Japan and International Organizations

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Abstract and Keywords

Japan's emergence as a great power and economic powerhouse coincided with the rise of international organizations in global politics. International organizations now facilitate cooperation in essentially all arenas of international relations. This article surveys major academic debates about Japan and international organizations across three time periods: from the Meiji Restoration until World War II; the postwar liberal international order; and the recent era of contestation. Japan has played a variety of roles—as creator, reformer, and disruptor of international organizations. After World War II, Japan contributed actively to the liberal international order as a key democratic ally of the United States. Recent shifts in the international system and Japanese domestic politics are reconfiguring Japan's policy toward international organizations, opening exciting avenues for future research.

Keywords: Japan, international organizations, institution, regime, cooperation, foreign policy, renegotiation, diplomacy, regionalism, United Nations

Scholars generally recognize the Central Commission for Navigation on the Rhine, founded in 1815, as the first instance of a modern international organization (Pevehouse, Nordstrom, and Warnke 2004). Although early international organizations were limited in both membership and scope, the founding of universalistic institutions—such as the Universal Postal Union in 1874 and the League of Nations in 1920—represented significant efforts by states to alter the conduct of international relations through institutionalized cooperation. After the end of World War II in 1945, the number, scope, and authority of international organizations exploded. International organizations—such as the United Nations (UN), International Monetary Fund (IMF), and World Trade Organization (WTO)—have come to occupy a major role in essentially all policy areas of international relations.

It is in this context of a fundamental transformation of international relations that we must understand Japan's engagement with international organizations. Japan's emergence as a great power and economic powerhouse coincided with the rise of international organizations in global politics. When the League of Nations was established with great fanfare in 1920, it also marked a milestone for Japan, with a permanent seat on the

League Council enshrining the country's great power status. However, Japan delivered a catastrophic blow to the League, and ultimately itself, when it abandoned the institution in 1933 over its prerogatives in Manchuria. The postwar Japanese economic miracle was fueled by institutions like the World Bank and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). Yet Japanese policymakers grew frustrated by their underrepresentation in major international organizations, most notably the UN Security Council and IMF.

Japan's engagement with international organizations is deeply intertwined with the country's democratic institutions. Since World War II, Japan has been a major actor in the complex web of international organizations that constitute a core pillar of the liberal international order (Funabashi and Ikenberry 2020). The order is supported by a core group of like-minded democratic states. In recent years, Japanese foreign policy has increasingly adopted the language of liberal internationalism as illustrated by the Free and Open Indo-Pacific vision. Furthermore, international organizations have strengthened Japan's democratic institutions both indirectly, by facilitating economic growth and the development of a robust middle class, and directly, by making government more responsive to the voices of disadvantaged members of society.

This essay will proceed as follows: The first section briefly covers theoretical perspectives on international cooperation and embeds Japan within this broader literature. We then proceed chronologically to survey major academic debates about Japan's engagement with international organizations across three main time periods: from the Meiji Restoration until World War II, the postwar liberal international order, and the most recent period of contestation over the future of the order. Finally, the essay will close with a conclusion and suggestions for future researchers.

Theoretical Perspectives on International Organizations

Why do international organizations exist? Robert Keohane laid out the basic function of international institutions as facilitating international cooperation by providing a basic legal framework, reducing information asymmetries, and reducing transaction costs (Keohane 1984). In turn, formal international organizations, which are defined by the presence of a concrete organizational structure and administrative staff, are effective in solving problems that require a degree of centralization and independence (Abbott and Snidal 1998). This article will devote attention primarily to formal international organizations, though we will discuss how cooperation through less formalized institutions is also an important and interrelated feature of Japanese foreign policymaking (Pekkanen 2016).

International organizations composed of sovereign states encourage their members to share information, constitute common rules, interact freely and repeatedly, and revise agreements when the rules are to be reviewed. International organizations, in other words, provide benefits for the governments of sovereign states by providing a mechanism to peacefully resolve conflicts and problems. Moreover, international organizations

are embedded within a broader international order (Ikenberry 2010) and allow countries to manage power transitions through renegotiation diplomacy rather than violence (Lipscy 2017; Zangl et al. 2016).

