all other forms of expression are guaranteed.” The LDP would add to this that “engaging in activities with the purpose of damaging the public interest or public order, or associating with others for such purposes, shall not be recognized.”

On the one hand, maintaining public order is clearly in the interest of every Japanese citizen. On the other hand, however, a revised Article 12 and 21 can be a powerful tool in the hands of the government, giving it the right to suppress freedom of speech, association of individuals and public assembly in the name of public order and interest. It could dissolve public protests and political demonstrations, or even stop them from happening in the first place as it sees fit, arguing that these could cause disturbance to the general public, including obstructing traffic or upsetting members of the public in one way or another. A fundamental right in any democratic society is the freedom to speak out and protest against, or for, public issues and policies, and by doing so, some level of inconvenience caused to other members of society is simply unavoidable. By removing the individual’s constitutional protection for the right of association, anyone affiliated with a group whose protest is deemed unlawful by the government can be prosecuted on the grounds that they are associated with the group in question, whether or not they are physically part of the protest. There is no doubt that any government committed to democratic values should understand and accept this and should therefore not try to limit the right of members of the public to give voice to their opinion. The new draft also calls into question the freedom of the press, public thinkers, scholars and academics. To what extent will expressing their opinion on public matters be deemed by the government unlawful is unclear, but the LDP’s draft would put in place legal barriers to their

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515 Ibid., 8.
intellectual freedom and their ability to openly express dissenting views on certain issues, particularly in case those are highly critical of the government.

Freedom of expression is already a contested issue in Japan, with NGO Reporters Without Borders ranking the country 72nd out of 180, one of the lowest among the developed countries, in its 2017 World Press Freedom Index.\(^{516}\) Japan’s ranking is not only by far the lowest among the G7 countries, but it shows an alarming drop from its number eleven spot in 2010. Examples for a growing state control over the Japanese media are numerous. In October 2014 it was reported that NHK, Japan’s national broadcaster, sent a notice to journalists on its English-language services which allegedly banned any references to the Nanking massacre and to the Japanese use of “comfort women” (\(ianfu\)), the euphemism used to refer to wartime sex slaves recruited or kidnapped by Japan’s Imperial Army. Both issues are regarded as highly controversial among Japan’s neighbors, particularly in China and in the two Koreas. As Sophia University’s professor Kōichi Nakano observed, with its new leadership having close ties with the LDP, the NHK is becoming “increasingly like a mirror of CCTV,” China’s state broadcaster, and turning into a tool of the Japanese government.\(^{517}\)

In the LDP’s further attempt to redefine the current Japanese constitution’s notion of fundamental human rights, its draft proposes to fully delete the following passage from Article 97: “The fundamental human rights by this Constitution guaranteed to the people of Japan are fruits of the age-old struggle of man to be free; they have survived the many exacting tests for durability and are conferred upon this


and future generations in trust, to be held for all time inviolate.” The LDP’s Q&A pamphlet does not provide any explanation as to why the paragraph is omitted from the draft. Nevertheless, based on its proposed changes to Article 12 and 21, we can assume that the issue here was the age-old struggle of man to be free, which can be regarded as a universal motivation of all mankind to seek for the truth, break away from ignorance by critical thinking and challenge the power of any authoritarian power structure that attempts to control personal and societal freedom. If the passage was left in the constitution as it is, it could encourage various forms of criticism and struggle against the power of the state. Maintaining public interest and public order as unilaterally defined by the state clearly overrides civil rights and popular struggle.

**Eliminating the notion of the “individual” and defining new duties for the people**

Article 13 of the current constitution states that “All of the people shall be respected as individuals,” and that they have the “right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” This notion of individual freedoms and goals originally comes from Western societies’ “age-old struggle” for individual freedoms emerging from the French Revolution, and it also provided a strong ideological foundation for the U.S. Declaration of Independence. The LDP proposes to change the word “individual” (kojin) to “person” (hito). Just as when it rejected the notion of universal human rights and replaced them with Japan-specific rights derived from the nation’s culture and traditions, the LDP’s aim here again appears to go against the Western theory of natural - inalienable - human rights, something that the Japanese government

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considers so important in its views of China. The LDP’s Q&A booklet provides some further explanation: “The current Constitution includes some provisions based on the Western theory of natural rights. We think that those provisions need to be revised.”\textsuperscript{520} The proposal of turning individuals into persons may seem harmless on the face of it, but it recalls Japan’s traditional social values, and how people were positioned in the hierarchic system of the family, the society, and ultimately the state. Yōichi Higuchi, a constitutional scholar at the University of Tokyo, points out that the concept of the ‘individual’ did not exist in pre-war Japan and it was the current constitution that put an end to the patriarchal family system by creating the notion of the individual and granting rights to the concept.\textsuperscript{521} As Kazuyuki Takahashi of the University of Tokyo, a leading law scholar puts it:

\begin{quote}
“Before we learned the idea [of constitutionalism] from Westerners, we did not know the idea of imposing law on rulers. Law had always come from rulers; obedience to the law had been a virtue of the people; \textit{rulers had ruled by law instead of being ruled by law.”}\textsuperscript{522}
\end{quote}

Indeed, there is clearly a shift in the LDP’s draft from emphasizing the importance of the individual rights of the citizens towards making the people’s duties uniform; in other words, giving more power to the state over its citizens while weakening the rights of the individuals to keep the power of the government at bay.

With the proposed elevated status of the Emperor, state sponsorship of traditional religious events, curbing human rights and freedoms and now turning the individual into a person, the LDP’s aim appears to be to dissolve the autonomous


and critically-thinking individual into a more generalized and uniformist, group-oriented and obedient person, resulting in a reduced vitality of Japanese citizens and in a less self-conscious civil society that could actively challenge the government, particularly in cases of its possible abuse of power. This view of the individual is a big step back towards the notion of imperial subjects under the Meiji Constitution.

The family as the “natural and fundamental unit of society”

Article 24 of the current constitution sets out the basic principles regarding family and marriage. The LDP’s draft would amend the article by declaring that the “family shall be respected as the natural and fundamental unit of society,” and that “family members must support each other.”523

The LDP’s aim of rejecting people’s rights as individuals - who are respected as being the sovereign social unit - and instead attempting to create a society based on the more uniformalised notion of “persons” is apparent in its proposal to amend Article 13 of the current constitution, as discussed above. This purpose would be further served by replacing the individual, or person, with the family as the basic unit of society. The centrality of family, or household (ie) system, is indeed a long-standing and fundamental feature of traditional Japanese society, and the family was codified in the 1890 Meiji Constitution and Civil Code as the smallest unit of society. Historically, however, the head of the house and the dominant figure of the family was the male, who not only maintained and managed issues of the household, but also protected, supervised, and represented other members of the family. The traditional ie system was also defined by a gender-based division of labour and other roles that every member of the household was expected to uphold.

Some scholars make the point that while Japan’s current constitution does guarantee the rights of husband and wife as equals, the *ie* system still appears to persist both as an extra-legal set of customary practices and as a legal entity through the *koseki*, or household registration system, making the patriarchal extended family household positioned to still practically be the primary social unit in today’s Japan.\(^{524}\) The LDP’s aim appears to be to reinstate some of the historical roles of the family instead of to eradicate remnants of centuries-old practices in order to create a more egalitarian society.

**Granting new powers to the Prime Minister**

Article 41 of the Japanese constitution stipulates that the Diet shall be the highest organ of state power, and shall be the sole law-making organ of the State.\(^{525}\) Article 66 adds to this that, in exercising the executive power, the Cabinet shall be collectively responsible to the Diet.\(^{526}\) In other words, the government’s power is currently limited by the Japanese Diet, as would be the case in any constitutional democracy. The LDP’s draft, however, appears to also do away with this important limitation and give special powers to the prime minister and the Cabinet. Article 98 of the party’s draft proposes that the prime minister shall have a special right to issue a declaration of a state of emergency in case of an event of armed attack on Japan, “disturbances of the social order due to internal strife (…) large-scale natural disasters due to earthquakes, *etc.*, or other states of emergency.”\(^{527}\)


\(^{525}\) “The Constitution of Japan,” Article 41.

