



JHUMUNC

THE JOHNS HOPKINS MODEL UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE

SHINZŌ ABE'S CABINET (2018)

Chaired by Kelvin Qian

Session XXIII

Shinzo Abe's Cabinet (2018)

Topic A: Japanese Foreign Policy in East Asia

Topic B: Japan's Demographic Crisis

Committee Overview

"The 21st century is a complex and unforeseeable epoch. Our thinking habits and our values, which until now looked settled, are being challenged." - Hayao Miyazaki¹

The year is 2018, and Japan is facing the new year with both hope and trepidation. On one hand, Japan will present itself as a powerful and dynamic nation during the 2020 Summer Olympics in Tokyo, with centuries of culture and innovation to be proud of. On the other hand, Japan's problems present a much more sobering reality.

Japan's neighborhood has become much more volatile in recent years, with a nuclear-armed North Korea and a rising China posing particular challenges to Japan's national security. Meanwhile, Japan's rapidly declining and aging population has dragged down its economy by straining the welfare system and leading to a shrinkage of the working-age population; despite government policies trying to reverse

them, these demographic trends show no sign of stopping.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has held his office since 2012, following a brief first term in 2006. His party, the Liberal Democratic Party, dominates Japanese politics, and he is on track to become Japan's longest-serving Prime Minister. However, a series of scandals and controversies has caused his approval ratings to drop abruptly in recent years. In 2017, Abe called snap elections to seek a "fresh mandate" to confront the North Korean crisis, campaigning on security and social issues and leading his party to victory.^{2 3}

Now, Abe has a new cabinet, featuring fresh faces, old allies and even political rivals.⁴ It is this cabinet that must come together, make tough decisions, and come up with smart and creative ways to address the issues Japan faces. Delegates, as Ministers, will work together to come up with solutions while balancing competing interests and addressing potential crises. These are not

¹ Beckett Mufson, "18 Genius Hayao Miyazaki Quotes to Celebrate His 76th Birthday," *Vice*, January 5, 2017, https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/mgpmqb/hayao-miyazaki-76th-birthday-quotes

² "Japan's snap elections explained," *BBC News*, October 22, 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-41329669>

³ Yoko Wakatsuki, James Griffiths and Joshua Berlinger. "Japan's Shinzo Abe hails landslide victory in snap election," *CNN*, October 23, 2017,

<https://www.cnn.com/2017/10/22/asia/japan-election-results/index.html>

⁴ Michael MacArthur Bosack, "Abe's Cabinet Reshuffle, Explained," *The Diplomat*, August 5, 2017, <https://thediplomat.com/2017/08/abes-cabinet-reshuffle-explained/>

easy tasks by any means, and only wise and forward-looking leadership can bring Japan into an era of beautiful harmony.

Parliamentary Procedure

Standard JHUMUNC procedure, largely taken from Robert's Rules of Order, will be followed, along with some rules particular to specialized committees. The following is an overview of specialized committee parliamentary procedure:

Motions and points. Fundamental to MUN parliamentary procedure are motions, which include motions to open debate, to enter moderated and unmoderated caucuses, to enter voting procedure and to suspend (end session) and adjourn (end conference). Delegates can also make points, including point of inquiry (for questions within the scope of a committee), point of information (for questions outside of committee) and point of personal privilege. Points are always entertained before motions, and motions are voted from most to least disruptive.

Moderated and unmoderated caucuses. As with general committees, debate flow will be organized along the lines of caucuses, with unmoderated caucuses considered more disruptive than moderated ones. In addition, in

place of a moderated caucus a delegate may motion to open a speakers list, which is organized like a traditional speakers' list in a standing committee, or a round robin, a debate format in which every delegate speaks exactly once.

Directives. In place of UN resolutions, specialized committees focus on passing directives. There are two main types: committee directives, which are like resolutions in that they are passed by the committee as a whole, and individual directives, which are carried out by individual delegates via crisis notes. Committee directives must obtain a certain threshold of sponsors and signatories before being introduced to the committee; they are then voted on in voting procedure. Delegates may also introduce amendments to committee directives; they are divided into friendly amendments, which are agreed to by the sponsors, and unfriendly amendments, which must be voted on by the committee.

As a final note, all parliamentary procedure rules may change at the discretion of the chair, and any motion a delegate may bring up can be ruled dilatory or be tabled.



Delegate Biographies:

Taro Aso (麻生 太郎)

Deputy Prime Minister & Minister of Finance

Aso is one of Japan's most experienced politicians, having served as prime minister himself from 2008 to 2009. The grandson of Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida, Aso is an important ally to Shinzo Abe; the two share similar views over economic policy and social issues. Like Abe, Aso is affiliated with the ultra-conservative Nippon Kaigi lobby, and he is infamous for making inflammatory public statements. However, Aso's training as an economist and expertise as a politician, which Abe often relies on when making political decisions, will be essential to solving Japan's long-standing economic problems of deflation and stagnant growth.⁵

Yoshihide Suga (菅 義偉)

Chief Cabinet Secretary

Suga is the longest serving Chief Cabinet Secretary in Japanese history, having served in this role since 2012. As Chief Cabinet Secretary, Suga is the head of the Cabinet Secretariat; he serves as the government's press secretary, coordinates cabinet ministries and agencies, and prepares cabinet meetings.⁶ Suga has played a key role in Abe's rise as a politician, and to this day they have remained key allies. Suga wields enormous power over the bureaucracy,⁷ and he was key on shifting Abe's policy focus to

economic policy in lieu of amending Japan's constitution.⁸ However, there is speculation that like many past Secretaries, Suga is aiming to become Prime Minister himself.⁹

Taro Kono (河野 太郎)

Minister of Foreign Affairs

The son of legendary politician Yohei Kono, Taro Kono previously served as the Chair of the National Public Safety Commission. Kono has been described as a "maverick" who has taken on a dovish foreign policy position, in contrast to Abe's hardline stance. Kono has also advocated for increasing immigration to alleviate Japan's demographic decline. As a Georgetown University alumnus, Kono has deep ties with the United States, and will be an important link as Tokyo and Washington work together on regional challenges.¹⁰

⁵ Emese Schwarcz, "Large and in Charge: Who Is Taro Aso?" *The Diplomat*, July 31, 2018,

<https://thediplomat.com/2018/07/large-and-in-charge-who-is-taro-aso/>

⁶ "The Cabinet Law," Administrative Management Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2007, http://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution_and_government_of_japan/cabinet_law_e.html

⁷ "Cabinet Profiles." *The Japan Times*, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/cabinet-profiles/abe-cabinet-formed-november-1-2017/>

⁸ Hiroshi Marutani, "How Abe's Right-Hand Man Has Shaped Policy in Japan," *Nikkei Asian Review*, September 12, 2018, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Cover-Story/How-Abe-s-right-hand-man-has-shaped-policy-in-japan>

⁹ Natsuki Okamura, "Suga's Planned U.S. Trip Fuels Talk That He Aims to Succeed Abe," *The Asahi Shimbun*, April 26, 2019, <http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201904260036.html>

¹⁰ "Japan's new top diplomat Taro Kono is son of official who wrote landmark 1993 apology to 'comfort women,'" *South China Morning Post*, August 3, 2017, <https://www.scmp.com/news/asia/east-asia/article/2105245/japans-new-top-diplomat-taro-kono-son-official-who-wrote>

Itsunori Onodera (小野寺 五典)

Minister of Defense

Onodera, who previously served as Minister of Defense from 2012 to 2014, is responsible for formulating Japan's national security. Like Abe, Onodera is a member of Nippon Kaigi and has a hardline view on defense policy. He supports amending Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution and the deployment of offensive weapons.¹¹

Seiko Noda (野田 聖子)

Minister for Internal Affairs and Communications & Minister of State for Gender Equality

A member of the Japanese Diet since 1993, Noda is the head of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, which manages everything from elections to telecommunications to taxes. Despite being a member of Abe's cabinet, she has been a rival of Abe on both political leadership and on policy. Noda is a strong advocate for women's rights in Japan, particularly for women in the labor force and in Japanese politics and believes that female empowerment will help the government tackle Japan's demographic issues.¹²

Hiroshige Seko (世耕 弘成)

Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry

Seko, as head of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) has jurisdiction over a wide range of policies, including industrial and trade policy.¹³ As such, his leadership will be instrumental for Japan to cooperate with other nations on economic and trade relations, especially with economic powers such as China, Russia, and the United States.¹⁴

Keiichi Ishii (石井 啓一)

Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism

As head of the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (MLIT), Ishii oversees everything from railways to roads to housing, and plays an important role in boosting tourism to Japan. Some of his positions are controversial, such as his plans to open Japan's first casinos and his efforts to pressure the Okinawan government to allow the move of the Futenma military base.¹⁵ Unlike the rest of Abe's cabinet, who are members of the LDP, Ishii is a member of Komeito, the LDP's junior coalition partner.¹⁶

¹¹ Walter Sim, "Japan's Defence Chief a Returning Steady Hand," *The Straits Times*, August 7, 2017, <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/east-asia/japans-defence-chief-a-returning-steady-hand>

¹² William Pesek, "A Woman Who Could Revive Japan's Fortunes," *The Japan Times*, 8 Sept. 2015, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2015/09/08/commentary/japan-commentary/a-woman-who-could-revive-japans-fortunes/>

¹³ "Japanese, Saudi Arabian Ministers Meet, Agree to Cooperate on Internet of Things, Renewable Energy," *The Japan Times*, October 9, 2016.

¹⁴ "Russia, Japan Agree to Promote Economic Cooperation in Russian Far East," *The Japan Times*, November 5, 2016.

¹⁵ Kyodo, "Abe Administration Increases Pressure on Onaga over Landfill," *The Japan Times*, November 9, 2015, [https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/11/09/national/abe-administration-increases-pressure-on-onaga-over-](https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/11/09/national/abe-administration-increases-pressure-on-onaga-over-landfill/)

¹⁶ The Japan Times, "Cabinet Profiles."