Scholars have explored various features of international organizations, such as the various ways they are designed (Koremenos, Lipson, and Snidal 2001; Rosendorff and Milner 2001) and how they interact with and orchestrate cooperation among other actors (Abbott et al. 2015; Abbott, Green, and Keohane 2016). In recent years, an influential literature on regime complexity has explored the complex interaction among international organizations that occupy the same issue area (Alter and Meunier 2009; Alter and Raustiala 2018; Davis 2009; Henning 2017; Keohane and Victor 2011; Lipscy 2015a; Morse and Keohane 2014; Pratt, 2018; Raustiala and Victor 2004). This has also given rise to scholarship on entry and exit into international organizations (Davis 2019; von Borzyskowski and Vabulas 2019).

The study of Japan's engagement with international organizations is not limited to literature that specifically examines Japanese diplomacy or international relations. Japan has been a major international actor during a period in which scholarly attention increasingly turned toward the study of international organizations. Japan's economy is among the largest in the world, and it has played an important role in major international organizations for over a century. Studies of Japan have therefore featured prominently in general, theoretical and empirical work that seeks to understand the politics of international organizations.

This is exemplified by the work of Christina Davis, who frequently uses Japan as an important source of empirical evidence in examining the politics of cooperation and dispute adjudication in the WTO (Davis 2003, 2012; Davis and Shirato 2007) and other economic organizations (Davis 2019). Similarly, Megumi Naoi has empirically examined various aspects of Japanese trade policymaking, including its policies toward the GATT/WTO and Trans-Pacific Partnership, to shed light on broader questions about the political economy of trade (Naoi 2009, 2015; Naoi and Urata 2013. Phillip Lipscy has used Japan's bargaining over organizations like the IMF and World Bank to examine broader theories about institutional renegotiation (Lipscy 2015a, 2017, 2020a). There is considerable work in a similar vein that examines Japan's interaction with international institutions to advance the broader international relations literature (Goddard 2018; Lim and Vreeland 2013; Pekkanen, Solís, and Katada 2007; Solingen 2008).

Work on Japan's engagement with international organizations is often not about Japanese policymaking per se, but about leveraging various aspects of Japanese politics and international relations to contribute empirical evidence to broader theoretical debates in the study of international relations. This will also be evident in the following sections. Although we organize the literature chronologically for expositional convenience, clear themes emerge from each time period that speak to general theories of international cooperation and contestation.

Imperial Japan and International Organizations: Adaptation, Transformation, and Exit

Why do international organizations matter for Japan? How has Japan viewed and approached international organizations? Reviewing the history of Japan's relations with international organizations requires us to focus on the fact that Japan encountered the Western international order as an outsider and newcomer. In addition, Japan was forced to adapt to the existing order twice, first in the Meiji era in the late 19th century, and then again in the mid-twentieth century after its defeat in World War II.

In the late nineteenth century, Japan encountered an international order that was regulated by European ideas and norms. Existing members of the international order did not regard Japan as an equal member of the order and imposed unequal treaties on the country. Japan in the Meiji era thus mostly attempted to gain regular membership in the order by adapting to European norms. Japan's efforts to improve its status achieved a measure of success when Japan successfully revised the unequal treaties, although Japan's original aim was more modest, namely to regain administrative control over foreign residents and travelers (Iokibe 2010). After World War I, Japan gained the status of a permanent member of the Council of the League of Nations. Imperial Japan thus adapted to the existing international order and received recognition as a great power in the most prominent international organization of the era.

Japan, however, did not just adopt and follow existing rules. Once assured of its great power status, Japan sought to transform international organizations to fit its interests and identity. Japan's proposal of a racial equality clause during the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 was a notable effort to reform the existing order. In the early 1930s, when the Great Depression and emerging fascism eroded the prestige of status-quo powers, Japan, amid the fall of its nascent democracy, more directly challenged the existing order by invading Manchuria. Despite international condemnation, Japan recognized the independence of Manchukuo, a puppet state.

