

It has been a long term, and I have asked you to think about many different things relating to Japanese society. However, the focus has been mainly domestic. In our final class we are thinking about Japanese society within international society.

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Japan in International Society

- Very broadly, modern Japanese history can be categorized as:
 1. Sakoku: Relative isolation (to 1850s)
 2. Imperial Japan: Aspiring to join the imperial powers (to 1945)
 3. American ally: A focus on economic growth within the American sphere (to today)

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When we think about Japan within international society, there are three very broad phases within the modern period.

The first is *sakoku*. This is the period from the mid-seventeenth century when Japan largely shut itself off from the rest of the world. However, it is important to remember it was not completely shut off. There remained contacts with the Ainu in the north, Ryukyuans in the south, there was some trade and diplomatic exchange with Korea and China, and the Dutch maintained an outpost at Dejima in Nagasaki.

The second period is imperial Japan. From the Meiji Restoration to the end of World War II, Japan aspired to be one of the great imperial powers. The imperial project ended in defeat and disaster for Japan.

And out of this destruction came the third phase, which continues to this day. Japan is now a peaceful economic power within the American sphere of influence. The key to understanding Japanese society within international society is how the earlier two phases continue to affect the third phase. In other words, how does Japan's history of isolation and then aggressive imperial

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expansion continue to cast a long shadow over the present day?

2

Postwar Japan

- Framed by the Constitution.
- Dominated by the issues stemming from Japan's defeat in 1945.
E.g. *60 Years. The Path of a Nation Striving for Global Peace.*
- A model member of the United Nations.

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Japan's postwar has been greatly shaped by the constitution. This was enacted in 1947 and has remained unchanged ever since. If you have not read the constitution yet, please make sure to do so.

Defeat in 1945 and war responsibility issues have affect all of Japan's participation in the international community. Read the government pamphlet *60 Years. The Path of a Nation Striving for Global Peace* to see how the war has affected bilateral relations with other countries and Japan's identity as a peaceful nation.

Also, mindful of how Japan's withdrawal from the League of Nations in 1933 over the Manchurian Incident deepened Japan's conflict with others, ever since the war Japan has aspired to be a model member of the United Nations. Again, you can read about this via links in the class homepage.

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The US-Japan Alliance

- Born in defeat and occupation.
- The Anpo Protests regarding the 1960 Japan-US Security Treaty signing.
- The controversy continues to the present with the 2015 protests over “collective self-defense”.
- One of the most contentious issues is the continued presence of US military bases in Japan, mainly in Okinawa.

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The cornerstone of Japan’s foreign policy is its alliance with the United States, which was born following Japan’s defeat and occupation. Of course, Japan is the junior partner. After 1945 it had little choice except to go along with American wishes.

Issues of defense and security, therefore, remain very sensitive. There was great popular protest in 1960 when the Japan-US Security Treaty was signed.

And there were more large protests in 2015 when the so called “collective self-defense bills” were being debated in the Japanese parliament.

Another major area of dispute is the continued presence of US military bases in Japan, mainly in Okinawa. For many nationalists in Japan, all this dependence on - indeed, continued occupation by - the United States is a painful reminder of defeat. It triggers a desire to break free from domination by a foreign power. For many progressives in Japan, the ongoing military alliance with the United States is a symbol of continued Japanese complicity in imperial structures. Those American

bases were used extensively during the Vietnam War, for example. This made Japan complicit once again in Asian suffering during war. However, for many less ideologically committed people, the foreign military presence in Japan is either an economic opportunity - tens of thousands of American personnel provide lots of jobs to local people - or it is a social nuisance given problems such as noise pollution and crime that are associated with hosting military bases.

Defense, Territory, History

- The Japan Self-Defense Force (JSDF): How can it exist given Article 9 of the Constitution (“land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained”)?
- Ministry of Defense documents/videos about the SDF.
- Japan has territorial disputes with China (Senkaku Islands/Diaoyu), South Korea (Takeshima/Dokdo), and Russia (Northern Territories/Southern Kuriles).
- The “history issue” has also been a thorn in relations with China and South Korea in particular. **Take my class “The History Issue in East Asia” in the 3rd year.**

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In addition to the American military, Japan is defended by its own Self-Defense Force, or JSDF. It is a simple reality of international politics that any country the size of Japan has a military. However, read the constitution carefully. You will see that according to Article 9 the SDF should not exist. However, it exists via a series of incredible “interpretations” that stretch the meanings of the Japanese and English languages to the absolute limit. Somehow “land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained” has been interpreted to mean that 250,000 military personnel, tanks, warships and fighter aircraft can be maintained. These constitutional contortions are actually extremely dangerous. If perfectly clear words in black and white on a page can be interpreted to mean the complete opposite of what they clearly say, is the Japanese Constitution worth the paper it is written on?

Anyway, read the Ministry of Defense White Papers and watch the videos linked from the class homepage. You will see that Japan has a formidable military, albeit called a Self-Defense Force. And yes, there is a Ministry of Defense that oversees this organization supposedly outlawed by the Constitution.