Yoko Kamikawa (上川 陽子)

Minister of Justice

A Harvard University alumnus,¹⁷ Kamikawa has previously served as Minister of Justice from 2014 to 2015. As minister, she is responsible for overseeing Japan's court and penal system. She is also responsible for carrying out Japan's immigration policy; as minister, she has refused to relax standards for refugee admission.¹⁸

Ken Saito (齋藤 健)

Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries

As the leader of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF), Saito is responsible for ensuring Japan's food supply, reforming agricultural policy, and promoting the development of Japanese rural areas.¹⁹ As minister, Saito has promoted Japanese agricultural exports in order to support Japanese farmers.²⁰

Katsunobu Kato (加藤 勝信)

*Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare
& Minister of State for the Abduction Issue*

Kato is an experienced politician who was first appointed to the Health, Labour and Welfare division of the LDP in 2009. As minister, Kato is responsible for food and drug safety in Japan, as well as running Japan's welfare system. He is also responsible for maintaining and reforming labor regulations, such as by

carrying out Abe's reforms to improve working conditions.²¹ As Minister of State for the Abduction Issue, he is also responsible for responsible for addressing the North Korean abductions of Japanese citizens, a major issue in Japan-North Korean relations.²²

Yoshimasa Hayashi (林 芳正)

Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology

An experienced politician and the son of former finance minister Yoshiro Hayashi, Hayashi has previously served under three different prime ministers. As the head of MEXT (as his ministry's name is usually shortened to), Hayashi is responsible for managing Japan's education system, as well as promoting Japanese culture and scientific research. In particular, he aims to improve the transparency of the Ministry after it was affected by scandal in recent years.²³

Masaharu Nakagawa (中川 雅治)

Minister of the Environment & Minister of State for Nuclear Emergency Preparedness

A member of the House of Councilors since 2004, Nakagawa is responsible for Japan's environmental policy. He embraces clean energy technology and international collaboration as tools in the fight against anthropogenic climate change.²⁴

¹⁷ "Kamikawa Yoko," LDP Members, Liberal Democratic Party of Japan, <https://www.jimin.jp/english/profile/members/120852.1>

¹⁸ Daisuke Kikuchi, "New Justice Minister Has No Plans to Boost Japan's Refugee Intake," *The Japan Times*, August 10, 2017,

¹⁹ "Summary of the Annual Report on Food, Agriculture and Rural Areas in Japan," Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, May 2017,

<http://www.maff.go.jp/e/data/publish/attach/pdf/index-57.pdf>

²⁰ "The False Promises of Farm Exports as a Growth Strategy." *The Japan Times*, November 20, 2017,

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2017/11/20/commentary/japan-commentary/false-promises-farm-exports-growth-strategy/>

²¹ White, Stanley. "Labor Market Reform Chief Targets Pay Gap as Balm for Productivity, Spending Woes," *The Japan Times*, December 25, 2016,

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/12/25/national/politics-diplomacy/labor-market-reform-chief-targets-pay-gap-balm-productivity-spending-woes/>

²² "U.N. Expert Discusses North Korea Abductions with Kin, Japan Ministers," *The Japan Times*, January 19, 2016, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/01/19/national/u-n-expert-discusses-north-korea-abductions-kin-japan-ministers/>

²³ Mizuho Aoki, "New Education Chief Looks to Repair Ministry's Tarnished Image," *The Japan Times*, August 10, 2017, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/08/10/national/politics-diplomacy/new-education-chief-looks-repair-ministry-tarnished-image/>

²⁴ "Statement by Masaharu Nakagawa, Minister of the Environment of Japan, at COP 23." Ministry of the Environment, November 15, 2017,

<https://www.env.go.jp/en/focus/171115.html>

Toshimitsu Motegi (茂木 敏充)

Minister in Charge of Economic Re-vitalization & Minister for Human Resources Development

Motegi, an economist by training, was a journalist and a consultant before entering politics in 1993. Under Abe, Motegi previously served as Minister for Economy, Trade and Industry from 2012 to 2014, and he has served as Japan's point man for negotiating the Trans-Pacific Partnership. Abe appointed Motegi off of a clean image, though his strict leadership style makes him unpopular within his party.²⁵

Hiroshi Kajiyama (梶山 弘志)

Minister of State for Regional Revitalization & Minister of State for Regulatory Reform

The son of former Chief Cabinet Secretary Seiroku Kajiyama, he entered politics as his father's secretary in 1985. He is responsible for revitalizing Japan's regional economies, which are struggling as people move from rural to urban areas.²⁶ Kajiyama supports regulatory reforms that would increase private sector activity and job creation.²⁷

Masaji Matsuyama (松山 政司)

Minister of State for Measures for Declining Birthrate & Minister of State for Science and Technology Policy

Despite being a first-time Cabinet member, Matsuyama holds the most positions out of all the members: seven in total. Many of them are related to Japan's demographic crisis, including the withdrawal of many of its citizens from public life, its declining population, and its stagnant birth rate. In addition, Matsuyama's portfolio covers Japan's science, space, and technology policy. Finally, as Minister for the "Cool Japan" strategy, Matsuyama is

responsible for promoting Japan's soft power; Matsuyama himself is a guitarist in the all-lawmaker pop band Gi!nz.²⁸

Hachiro Okonogi (小此木 八郎)

Chairperson of the National Public Safety Commission & Minister of State for Disaster Management

A longtime politician who served as secretary for his father, Hikosaburo Okonogi, and for prominent LDP politician Michio Watanabe, Okonogi has had extensive experience in serving in various vice-ministerial positions. As Chairperson of the National Public Safety Commission, he is responsible for Japan's police system. He is also in charge of Japan's response to natural disasters, a heavy responsibility given the recency of the 2011 Tohoku earthquake and tsunami.²⁹

Masayoshi Yoshino (吉野 正芳)

Minister for Reconstruction & Minister in Charge of Revival from the Fukushima Accident

Yoshino is a native of Fukushima Prefecture, one of the areas most heavily affected by the 2011 earthquake and tsunami. A former senior vice environment minister, he became Minister of Reconstruction after his predecessor made insensitive remarks about the disaster. He has not forgotten his roots, given his concern about the effects of reconstruction on local communities.³⁰

²⁵ The Japan Times, "Cabinet Profiles."

²⁶ "Essential Points for Regional Revitalization." Highlighting Japan, Public Relations Office of the Government of Japan, February 2018, https://www.government.go.jp/eng/publicity/book/hlj/html/201802/201802_01_en.html

²⁷ The Japan Times, "Cabinet Profiles."

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

Shunichi Suzuki (鈴木 俊一)

Minister in Charge of the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games

Suzuki is the son of former Prime Minister Zenko Suzuki and is the brother-in-law of Taro Aso. He has had a long career in politics, elected first in 1990 to the House of Representatives; he then served as the environmental minister in 2002 and the deputy foreign minister in 2012.³¹ As he is responsible for the Tokyo 2020 Games, Suzuki has an important role in upholding Japan's image on the world stage.

Teru Fukui (福井 照)

Minister of State for Okinawa and Northern Territories Affairs & Minister in Charge of Ocean Policy and Territorial Issues

Fukui has served in a number of local government positions, most recently as the Director for the Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism Division of the LDP.³² He was recently appointed to the cabinet and will have to prove himself on a number of issues, including the US military presence in Okinawa.³³ As the minister responsible for territorial issues, he must also defend Japan's territorial claims, such as those over the Senkaku and Takeshima Islands.

Yasutoshi Nishimura (西村 康稔)

Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary

Nishimura, like many other cabinet members, has a long history of public service, with a focus on the economy. He has worked for the Ministry of International Trade and Industry since 1985, and in 2012 was appointed to be the Senior Vice-Minister of Abe's Cabinet. In that position, he focused on economic revitalization and trade partnerships, including the Trans-Pacific Partnership.³⁴

Yusuke Yokobatake (横畠 裕介)

Director General of the Cabinet Legislation Bureau

Yokobatake succeeded Ichiro Komatsu, one of Shino Abe's staunchest supporters as Director General in 2014. His bureau is responsible for reading and relaying all bills passed by the legislature, and can thus shape the government's interpretation of the constitution. While his predecessor supports reinterpreting the Japanese constitution to approve the use of collective self-defense, Yokobatake takes the traditional bureau view of upholding the current interpretation.³⁵

³¹ Ibid.

³² "Fukui Teru," LDP Members, Liberal Democratic Party of Japan, <https://www.jimin.jp/english/profile/members/114628.html>

³³ "Onaga Urges New Okinawa Affairs Minister to Reduce U.S. Military's Footprint," The Japan Times, March 4, 2018, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/03/04/national/ona-ga-urges-new-okinawa-affairs-minister-reduce-u-s-base-burden/>

³⁴ "Yasutoshi Nishimura," World Economic Forum, <https://www.weforum.org/people/yasutoshi-nishimura>

³⁵ Reji Yoshida, "Abe's man in Cabinet law office steps down," *The Japan Times*, May 16, 2014.



Topic A:

Japanese Foreign Policy in East Asia

Introduction

Japan lies at the edge of East Asia, one of the most dynamic yet precarious geopolitical arenas in the world. To the west lie China and the two Koreas, nations that share millennia of history, culture, prosperity, and tragedy. To the north lies the eastern edge of Russia, while across the Pacific lies Japan's enemy-turned-ally, the United States.

In 1918, Japan was the dominant power in East Asia, with Korea under its control and with China and Russia defeated in war. In 2018, South Korea competed toe-to-toe with Japan's technological and cultural prowess. North Korea's missile and nuclear weapons program pose a serious security threat to the homeland. And China has become an economic and geopolitical rival to Japan, bent on reshaping East Asia into its own image.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, an ardent nationalist who wishes to restore Japan to its former position on the world stage, is well-aware of his neighborhood. He has embraced a hawkish foreign policy, which includes confronting Japan's regional rivals and strengthening its defense forces.³⁶ How will Abe and his cabinet achieve their goals of national rejuvenation as their neighbors settle old scores and present new challenges?

Historical Background

Japan's relations with its Asian neighbors date back millennia, spanning trade, diplomacy and cultural exchange. As far back as 400 BCE, migrants from the Korean peninsula brought advanced farming and metalworking techniques to Japan, and in the following centuries Japanese polities engaged in diplomatic relations with the mainland.³⁷ China has had a particularly profound effect on Japanese culture; from the 6th century CE onwards, Japan adopted the Chinese writing system, studied Chinese literature and art, adapted Chinese theories of law and governance, and adopted Buddhism from China.³⁸

However, Japan's long history with its neighbors was - and still is - marked by conflict. Japan was twice unsuccessfully invaded by the Mongol Empire during the 13th century.³⁹ In 1592, Japanese forces under ruler Toyotomi Hideyoshi launched an attempt to invade China through the Korean peninsula; the ensuing Imjin War lasted until 1598, resulting in Japan's defeat, the deaths of over 70,000 Japanese soldiers, and the loss of a fifth of Korea's population.⁴⁰

Japan adopted a policy of relative isolationism known as *sakoku* (literally "closed country") in the 1630s, while Japan cut itself off from most countries during this

³⁶ Brad Glosserman, *Special Report: Peak Japan and its implications for regional security* (The Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 2016), 6, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep04224>

³⁷ Mark Cartwright, "Ancient Japanese and Chinese Relations," *Ancient History Encyclopedia*, June 27, 2017, <https://www.ancient.eu/article/1085/ancient-japanese--chinese-relations/>

³⁸ Kitajima Masamoto, Akira Watanabe, et. al., "Japan," in *Encyclopædia Britannica*, published June 27, 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Japan/>

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Samuel Hawley, "The Imjin War." *Transactions of the Korean Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 78 (2003): 33-55, www.raskb.com/transactions/VOL78/VOL78-4.docx

era, though it still maintained some trade with China. The *sakoku* era came to an end when in 1852, Commodore Matthew Perry led an American naval expedition to pressure Japan to open itself up.⁴¹