\(^{526}\) Ibid., Article 66.

Firstly, this is a very broad range of circumstances. Secondly, those cases allowing for the government to declare a national emergency are not clearly defined. Would the government use its power to declare emergency in such cases as a nuclear accident (e.g. the recent one in Fukushima), in case of a North Korean missile test (e.g. the one that flew through Japanese airspace in August 2017), an incident with China (e.g. in case of the reignited territorial disputes around the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands with China, such as in 2010, when a Chinese fishing boat rammed a Japanese coast guard ship in waters administered by Japan), a large-scale domestic protest (e.g. the ongoing nation-wide street protests against the use of any nuclear power in Japan)?

This is all left unclear in the draft. What is made clear, however, is that the government would have the right to do so. While Article 98 also proposes that a prior or a subsequent approval of the Diet is needed for declaring a state of emergency, the reality is that any government that has a simple majority in the Diet, which normally is the case, could push through such an approval. According to this proposal, any prime minister would have 100 days before they need an approval for extension of the national emergency, during which time the Diet would be dysfunctional. This process could be repeated for as long as the prime minister and the Cabinet sees fit, and again: with a simple majority vote in the Diet, which would resume for the time of voting. Furthermore, Article 99 of the LDP’s draft proposes that when a state of emergency has been decreed, the Cabinet would have the power to enact orders having an effect equivalent to that of law, while the prime minister could issue necessary orders to chief executive officers to local governments, and every person shall be subject to the orders of the State and other public organs. 528

528 Ibid., 25.
In other words, while the Diet would be dysfunctional during a declared state of national emergency, the prime minister and their Cabinet would be given full power to run the country without the control of the Diet. This would allow the government to make decisions without any transparency, including those decisions challenged by members of the opposition parties, as would normally be the case during any Diet session. The lack of parliamentary debates would mean that general members of the public would also be left uninformed, as there would not be any televised parliamentary debates discussing the pros and cons of any proposed bills. While the LDP’s proposal would uphold earlier provisions regarding basic human rights during a state of emergency, one would assume that those rights could be limited even further on the basis of the priority of public interest and public order.

The end of the Peace Constitution? Article 9

Article 9 of the current constitution is widely regarded as a fundamental guarantee that Japan will remain a peaceful and peace-observing nation. It states the Japanese people’s sincere aspirations to uphold international peace based on justice and order, and declares that 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, concluding accordingly that land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained.  

For this simple, clear and firm declaration, Japan’s post-war constitution is also referred to as a pacifist, or peace, constitution. The LDP intends to make significant changes to Article 9, to the extent that the constitution itself may no longer be considered a guarantee of peace. Firstly, it proposes that the word “forever” be omitted from the text, which would make the Japanese people’s

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intention to renounce war as a sovereign right of the state not permanent but temporary and subject to change depending on the circumstances. Secondly, the draft deletes the passage that prohibits maintaining land, air and sea forces and the state’s right to belligerency. Thirdly, and accordingly, the draft would allow Japan the right to exercise self-defence and, in order to achieve that, it proposes that a “National Defence Military shall be retained with the Prime Minister as the supreme commander.” Moreover, this military force shall conduct international cooperative activities, as well as maintain public order. In other words, the LDP’s draft would allow Japan to maintain a military force that it could deploy beyond its borders, as long as an argument for self-defense can be made, but also domestically, as long as an argument about threats to the public order can be made. Furthermore, Article 66 of the current constitution states that the prime minister and other ministers of the state must be civilians, but the LDP’s draft would allow these positions to be filled by military personnel as well, as long as they are not on active duty.

Overall, the LDP’s proposal to change Article 9 would allow for the Japanese government to legally deploy a proper military force overseas in case of conflict, but also to use its military domestically against its own population, should the overriding principle of maintaining public order require that. When the new powers proposed for the prime minister and the Cabinet in case of a state emergency are added to this, the risk of engaging in a military conflict overseas and the possibility of abusing the state’s power over its own domestic population would be much higher, and even constitutionally allowed for.

531 Ibid., 4-5.
532 Ibid., 17.
Paving the way for future constitutional changes

As stated earlier in this chapter, changes to Japan’s current constitution have never been made since its 1947 promulgation. The reasons lie in Japan’s complicated political system and also in the fact that Article 96 of the Japanese Constitution requires at least a two-thirds majority vote in both houses in order to make any constitutional amendments. Article 100 of the LDP’s draft proposes to lower the bar for any changes to a simple majority vote in both the House of Representatives and the House of Councillors before putting changes up for a majority popular vote. As Lawrence Repeta, professor of law at Meiji University and director of the Japan Civil Liberties Union, points out, the reason for keeping the bar to make any constitutional changes at a two-thirds supermajority vote is that individual rights such as the right to freedom of expression and religious freedom are so fundamental to the functioning of a free society and democratic government that those should not be subject to change by a simple majority vote.533

The constitution should not be so easily subject to changes in any healthy democracy, especially when public opinion can sway so quickly at times of stress, resulting in temporary majorities of political coalitions. If any government of the day could so easily change the constitution, people’s belief in democratic values and institutions and in their fundamental rights to counter excessive governmental power with strong checks and balances guaranteed by the constitution would be challenged, quite possibly to the point where Japanese society could lose its ability to function as a democracy.

533 Repeta, “Japan's Democracy at Risk - The LDP’s Most Dangerous Proposals for Constitutional Change.”
Domestic criticism of the LDP’s constitution

While the extent of changes the LDP’s draft wants to introduce is yet to sink into the minds of the general public, some Japanese law experts and constitutional scholars have openly come out criticizing the proposal.

Setsu Kobayashi, a professor of constitutional law at Keiō University, argues that the 2012 draft constitution shows that Japan’s long-ruling party, the LDP, does not understand at all the basics of what a (modern) constitution should be, which is to “protect the rights of the people from abuse of power [by the state].”534 In order to avoid historical incidents when entities or individuals wielded absolute power and used it to oppress people, modern constitutions were created to “protect citizens from tyranny and corruption by laying out rules that restrain governing entities,” points out Kobayashi.535

Similarly, Shōjirō Sakaguchi, professor of law at Hitotsubashi University, points out that the LDP’s draft simply “denies individualism and the universal character of constitutional rights,” and concludes that it “is no exaggeration to say that the proposed draft is a kind of declaration of independence from Western constitutionalism.”536

Some of the critics point to an even larger and ongoing problem in Japan’s domestic politics, something that appears to have been deeply embedded in the thought of many in the ruling post-war political elite. In his book Five Decades of Constitutionalism in Japanese Society, Yōichi Higuchi, professor emeritus at the University of Tokyo and a leading authority on constitutional law, argues that liberal

535 Ibid.
constitutional scholars in post-war Japan have been haunted by the fact that the political forces in power have failed to accept the legitimacy of the Constitution and to fully embrace constitutionalism. He explains that some Japanese conservative politicians often aim to defend a historic national identity and traditional values, as they think that Japanese society should be based on the authority of the emperor.  

In an apparent agreement with Kobayashi, Higuchi argues that the premise behind constitutionalism is that government authorities would be naturally inclined to abuse their power if they are left unchecked; therefore constitutions are made for the civil society to have legal means to limit the power of the state. Kobayashi and Higuchi both argue that this is the exact reason why Japan’s new constitution was put in place after the Pacific War, and why it is widely regarded as a guarantee to protect the right of the individual against any excessive power of the state.