The Manchurian incident ultimately triggered Japan's exit from the League of Nations, but this was not Japan's original intention. In the process of the Leagues' arbitration of the dispute, Japan sought recognition of Manchukuo's sovereignty, but China refused. The negotiation and arbitration faced a deadlock, but Great Britain committed to finding a way to prevent Japan's departure. Japan's delegation did the same. Japan was effectively negotiating for a great power veto over areas that fell under its core national interests, citing the Suez Canal as a territory with similar value to the United Kingdom (Lipscy 2017).

However, the deterioration of the security situation in Rehe Province drastically altered Japan's position in the League. Japan's imperial army sought to take action in Rehe for the stability of Manchukuo, but in the process of arbitration, the League prohibited its members from engaging in military operations; the violation of the rule would trigger economic sanctions by the League's member states. Because Japanese policymakers

viewed the operation in Rehe as critical, departure came to be seen as the only way to avoid sanctions. Japan finally withdrew from the League of Nations on March 27, 1933 (Hatano 2019; Inoue 1994).

There is considerable theoretical debate about Japan's departure from the League during this period. Goddard (2018) argues that Japan was outside of crucial international networks during this period, making it difficult to secure its aims without seeking to overturn the international order. Lipscy (2017) argues that there were important design deficiencies in the rules of the League of Nations that disadvantaged powerful states—such as the absence of a great power veto, unanimity rules, and the co-equal status of the council and assembly—that compelled Japan to leave. These institutional features were removed from the United Nations, allowing major powers like the US and USSR to remain members despite conflicts that implicated their core national interests.

Japan's exit from the League is remembered as a great diplomatic folly. Nevertheless, exit did not mean total disengagement from the international order, as Japan maintained its relations with other powers and continued to participate in other institutions. Foreign Minister Yasuya Uchida, who initiated Japan's exit, accepted a US invitation to the London Economic Conference in 1933. Japan also chose to remain within the arms-control regime. Subsequently, Foreign Minister Koki Hirota sought to improve relations with the US, Great Britain, China, and the Soviet Union. His diplomacy was called *wakyo gaiko*, "concert diplomacy" (Hatano 2019; Kitaoka 2011). Japan also retained its commitment to the League of Nations Health Organization even after its exit from the League (Yasuda 2014). Thus, withdrawal from the League of Nations, though consequential and ultimately catastrophic for Japan, did not equate to exit from the international order itself.

Postwar Japan in the American-Led Liberal International Order

Imperial Japan collapsed with a devastating defeat in World War II. In 1952, Japan, which regained its independence from the US Occupation, was forced to adapt once again to a new, drastically altered international order. The US-Soviet Cold War rivalry divided postwar international society. As a US ally, Japan embraced the US-led order while seeking to renegotiate terms it saw as inequitable to suit its own interests and identity (Tamaki 2020a, 2020b).

Japan in the Liberal International Order

The liberal international order is "a distinctive type of order, organised around open markets, multilateral institutions, cooperative security, alliance partnership, democratic solidarity and United States hegemonic leadership" (Ikenberry 2010). The order emerged after World War II as the United States sought to unite democratic nations around free-market principles and against Communism. Within the order, major democratic nations united as allies, achieved economic prosperity through free trade, and coordinated their ac-

tions in international organizations. Japan's participation in the order has been buttressed by its democratic institutions, participation in the global free trade regime, and membership in international organizations. However, Japan's status as an enemy state during World War II meant its standing within the order was subject to frequent contestation.

In the 1950s and the 1960s, Japan struggled to join the GATT and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (Goldstein, Rivers, and Tomz 2007). Japan sought to gain GATT membership to receive most-favored-nation (MFN) status from Western nations, which was critical for Japan to increase its exports and recover from the wartime devastation. However, European nations, wary of competition from cheap Japanese goods, invoked Article 35 of the GATT to exclude Japan from the free trade system; the article allowed GATT members to refuse MFN status to a new member state (Akaneya 1992; Tadokoro 1993). Japan also attempted to join the OECD, an international organization primarily composed of advanced industrialized countries, seeing membership as a symbolic milestone to mark Japan's restoration within the international order. However, Japan again faced European resistance.