In 1867, under the fear of foreign encroachment, a group of young samurai staged a coup that overthrew the Tokugawa Shogunate, a hereditary military dynasty separate from the monarchy that governed Japan since 1607. The monarchy, under the newly ascended Emperor Meiji, had its powers restored and Japan underwent massive reforms to Westernize its government, military, and economy. The so-called Meiji Restoration marked a new Japan, one which would rapidly industrialize and become the dominant power in East Asia.^{42 43}

Japanese Expansionism

As Japan industrialized, it engaged on a campaign of expansionism starting from its immediate periphery. Japan incorporated the northern island of Hokkaido in 1869 and the southern Ryukyu Islands where Okinawa is located, in 1879.^{44,45}

Japan's rise upset the traditional balance of power in East Asia, in which China was the dominant power and neighboring polities like Korea were "tributary states" of China. This balance of power was upset in the 19th century, when

European powers defeated China in conflicts such as the Opium Wars. The ruling imperial Qing dynasty was forced to sign treaties that gave away territory (e.g. Hong Kong) to Western powers and allowed them to conduct commercial and missionary activity at will. Such Western incursions, along with domestic issues, greatly weakened the Qing government and led to numerous revolts.⁴⁶

Japan's rise took advantage of a weakening China. Increasing Japanese political and economic influence over Korea led to tensions that culminated in the First Sino-Japanese War in 1894. The war was a total victory for Japan; the Treaty of Shimonoseki signed in 1895 transferred Taiwan and the Liaodong Peninsula from China to Japan (though the latter gain was reversed a few years later). The treaty also recognized Korean independence from Chinese suzerainty. However, Korean independence turned out to be short-lived, as Korea became a Japanese protectorate in 1905 and was annexed in 1910. Korea would remain a Japanese colony until 1945.^{47 48}

China's defeat in the Sino-Japanese war was also a blow to national morale. The "loss" of Korean and Taiwan to Japan to a nation perceived as culturally and militarily inferior led to anger against the Qing government, contributing to the instability that led to the collapse of the Qing dynasty in 1911.^{49 50}

⁴¹ Kitajima et. al., "Japan."

⁴² *Encyclopædia Britannica*, s.v. "Meiji Restoration," September 27, 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Meiji-Restoration>

⁴³ Kitajima et. al., "Japan."

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Encyclopædia Britannica*, s.v. "Hokkaido," September 11, 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Hokkaido>

⁴⁶ Cheng-Siang Chen and David N Keightley, "China," in *Encyclopædia Britannica*, June 25, 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/place/China/>

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Editorial staff. "The annexation of Korea." *The Japan Times*, August 29, 2010, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2010/08/29/editorials/the-annexation-of-korea/#.XRLI79NKhZg>

⁴⁹ Taylor Washburn, "The War That Made Asia," Center for the National Interest, December 2, 2014, <https://nationalinterest.org/commentary/the-war-made-asia-9474>

⁵⁰ Chen and Keightley, "China."

Japan not only clashed with its Asian neighbors but also with European powers such as Russia. In particular, tensions over Russian interests in China's northeastern region of Manchuria, such as Russia's desire to build a railroad there, led to the Russo-Japanese War in 1904. Japan would defeat Russia in this war, gaining south Sakhalin Island in the Russian Far East, regaining the Liaodong Peninsula from Russia, and going down in history as the first Asian nation to defeat a European power in combat.⁵¹

World War II

Japan's gains in Asia from China and Russia and the rise of militarism in domestic Japanese politics⁵² would set the stage for World War II in East Asia. Following the Russo-Japanese war, Japan exerted enormous influence in Manchuria. In 1931, Japan seized the Chinese city of Mukden (modern-day Shenyang) and reorganized the region as the puppet state of Manchuko, and in 1934 Japan declared that all of China was to be under its sphere of influence.⁵³

War broke out in 1937 after a skirmish between Chinese and Japanese forces near Beijing, known as the Marco Polo Bridge Incident after its location. In the face of an unorganized Chinese resistance, Japanese advancements were swift, quickly taking major cities and large swaths of territory. Beijing, Shanghai, and Nanjing all fell in a matter of months; in Nanjing in particular, 300,000 Chinese soldiers and civilians died

in what became known as the Nanking Massacre.⁵⁴

However, by 1939 the war in China grounded to a stalemate.⁵⁵ Worse for Japan, the United States issued an oil embargo against Japan after it invaded French Indochina in 1941. The embargo would have devastated the resource-poor nation, leading Japan to launch a surprise attack on Pearl Harbor. This led to war with the United States as part of the Pacific Theater of World War II. Japan would surrender after atomic bombings on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and a declaration of war by the Soviet Union.⁵⁶

The Post-War Era

Japan was under Allied occupation, led by General Douglas MacArthur, until 1951 with the signing of the San Francisco Peace Treaty. Under the occupation, Japan underwent great change, including democratization, demilitarization, the transformation of the Emperor into a figurehead, and the loss of territories outside of the "Home Islands" (such as Korea and Taiwan).⁵⁷ With the US-Japan Mutual Security Treaty of 1951, Japan also entrusted its security to the United States. This led to an ongoing American military presence in Japan that has allowed the United States to project military power in the region, especially during the Korean and Vietnam Wars.^{58 59}

⁵¹ *Encyclopædia Britannica*, s.v. "Russo-Japanese War," May 3, 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Russo-Japanese-War>

⁵² Kitajima et. al., "Japan."

⁵³ *Encyclopædia Britannica*, s.v. "Second Sino-Japanese War," March 14, 2019,

<https://www.britannica.com/event/Second-Sino-Japanese-War>

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Encyclopædia Britannica*, s.v. "Pacific War.", *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Inc. 21 December 2018.

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Pacific-War>

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Beina Xu, "The US-Japan Security Alliance," Council on Foreign Relations, July 1, 2014,

<https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/us-japan-security-alliance>

⁵⁹ Michael Schaller, "Japan and the Cold War, 1960-1991," in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, vol. 3, ed. Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010), 252.

With the Communist victory in China in 1949 and the start of the Korean War in 1950, East Asia became central to the Cold War. Japan underwent a period of rearmament during the Korean War⁶⁰ and played an important role supplying military goods, kickstarting a decades-long economic boom;⁶¹ it also grew as a manufacturer of consumer goods during the Vietnam War.⁶² It was from the 1950s to the 1980s when Japan became an economic powerhouse with an economy second only to the United States.⁶³

At the same time, opposition against American foreign policy and its influence in Japan was quite common in Japan, especially over topics such as nuclear weapons, the American military presence in Japan, and the Vietnam War. Many Japanese opposed American militarism, fearing that it undermined the pacifism Japan embraced after World War II, and held protests against it.^{64,65,66,67} Even so, Japan was the linchpin of the United States' strategy to contain Communism in East Asia as the two countries faced off against Communist powers such as China, the Soviet Union and North Korea.⁶⁸

Today, Japan only occupies a fraction of the territory it controlled during the height of its empire. It has been more than seventy years since the end of World War II and the Cold War has been over for more than two decades. Even so, Japan's history casts a long, complicated shadow that affects Japan's relations with its neighbors to this day.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 255-256.

⁶¹ Ibid, 257.

⁶² Sayuri Guthrie-Shimizu, "Japan, the United States, and the Cold War, 1945-1960." in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War, vol. 1*, ed. Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 169-170

⁶³ Kitajima et. al., "Japan."

Current Foreign Relations *China*

The relationship between Tokyo and Beijing has been rocky throughout the 20th century, and this trend has continued into the 21st. From 1949 to 1972, the People's Republic of China did not maintain diplomatic relations with Japan; however, relations improved as China opened up its economy and Japan provided aid to China throughout the 1970s and 1980s.⁶⁹ China soon underwent spectacular economic growth and displaced Japan as the world's

⁶⁴ Schaller, "Japan and the Cold War, 1960-1991" 258-259.

⁶⁵ Guthrie-Shimizu, "Japan and the Cold War, 1945-1960," 158-161.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 166-169

⁶⁷ Xu, "Security Alliance."

⁶⁸ Guthrie-Shimizu, "Japan and the Cold War, 1945-1960," 156.

⁶⁹ Caroline Rose and Ed Griffith, "Sino-Japanese Relations Since 1945," in *Oxford Bibliographies* (Oxford University Press, 2018),

second largest economy in 2011.⁷⁰ That, plus the modernization of the Chinese armed forces, has caused a new round of Sino-Japanese tensions as China challenges Japan's dominance in East Asia.

Both countries continually reference historical events when discussing their relationship, each seeing themselves as a peacemaker and the other as the aggressor. As such, past grievances prevent the two countries from moving forward.⁷¹ In China, its repeated wartime defeats to Japan have contributed to a "century of humiliation" sentiment that is core to modern Chinese nationalism. Many Japanese atrocities such as the Nanking Massacre remain in living memory. Meanwhile in Japan, many conservative and nationalistic politicians downplay World War II-era atrocities, and there also exists a sense that Japan is unfairly criticized for its past compared to Western powers.⁷²

Education plays a heavy hand in this characterization. In contrast to countries such as Germany where World War II atrocities are widely taught, many Japanese schools gloss over them,⁷³ a trend that has intensified under Abe's government as it encouraged patriotic sentiment in schools.⁷⁴ Meanwhile, the Chinese education system

emphasizes the culpability of Japan during the war while also promoting nationalism.⁷⁵

The trend of Chinese militarization began in 2005 and budgetary allotments towards the Chinese military have increased rapidly in the years since.⁷⁶ From 2000 to 2018, China's military spending has grown by almost 600 percent, from \$41 billion in 2000 to \$240 billion in 2018.⁷⁷ ⁷⁸ Thus, China poses a significant security concern for Japan; their increased military capabilities in the South China Sea (including the construction of artificial islands) allows them the ability to take unilateral action in territorial disputes,⁷⁹ including the current dispute over the Senkaku Islands.

The islands, known in China as the Diaoyu islands, consists of several uninhabited islands located in the East China Sea that are claimed by Japan, China and Taiwan⁸⁰ as part of their exclusive economic zones. Besides nationalistic sentiment, these islands are important because of rich fish, oil, and gas resources and their strategic location.⁸¹ ⁸²

As these islands have been an ongoing source of tension between China and Japan, both countries have threatened unilateral military action to take them. Chinese ships and aircraft have been

<https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199920082/obo-9780199920082-0036.xml>

⁷⁰ "China overtakes Japan as world's second-biggest economy." *BBC News*, February 14, 2011, <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-12427321>

⁷¹ Tania Branigan, "Rows between Japan and China draw on historical grievances." *The Guardian*, March 5, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/05/rows-japan-china-historical-grievances>

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Stephen D Wrage, "Germany and Japan handle history very differently," *The New York Times*, August 17, 1995, <https://www.nytimes.com/1995/08/17/opinion/IHT-germany-and-japan-handle-history-very-differently.html>

⁷⁴ NYT, "Japanese PM Shinzo Abe wants more patriotic tone in school textbooks," *South China Morning Post*, December 30, 2013, <https://www.scmp.com/news/asia/article/1392703/japanese-pm-shinzo-abe-wants-more-patriotic-tone-school-textbooks>

⁷⁵ Branigan, "Rows between Japan and China," 2014.