University of Tokyo philosophy professor Tetsuya Takahashi sees the biggest difference between Japan’s current constitution and the LDP’s draft is that the latter is not based on “natural human rights,” something which the former implicitly acknowledges people are born with. He explains that the LDP’s proposal resembles a top-down system in which a state led by the Emperor and a unique culture exist prior to the people. Ultimately, the LDP thinks human rights only exist when they are recognized by the state, argues Takahashi. The new balance of power between authorities and civil society guaranteed by the post-war constitution is exactly what the LDP appears to be willing to change significantly, in a way turning the wheels of history back to more authoritarian times. As Higuchi concludes, “it is no

538 Otake, “Abe wants to gut public protections: expert.”
exaggeration to say that if there were an enemy of democracy and freedom in post-war Japan, it would be the LDP itself.”^540

While there has been no significant large-scale public debate about the LDP’s draft, some citizens’ groups have been formed to protest some of the proposed changes, those largely related to Article 9 that guarantees that Japan will stay on a peaceful path. Ryō Motoo, head of the Women’s Article 9 Association (Josei Kyūjō no Kai), warns that Abe is trying to “revive the mores of his grandfather’s era,” which she fears will result in a society full of restrictions that “does not recognize diversity of opinions and puts restraints on the freedom of speech as in the past.”^541

In a rare occurrence, even one lawmaker seems to agree with her point.

“There are some in both houses (of parliament) who don’t really understand the role of a modern constitution (…) The constitution is there to tie the hands of government, not put duties on the people,” says Tarō Kōnō, member of the ruling LDP, who is known to challenge his party’s views at times.

Since the late 1990s, Japan’s current prime minister, Shinzō Abe, and his right-wing conservative base have long been calling for “getting free of the post-war regime” (“sengo regime karano dakkyaku”)^542 By challenging the basic values and principles of Japan’s post-war constitution, the LDP’s draft proposal appears to aim to do just that, and thus to establish a nationalistic and authoritarian state whose powers are left largely unchecked by Japanese civil society.

Japan’s State Secrets Law: another significant step threatening individual and universal values

Unlike the proposed new constitution that still needs to be passed, the Liberal Democratic Party’s comprehensive Specially Designated Secrets Protection Act (Tokutei Himitsu no Hogo ni Kansuru Hōritsu)\textsuperscript{543}, commonly referred to as the State Secrets Law, has already been adopted by the Japanese Diet. The law was passed on 6 December 2013, one year after the LDP was re-elected with a stable majority in both houses of the Diet. The SSL allows for the government agencies to classify a wide range of information as state secrets, while it introduces strict criminal penalties on those – bureaucrats, journalist and members of the public alike – who leak any information designated as a state secret in any possible form. According to the new law, heads of all major government organs, including the Prime Minister the Cabinet ministers, and even the head of the Imperial Household Agency, have the right to designate information as a state secret.\textsuperscript{544} The SSL lists defence, international relations, terrorism countermeasures, and spying on behalf of a foreign power, as the four categories of state secrets. However, the law does not provide a clear definition of what information in these categories should be defined as state secrets, and leaves this to be determined by the above heads of agencies instead. Article 18 provides full rights to the Prime Minister to set the standards of classifying and declassifying information, as well as to provide security clearances to state secrets.\textsuperscript{545} Although the prime minister is required to consult an advisory committee, that committee does not


\textsuperscript{544} Ibid., Articles 2 and 3, 2-5.

\textsuperscript{545} Ibid., Article 18, 24-25.
have authority over the prime minister’s final decision, its recommendations are non-binding.

Furthermore, the SSL stipulates that the government agencies have the power to designate state secrets for up to 30 years, but after this period it is left up to the Cabinet to decide about further extension. Also, when a government agency decides to destroy any designated state secret, it only has to obtain the approval of the prime minister before doing so, but is not required to consult other agencies, including public ones.546

Article 23 of the SSL strictly penalises all government officials and private contractors who leak any state secrets to members of the public or to the media, imposing a maximum prison sentence of ten years and a penalty fee of up to ten million yen on them.547 The SSL makes no exception in these cases. Even those whistle-blowers who disclose state fraud, corruption and other threats to the public would face serious penalties from the state, even if it could be argued that their actions have served the interest of the general public. Ironically, this stipulation seems to be in contradiction with the idea of serving the public interest above all in the related part of the LDP’s proposed new constitution.

The State Secrets Law was passed hastily and without any substantial debate in either chamber of the Diet; neither was any consultation or feedback allowed from the public or from related professional associations such as Japan’s National Bar Organization, although the latter expressed its strong opposition to the proposed bill a number of times.548 There was widespread domestic criticism, ranging from public writers and civil rights groups to scholars and media experts. The Japan Civil

546 Ibid., Article 4, Section 6, 6-7.
547 Ibid., Article 23, 26-27.
548 Repeta, “Raising the Wall of Secrecy in Japan – the State Secrecy Law of 2013,” 23.
Liberties Union, a citizens group founded in the year Japan’s post-war constitution took effect, formally opposed the bill and organized a series of “emergency gatherings” (kinkyū shūkai) where activists and public intellectuals spoke out against the bill. Regular anti-secrecy demonstrations were held opposite the Prime Minister’s Office.

A group of 24 prominent Japanese scholars issued a declaration against the bill on 11 October 2013, criticising it as being unconstitutional, as something that gives the state extended power of secrecy and as “threatening fundamental human rights”. The online petition had gathered support from 271 constitutional, media, and criminal law experts from across Japan by the end of the month. With over 80 per cent of Japan’s population opposing the bill, street protests drew crowds of up to 10,000 people in Tokyo. While PM Abe said that he would quit office “if there is a case where news reporting is suppressed” and attempted to reassure the general public that the law was aimed at terrorists and spies instead of normal Japanese citizens, Shigeru Ishiba, Secretary General and second-in-command of the LDP, likened those who were protesting against the bill to be terrorists themselves.

549 Ibid.
Despite facing an enormous domestic opposition coming from various segments of society, the LDP did not hold any public consultation and instead rammed through the bill without any significant debate in both Diet chambers. The law, designating 55 categories of state secrets and creating up to 460,000 state secrets between the 19 government offices, took effect a year later, in December 2014. Kōichi Nakano, professor of political science at Sophia University, said that the Abe administration’s aim was to seek greater influence over the Japanese media, and Kaori Hayashi, a professor at Tokyo University, criticised the bill, saying that “[t]he definition of secret is very vague, and people, including myself, are wary of misuse.”

Many major media and law organizations, including the Japan Newspapers & Editors Association, the Japan Federation of Bar Associations, the Japan Magazine Publishers Association, The Foreign Correspondents Club of Japan, and the Japan P.E.N. Club, had also declared their opposition to the law, saying that it went against fundamental democratic values and principles. The June 2000 declaration of the Japan Newspapers & Editors Association says that

“The public’s right to know is a universal principle that sustains a democratic society. That right cannot be ensured without the existence of media, operating with the guarantee of freedom of speech and expression, while being totally committed to a high moral standard and fully independent. […] Freedom of expression is a fundamental human right, and

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newspapers have that absolute freedom in both their news coverage and editorial commentary.”

The new law would infringe upon these basic principles and values that all news organizations should be founded on. Similarly, Yasuhiro Tajima, media law expert at Sophia University, argues that the SSL allows for almost unlimited power for government agencies to exercise information control (jōhō tōsei). He points out that people’s right to know, as guaranteed by the current constitution, will only apply in the context of government agencies and bureaucrats, and the general public’s free access to information will no longer hold. He is concerned that Japan’s news organizations and journalists will be turned into government public relations agencies as their role could be reduced to simple “press release journalism” (happyō hōdō). Ultimately, the state secrets law will “root out and destroy” the very basic values of democracy, says Tajima. Jeffrey Kingston, a professor at Temple University, adds that the lack of any independent oversight body means that government officials will

“have a carte blanche to cover their tracks, and that state bureaucrats will designate too much information as “special secrets” so that their decisions won’t be scrutinized or second-guessed (...) bureaucrats have often decided against the public interest and now have a way to hide their misdeeds.”