US support for Japan's membership in major international organizations reflected a calculus based on security interests (Davis 2019). Japan increased its commitment to the liberal order to overcome skepticism about its membership. In the early 1960s, Prime Minister Hayato Ikeda's government improved Japan's relationship with the US by framing Japan as the third pillar of the free world to counter Communism, along with the US and Western Europe. Ikeda then successfully persuaded European nations to revoke their opposition to Japan's full participation in the GATT and OECD (Suzuki 2013).

In the 1970s, Japan further enhanced its contribution and commitment to the liberal order, especially in the economic domain. Japan facilitated the establishment of the International Energy Agency in the face of the oil crises and participated in the management of global economic issues at the G7 summit (Kojo 1995; Oyane 2016; Shiratori 2015). Membership and integration into the liberal order gave Japan important tools to pursue its economic interests. The GATT/WTO allowed Japan to benefit from expanding free trade while protecting its domestic interests through adjudication mechanisms (Davis 2003, 2012; Davis and Shirato 2007). Japan's use of "aggressive legalism" to pursue its economic interests has subsequently expanded beyond its origins in the WTO (Pekkanen 2008).

International organizations have also played an important role in strengthening Japanese democratic institutions by expanding rights and promoting inclusiveness. Minority groups like the Ainu, Burakumin, and Koreans have been empowered by the international human rights regime to secure greater influence within the Japanese political system (Tsutsui 2018). International law has also been an important source of empowerment for Japanese civil society on women's issues (Simmons 2009). However, the impact of international organizations has been more limited in areas such as refugee protection, where NGO influence on Japanese policymaking has been constrained (Flowers 2008). Furthermore,

Japanese policymakers have sometimes cynically taken advantage of international institutions and norms to deal with extraneous domestic priorities (Leheny 2006).

Renegotiation Diplomacy

As Japan sought to achieve acceptance within the liberal international order, it also faced an important challenge: institutional renegotiation. An important feature of Japan's engagement with international organizations is its status as a latecomer. In both the period before and after World War II, Japan started as a weak country and experienced rapid economic growth, closing the gap with established powers in the international system. Japan's rise and its attempts to shape the international order have thus featured prominently in studies of institutional renegotiation, or how countries seek to alter the status quo in existing international organizations and regime complexes.

Japan's rapid postwar growth, combined with cumbersome institutional procedures for changing the terms of cooperation, meant that the country found itself underrepresented in many major international organizations established after World War II (Ogata 1983; Lipscy 2008). Rather than passively accepting all features of the order, Japan has at times sought to modify and reform the US-led order to suit its interests and values (Tamaki 2020a). Japan has thus been a central player in contestation over international organizations and renegotiation diplomacy (Ikenberry and Lim 2017; Lipscy 2015; Morse and Keohane 2014; Zangl et al. 2016).

Japan's renegotiation diplomacy has achieved mixed success. In policy areas where Japan has credible outside options, such as development aid and regional cooperation, it has been able to leverage the threat of resource reallocation to secure greater influence and formal voting power. However, progress has been slow or minimal in issue areas where such outside options are less credible, such as balance of payments lending and collective legitimization. Hence, Japan has achieved greater success in renegotiating the terms of cooperation in institutions like the World Bank compared to the IMF or the United Nations Security Council (Lipscy 2017).

A major arena for Japan's renegotiation diplomacy has been the United Nations (UN). The absence of a permanent seat for Japan on the UN Security Council has been seen as deeply symbolic of Japan's exclusion from the highest echelons of the postwar order. Japan's quest for improving its status also focuses on modification of UN institutions that stigmatize and discriminate against Japan, such as the so-called "enemy State" clauses of the Charter. Japan has sought reform by arguing that these features are anachronistic, leveraging its financial contributions, and portraying itself as a bridge between the East and West (*tozai no kakehashi*). In addition, the cultural, economic, and social activities of the UN have provided opportunities for Japan to promote its foreign policy interests and elevate its international status.