⁷⁶ Glosserman, *Peak Japan*, 13-14

⁷⁷ "What does China really spend on its military?" China Power, Center for Strategic and International Studies, December 28, 2015. <https://chinapower.csis.org/military-spending/>

⁷⁸ All dollar figures are given in US dollars.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Taiwan is itself disputed between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Republic of China (ROC) governments.

⁸¹ Congressional Research Service, *Japan-U.S. Relations: Issues for Congress*, RL33436 (Sept. 2017): 9, www.everyCongressionalResearchService.com/reports/RL33436.html

⁸² Meenakshi Viswanathan, "Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands: Significance, Challenges and Opportunities," *ISSSP Reflections* 26 (2015), <http://issp.in/senkakudaioyu-islands-significance-challenges-and-opportunities/>

performing routine “patrols” near the islands since 2012, sometimes resulting in escalations with the Japanese military.⁸³ That same year, the Japanese government purchased three of the Senkaku Islands from a private owner, provoking anti-Japanese demonstrations in China.⁸⁴ China’s new capabilities also mean that Tokyo faces the prospect of a shift in the balance of power away from Japan in Southeast Asia.⁸⁵

Despite being geopolitical rivals, China and Japan share extensive economic ties. China is Japan’s largest trading partner, and with 8.4 million Chinese tourists visiting Japan in 2018, China is Japan’s number one source of tourists.⁸⁶ ⁸⁷ In recent years, China and Japan have attempted to improve their relationship, with Abe inviting Chinese leadership to visit Japan and expressing interest in joining China’s Belt and Road initiative to build infrastructure around the world.⁸⁸

North Korea

Relations between Japan and North Korea have been poor since the start of the Cold War, and to this day the two countries do not have formal diplomatic relations. Tensions have remained between the two countries; Japan has followed the example of the United States and taken a hard line against the North Korean regime, both

through economic sanctions as well as diplomatic efforts at the UN to punish the regime for its human rights violations.⁸⁹ ⁹⁰

North Korean missile capabilities are of particular concern for Tokyo. Japan is directly threatened by North Korean long-range missiles and US bases on Japanese soil are a target for the North Korean military.⁹¹ This threat to Japanese security has existed since the early 1990s, when Pyongyang first developed their nuclear capabilities. The issue has only increased during the 2010s; between 2010 and 2017 North Korea has conducted a total of four nuclear tests and 87 missile tests,⁹² ⁹³ with two missile tests in 2017 flying over Japanese territory.⁹⁴

Tensions also remain because of unresolved questions over the North Korean abduction issue. During the 1970s and 1980s, the North Korea regime kidnapped Japanese citizens and brought them to the country for purposes such as translating Japanese documents, teaching Japanese, and creating fake Japanese passports.⁹⁵ According to Japan, 17 Japanese citizens were abducted, though North Korea has claimed only 13 people were. Five abductees were returned in 2002, while North Korea claims that the others died of natural causes. During his first term as Prime Minister in 2006, Shinzo Abe established the Headquarters for the Abduction Issue to coordinate government

⁸³ Congressional Research Service, *Japan-U.S. Relations*, 9-10

⁸⁴ Viswanathan, “Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands.”

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 13

⁸⁶ “Japan.” Organization for Economic Complexity, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, <https://atlas.media.mit.edu/en/profile/country/jpn/>

⁸⁷ “Overseas Residents’ Visits to Japan.” JTB Tourism Research & Consulting Co., August 16, 2019. <https://www.tourism.jp/en/tourism-database/stats/inbound>

⁸⁸ Charlotte Gao, “Taro Kono’s China Visit Paves the Way for a China-Japan-South Korea Summit,” *The Diplomat*, January 30, 2018, <https://thediplomat.com/2018/01/taro-konos-china-visit-paves-the-way-for-a-china-japan-south-korea-summit/>

⁸⁹ Glosserman, *Peak Japan*, 12-13

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 12-13

⁹¹ *Ibid*, 12-13

⁹² “North Korea Nuclear Timeline Fast Facts.” *CNN*, May 6, 2019, <https://www.cnn.com/2013/10/29/world/asia/north-korea-nuclear-timeline---fast-facts/index.html>

⁹³ “The CNS North Korea Missile Test Database,” Nuclear Threat Initiative, May 14, 2019. <https://www.nti.org/analysis/articles/cns-north-korea-missile-test-database/>

⁹⁴ Congressional Research Service, *Japan-U.S. Relations*, 12

⁹⁵ Robert S. Boynton, “North Korea’s Abduction Project.” *The New Yorker*, December 21, 2015, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/north-koreas-abduction-project>

work on the issue and educate the public about it.^{96 97}

South Korea

Though the trilateral relationship between Japan, South Korea and the United States is arguably the most important security bulwark against the North Korea threat,⁹⁸ the Japan-South Korea alliance is far more fragile than the Japan-US alliance. For one, South Korea wishes to avoid war with North Korea at all costs due to the high cost of war to their civilian populations, a point of tension in the trilateral alliance.⁹⁹

As with China, Japan and South Korea share disputed territory and maintain historical grievances against each other. The two countries both claim the Liancourt Rocks, known as the Takeshima Islands in Japan and the Dokdo Islands in Korea. Located between both countries, these islands contain rich fishing grounds and potential natural gas deposits. Both countries state that their claims date back to the 17th century, with South Korea claiming that they were restored to Korea after World War II, despite not being mentioned as such in the San Francisco Peace Treaty.^{100 101} The countries also disagree over the name of the sea where the islands are located; Japan uses the term “Sea of Japan,” while Korea uses the term “East Sea.”¹⁰²

South Korea’s government (and North Korea’s government¹⁰³) also believes

that Japan never sufficiently apologized for Japanese oppression during the colonial period from 1910 to 1945. While Japan modernized Korea during that period, it also enforced a policy of forced assimilation of Koreans into Japanese culture, such as by suppressing the Korean language and pushing Koreans to adopt Japanese names. The Japanese government also forced many Koreans to serve as soldiers or workers during World War II.¹⁰⁴

In particular, Japanese politicians have downplayed the Imperial Japanese government’s role in the issue of “comfort women,” who served as sex slaves for the Imperial Japanese Army during the 1930s and 1940s. The United Nations estimates that 200,000 women, mostly Koreans, were forced to serve as comfort women. This has become an increasingly important issue in recent years due to Korean and international activism.^{105 106} In 2011 South Korea began putting up statues honoring these women, starting with one at the Japanese embassy in Seoul, which Tokyo views as hindering future collaboration.¹⁰⁷

Besides downplaying the issue of comfort women, Abe and his cabinet members have made visits to Yasukuni Shrine, a shrine that commemorates Japanese war dead, including perpetrators of wartime atrocities.¹⁰⁸ South Korean leaders have condemned such visits, as well as Japanese textbooks that they claim are

⁹⁶ Congressional Research Service, *Japan-U.S. Relations*, 12-13

⁹⁷ Boynton, “Abduction Project.”

⁹⁸ Congressional Research Service, *Japan-U.S. Relations*, 3

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 12

¹⁰⁰ “Profile: Dokdo/Takeshima Islands.” *BBC News*, August 10, 2012. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-19207086>

¹⁰¹ Justin McCurry, “Rocky relations between Japan and South Korea over disputed islands.” *The Guardian*, August 18, 2010. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/aug/18/japan-south-korea-disputed-islands>

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ Congressional Research Service, *Japan-U.S. Relations*, 12

¹⁰⁴ *The Japan Times*, “Annexation of Korea.”

¹⁰⁵ Elise Hu, “‘Comfort Woman’ Memorial Statues, A Thorn In Japan’s Side, Now Sit On Korean Buses,” *NPR*, November 13, 2017, <https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2017/11/13/563838610/comfort-woman-memorial-statues-a-thorn-in-japans-side-now-sit-on-korean-buses>

¹⁰⁶ Congressional Research Service, *Japan-U.S. Relations*, 12

¹⁰⁷ Hu, “Comfort Women.”

¹⁰⁸ Congressional Research Service, *Japan-U.S. Relations*, 9

revisionist. Some Japanese politicians have issued apologies for wartime atrocities in the past, but they have done little to relieve tensions, leading to a sense of “Korea fatigue” in Japan.¹⁰⁹

However, as with China, economic ties bind South Korea with Japan despite tensions. South Korea is the second largest source of tourists to Japan after mainland China¹¹⁰ and is Japan’s third largest trading partner after China and the US.¹¹¹ In particular, Japan is a lucrative market for the Korean music industry, with K-pop bands regularly selling out concerts in Japan and Korean music agencies recruiting Japanese artists.¹¹²

Russia

As Japan’s northern neighbor, Russia has had a long history of interactions with Japan, including wars such as the Russo-Japanese War and the Soviet invasion of Manchuko in World War II. To this day, Russia and Japan have not officially signed a World War II peace treaty, and they maintain a territorial dispute over the South Kuril Islands north of Japan. While Japan asserts territorial rights over the islands, calling them the Northern Territories, Russia has maintained *de facto* control since the end of World War II.¹¹³

However, Russia and Japan have recently engaged in cooperation, promising to start new initiatives to expand economic ties and tourism between the two countries. This includes establishing a \$1 billion joint

investment fund in 2015 and the prospect of joint economic projects on the Southern Kurils in areas such as fishing, energy, and tourism.¹¹⁴

United States

The United States and Japan alliance is a steadfast one for both countries: for the US, its bases in Japan are the foundation of its military presence in Asia, and for Japan, the US guarantees security, especially against North Korea and China. About 50,000 US Forces Japan (USFJ) troops are currently stationed in Japan across 90 bases, and the countries regularly carry out military exercises together.¹¹⁵ Japan is also covered under the United States’ “nuclear umbrella,” under which Japan is protected by American nuclear weapons. The US can use its nuclear weapons to protect Japan.^{116,117}

The collaboration between these two countries has always been orchestrated well, as evidenced by the joint response to the 2011 tsunami and Japanese missions in Afghanistan and Iraq.¹¹⁸ However, recently the balance of power has shifted to become more equally distributed between the two countries, due in part to Japan’s decision to employ the Japanese Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) in active overseas missions. This process was accelerated by the 2013 revision of the Mutual Defense Guidelines, which

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 11

¹¹⁰ JTB Tourism Research & Consulting Co., “Visits to Japan,” <https://www.tourism.jp/en/tourism-database/stats/>

¹¹¹ MIT, “Japan.”