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International organizations such as the Human Rights Watch, the International PEN Club, Reporters Without Borders, and the Open Society Justice Initiative also came forward criticising the SSL.\textsuperscript{559} Even the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, a position regarded as the top human rights job in the world, made a statement voicing her concern that the law was rushed through Japan’s Diet, that there was not enough clarity as to what constituted a secret, and that the bill allowed the Japanese government to “designate any inconvenient information as secret.”\textsuperscript{560}

Consequently, in the year the bill was accepted, Japan experienced a record drop of 31 places and ranked 53\textsuperscript{rd} in the 2013 World Press Freedom Index. The next year, when the law came into effect, Japan fell a further 6 places to 59\textsuperscript{th} in the same index, and its freefall continued with the latest index ranking Japan the 72\textsuperscript{nd} nation out of 180, putting it behind countries such as Namibia, Botswana, Mongolia, Niger, or Papua New Guinea.\textsuperscript{561} In its 2014 country analysis the Reporters Without Borders said that as a consequence of the SSL, “[i]nvestigative journalism, public interest and the confidentiality of journalists’ sources are all being sacrificed by legislators bent on ensuring that their country’s image is spared embarrassing revelations.”\textsuperscript{562}

Ironically, the same year the bill was accepted, the Open Society Justice Initiative released its Global Principles on National Security and the Right to Information, what became generally known as the Tshwane Principles. According to the Society’s statement, these principles were

\begin{quote}
“based on international (including regional) and national law, standards, good practices, and the writings of experts...[T]hese Principles were drafted
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{559} Repeta, “Raising the Wall of Secrecy in Japan – the State Secrecy law of 2013,” 13.
\textsuperscript{561} “2017 World Press Freedom Index.”
by 22 organizations and academic centres in consultation with more than 500 experts from more than 70 countries at 14 meetings held around the world.  

The Tshwane Principles is therefore widely considered to be the most comprehensive document made to date that provides guidelines for setting the balance between the state’s national security interests and the public’s right to know. Sadly, Japan not only did not participate at any stage of the two-year-long discussion leading to the issuing of the Tshwane Principles, but its state secrets law clearly goes against the spirit, values and principles of the document.

**Rule of law versus rule by law: Japan’s post-war values in danger**

With the exception of a few brief intervals, the Liberal Democratic Party has ruled Japan for most of its post-war period, with changing the 1946 Constitution that was imposed on Japan by foreign powers being one of its founding goals. Since its creation in 1955, the party has also acted as a “hub for history revisionists,” who denied that events such as the Nanjing Massacre ever took place and who have been attempting to whitewash Japan’s wartime history. The likes of *Nippon Kaigi* and its closely affiliated organizations and groups appear to serve as indirect ideological think-tanks that provide a right-wing conservative ideology for the LDP. These groups have been growingly active since the 1990s and early 2000s, pushing the

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LDP towards constitutional revision and reintroducing more traditional values into Japanese society.

A political blueblood, Prime Minister Abe has built his entire career supporting this political agenda, being closely associated with, or even serving as a high-ranking member in, a number of these right-wing conservative groups. A Diet member with only a few years experience in the 1990s, Abe was already at the forefront of the politics of denial as the Secretary General of the Young Diet Member Group for Considering Japan’s Future History Textbooks (Nihon no Zentō to Rekishi Kyōkasho wo Kangaeru Wakategi no Kai), a group aiming to revise Japan’s masochistic (jigyakuteki) history education and whitewash the country’s wartime history.565

His career has developed parallel to the creation of such groups that one way or another advocated for Japan-specific values and the reversal of the post-war liberal democratic order established by the 1946 Constitution. Accordingly, Abe and other leaders of the LDP have long sought to establish greater government powers,566 and their moment finally arrived with the LDP securing a comfortable majority in both houses of the Diet after the December 2012 elections.

Soon after PM Abe announced his new cabinet in January 2013, Children and Textbook Japan Network 21, a non-governmental organization formed to resist historical revisionism and fight the removal of material critical of Japan’s war record from textbooks, published a comprehensive list of the Abe administration’s ministers’ affiliations with various right-wing and conservative groups, as well as indicating

their positions in those groups. The list is a staggering account of how deeply Japan’s top leaders are involved in activities of such groups as the Diet Representative ‘Japan Conference’ Roundtable (Nippon Kaigi Kokkai Giin Kōdankai, the influential political wing of the Nippon Kaigi), the Diet Member Group for Considering Japan’s Future and History Textbooks (Nippon no Zentō to Rekishi Kyōkasho wo Kangaeru Giin no Kai), the Shinto Political Alliance Diet Member’s Roundtable (Shintō Seiji Renmei Kokkai Giin Kōdankai), the Association of Diet Members for Worshipping at Yasukuni Shrine Together (Minna de Yasukuni Jinja ni Sanpai suru Giin no Kai), the Diet Member Alliance for Promoting the Assessment of a New Constitution (Kenpō Chōsa Suishin Giin Renmei), the Japan Rebirth (Sōsei Nippon), the Committee for Promoting Reform of the Fundamental Education Law (Kyōiku Kihonhō Kaisei Sokushin Inkai), the Association for Building a Proper Japan (Tadashii Nippon wo Tsukurukai), and the Association of Diet Members for Demanding that China Remove Defamatory Photographs from the War of Resistance Against Japan Memorial Hall (Chūgoku no Kōnichi Kinenkan kara Futō na Shashin no Tekkyo wo Motomeru Kokkai Giin no Kai). Many of the Japanese government’s top officials, including PM Abe himself, the Deputy Prime Minister, the Minister of Internal Affairs and Communications, the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, the Minister of Defence, and the Chief Cabinet Secretary held high-ranking positions in these influential groups that both implicitly and explicitly claim that Japan has “gone wrong” during the post-war period and therefore advocate for a social order similar to the prewar status quo, including the removal of content

critical of Japan’s wartime actions from school history textbooks and assert that Japan’s aim was to free Asia from Euro-American imperialism, implement a moral and patriotic education based on Japan’s traditional values, reinstate the centrality of the Imperial Family and promote Shinto values, advocate for official political visits of the Yasukuni Shrine, push for a constitutional revision, and to rethink Japan’s post-war order.\footnote{Ibid.}

Japan’s first constitution, the Meiji Constitution, can be regarded as a means for the government to have control over society, in which the value of the people was defined in such terms as obedience, filial piety and loyalty to the Emperor, and being subservient to a government that acted in the name of that Emperor. Japan’s post-war Constitution radically changed this view of law by placing constraints on the power of the government instead, following the principles of constitutionalism developed in Western liberal democracies. This new understanding of the law was founded on popular sovereignty and on the principles of fundamental human rights, representative democracy, and individualism. Although these were at odds with Japan’s traditional values, the Japanese people have since come to embrace them.

Elevating the status of the Emperor, or even restoring his formal powers, has been a part of a simmering, but decades-long revisionist agenda in Japan, in which right-wing conservative groups such as Nippon Kaigi have played a central role. Parallel to issuing the LDP’s draft constitution in 2012, Abe proposed a new public commemorative event called the Restoration of Sovereignty Day (Shūken Kaifuku no Hi) to be celebrated on 28th of April each year. This is the day when Japan’s Allied Occupation ended in 1952 and the day when the LDP announced its draft constitution 70 years later. It became a formal event of the state soon after Abe
assumed his position as prime minister and was first celebrated with the attendance of the Emperor and the Empress in 2013. On the grounds of Japan’s current constitution it is highly questionable that the emperor, being merely a symbol of the state, should attend such an event, his presence could have reinforced the right-wing conservative agenda which claims that full sovereignty can only be restored with the Emperor becoming the head of the state again, and Article 1 of the LDP’s draft points in this direction.

Abe is also at the front of a campaign that aims to call for a revision of Article 96, lowering the current two-thirds supermajority requirement for constitutional amendments to a simple majority in the Diet. The initiative appears to have support not only among LDP members, but also with Nippon Ishin no Kai, a major opposition party, and some smaller ones like Your Party. Watering down the supermajority requirement would essentially open the road to all other constitutional changes in the future. As Yōichi Higuchi points out, by amending Article 96, the LDP would effectively “change the rules of the game first,” which goes “completely against the spirit of constitutionalism.”