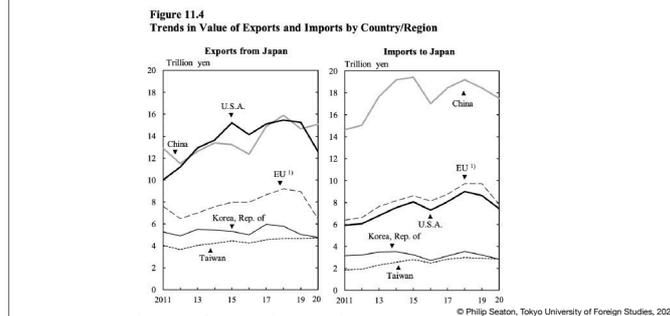
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In practical reality, you will see in the Defense White Papers that Japan does not live in a completely stable part of the globe. Japan has territorial disputes with its three immediate neighbours: China, South Korea and Russia. Again there are extensive online documents available via the class homepage.

In addition to territory, the so-called “history issue” continues to affect relations between Japan and its neighbours. If you are particularly interested in such issues, please take my class “The History Issue in East Asia” in your third year. The history issue is my other main research area alongside contents tourism.

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Politics vs Economics



However, we should not confuse close military or political ties with close economic ties. And conversely, we should not confuse difficult political relations with difficult economic relations.

Look at this graph from the *Statistical Handbook of Japan*. Japan has difficult historical and political relations with China, but China is Japan's most important trading partner. And despite a military alliance with the United States, there is considerable economic friction. Note how America imports far more goods from Japan than it exports to Japan. This balance of payments deficit has long been a cause of anti-Japanese economic sentiment in the United States. Japan's relations with the European Union are basically strong, and in 2019 the EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement was reached, which reduced tariffs and trade barriers between the two.

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Soft Power and Cultural Diplomacy

- Hard power (military/economic) vs Soft power (cultural)
- Japan Foundation: promoting Japanese culture and language overseas.
- JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency): volunteer work, ODA.
- There's never "pure altruism": Much aid is a legacy of imperial history, or a strategic matter.

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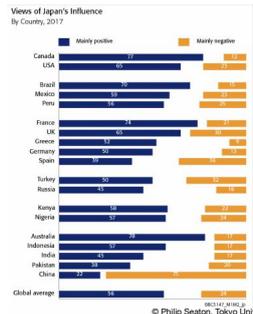
In contrast to the use of hard power in military and economic relations, Japan also tries to use soft power, particularly with the rest of Asia and the "global south". Soft power is the idea that you can encourage other people to act in a beneficial way for you via good relations, instead of forcing them to do what you want via the use of military or economic power. But even here, in the realms of soft power and cultural diplomacy, historical issues come into play. Many countries in Asia suffered greatly during the age of Japanese imperialism.

So, Japanese initiatives like cultural diplomacy via the Japan Foundation, developmental assistance via JICA, or other forms of ODA can contain meanings of "making amends" for the past. Activities such as overseas aid are never pure altruism. Japan benefits, too. Often the benefits are economic: Japan might be constructing a dam in Vietnam, but Japanese companies are doing much of the work and therefore receiving much of the construction costs. Or, an Indonesian student might be receiving a Japanese government scholarship, but there is a higher chance that the Indonesian student will become a Japan-friendly member of society who perhaps works for the economic benefit of Japanese companies operating in Indonesia in the future.

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The International Image of Japan

- Generally Japan makes a positive, peaceful contribution. To international society.
- This is reflected in images of Japan.
- But ...



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The overall result of Japan's activities in international society is that people around the world generally have a positive view of Japan. This is data from a 2017 survey that asked tens of thousands of people around the world if they viewed a country's influence as mainly positive or negative. Japan comes very high up the international rankings as one of the best liked countries around the world. Note in particular how countries with close cultural ties rate Japan highest. The large Nikkei population in Brazil, the joint love of comics and fine dining that Japan shares with France, the Australian policy of promoting Japanese language learning - these cultural factors all push Japan's positive image abroad. Soft power truly can be more effective than hard power in gaining friends. The one country that stands out as having strongly negative views of Japan's influence is China. China is the neighboring economic rival. But it is also the country with the deepest wounds from Japanese imperialism. To understand Japan's present, you must also understand Japan's past ...

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Finally ...

- At the end of this course, what is the most important thing you feel you have learned about Japanese society?

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And so we have reached the end of our course. This is the final question I want to leave you with. "At the end of this course, what is the most important thing you feel you have learned about Japanese society?"

Let me tell you what I hope you have learned: That Japan is complicated. From now on, make sure you talk about Japan using considerable nuance and attention to detail. Do not rely on broad stereotypes about Japanese society and culture. Stop using phrases like "the Japanese think this" or "the Japanese do that". If you use cliched words like "unique" to describe something about Japan, make sure that it really is the case and not just a tired stereotype.

Furthermore, there have been significant changes and turning points throughout Japanese history, and at the moment we are moving quickly towards another period of great change. This is the era of post growth, namely when depopulation, aging and economic stagnation are occurring against the backdrop of the social changes that will be forced upon us by climate change. Your generation did not cause these problems, but your generation will be at the forefront of finding and implementing the solutions to these problems. For that you will need critical thinking skills in addition to detailed knowledge. So, while this

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course has been about Japanese society today, I hope that more than anything else it has taught you to challenge and question everything you know about Japan. I also hope it has taught you to think deeply about how the knowledge you are learning here at university will help you solve the challenges that you and Japan will face in the future.

Otsukaresama deshita!