¹¹² Ju-min Park, “K-Pop stardom lures Japanese youth to Korea despite diplomatic chill,” *Reuters*, April 30, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-southkorea-japan-kpop-feature/k-pop-stardom-lures-japanese-youth-to-korea-despite-diplomatic-chill-idUSKCN1S62TY>

¹¹³ Aleksandra Bausheva, “Russia and Japan on Different Wavelengths in the Kuril Islands,” Center for Strategic and International Studies, <https://www.csis.org/npfp/russia-and-japan-different-wavelengths-kuril-islands>

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Congressional Research Service, *Japan-U.S. Relations*, 16

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 25

¹¹⁷ Xu,

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 17

guide how the two militaries interact with each other in both peacetime and wartime.¹¹⁹

Despite the length and stability of the bilateral relations, there are several factors that threaten to destabilize the alliance. The strength of trilateral relations between the US, Japan and South Korea are undermined by Korean-Japanese tensions. The United States also stations 25 percent of USFJ troops on Okinawa, whose location in the East China Sea lends it strategic importance. The island is small in area and the US military presence dominates the island, leading to local resentment. For instance, plans to expand the Futenma military base have led to protests by Okinawans and boycotts by Okinawan governor Takeshi Onaga.¹²⁰

While campaigning, US President Donald Trump made comments critical of Japan, including claims that Japan was not paying its fair share for the US security umbrella; this made some analysts concerned that he would significantly inhibit the US-Japan alliance.¹²¹ During Trump's presidency, Japanese officials have criticized the US for the decision to withdraw from the Paris Climate Accord.¹²²

However, Trump and Abe have become close friends and formed a strong partnership between their nations, with their countries standing together on overall policy.¹²³ Ultimately, Tokyo has little ground to stand on in terms of opposing US security policy in the region, as the damage that Japan would take during a war with North Korea has meant that Abe has

essentially agreed with Trump in terms of security policy.¹²⁴ In recent years, US support has allowed Abe to achieve his goals of expanding the JSDF and Japan's military capabilities, allowing them to expand their influence in the region.

National Security in the Abe Era

One of the most recent developments in Japanese military history is the Japanese Self Defense Force, or JSDF for short. After Japan surrendered in World War II, the American occupation forces implemented a new constitution in 1947. Among its many sections was Article 9, a unique provision in which Japan renounced the ability to declare war or the ability to maintain armed forces except to defend Japanese territory. This coincided with the dismantling of Japanese land, sea and air forces under the Allied occupation.¹²⁵

Due to pressure put on them by the Korean War, Japan decided to create a stronger police force that went by the original name of the National Police Reserve,¹²⁶ which would be changed to the JSDF in 1954.¹²⁷ Despite original objections and after much debate, it was decided in 1959 that the new police force did not violate Article 9.¹²⁸ Even then, public perception towards the JSDF remained mixed at best,¹²⁹ as Japan developed a pacifist mindset and most Japanese felt secure under the

¹¹⁹ Congressional Research Service, *Japan-U.S. Relations*, 19

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 20-21

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 6

¹²² *Ibid.*, 17

¹²³ Matt Alt, "Donald and Shinzo's Excellent Adventure." *The New Yorker*, November 7, 2017,

<https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/donald-and-shinzos-excellent-adventure>

¹²⁴ Congressional Research Service, *Japan-U.S. Relations*, 6

¹²⁵ *Encyclopedia Britannica*, "Pacific War."

¹²⁶ Alex Ward, "The Rise of Japanese Militarism," *Vox*, April 30, 2019,

www.vox.com/2019/4/30/18100066/japan-shinzo-abe-sdf-emperor-china.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ Watanabe et. al., "Japan."

¹²⁹ Ward, "Japanese Militarism."

American military presence in the country.¹³⁰

The role of the JSDF, augmented by the American security presence, satisfied its national security needs until several major events shifted Japanese opinion. The first event was the Persian Gulf War in 1991, in which due to Article 9, Japan was unable to assist its allies in the fighting. In one infamous moment, Japanese army major Nozomu Yoshitomi saw JSDF troops making ice sculptures on television while allied troops fought in the Middle East.¹³¹ While Japan aided its allies financially and provided limited military assistance, the embarrassment of the experience, alongside American pressure, motivated Japanese policymakers to start shifting away from pacifism and towards a more assertive role for the JSDF.¹³²

In June 1992, Japan passed a law which allowed JSDF deployment UN peacekeeping missions, with Japanese peacekeepers being sent to Cambodia a year later.¹³³ However, focus shifted away from peacekeeping and towards counterterrorism after the September 11 attacks. During the War in Afghanistan, Japanese ships refueled American warships, while JSDF members were sent to Iraq to aid in that nation's postwar reconstruction.^{134 135}

In 2011, in the aftermath of the Tohoku earthquake and tsunami, over

70,000 JSDF forces were immediately deployed to disaster zones to engage in search and rescue, repair infrastructure, and prevent the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster from spiraling out of control, leading to a renewed sense of respect towards the JSDF.¹³⁶ Today, nearly 90 percent of Japanese people view the JSDF positively.¹³⁷

Pushed by China's military buildup, in 2009 the Japanese government embarked on a plan to prioritize the defense of Japanese territory in the East China Sea.¹³⁸ Those plans were further cemented into Japanese policymaking with Shinzo Abe's win in 2012, which signaled Japan's increasing ambitions on the military front. Part of the 2009 strategy included establishing a National Security Council, modeled on its American counterpart, and easing a ban on overseas arms sales; under Abe, the Council was established in 2013 and the ban was completely lifted in 2014.^{139,140}

Furthermore, Japan has increased defense spending in recent years; the defense budget is planned to increase by 1.3 percent to \$46 billion in fiscal year 2018, which will be the sixth annual increase in a row. Much of this spending will be used on cruise missiles and missile defense systems to counter North Korean military threats.¹⁴¹

¹³⁰ Akitoshi Miyashita, "Where Do Norms Come from? Foundations of Japan's Postwar Pacifism." *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 7, no. 1 (2007): 99-120, JSTOR, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26156617>

¹³¹ Tim Kelly and Nobuhiro Kubo, "Gulf War Trauma Began Japan's Retreat from Pacifism." *Reuters*, December 20, 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-japan-military-history-insight/gulf-war-trauma-began-japans-retreat-from-pacifism-idUSKBN0U300D20151220>

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Xu, "Security Alliance."

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Kelly and Kubo, "Gulf War."

¹³⁶ Shelia A. Smith, "A Stunned Japan Turns to Its Military," Council on Foreign Relations, March 16, 2011, <https://www.cfr.org/blog/stunned-japan-turns-its-military>

¹³⁷ Ward, "Japanese Militarism."

¹³⁸ Kelly and Kubo, "Gulf War."

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ "National Security Council," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, https://www.mofa.go.jp/fp/nsp/page1we_000080.html

¹⁴¹ Tim Kelly and Nobuhiro Kubo, "Japan approves record defense spending that favors U.S.-made equipment," *Reuters*, December 21, 2017,

Revising Article 9

In addition to pursuing a more active military, Abe and the Liberal Democratic Party¹⁴² have long advocated for revising Article 9 of the Japanese constitution since his return to the office of Prime Minister. In 2012, the LDP released a draft constitution released that would allow Japan to establish a “National Defense Force” (NDF). Instead of being only permitted to defend the homeland like the JSDF, the draft constitution would allow the new NDF would be allowed to patrol international waters, cooperate with allied nations and become a more prominent player worldwide to maintain the “peace and security of international society.”¹⁴³

Ultimately, the goal of Abe’s revisions is to settle the dispute about whether or not the JSDF is unconstitutional, in order to give it more backing. A revised Article 9 would entail a clearer definition of any Japanese military force and give clarity as to its legal status.¹⁴⁴ ¹⁴⁵ Through these revisions, Japan would have a traditional military, as befits a “normal” major country.¹⁴⁶

Already, the Abe government has encouraged re-interpretations of Article 9, in lieu of outright revisions, in order to expand the role of the JSDF. In 2014, the Cabinet issued a re-interpretation of the right to self-defense to cover “collective self-defense,” a change that was codified into law in 2015. Driven by “complex and significant national

security challenges” facing the country, the re-interpretation would permit Japan to protect allies in the event of an attack.¹⁴⁷ ¹⁴⁸

That said, passing any changes to the constitution is difficult. One of the big hurdles Abe and his party have to overcome is the difficulty of the amendment process: any amendment needs two-thirds support in both houses of the National Diet, Japan’s legislature, and must pass a national referendum.¹⁴⁹ Another difficulty is public opinion. Historically, expanding the scope of the JSDF has always been controversial; the 2014 and 2015 “collective self-defense” re-interpretations led to widespread protests, with critics calling it “war legislation” and even comparing Abe to Adolf Hitler.¹⁵⁰ A December 2017 poll on revising Article 9 showed that 55 percent of people opposed the revision, whereas 33 percent supported it.¹⁵¹ Furthermore, the base of the Komeito Party, which is the LDP’s junior coalition partner in the current government, is largely pacifist, further complicating the politics of Article 9.¹⁵²

However, other polls have shown a more even divide in the Japanese populace’s opinion on amending the constitution.¹⁵³ Increasing pressure from international factors such as North Korea’s nuclear potential, China’s militarization and the recent unpredictability of the United States have been cited as important reasons for the increasing Japanese support. Other supporters of the revision wish to fix

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-japan-defence/japan-approves-record-defense-spending-that-favors-u-s-made-equipment-idUSKBN1EG081>

¹⁴² Reinhard Drifte et. al., “Amending Japan’s Pacifist Constitution - Article 9 and Prime Minister Abe,” Institute for Security and Development Policy, April 2018, <http://isd.eu/publication/amending-japans-pacifist-constitution/>

¹⁴³ Ward, “Japanese Militarism.”

¹⁴⁴ Drifte, et. al., “Amending Japan’s Constitution.”

¹⁴⁵ Kyodo News, “LDP pledges.”

¹⁴⁶ Ward, “Japanese Militarism.”

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Drifte, et. al., “Amending Japan’s Constitution.”

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ward, “Japanese Militarism.”

¹⁵¹ Drifte, et. al., “Amending Japan’s Constitution.”

¹⁵² Ward, “Japanese Militarism.”

¹⁵³ Drifte, et. al., “Amending Japan’s Constitution.”

potential constitutional contradictions, increase international action from Japan, and strengthen Japan's alliance with the United States.¹⁵⁴

Even so, revising Article 9 is a significant and controversial action, bringing up fundamental questions about Japan's pacifism and its role in an increasingly uncertain world. Such questions have not stopped Abe from wavering from his goal; perhaps now is the moment he can realize his vision of a strong Japanese military.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

Questions to Consider

1. *What should Japan's approach towards China be?*

Shinzo Abe has responded to China's rise by taking a hardline position on national security. But there are areas, like trade and economics, where Tokyo and Beijing might find common ground.

2. *How should Japan approach North and South Korea?*

Historical grievances, territorial disputes, and Pyongyang's militarism have strained Japan's relationship with the two Koreas, resisting decades of attempts to resolve these issues.