In Japan, there has always been a tendency for the government to destroy evidence, or in certain cases, to not produce any evidence at all, and there is no law for governments agencies and bureaucrats to keep records or disclose information after a certain time has lapsed. A recent example would be that when the Japanese


government reinterpreted the Constitution to allow for the exercise of collective self-defense in 2014, the Cabinet Legislation Bureau did not keep any records of its internal discussions.572

The 2012 draft constitution and the state secrets law point right into the heart of an issue that has long and deeply been embedded in the Japanese political system: a right-wing conservative revisionist agenda that aims to remove the liberal-democratic foundations of post-war Japan, of which the LDP itself appears to be the most significant enemy. Japan’s current constitution has greatly contributed to the nation’s quick post-war recovery, serving as a basis for the nation’s peaceful prosperity and keeping government power at bay. Abe and his right-wing followers have embarked on a mission to turn Japan’s current constitution that is based on upholding universal values such as human rights, democracy and freedom into a Japan-specific “autonomous constitution” (jishū kenpō) that draws on historical traditions and focuses on Japan’s perceived uniqueness, significantly changing the balance of power between government and civil society, to the detriment of the latter.

So far both public and academic debate about the LDP’s proposal to amend Japan’s post-war constitution has largely been in the context of reinterpreting and changing Article 9, which guarantees peace. As this chapter showed, however, there are many more fundamental values that are in danger by the 2012 draft constitution. With the State Secrets Law now in place, some of Japan’s democratic values, including the general public’s right to know, are in grave danger. With its checks and balances in place, however, Japan’s current constitution is still able to put a powerful restraint on Japan’s political elite. But Abe and his followers envision an

autonomous constitution that would significantly adjust the balance of power between the government and individual rights: instead of using the constitution to keep the power of the state in check, the LDP wants to remove restraints from government power and impose duties on the people instead, which goes against the values of modern constitutionalism. In other words, the LDP wants to revise the fundamental values and principles in Japan’s constitution, based on which Japan’s post-war regime was founded, and on which a new Japanese society was built. By attempting to revoke those values and principles, the LDP clearly believes that those ‘universal’ values and principles are wrong, or at least do not apply to Japanese society. With its proposed new constitution and the already implemented State Secrets Law, the LDP clearly seems to value state power and authority above universal values and principles. If the proposal to change the post-war constitution is successful, the Japanese government would simply become the judge, the jury and the enforcer and the state would become accountable ultimately only to itself.

The LDP’s constitution was first drafted and published in 2005. Remarkably, this year was also when Japan started to develop its so-called values-oriented diplomacy (during Abe’s first term as prime minister), with which it aimed to clearly distinguish itself from the Chinese government and reinforce its image as a liberal-democratic and progressive country to other members of international society. With the proposed changes, however, the LDP is effectively saying that liberal democracy is incompatible with Japan’s culture and traditions. Indeed, the values and principles that the LDP’s draft constitution advocate, and the powers that the already-implemented state secrets law give to the government, push Japan closer to the way in which the Chinese government, the object of its criticism, operates. At the same
time, the LDP clearly seems to want to distance itself from certain values on which Western liberal democracies and even Japan’s own post-war order were founded.
Conclusion

In this thesis I have argued that values play a significant role in the views of the Japanese toward contemporary Japan-China relations. Both in its academic and political narrative as presented to an international audience, Japan views itself as a country that puts great emphasis on advancing universal values such as democracy, freedom, the rule of law, and human rights. At the same time, Japan characterises China in quite the opposite terms, presenting it as a country that lacks these shared values.

My research examined the shortcomings of Japan’s views of its relations with China in the context of the same values the Japanese elite considers important, and concluded that, while its references to universal values are frequent, those values are not applied consistently and critically when it comes to reflecting on Japan’s own roles and responsibilities, whether in regard to persistent and deep-running historical issues between the two countries, or in regard to Japan’s strategies in cooperating with other countries, or in reflecting on its recent domestic politics. Advancing arguments based on the relevance of any values is misleading when those values are applied only in a particular context. Values must be consistently applied to all parties involved, in any context and without exception. The Japanese political and academic elite’s lack of consistency in applying the same values based on which it criticizes China to itself – and to some other countries – is therefore what this dissertation takes issue with.

More specifically, my research revealed shortcomings in Japan’s values approach in the following three different areas:
Credibility of Japan’s foreign policy strategies

Firstly, Japan’s concept of universal values was vaguely defined. Apart from repeatedly emphasizing the importance of democracy, freedom, human rights, and the rule of law in its foreign policy statements and international agreements, Tokyo did not make clear what exactly it meant by these values and never formulated actual policies based on which these values could be further advanced with its partner countries.

Secondly, there was also a lack of consistency in Japan’s pursuit of universal values in its diplomacy. Frequent changes in Japanese government resulted in inconsistent foreign policy strategies: While some administrations placed universal values in the centre of their diplomacy, others appeared to consider promoting universal values less important. Some governments were even openly against incorporating any kind of values into their diplomacy. The emergence and subsequent decline of Tokyo’s Arc of Freedom and Prosperity initiative also showed that Japan itself has difficulties with how central universal values should be in its own diplomatic principles. Tokyo’s oscillations between pragmatism and universal values appear to have been motivated less by a deeper commitment to those values than by its more narrowly understood national interests.

Thirdly, there was a significant problem with credibility. Japan’s values-oriented diplomacy, and its Arc of Freedom and Prosperity initiative in particular, outlined cooperation based on strengthening universal values with a number of countries that did not find those values important. It would be hard to argue that some Central Asian countries such as Kazakhstan or Kyrgyzstan greatly value democracy, the rule of law, or human rights in both their domestic and foreign policies, and this was also the case with some ASEAN countries such as Myanmar.
and Cambodia. This was arguably the reason why Tokyo expressed its commitment to universal values in principle and never put the strengthening of those values into well-defined policies and practical action.

It is clear that frequent references to universal values were meant predominantly to advance Tokyo’s own political interests: It is hard to think it was a sheer coincidence that Japan emphasized exactly those values that it thought China rejected. Japan’s values-oriented foreign policy therefore had relevance predominantly on a rhetorical and strategic level. In this way Tokyo aimed to mitigate China’s influence in Asia by expanding the scope of its own cooperation with supposedly like-minded countries in Asia and beyond. Japan therefore appears to have used the concept of universal values with the aim of elevating its international image and appeal to certain countries in a larger geopolitical game of competing for power and influence vis-à-vis China.

**Consistency of Japanese academic views**

I argued that not only are Japan-China relations fraught, but so are some of the approaches with which a number of leading Japanese academics attempt to explain them to an international audience. Firstly, Japanese scholars tend to view China and Japan, and even Japan’s major ally, the United States, in monolithic terms. While they adopt a critical approach towards China and describe it in mostly negative terms – some even going as far as to claim China is Japan’s enemy – they tend to avoid criticising the Japanese government with the same vehemence. Also significantly, the presented scholars’ views lack any substantial criticism toward the role the United States plays. In normative terms, the power of the US-Japan alliance, as well
as the power of the current global and regional status quo, should be valued by Japan
to the extent they consistently uphold universal values in the country’s international
relations. From a values perspective, the power of any status quo is only credible and
acceptable as long as it is based on the genuine advancing of universal values and
not narrowly defined self-interests. Drawing on John Mearsheimer, who asks why
China would not act out of self-interest, Chapter Three also questions whether the
current status quo, both in Asia and globally, was based on the realization of
universal values. Even the lack of equality in the US-Japan alliance, in which the US
is evidently the leading power whose actions are never questioned, indicates that
perceptions of power play a more significant role than universal values not only in
the bilateral relation itself, but also in Japanese scholarly writing on it. Status quo
always serves the interests of those in power and affects negatively those who are
not. Status quo itself is the result of the age-old struggle for power and it therefore
represents power relations and hierarchy and not a state of affairs based on the
realisation of universal values. The term itself in international relations presupposes
interests and efforts to maintain existing power structures and a resistance to any
change that might challenge the power of those in charge. As such, status quo itself
is part of the problem and not the solution. While scholars rightly point out that
China is challenging the current regional, and perhaps global, order, their arguments
remain in the context of power, and not values, if they are not critical towards the
current status quo itself.