Japan, viewing the US-led liberal order as essential for its security and prosperity, has sought modifications to the UN while also supporting its basic foundational principles. Therefore, Japan has not joined developing nations in Asia and Africa that have sought

radical revision of the UN system. Developing nations have thus often regarded Japan as a status-quo power that opposes their reform proposals, whereas Western powers tend to see Japan's efforts as a challenge to their institutional privileges. Japan's attempts to navigate these competing and often contradictory interests in the UN have thus far failed to yield meaningful reforms in its favor (Pan 2013).

Underrepresentation in the IMF has also been a major source of frustration for Japanese foreign policymakers and a focus of diplomatic efforts over the years (Ogata 1989; Rapkin, Elston, and Strand 1997; Rapkin and Strand 1997). Japan initiated a major diplomatic campaign for greater representation in the institution in the 1980s, but these efforts were repeatedly frustrated. Japan's formal voting power came into line with its global GDP share largely because of its stagnant economy, not because of successful diplomatic efforts. In addition, Japan appears to exercise very limited informal influence over the IMF's lending activities compared to the United States and major European countries (Lipscy 2017).

Regionalism

Another pillar of Japan's policy toward international organizations has been regionalism. The development of regional institutions alongside global institutions has allowed Japan to further its interests in East and Southeast Asia, with a primary focus on the economic sphere. In addition, cooperation through regional institutions has allowed Japan to strengthen its bargaining leverage and status in global institutions.

From the 1970s to the 1990s, Japan's initiatives in Asia reflected confidence based on postwar Japan's rapid economic growth (Kahler and Frankel 1992). Many Japanese policymakers saw Japan's government-led economic model as a good fit for the rest of the region. US aid policy, through promoting democracy, liberalism, and human rights, tends to intervene in the recipient states' values, societies, and political systems. On the other hand, Japan has been cautious about intervening in the recipients' domestic affairs and has typically sought mutual agreement and consensus. Japanese policymakers saw their own development model as best suited for Asian nations and believed economic success would foster peace and stability. Japan thus played an important role in shaping Asian regionalism and the various regional institutions that emerged to facilitate cooperation (Anderson 1993; Fujiwara 2013; Hatano and Sato 2004; Ikenberry and Inoguchi 2007; Kono 1997; Krauss and Pempel 2004; Miyagi 2017; Park, Pempel, and Kim 2011; Solingen 2005; Tamaki 2020a; Wakatsuki 2006; Ye and Calder 2010).

Japanese foreign policy has had an important impact on the institutionalization of Asian international relations. Japan played a lead role in the 1966 establishment of the Asian Development Bank, an institution that it continues to dominate informally (Lim and Vreeland 2013; Wan 1995; Yasumoto 1983). From the 1970s, Japan supported regional economic development through economic assistance. Southeast Asian nations, as a result of US retreat after the Vietnam War, sought to establish their own international organizations centered on the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Japan supported

regionalism through the establishment of Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) in 1989. Japan, along with Australia and ASEAN nations, took the initiative to promote regional institutionalization (Funabashi 1995; Lee 2015; Tanaka 2017). Japan has played a central role in promoting institutionalization in East Asia, a region that is increasingly becoming a hub of global economic relations (Pekkanen 2016).

Japanese regionalism in Asia led to some tension with the US over international organizations. The US welcomed Japan's complementary role but became alarmed by the possibility of Japan's resurgence as an autonomous great power, which could undermine US leadership (Tamaki 2009, 2018). In the early 1990s, Japan attempted to legitimate its government-led development model in the World Bank, which resulted in tension with the neoclassical orthodoxy promoted by the US. Moreover, in the face of the Asian financial crisis in 1997 and 1998, Japan regarded US-led financial liberalization as a major cause of the crisis and attempted to establish an Asian Monetary Fund (AMF) (Iida 2013; Lipscy 2003). However, Japan's AMF initiative failed due to harsh opposition from the US and Chinese ambivalence (Hiwatari 2003; Oshiba 2016; Sakakibara 2000). Subsequent to the Asian Crisis, Japan took a lead role in establishing the Chiang Mai Initiative, which started as a bilateral swap network but gradually became institutionalized and formalized as the Chiang Mai Initiative Multilateralization (Ciorciari 2011; Grimes 2011).