3. *How should Japan handle its territorial disputes?*

Japan currently has territorial disputes with China, the two Koreas, and Russia. With natural resources, geopolitics, and national pride at stake, there are no easy ways to resolve these disputes.

4. *Should Japan keep strengthening its alliance with the US?*

While the US-Japan alliance has brought many security benefits to Japan, there are some aspects, such as the US military presence in Okinawa, that warrant a hard look by Tokyo.

5. *Should Japan continue the process of remilitarization?*

Remilitarizing Japan, including revising Article 9 of the constitution, is one of Shinzo Abe's long-term goals. But doing so will dramatically affect Japan's identity as a pacifist nation and its role in global security.

Conclusion

Japan's relations with its neighbors are complex. On one hand, Japan's relationships with its neighbors have been poisoned from historical grievances, territorial disputes, and deep-seated rivalries. All of these issues have led to an air of mistrust in East Asia, and a hardline foreign policy stance, which Shinzo Abe has adopted, seems to be the easiest option for Japan in such a dangerous neighborhood.

However, beneath the rhetoric and tension lie deep connections between Japan and its Asian neighbors. Trade with its neighbors remains an economic lifeblood for Japan, millions of Chinese and Korean tourists visit Japan each year, and Japanese pop culture is beloved across the world. Such exchanges present opportunities for cooperation that should not be missed.

Japan's foreign policy and national security hang in the balance as Abe crafts his legacy. It is up to his cabinet to see what that legacy looks like as Asia and Japan enter a new era.



Topic B:

Japan's Demographic Crisis

Introduction

Japan is in the midst of one of the most dramatic demographic declines seen in modern history. From a total of nearly 127 million people in 2017, Japan's population is expected to fall to 100 million by the middle of this century.¹⁵⁵ Compounding this is the fact that Japan is rapidly aging, with more than a quarter of all Japanese aged 65 years or older.¹⁵⁶ All of these changes will have an enormous impact on the Japanese economy and society, from slowing economic growth to stretching the welfare system to its limits.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has sought novel solutions to address his country's demographic crisis. Thus far, many of them have come with their own risks and controversy. Increasing Japan's fertility rate is not easy, nor is embracing immigration to Japan. And what perils will come along with the promises of automation? For Abe's cabinet, what can be done to stem Japan's descent into the population abyss?

Historical Background

Japan has not always experienced a demographic decline; in fact, throughout much of its modern history it has experienced rapid population growth. Japan grew from nearly 35 million people in 1870 (around the start of Japan's industrialization) to 82 million by 1950.¹⁵⁷ This level of rapid growth has been driven by a high fertility rate. Japanese women on average each gave birth to more than four children before World War II, reaching a peak total fertility rate of 5.35 children per woman in 1920.¹⁵⁸

However, Japan's fertility rates declined dramatically in the years immediately following World War II, and after a slight rise during the 1970s, Japanese fertility rates continued their decline until reaching an all-time low of 1.26 children per woman in 2005.¹⁵⁹ ¹⁶⁰ This is below the "replacement rate" of 2.1 births per woman, and without immigration, a country with a birth rate below this level would experience population decline.¹⁶¹

Japan's fertility decline is not unique. Most countries undergo a "demographic transition" as they develop, experiencing declines in birth and death rates and rapid population growth before that growth

¹⁵⁵ Sasha Ingber, "Japan's Population Is In Rapid Decline," *NPR*, December 21, 2018.

<https://www.npr.org/2018/12/21/679103541/japans-population-is-in-rapid-decline>.

¹⁵⁶ "The Challenges of Japan's Demography," *The Economist Newspaper*, November 26, 2018, <https://www.economist.com/the-economist-explains/2018/11/26/the-challenges-of-japans-demography>.

¹⁵⁷ Ola Rosling, "Total Population," *Gapminder*, updated 8 April 2018, <https://www.gapminder.org/data/>

¹⁵⁸ Max Roser, "Fertility Rate," *Our World In Data*, 2019, <https://ourworldindata.org/fertility-rate>

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ "Table 1-20: Total fertility rates by year," *Handbook of Health and Welfare Statistics 2017*, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, <https://www.mhlw.go.jp/english/database/db-hh/1-2.html>

¹⁶¹ Roser, "Fertility Rate."

stabilizes. Factors like declining child mortality, improved education, and increased female workforce participation has led to a global decline in total fertility rate, from five children per woman in 1950 to 2.5 in 2015.¹⁶²

Career versus Family

The demographic transition theory applies to Japan, which experienced a dramatic rise in living standards, life expectancy and urbanization rate in the postwar era. Women's rights also progressed in Japan during this period. Under the 1946 Constitution adopted under Allied occupation, women were granted the right to vote, run for office, and enroll in university.¹⁶³ Female enrollment in higher education jumped from 5 percent in 1955 to 41 percent in 1992, while the proportion of married women aged 20 to 54 who work rose from 13 percent in 1963 to 42 percent in 1990.¹⁶⁴

The increased female workforce participation rate of married women tends to depress fertility rates due to the difficulty of maintaining a job and raising a family at the same time.¹⁶⁵ Paradoxically, this is compounded by the fact that traditional views of gender roles remain entrenched in Japan, despite over seventy years' worth of progress in women's rights: women are expected to be homemakers while men to be breadwinners.¹⁶⁶ 70 percent of new mothers

quit and rely on their husband's salary while raising the family, due to the incompatibility between career and family life.¹⁶⁷ 168

The "career versus marriage" problem is compounded by the inadequacy of Japanese maternity and parental leave. Japanese maternity benefits rank 24th out of 29 developed nations in terms of length and quality; Japanese women are entitled to 14 weeks leave at 60 percent pay, compared to the OECD average of 15 weeks at 100 percent pay.¹⁶⁹ Japan's parental leave policy, first adopted under the Child Care Leave Law of 1992,¹⁷⁰ allows either parent can take the option of one year of parental leave at 40 percent pay, which many find inadequate. Furthermore, many women quit their jobs instead of taking parental leave due to cultural expectations, such as the perception that pregnant women should quit.¹⁷¹ These expectations also affect men, as only five percent of fathers take advantage of paternity leave, despite Japan's program (unlike its maternal leave program) being among the best in the world.¹⁷²

The burden of raising children is compounded by limited childcare services, including a nationwide daycare shortage. As of April 2017, over 23,000 children are on the national daycare waiting list. The government has attempted to solve this problem since 2001, and Shinzo Abe has pledged to bring the waiting list down to

¹⁶² Roser, 2019.

¹⁶³ Patricia Morley, *The Mountain is Moving: Japanese Women's Lives*, (London: Pandora, 1999), 7

¹⁶⁴ Naohiro Ogawa and Robert D. Retherford. "The Resumption of Fertility Decline in Japan: 1973-92." *Population and Development Review* 19, no. 4 (1993): 726, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2938411>.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 727.

¹⁶⁶ Morley, *Mountain is Moving*, 2-3.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 78.

¹⁶⁸ Alana Semuels, "The Mystery of Why Japanese People Are Having So Few Babies." *The Atlantic*, July 20, 2017. <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2017/07/japan-mystery-low-birth-rate/534291/>.

¹⁶⁹ Patricia Boling. "Demography, Culture, and Policy: Understanding Japan's Low Fertility." *Population and Development Review* 34, no. 2 (2008): 311-312. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1728-4457.2008.00221.x>.

¹⁷⁰ Morley, *Mountain is Moving*, 79

¹⁷¹ Boling, "Demography, Culture, and Policy," 313.

¹⁷² Isabella Steger, "Researchers have figured out why almost no men take paternity leave in a country that offers 12 months of it," *Quartz*, September 22, 2017, <https://qz.com/1084591/despite-japans-generous-paternity-leave-only-2-3-of-men-take-it-because-they-think-their-peers-would-disapprove/>

zero by early 2018, but he later postponed that goal by three years.¹⁷³

The Rise of Irregular Work

Compounding the career versus marriage dilemma is a shortage of stable work. Traditionally, Japanese firms would practice “lifetime employment,” where employees would work for one company their entire lives. This is, for many workers, no longer the case. The rapid economic growth Japan enjoyed after World War II era ended in the 1990s in the so-called “lost decade,” a decade of economic stagnation;¹⁷⁴ at the same time, labor law reforms allowed intermediary firms to use more temporary and contract workers.¹⁷⁵ ¹⁷⁶ As Japan competed on the international stage, companies felt pressured to lower their costs, creating a growing reliance on these irregular workers, who are paid less than their full-time counterparts. From 1995 to 2008, the number of irregular workers increased by 7.6 million, while the number of regular workers declined by 3.8 million.¹⁷⁷

As a consequence of the law reform, around 40 percent of the Japanese workforce are in such irregular and temporary jobs, with only 20 percent being able to switch to regular, more financially stable jobs. The rise of unstable jobs has been particularly tough for men, as without a stable job, they are seen as undesirable partners¹⁷⁸

This problem also affects women, who find themselves needing to work in irregular jobs with low pay and unstable hours. In fact, half of working women hold irregular jobs in recent years, up from one-third in 1992.¹⁷⁹ 31 percent of women who work irregular jobs (and 14 percent of men) do so for tax reasons: Japanese tax laws allow one partner to claim tax-free income up to ¥1.5 million (~\$14,000).¹⁸⁰ ¹⁸¹ ¹⁸² But many others who seek full-time work end up stuck in irregular jobs and have diminished opportunities to raise children.¹⁸³

With this increase in irregular employment, settling down with a partner and having a child has become increasingly infeasible for both genders. About 30 percent of irregular workers in their early 30s are married, compared to 56 percent of full-time employees.¹⁸⁴

As such, Japan has a large concentration of unmarried young people: as of 2015, 34 percent of women aged 25 to 29 have never married and are not in a relationship, while that number rises to 50 percent for men. According to a government survey, 90 percent of never-married people in their late 20s wish to marry at some point, with half of those respondents citing cost as the main obstacle against marriage.¹⁸⁵ In a society where marrying and having children

¹⁷³ Kyodo, “Japan’s day care shortage intensifies as populations cluster near city centers,” *The Japan Times*, August 16, 2017, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/08/16/national/japan-day-care-shortage-intensifies-populations-cluster-near-city-centers/#.XV9F89NKhZg>

¹⁷⁴ Johnathan Adams, “Temp Nation: The demise of “lifetime employment” in Japan,” *PRI*, May 30, 2010, <https://www.pri.org/stories/2010-05-18/temp-nation-demise-lifetime-employment-japan>

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Semuels, “Japanese People Are Having Few Babies.”

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Katharina Buchholz, “Half of Japanese Female Workers Are Not Employed Full-Time,” *Statista*, March 6, 2019, <https://www.statista.com/chart/17262/number-of-japanese-women-working-part-time/>

¹⁸⁰ While currency exchange rates obviously fluctuate, the rate between yen to US dollars has hovered around ¥110 to US\$1 between January and August 2019, making this rate an approximate rule of thumb.

¹⁸¹ Buchholz, “Japanese Female Workers.”