As argued earlier, China is much more than merely a research object to satisfy
Japanese scholars’ intellectual curiosity, but, as Noriko Kamachi points out, a proper
attitude towards China is also important for their moral integrity. This needs to be
extended to critical scholarly reflections on the roles of Japan and the United States,
including holding them to account when it comes to holes in their advancement of universal values. This leads to the problem of normativity in Japanese scholarship.

As Chapter Three showed, while earlier Japanese research on Japan-China relations included significant normative elements, more recent publications tend to be descriptive. The advantage of normative research, particularly on the present state of Japan-China relations, is that it can make a strong case for how things ought to be, rather than just explaining how things in reality are. From a normative and values-based perspective, scholars must contribute proactively towards establishing better visions for future bilateral relations, be it through criticism or through concrete policy recommendations that help facilitate cooperation and the realization of a more values-based future status quo. Japanese scholars need to work on formulating more positive visions for future Japan-China relations that are inclusive, holistic, long term-based, and universal values-oriented.

The Japanese political elite’s proposed domestic values

As discussed earlier, one of the central tenets of Japan’s values-oriented diplomacy is a general respect for universal values such as “human dignity, rule of law, and democracy.” These values can also be understood as values of civil society and are therefore applicable to Japan’s own domestic society as well. However, as the case study in Chapter Four reveals, it is highly questionable whether universal values are really important to the Japanese political elite when it comes to its own civil society.

573 The term “future status quo” is somewhat an oxymoron as status quo literally means the state of affairs that existed before. The point is of course to constantly move forward towards a better state of affairs.

574 Kanehara, “Japan’s Grand Strategy and Universal Values.”
Indeed, neither the spirit of the LDP’s draft constitution and its proposed new stipulations, nor the State Secrets Law and issues around its implementation such as the lack of both public discussion and consultation with experts indicate that the Japanese government has much respect towards universal values. On the contrary, the case study showed that the existence of those very values is put in danger by both documents: the values and principles that the LDP’s draft constitution advocate, and the powers that the State Secrets Law give to the government, push Japan closer to the way in which the Chinese government, the object of its strongest criticism, operates. At the same time, the LDP’s draft constitution clearly distances Japan from the very values that Western liberal democracies uphold and on which Japan’s own post-war order was founded. As argued in the Introduction, values represent an ideal state of affairs and are therefore only approximative in reality. In this context, it can be argued that Japan’s moving away from those values is even more alarming than China’s perceived lack of universal values, as Beijing is at least consistent in that regard.

‘What can Japan do better?’\textsuperscript{575}

In my thesis I do not aim to discredit Japan’s genuine concern about China’s rise and its future course. Nor does it argue that values are not important to Japan. On the contrary, I strongly agree with those cited in this research who point out that values

\textsuperscript{575} One of the most prominent contemporary Japanese international relations scholars, Takashi Inoguchi, maintains that post-war Japanese international relations research mostly sought to answer the question, “what went wrong?”, \textit{i.e.} how Japan ended up in the position it found itself at the end of the Pacific War. See Takashi Inoguchi, “Why are there no non-Western theories of International Relations? The Case of Japan,” in \textit{Non-Western International Relations Theory: Perspectives on and Beyond Asia}, ed. Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan (London, New York: Routledge, 2010), 56.
are important and they do matter to Japan.\textsuperscript{576} I also agree with one of Japan’s significant dilemmas about China: namely, whether the latter will take a more open and commonly shared values-based approach, or on the contrary continue to pursue a rather self-centred and self-interest-based approach in dealing with other countries. This is indeed a very important dilemma and is of concern to the rest of the world as well. What this thesis takes issue with is whether values always matter to Japan, and whether Tokyo always appreciates values for what they are. How much does Japan really understand the value of personal freedom and human rights when it comes to issues of history with China, and, indeed, how much does it really comprehend the significance of the rule of law and democratic decision-making when it comes to its own civil society? Can Japan use these arguably universal values merely as a foreign policy strategy and exempt itself whenever it sees fit from having those values applied to itself?

Shin’ichi Kitaoka makes a strong case that the international order of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century must be based on achievements made by societies in the last 150 years. With this in mind, it is particularly concerning what Tarō Asō, Japan’s former foreign minister and present deputy prime minister – who happens to be one of the strongest advocates of Japan’s Arc of Freedom and Prosperity diplomacy – said regarding trilateral relations between China, Japan, and India: namely, that “China and India have hated each other for a thousand years. Why should things be different now?”\textsuperscript{577}

He later added that there was never a time for the past more than 1,500 years of history when India’s and Japan’s relations with China “went extremely

smoothly.” Asō’s argument indicates that he simply dismisses the possibility, and even the necessity, of making progress with China. He views China as a menacing force and a remnant of the past. As already argued, however, something has universal value when everyone finds it valuable or at least has reason to believe it has value. It would be difficult to argue that China has no reason to value human rights or the rule of law, even though it may not emphasize these as much as some other countries.

The real issue, however, and quite controversially, is that universal values, such as human freedom, are not wanted with a universal validity (e.g. not everyone wants equal freedom for everyone else), and those values do not carry the same meaning for all. In fact, those values are vaguely defined and are understood quite differently in various cultural contexts. As argued in the Introduction, values are approximative in reality. Thus it is therefore unfair to deny universal values to any country, even if their path to realize these values is paved with contradictions and universal values are therefore often violated. Different countries take different paths, face different obstacles, and evolve at a different tempo. It would therefore result in the Japanese elite’s sudden and inevitable self-criticism if, instead of questioning China’s respect for values for its own benefit, it focused on how to better realize values in general.

By the internal logic of Japan’s value-oriented diplomacy, it would be contradictory to say that Japan does not value the human rights of the Chinese. In other words, the problem with Japanese elite views – which can be rather extreme and self-righteous at times – is that they appear to try to convince others that China

rejects universal values, instead of assuming China’s own pursuit of universal values once and for all and focusing on how to assist and work together towards the convergence of the two countries’ different paths of realising universal values.

Interests tend to focus on differences while values emphasize similarities. If Japan really considers universal values important, it must also seek for cooperation based on these values consistently, and without exception. The nature of universal values dictates that, regardless of how cooperative or uncooperative China seems, Japan should always be open towards it and constantly make efforts towards cooperation. In addition to that, and similarly importantly, the nature of universal values also dictates that even competition should be based on these values. But what is the best way to realize these values through competition? How can international competition be arranged so that it benefits everyone? In other words, how is it possible that, instead of narrowly defined self or national interest, international competition is based on values? Japan’s values-oriented diplomacy completely fails to address these important questions.

‘Eastern’ and ‘Western’ universal values in Japan’s international relations

It may be no exaggeration to say that the history of post-Meiji Restoration Japan has been a history of the struggle with the notions of Westernization and modernization.579

It would well exceed the limits of this thesis to go into the complexities of the otherwise unavoidable – terminological issue of what is meant by "East" and

"West," and the relation between these two terms has changed over history. Nevertheless, even by using these terms we already assume and attempt to summarize what influences we attribute to certain cultural patterns. It was the Western tradition that defined itself and found its "special otherness" vis-à-vis Eastern traditions, starting from ancient Greek philosophy, through Roman law, the declaration of human and civil rights, the birth of free market capitalism, and the economic and cultural expansion of military-industrial imperialism. The West and the East shared many important views for centuries, but with time the utilitarian- and capitalist-turned West departed from holistic approaches and, with a few exceptions, generally stopped the scientific inquiry into universal values. The focus on sensual reality (over the supersensual) and individuality became the dominant characteristic of the soon-to-become-dominant West as well as the basis of the kind of empirism, positivism and political realism that Japan had to face relatively late and quite violently. In summary, the Japanese elite encountered, interacted with, and ultimately "tuned in to" not simply any kind of "West" – or "East" for that matter – at the end of its self-imposed isolation in the 19th century: It was strongly influenced by, and became susceptible to, dominant powers that strictly furthered their own interests.