Having said that, Japan's diplomacy also shows remarkable consistency in the idea that the US-led liberal order has been the foundation of regional peace and prosperity. After the end of the Cold War, Japan's commitment to international organizations strengthened beyond the economic realm; Japan's participation in multilateral security dialogues, such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), and its engagement with global climate issues illustrate the country's expanded activity in the international order (Tiberghien and Schreurs 2007; Yuzawa 2007). Japan also responded to international pressures by stepping up contributions to UN peacekeeping operations. However, constitutional restrictions on the use of force have often limited the efficacy of Japanese forces stationed abroad (Dobson 2003, Ishizuka 2004). Japan's struggle to achieve meaningful greenhouse gas reductions has also raised questions about its ability to exert leadership in climate change cooperation (Aldrich, Lipscy, and McCarthy 2019; Incerti and Lipscy 2018, 2020).

From the 1990s to the mid-2000s, Japan primarily focused on trust-building in multilateral forums or in nontraditional security issues (UN peacekeeping operations, terrorism, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, environmental security, etc.), rather than traditional military/national security (Tamaki 2020a). As evident in the Junichiro Koizumi government's attempts in the 2000s, Japan pursued a permanent UN Security Council seat even after the Cold War (Kitaoka 2007; Murakami 2016; Soeya 2016). Nevertheless, unlike the incumbent permanent members of the UN Security Council, Japan maintained limited involvement in military conflicts.

Japan’s Evolving Approach to International Organizations

The end of the Cold War raised important questions about Japan’s role in the world order. Scholars in the realist tradition saw a dark future, predicting a return to traditional great power politics with the breakdown of Cold War bipolarity. As the second-largest economy in the world, Japan was seen as a natural challenger to the United States, leading to predictions of greater friction and military competition (Waltz 1993). These predictions turned out to be wildly off the mark: Japan remained firmly allied to the United States and maintained low military spending. During the Trump administration, Japan increasingly emerged as a defender of core principals of the liberal order even as the US turned inward (Funabashi and Ikenberry 2020; Hikotani 2017; Katada 2020; Solís 2020).

However, in other ways, Japan’s contributions to the liberal international order proved disappointing. After the Cold War, Japan faced increasing calls to step up its contributions to the maintenance of the order to reflect its perceived status as an economic superpower (Dore 1997; Hunsberger and Finn 1997; Lincoln 1993). Although Japan responded to these pressures by increasing foreign aid disbursements and participation in peacekeeping operations, these contributions began to wither as budgetary pressures and rising regional security threats led to a shift in focus away from global problems toward domestic and regional challenges.

Assertive Renegotiation

Furthermore, in recent years there have been some signs that Japanese foreign policymakers have become more willing to engage in assertive renegotiation, threatening withdrawal from international organizations that do not conform to their interests. In 2015, Japanese policymakers sharply criticized UNESCO for including documents about the Nanking Massacre in its “Memory of the World” list. The Abe government threatened to withdraw funding from UNESCO and contemplated withdrawing from the organization entirely if documents related to comfort women were also accepted. These pressure tactics ultimately resulted in an outcome favorable to Japan and a blocking of comfort women documents (Lipscy 2020b).

Japan’s exit from the International Whaling Commission (IWC), which was declared in 2018 and enacted in June 2019, is another example of such assertive renegotiation. Japan’s traditional custom of whaling and eating whale meat has been criticized by Western activists and governments (Morita 1994; Takahashi 2018). The Japanese government has long sought compromise with anti-whaling nations through negotiations within the IWC. Japanese foreign aid was also used as a point of leverage to secure votes from IWC members (Strand and Tuman 2012). However, anti-whaling nations have favored a total whaling ban.