¹⁸² Ogawa and Retherford, “Fertility Decline,” 728

¹⁸³ Semuels, “Japanese People Are Having Few Babies.”

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Akihito Kato, “Declining Marriage and Ever-Increasing Childlessness - Japan’s Future Will Be Lost If Nothing Is Done,”

go hand-in-hand - 98 percent of Japanese children are born in wedlock - this has serious implications: around half of Japanese women between 20 and 49 do not have any children.¹⁸⁶

The Cost of Children

Many parents consider the cost of raising children, especially when they have access to contraceptives and family planning knowledge, to the benefits of having them.¹⁸⁷ This is especially true in Japan where raising children is very expensive. Raising one child in Japan is estimated to cost between ¥20 to ¥30 million (about \$180 to \$270 thousand).¹⁸⁸

Education expenses take up a major portion of that cost, with parents having to pay for tuition, school uniforms, meals, extracurriculars and many other expenses. There are also the costs *juku*, expensive cram schools that nearly all Japanese high schoolers attend in order to do well in university entrance exams.¹⁸⁹ This is complicated by the fact that government spending on education is among the lowest among developed nations.¹⁹⁰

With the enormous expense of raising children combined, a career versus family dilemma for women, and an unstable employment outlook for many young people, it is not surprising why Japan's fertility rate is near historical lows. Any attempt to address these issues must tackle these deep-seated cultural, social, economic causes.

Meiji University, October 3, 2018, https://www.meiji.ac.jp/cip/english/research/opinion/Akihiko_Kato.html.

¹⁸⁶ Kato, "Declining Marriage."

¹⁸⁷ Ogawa and Retherford, "Fertility Decline," 711

¹⁸⁸ Kato, "Declining Marriage."

¹⁸⁹ "Testing Times," *The Economist*, December 31, 2011, <https://www.economist.com/asia/2011/12/31/testing-times>

¹⁹⁰ Tomoko, Otake, "Public education spending in Japan lowest in OECD for sixth straight year," *The Japan Times*, November 25, 2015,

Effects of the Population Decline

While people usually think of *over*-population as causing demographic problems, Japan is currently experiencing problems caused by *under*-population, problems that will only get worse in the future. A declining population and labor force, combined with an aging problem, will stress Japan's economy, social structure, and national security for years to come.

Japan's low birthrate, combined with one of the highest life expectancies in the world, is causing its population to become older. Right now, over 28 percent of the country is elderly (defined as someone older than 65), the most out of any country in the world.¹⁹¹ Some estimates expect that a third of the population will be elderly by 2036.¹⁹² 45 percent of Japanese households include one family member who is elderly, and by 2060 it is projected that there will be 1.3 people of working age for every elderly person.¹⁹³

Economically, Japan is facing a severe shortage in labor with the ratio of elderly retirees to young, able-bodied workers steadily growing.¹⁹⁴ The working-age population (defined as those aged 20 to 64) declined by 13 percent between 2000 and 2008, a much greater drop than the overall

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/11/25/national/public-education-spending-japan-lowest-oecd-sixth-straight-year/#.XV9fE9NKhZg>

¹⁹¹ "Challenges of Demography",

¹⁹² Ingber, "Population Decline."

¹⁹³ Leo Lewis, "Age survey underlines pressures on Japan," *Financial Times*, May 28, 2016,

<https://www.ft.com/content/a8e6dd9e-254b-11e6-8ba3-cdd781d02d89>

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

population decline.¹⁹⁵ In particular, as the longevity of citizens increases, more jobs for elderly services such as nursing will be needed, a need which is currently not being fulfilled due to a shortage in nurses and nursing care.¹⁹⁶

In other areas, Japan's shrinking population means a smaller domestic market for goods and services. Thousands of schools and businesses have closed in recent years, and the IMF estimates that over the next three decades, the impact of Japan's aging population can drag down its GDP growth by one percent each year.¹⁹⁷

This is not only a matter of workforce or GDP, however. The simultaneous increase in the elderly population and the decline in the working population will make it far harder to fund a social safety net, with annual social welfare costs projected to rise from ¥121 to ¥190 trillion by 2040 (~\$1.06 to \$166 trillion).¹⁹⁸

Elderly people themselves are increasingly facing problems. From 1980 to 2015, the number of seniors living alone has increased from one million to six million, upending Japan's tradition of family members taking care of their old. Loneliness has even driven some seniors to commit crimes to intentionally go to prison, where they hope to seek social support.¹⁹⁹

The impact of an aging Japan is not distributed evenly between urban and rural

areas. As millions of Japanese people flocked to cities like Tokyo and Osaka, many rural towns are aging and shrinking faster than the nation as a whole. One former prefectural governor predicts that almost 900 towns will go extinct due by 2040.²⁰⁰

In terms of self-defense, the number of people old enough to be eligible for recruitment into Japan's Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) has been falling since 1994. Since that year, the pool of suitable citizens was down 40 percent in 2015. This would have an adverse impact on the JSDF's duties in important matters such as disaster relief and national security.²⁰¹

Potential Solutions

The problem of Japan's population decline has not gone unnoticed by the Japanese government, yet despite its best efforts, it has yet to effectively solve it. The legislature should be looking to address both the declining population as well as the declining size of the workforce.

Increasing the Fertility Rate

Increasing the fertility rate has been a goal of the Japanese government since the 1990s,²⁰² but this target has gained renewed attention under Shinzo Abe's administration. In September 2015, Abe announced a target fertility rate of 1.8 children per woman. This was a part of

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Editorial Board, "Leaving jobs for nursing care," *The Japan Times*, October 18, 2015, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2015/10/18/editorials/1-eaving-jobs-nursing-care/#.XaivOedKi-w>

¹⁹⁷ Valentina Romei, "How Japan's ageing population is shrinking GDP," *Financial Times*, May 15, 2018, <https://www.ft.com/content/7ce47bd0-545f-11e8-b3ee-41e0209208ec>

¹⁹⁸ "Challenges of Demography."

¹⁹⁹ Shiho Fukada, "Japan's Prisons are a Haven for Elderly Women," *Bloomberg Businessweek*, March 15, 2018, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2018-03-16/japan-s-prisons-are-a-haven-for-elderly-women>

²⁰⁰ Alana Semuels, "Can Anything Stop Rural Decline?" *The Atlantic*, August 23, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2017/08/japan-rural-decline/537375/>

²⁰¹ Pam Kennedy, "How Japan's Aging Population Impacts National Defense," *The Diplomat*, June 28, 2017, <https://thediplomat.com/2017/06/how-japans-aging-population-impacts-national-defense/>.

²⁰² *Policy Brief No. 11: Government response to low fertility in Japan*, New York: UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs and East-West Center, November 3, 2015, https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/events/pdf/expert/24/Policy_Briefs/PB_Japan.pdf

“Abenomics 2.0,” the next phase of his “Abenomics” reforms to stimulate the Japanese economy.^{203 204}

Reform did not start with Abe. The 1992 Child Care Leave Law was an early reform initiative, and the Japanese government has worked on expanding childcare services since the mid-1990s. In 1994, the Japanese government introduced the Angel Plan, a five-year plan designed to assist couples in raising children, and further plans were introduced in 1999 and 2009. However, these policies have not succeeded in resolving Japan’s demographic decline, and in many respects remain inadequate compared to policies from other developed nations.^{205 206}

To achieve the target fertility of 1.8 births per woman, Abe has focused on improving the status of women under his so-called “womenomics” plan. Using measures to ensure equal pay, expand childcare options, and encourage the hiring and promotion of women,^{207 208} Abe’s government hopes to increase the female workforce participation rate and emulate countries like Sweden, Denmark, and the US, which all have higher fertility rates than Japan.^{209 210}

²⁰³ Anthony Fensom, “Abenomics 2.0: A Reform Reboot For Japan?” *The Diplomat*, September 30, 2015, <https://thediplomat.com/2015/09/abenomics-2-0-a-reform-reboot-for-japan/>

²⁰⁴ James McBride and Beina Xu, “Abenomics and the Japanese Economy,” *Council on Foreign Relations*, last updated March 23, 2018,

<https://www.cfr.org/background/abenomics-and-japanese-economy>

²⁰⁵ Claudia Irigoyen, “Tackling the Declining Birth Rate in Japan,” *Centre for Public Impact*, April 7, 2017, <https://www.centreforpublicimpact.org/case-study/tackling-declining-birth-rate-japan/#public-confidence>

²⁰⁶ UN DESA, “Government Response.”

²⁰⁷ Sean Creehan and Cindy Li, “Womenomics: The Importance of Female Workforce Participation in Japan,” Pacific Exchanges Podcast, Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, November 5, 2018, <https://www.frbsf.org/banking/asia-program/pacific-exchanges-podcast/womenomics-the-importance-of-female-workforce-participation-in-japan/>

Improving women’s work-life balance is an important component of womenomics. With many women quitting due to lack of available childcare services, Abe plans to expand day care facilities and implement free preschool, under a pledge to spend ¥2 trillion (\$18 billion) on education and childcare.^{211 212 213}

Japan’s aging population is also making many families to take care of elderly relatives, with thousands of workers leaving their jobs to look after their elders. Nursing home facilities have been inadequate, leaving thousands on waiting lists.²¹⁴ As a result, Abe has pledged to expand nursing home care as part of Abenomics 2.0.²¹⁵

Child allowances and financial assistance remain important for Japanese families. A child allowance scheme was first implemented on the national level in 1972,²¹⁶ and in 2010 it was reformed as the Child Allowance Law. Under the law, families would receive monthly payments of up to ¥15,000 (~\$140) per child, with greater amounts for single parents and parents with disabled children.²¹⁷

Yet another tool to counteract Japan’s falling birth rate is *in vitro* fertilization; in 2015, a record 1 in 20 Japanese babies were

²⁰⁸ Vindu Mai Chotani, “Five Years On, Where Does Abe’s ‘Womenomics’ Stand?” *Journal of International Affairs*, Columbia School of International and Public Affairs, July 30, 2017, <https://jia.sipa.columbia.edu/online-articles/five-years-where-does-abe%E2%80%99s-%E2%80%98womenomics%E2%80%99-stand>

²⁰⁹ McBride and Xu, “Abenomics.”

²¹⁰ Chotani, “Womenomics.”

²¹¹ *Ibid.*

²¹² McBride and Xu, “Abenomics.”

²¹³ Fensom, “Abenomics.”

²¹⁴ Editorial Board, “Nursing Care.”

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

²¹⁶ UN DESA, “Government Response.”

²¹⁷ “Social Security in Japan 2014: Chapter 7 Family Policy,” National Institute of Population and Social Security Research, <http://www.ipss.go.jp/s-info/e/ssj2014/007.html>

born using fertility assistance technology.²¹⁸ As such, Abe has included government support for infertility treatments as part of his reform package.²¹⁹

Expanding the Workforce

While increasing the fertility rate is important in slowing Japan's demographic decline, it is not enough: even Abe's ambitious target fertility rate of 1.8 is below the replacement rate of 2.1. Reforms must also expand the workforce directly, and so far, the Japanese government has targeted two groups for these reforms: women and the elderly.