These are the contexts in which Japan’s values-oriented diplomacy becomes really interesting, and this is where Asia’s traditional cultural values and holistic sensitivity – something that, for instance, Okakura Kakuzō emphasized in the 19th century - can help further Japan’s genuine pursuit for universal values. As pointed out in the Introduction, traditional international relations in East Asia were defined by a China-centered system of tributary and vassal states, or, as John Fairbank calls
it, the “Chinese World Order.” Early Japan was also a part of this ancient and relatively loose East Asian regional order, which not only contributed to its cultural development, but also stabilised the power of the Japanese archipelago’s competing warlords through assigning social ranks and authority to its members for many centuries. As opposed to the growingly individualistic Western cultures, East Asian relations were dominated by a more rigid and more collectivist social order and hierarchy until Western colonization. Even at times of anarchy, traditional order in East Asian societies remained largely unchanged. This unchallenged and mostly unchanging system brought peace and a sense of predictability on the one hand, but, on the other hand, it was essentially based on power and inequality, where social change and individuality played very little, if any, role. Confucianism found social harmony in a well-defined hierarchy, while Buddhism and Taoism did not have much to say about society. The only soft theory about international relations in East Asia, if one really stretches it, was perhaps offered in Sun Tzu’s famous book, the Art of War, from some 2,600 years ago. Interestingly, his book would likely be considered a Chinese realist theory today and would be compared to the works of Thucydides and Machiavelli, who are often considered to be forerunners of Western realist IR theories.

It would be interesting to see, for instance, a genuine attempt to create a Japanese theory of international relations based on the concepts of dàtóng (大同), perhaps Confucianism’s highest principle, which refers to a Great Harmony or a

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Grand Union within society, and tǐānxià (天下 —”all under heaven”) – a concept understanding the world as an integrated whole in which a natural way of life is to seek harmony between differences, and where there is no such thing as an “outsider.” This holistic worldview emphasizes inclusiveness rather than exclusiveness, an inclusiveness in which well-defined boundaries of nation-states and national interests are difficult to imagine. As opposed to Western theories, where the balance of power is perhaps what can be achieved at best, and in which power often comes from possessing, and often exploiting, human and natural resources, the holistic ideas of dàtóng and tǐānxià suggest not only a possibility, but the moral necessity of establishing harmony within and between societies as well as in human-nature relations. In the light of the current state of international relations, let alone Japan-China relations, this is a rather naïve, if not laughable, proposition. Yet it also indicates how far those current international relations are from such high ideals, and not only in the case of Japan.

Despite an abundance of East Asian religions and philosophies (i.e. Buddhism, Daoism, Confucianism, Zen Buddhism), it is striking to see how little these have been utilized to create East Asian theories of international relations. Perhaps the answer lies in the traditionally hierarchic and fundamentally cyclic worldviews of East Asian cultures and in their simple struggle to catch up with the West in the past 170 or so years.


While some thinkers, such as Yūkichi Fukuzawa, fully embraced Western notions of liberalism and democracy, others rejected them and tried to preserve the “spirit of the samurai.”\textsuperscript{584} The Meiji modernization is also generally considered to be the time when the notion of “Western philosophy” – as opposed to Confucianism and Buddhism – was introduced to Japan,\textsuperscript{585} and during this period notions such as truth, universality and modernity became closely linked to the West in the eyes of many, and things as well as ideas ‘non-Western’ were often associated with being false or regarded as lagging behind.\textsuperscript{586} Nevertheless, some Japanese thinkers sought to establish a balance between Eastern and Western thought and to find a better understanding of the universal by attempting to combine what they considered to be the best of both cultures. One of the most prominent intellectuals in this regard was Kitarō Nishida, the founder of modern Japanese philosophy and the leading figure of the Kyoto School, who argued that Eastern traditional thought must be used to shed a new light on Western thought with the aim to create a new world culture. He noted that the East and the West “must complement each other and (...) achieve the eventual realization of a complete humanity. It is the task of Japanese culture to find such a principle.”\textsuperscript{587}

\textsuperscript{584} For instance, Saigō Takamori, one of the central figures bringing about the Meiji Restoration, even led an unsuccessful uprising against the modernizing state with the aim of returning to traditional Japanese values.

\textsuperscript{585} Funayama Shin’ichi dates the introduction of Western philosophy to Japan in 1862, when August Comte and John Stuart Mill’s utilitarianism were introduced from Europe. See footnote 4 in Arisaka, "Beyond "East and West," 543.

\textsuperscript{586} Arisaka, “Beyond "East and West,“ 542-543.

While some attempts were made to combine the best of both philosophies, this was not the case when it came to ideas about international relations, which, as opposed to soft philosophies, were driven predominantly by hard power at the time. It is therefore not surprising, but rather unfortunate, that Japanese thought on international relations was based on hard power, on a fight for survival. In other words, Japan’s major concern was whether it would end up another colony of the Western powers or whether, on the contrary, it could resist colonization and even become a colonizing power itself. Accordingly, Japan went on to become a military-industrial power in its own right, something like a "best disciple of the West", by most successfully adapting to the dominating context of struggle for power in Asia. The history of international relations (IR) research in Japan was also dominated by Western ideas and IR theories, thus defining Japan’s success by Western, more specifically American, terms. One of the leading contemporary Japanese IR scholars, Takashi Inoguchi, argues that Japan, “being a failed challenger to American hegemony in the past and having been embedded in the global governance system dominated by the US today,” has not been in a position to develop new theories of international relations.

Nevertheless, some recent developments, such as the 2001 launching of the journal, *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* (IRAP), Japan’s most important English-language international relations journal, suggest a growing need for Japanese IR scholars to introduce their views to a global audience and therefore be able to provide Japanese perspectives and play a more proactive role in the international community of IR research. Remarkably, the first topic taken up by the IRAP was the Asian values debate. On the other hand, however, Japan-China

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588 Inoguchi, “Why are there no non-Western theories of International Relations? The case of Japan,” 51.
relations appear to be of interest for the journal’s editors only in the context of the China-Japan-US triangle, and even this topic is listed after “Japan’s ‘special relationship’ with the UK and the US.”

As an interesting coincidence with the time of the submission of this thesis, IRAP published an article rethinking Japan in mainstream international relations, arguing that all the usual theories provide “poor foundations for both academic and policy analysis of Japan’s important world role.”

Another important change has been a growing cooperation among various research institutions, as marked by the foundation of The Association of Japanese Institutes of Strategic Studies (AJISS), which incorporates the Institute for International Policy Studies (IIPS), The Japan Institute of International Affairs (JIIA), and the Research Institute of Peace and Security (RIPS). The research that has been carried out under the auspices of AJISS is available in English on its website and amounts to well over 200 articles to date, the majority of which focus on contemporary international issues and Japan’s international relations.

All these recent initiatives show the importance that Japan puts on its international relations, but there still appears much work to be done when it comes to incorporating values, let alone developing coherent value-oriented theories, into Japanese research. In addition, most publications are still strongly embedded in Western theories and the majority of them are still descriptive.

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589 See the journal’s description and topics of interest here: https://academic.oup.com/irap/pages/About.
591 For more details, visit AJISS’ website here: http://www2.jiia.or.jp/en/.
592 As argued in Chapter Two, while a descriptive style is important to understand causes of problems, a normative style that offers solutions is just as important, particularly when arguing from a values-based approach. When adopting a normative perspective, scholars can contribute
The academic study of international relations dates back to not much longer than a century ago and has, up to now, been an overwhelmingly Western and predominantly male-dominated field of science. This has significant implications for the way its research concepts are defined and therefore for the way international relations are generally understood. The mainstream view of Western IR research is that all nation states have to compete for power and control based on self-interest in an anarchic set of international relations. In addition, one of the major works on which IR theories are founded is Hans Morgenthau’s *Politics Among Nations*, in which he argues that “universal moral principles cannot be applied to the actions of states.” Another scholar of the field, Edward Carr, also states that “no ethical standards are applicable to relations between states.” Their arguments suggest that the priority of being in control marginalizes all other objectives, and therefore the pursuit of power itself becomes the ultimate purpose of states, and the end justifies the means. However, the pursuit of power and control above all generally presupposes a world that does not change in its fundamental character. No wonder these ideas have very little, if anything, to say about qualitative change, such as moral progress or the pursuit of values, in international relations.