Under the Abe administration's womenomics strategy, one of the main goals is to increase the female workforce participation rate. To some extent, the plan has worked: in 2016, Japan's female workforce participation rate reached 76 percent, exceeding the US rate of 74 percent, though a large percentage of working women remain part-time instead of full-time.²²⁰ In fact, were the gender employment gap closed, Japan's GDP would rise by 10 percent.²²¹

As Japan's population ages, the role of the elderly as a source of labor will increase. Already, 12 percent of the total workforce is made up of elderly people. Abe has encouraged older people to work and stay active, while his administration plans to

increase the minimum pension-drawing age from 60 to 71 and the retirement age for government workers from 60 to 65.²²² ²²³

Immigration Reform

One of the most important ways that Japan can increase the size of its working population is through immigration. However, immigration reform is difficult due to a deep cultural mistrust of immigration and the "foreignization" of Japan. Shinzo Abe himself stated in 2014 that "we are *not* adopting a so-called 'immigration policy.'" That said, Japanese officials are attempting to go around such antipathy by quietly implementing policies with similar effects.²²⁴

Immigration policies as they stand currently fall into a few different categories: naturalization of workers, international students, or spouses; asylum seekers; migrant workers living under the "technical trainee" status; and those who've overstayed their visas. In total, the number of foreign residents in Japan was 2.56 million at the end of 2017.²²⁵ Of that population, 1.28 million were classified as foreign workers, double the number in 2010.²²⁶

In recent years, the government has lowered the stringent requirements for obtaining employment visas for

²¹⁸ Kyodo, "IVF accounts for 5% of babies born in Japan in 2015: survey," *The Japan Times*, September 12, 2017, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/09/12/national/social-issues/1-20-infants-born-vitro-fertilization-japan-survey/#.XWrcqpNKiL8>

²¹⁹ Fensom, "Abenomics."

²²⁰ Creehan and Li, "Womenomics."

²²¹ Chotani, "Womenomics."

²²² "How Japan's prime minister plans to cope with daunting demography," *The Economist*, November 17, 2018, <https://www.economist.com/asia/2018/11/17/how-japans-prime-minister-plans-to-cope-with-daunting-demography>

²²³ Sertan Sanderson, "Japan plans to raise pension age beyond 70," *DW*, February 17, 2018,

<https://www.dw.com/en/japan-plans-to-raise-pension-age-beyond-70/a-42629344>

²²⁴ Glenda S. Roberts, "An Immigration Policy by Any Other Name: Semantics of Immigration to Japan." *Social Science Japan Journal* 21, no. 1 (2017): 89, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ssj/jyx033>

²²⁵ Staff writers, "Number of foreign residents in Japan hit record 2.56 million at end of 2017," *The Japan Times*, March 28, 2018, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/03/28/national/number-foreign-residents-japan-hit-record-high-2-56-million-end-2017/#.XWsOa5NKiL8>

²²⁶ Staff writers, "Japan's foreign workers increasingly join labor unions," *Nikkei Asian Review*, November 26, 2018, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Japan-immigration/Japan-foreign-workers-increasingly-join-labor-unions>

international students,²²⁷ such as by offering a new visa category for students who decide to care for the elderly in 2016.²²⁸ The government has also been quietly naturalizing those who have come to Japan for employment, to the point that 30 percent of foreign nationals living in Japan have gained permanent resident status.²²⁹ Although neither of these populations were considered “immigrants” when they arrived in Japan (rather they were simply “foreigners”), they are an important way of obtaining highly skilled laborers while largely avoiding political backlash.²³⁰

In either case, skilled workers and students are preferred; a 2014 government paper specifically invites “foreign talent” while specifically stating that it did not “encourage the long-time stay of ordinary foreigners.”²³¹ This is applied in practice: people in certain professions or academic fields can gain permanent residency in as little as one to three years, as opposed to the usual ten years.²³²

The other types of immigration are proving to be less effective. While allowing spouses of Japanese citizens to naturalize is perhaps the least controversial type of immigration, international marriages have seen a decrease after peaking in 2006.²³³ Most noticeably, it has not been connected to an increased birth rate.²³⁴

People who have stayed illegally in Japan, usually by overstaying their visas, constitute a significant proportion of the

migrant population, at one point reaching over 300,000 people.²³⁵ Allowing people who’ve overstayed their visas is deeply unpopular, so political progress has been incredibly slow moving. However, in 2009, the Japanese government has granted thousands of visa overstayers who meet certain requirements (such as paying taxes and being married to a Japanese national) special permission to stay.²³⁶

One of the most controversial migrant categories has been the Industrial Trainee and Technical Internship Program (TITP), which was established in 1993. Under this program, Japanese employers can hire foreign workers as “trainees” for three years; the intent was that these workers would return home with the skills they gained in Japan. At the end of 2015, almost 200,000 people had worked under the TITP, and the Japanese government sought to expand TITP quotas to fulfill nursing care demands and for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.²³⁷

Under the program, migrants work under many restrictions, including the inability to change employers or quit their jobs.²³⁸ As such, the system has become rife with abuse, with reports of underpayment, wage theft, passport confiscation, and sexual assault; critics have called the TITP a government-sponsored human trafficking program.²³⁹ Some experts suggest that Japan should implement a proper work visa

²²⁷ Roberts, “Semantics of Immigration,” 92.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 98

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 92.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 91-92.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 91.

²³² Chris Weller, “It Just Got Easier to Become a Permanent Resident of Japan - Here’s How You Do It,” *Independent*, March 9, 2017,

<https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/moving-to-japan-how-to-become-permanent-resident-tokyo-travel-emigration-a8248046.html>

²³³ Roberts, “Semantics of Immigration,” 93.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 93-94.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 94.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 94

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 95.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 95.

²³⁹ Gavin Fernando, “Welcome to the world’s worst internship,” *News.com.au*, May 23, 2016,

<https://www.news.com.au/finance/business/travel/welcome-to-the-worlds-worst-internship/news-story/eeda395f79c84f4afde4744837724505>

system in place of the TITP in order to discourage abuses.²⁴⁰

Japan might also stand to benefit from asylum seekers, refugees who are fleeing persecution, violence or war in their homes. However, the government has been heavily criticized for their slow rate of acceptance for asylum seekers - in 2017, only 0.1 percent of those seeking asylum were granted it.²⁴¹ Abe has been particularly prone to controversy on this topic: he said in 2015 that Japan should focus on providing for their own people first.²⁴² However, new guidelines implemented by the Ministry of Justice in 2017 are lowering barriers to asylum seekers, making it easier to gain employment or apply and obtain permanent residence. Even so, cabinet officials have said that there is a cultural reluctance to accept people who would require government resources, even if their presence was a net positive for the economy.²⁴³

Many Japanese people are waking up to the reality of increased immigration: a 2015 poll showed that 51 percent of respondents favored receiving immigrants, a two-fold percentage increase from 2010. But it is a hard sell to many others, especially older people who form the voter base of Abe's Liberal Democratic Party.²⁴⁴ Policymakers should look to ease fears about foreigners while simultaneously removing barriers to immigration. They should also be wary about plans that attract too many skilled workers while not paying

sufficient attention to low skill jobs that are essential to the Japanese economy.

Automation

Another solution to the workforce problem is automation. Automation has become a lucrative way of supplementing the workforce, especially in Japan, where innovation is high. In fact, since the 1970s, many Japanese industries have become reliant on robots and automation to be functional. Today, Japan's "robot density" is one of the highest in the world, with 3.03 robots per 100 workers. Robots saturate every sector of the Japanese economy, from self-checkout registers, automated airport check-ins, automated restaurant service, and the vending machines that have become a hallmark of Japanese street corners.^{245 246}

Japan is likely to see a rapid increase in the integration of new technologies because automation and other artificial intelligence are reliable alternatives to immigration to solve the population crisis. Some argue that automation can fill the gaps created by the shrinking workforce not filled by immigration.²⁴⁷

However, automation is a tricky subject for the cabinet for a number of reasons. The cabinet will need to walk a fine line between creating policy that encourages automation without imposing requirements that unfairly target small businesses. Furthermore, automation is deeply unpopular among Japanese people: 58

²⁴⁰ Roberts, "Semantics of Immigration," 96.

²⁴¹ Justin McCurry, "Japan Had 20,000 Applications for Asylum in 2017. It Accepted 20." *The Guardian*, February 16, 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/feb/16/japan-asylum-applications-2017-accepted-20>

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Roberts, "Semantics of Immigration," 93.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 99.

²⁴⁵ "Japan Is Both Obsessed with and Resistant to Robots." *The Economist*, November 8, 2018,

<https://www.economist.com/asia/2018/11/08/japan-is-both-obsessed-with-and-resistant-to-robots>.

²⁴⁶ Todd Schneider, Gee Hee Hong, and Anh Van Le, "Land of the Rising Robots," *Finance & Development* 55, no. 2 (June 2018): 28-31, International Monetary Fund,

<https://www.imf.org/en/News/Podcasts/All-Podcasts/2018/09/27/Japan-Robots>

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

percent of adults do not think that automation will boost the economy, while 83 percent fear worsening inequality as a result of automation.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁸ Nidhi Singh, "How Japanese Look At the Rising Trend of Automation," *Entrepreneur*, November 13, 2018,

<https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/323216>.

Questions to Consider

1. *What are the causes of Japan's low birth rate?*

Understanding the basis of Japan's demographic crisis will be essential in crafting government policies to stimulate the birth rate.

2. *How can Japan reform its welfare and health systems?*

Thanks to Japan's aging population, its welfare and healthcare systems will be stretched to their limits. Without significant changes to government policy, Japan will be unable to cope with its aging population.

3. *What are the flaws in Japan's current immigration policy?*

Immigration reform is a significant roadblock in crafting a multifaceted response to the demographic crisis. And when reforming immigration policy, Japan needs to balance the needs of the native population with those of migrants.

4. *What role does automation play in the future of Japan's economy?*

Automation has the potential to shoulder many of the difficulties that labor shortages pose. But the committee will also have to consider automation's limits, as well as its benefits.

5. *What labor reforms can be made to make having a family easier?*

While cheap labor lowers production costs of goods and services, it certainly carries external costs. Japan must balance competitiveness in the global market with social and human tolls.

Concluding Remarks

Japan's demographic crisis will not be an easy one to solve. With each passing year, Japan's population shrinks and ages a bit more, all despite the Abe administration's best efforts to tackle the problem.

And Japan is not alone. Japan's demographic problems can be seen all around the world, from Europe to China. As such, Japan serves as a test case for the entire world, leaving Shinzo Abe and his cabinet with a great responsibility to shoulder. Can they reverse Japan's demographic decline? And if not, how can it manage the decline such that Japan remains prosperous for decades to come?

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