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594 Ibid.
597 For instance, John Ruggie argues that realism, the most predominant IR theory, is unable to explain vital changes in the international system because the theory is missing both a dimension of change and a determinant of change. See John G. Ruggie, “Continuity and Transformation in the World Polity: Toward a Neorealist Synthesis,” *World Politics* 35, no. 2 (January, 1983): 261-85. DOI: 10.2307/2010273.
the end of the twentieth century, such as the end of the Cold War, accelerated globalization and the notion of a ‘global society’, as well as the growing number of international and non-governmental organizations, the growing importance of international law, and the strengthening of international civil societies and their networks. The problem lies in how power and interest are used and understood in international relations. As prominent IR scholar Janice Mattern points out, “if the way power is used shapes world politics, the way it is conceived shapes international relations.”

The earliest conceptions of power in international relations scholarship described it as an entity, intrinsic to physically tangible things such as the military, wealth and geography, and therefore the discipline focused exclusively on physical resources and on those states that had control over them, equating power literally with materialistic wealth and military force. It was not until late in the second half of the twentieth century that scholars started exploring and theorizing intangible features of power and made a distinction between actual and potential power, the former meaning the capacity of actor A to get actor B to do what it would otherwise not do, and the latter describing power as a relationship of influence. From this distinction, new theoretical aspects of power were born, and scholarship focused on defining various forms and aspects of power; however, it still failed to create more comprehensive and more positive definitions of the concept. Therefore, it is still common among scholars of international relations to conceive power in negative

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598 Janice B. Mattern, “The Concept of Power and the (Un)discipline of International Relations,” in The Oxford Handbook of International Relations, 692.
600 Some of the newly explored aspects of power were compulsory, institutional, structural, and productive power. See, for instance, Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall, eds., Power in Global Governance (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 13-23.
terms: they generally regard it as some form of control and influence over others, as an ability to impose one’s will upon another, whether directly or indirectly.

Even though Joseph Nye, a leading theorist of the field, has pointed to the growing role of less direct forms of power, such as soft and smart power, scholarly interpretations, including those of Nye, still tend to understand the concept from a narrowly-defined interest-based perspective. In other words, power is still understood as imposing one’s self-interest upon others, albeit in more sophisticated/less coercive ways.

Some scholars have challenged these essentially negative definitions of power by pointing to consequences of the abuse of power. Some international relations scholars point out that it was the Frankfurt School’s and feminist theory that contributed perhaps the most to a more positive understanding of power. They focused on the ethical foundations of power, criticizing oppression and envisioning emancipation, and they introduced concepts such as caring power.

As I argued earlier, Japan attempted to form a new East Asian regional order during its first period of modernization that culminated in the Pacific War, although its attempt was not more than merely adjusting itself to the international circumstances of the time based on colonizing and hard power. After its defeat by the Allies, Japan has never challenged the U.S.-centered international order and theories of international relations. China’s re-emergence may well only reinforce a traditionally non-theorizing and China-centered East Asian regionalism and a

601 Nye argues that soft and smart power (e.g. cultural or diplomatic) will have a growing importance in the future of international relations. See Joseph S. Nye, The Powers to Lead: Soft, Hard, and Smart (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 1-26.
worldview that is based on both social and regional hierarchy and therefore may provide little space for critical theories that are necessary to bring about change and progress in international relations.

Nevertheless, it may seem a bit naïve but I believe that one of the most important and yet-to-be-answered questions about power in international relations, from both a practical and a theoretical perspective, is: *what should be the common goals and strategies based on which opposing interests in a conflict can be resolved*? If there is no clear understanding of, and a strong focus on, common goals and strategies, conflicts tend to be ‘resolved’ in favour of the more powerful party. But can conflicts truly be resolved based on power? It seems that as long as power determines who – or what – is right, solutions are not real and can even deepen any existing conflicts. Without being based on common goals and strategies, solutions are impossible. Without being based on universal values, common goals and strategies are difficult to establish.

Overall, Japan appears to show little intention to challenge dominant Western theories and perceptions of international relations, and, considering its weight, contributes very little to IR theories. In fact, some of the attempts at creating more comprehensive non-Western theories of international relations were done by Western intellectuals, such as Ralph Pettman and Ernst Schumacher. The former writes about such theories as Taoist strategies, Buddhist economics, Confucian Marxism,

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603 Whatever the meaning of ‘conflict resolution’ might be, e.g. a complete elimination or a partial solution, or even a transformation of a problem.
and Hindu constructivism, while the latter developed an alternative economic model based on one of Buddhism’s central ideas, the Middle Way.  

Without contradicting the concept of universal values, Japan’s pursuit of values in its international relations could certainly draw from Zen’s practice of self-discipline, Buddhism’s emphasis on compassion and responsibility towards others, or Taoism’s concept of a holistic harmony.

It must be noted that a larger, ultimately philosophical, problem lies behind the Japanese elite’s controversial use of values: it is clear that any external influence, be it Eastern or Western, is filtered through the selective receptivity and susceptibility of the Japanese elite, and will be adapted accordingly. Therefore, even within the context of ‘Eastern’ and Western influence, the Japanese elite is ultimately struggling with itself, with its very own syntheses. As Friedrich Nietzsche pointed out, if one fights with demons too long, one might become a demon oneself. To paraphrase him, it is the Japanese elite that created its own demons. Power struggle is always more receptive to relative power relations than to absolute values, and is therefore more apt to create demons rather than to genuinely struggle to realize universal values.


How does Japan’s values-oriented diplomacy matter?

Recent Japan-China relations appear to have reached a critical point. Based on lingering issues from the past and newly emerged conflicts, the two countries harbor so much negative sentiment towards one another that, to make significant progress in their bilateral relations, yet another normalization between them seems necessary. This thesis argues that Japan seems to be concerned less about values as about power and influence when it comes to its relations with China. It also attempts to show why this is problematic from a values-oriented perspective and argues that liberal democratic values that were embraced by the majority of the Japanese in the post-war period are threatened less by China than, in fact, by the very political party that has ruled Japan for most of the same period and which, remarkably, calls itself liberal and democratic.

The Japanese elite can only expect qualitative change when it better understands the importance of values and consequently can genuinely strive to realize them internally as well as externally. Hitoshi Tanaka argues that Japan matters even more as China rises. What is left unclarified in Tanaka’s argument is how Japan matters in this context. In this thesis I have indicated that Japan should matter from a values perspective: it needs to overcome a growing chasm between the values it advocates to an international audience and the values on which the Japanese political elite attempts to strengthen power over its own society.

Tamotsu Aoki, a well-known anthropologist at the University of Tokyo, maintains that Japan has faced an identity crisis three times. The first came with its rapid modernization and Westernization in the Meiji period, and the second with its devastating defeat at the end of the Pacific War, which propelled the country towards Americanization. The third crisis started in the mid-1980s (1984-present), which
Aoki calls the period “from unique to universal,” with Japan struggling to open itself more and become a more integral part of international society.

How the Japanese elite sees China reflects also on them. What course China takes in the future therefore can also be influenced by Japan’s more consistent approach to values, whether it be through self-criticism or through criticising others, such as its major ally, the United States.

To paraphrase Japanese international relations scholar, Takashi Inoguchi, who argued that post-war Japanese international relations research predominantly sought to answer the question, “what went wrong?” current Japanese research must try harder to address the question, “what is going wrong?” When practical solutions do not seem to work well enough, questioning ourselves and our own approaches is just as important as questioning others. This is all the more essential when adopting a values-oriented approach. The status quo will not change significantly without a substantial shift in perspective based on the understanding of universal values.

What really should matter is not who leads, but what values lead and where we are all heading. This is how values should really matter, and not only to Japan.

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607 Inoguchi, “Why are there no non-Western theories of International Relations? The Case of Japan,” 56.
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