From the Japanese viewpoint, the ideological position of anti-whaling nations suggested that they had no intention of finding common ground with Japan (Catalinac and Chan 2005). It became increasingly clear that the IWC would never accept Japanese preferences to continue whaling in some manner. The primary reason for Japan to remain a member of the IWC was thus to maintain good relations with anti-whaling states and Japan's reputation as a supporter of institutionalized cooperation.

Reportedly, before deciding to leave the IWC, the Japanese government carefully estimated the impact of the exit on Japan's economic and security relations with the US, European nations, and especially the most active anti-whaling nation, Australia. In the context of US president Donald Trump's repeated withdrawals from major international organizations, Japanese policymakers calculated that a Japanese IWC exit would not trigger as much international attention or condemnation as it might have during previous years. Although some reports sharply criticized Japan's exit from the IWC as similar to Imperial Japan's exit from the League of Nations (*Asahi Shimbun* 2018), Japan ultimately faced few negative consequences for its withdrawal.

Japan's policy toward UNESCO and the IWC reflect a greater willingness by Japanese policymakers to engage in assertive renegotiation more often seen by countries like the United States and Russia. A Japanese foreign ministry official attributes this to a "psychological change" in Japanese foreign policymaking stemming from fading memories of World War II and a sense that quiet diplomacy has not always been effective (Lipscy 2020b). Furthermore, the aggressive rhetoric and actions toward international organizations by President Trump supplied political cover to Japanese policymakers to pursue their interests without attracting a great deal of international attention or criticism.

However, we should be cautious about extrapolating too much from Japan's recent policies toward international organizations. Unlike the League of Nations, the IWC and UNESCO are relatively peripheral organizations. Moreover, Japan withdrew from the IWC while strengthening its commitment to defending the existing liberal order in other areas, like the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). Japan's policies toward these organizations have not noticeably hampered the country's foreign policymaking in other areas. Japan also has a long history of using financial contributions as a bargaining chip in renegotiating international institutions (Lipscy 2017). In this sense, assertive renegotiation may represent an escalation in tone and tactics, but it is broadly consistent with postwar Japan's diplomatic tradition to confirm its status within the liberal order even as it tries to modify a part of the order to reflect its own interests and identity (Tamaki 2020a).

Institutionalization of Security Relations

In recent years, Japan's approach to international organizations has been increasingly influenced by its national security concerns. The transition was accelerated by Sino-Japanese tensions, which intensified at the end of the 2000s and became most evident during the Senkaku crises in 2010 and 2012. In the early 2010s, China also clarified its attempts to create China-led international organizations (such as the Asian Infrastructure Invest-

ment Bank [AIIB] and Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership [RCEP]) and promoted the One Belt One Road Initiative OBOR), also known as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). These Chinese moves alarmed Japan and raised questions about the robustness of the US-led order as a mechanism to guarantee Japanese security.

The governments of the Democratic Party of Japan and Shinzō Abe moved to institutionalize security relations with Australia, India, Southeast Asian nations, Great Britain, and France. These efforts mainly consisted of regular bilateral dialogues, but also involved a multilateral security forum to check Chinese expansion. Japan's concerns about China have also influenced Japan's policies regarding ASEAN-related organizations and the governance of cyberspace. When it comes to economic organizations, Japan's enthusiastic pursuit of the TPP provides a typical example of the security-economic nexus in Japan's approach to international organizations; Japan intended (but failed) to tie the US with Asian rule-making to compete against China (Jimbo 2018; Oba 2019; Sahashi 2017).

Although Japan still relies primarily on the bilateral US-Japan security alliance to guarantee its security, multilateralism has emerged as an increasingly important feature of its international security policymaking (Midford 2017; Vosse and Midford 2018). This is exemplified by the Free and Open Indo-Pacific vision. Japan's emerging security concerns have led Japan to actively shape the regional order in Asia, providing important insights for the broader political dynamics of institutional contestation and cooperation in the midst of power transitions (Dian 2020; Koga 2020; Satake and Sahashi 2020; Tamaki 2020a).

However, Japan has also sought to hedge to some degree by improving its relations with China. Japan has increasingly engaged with initiatives emphasized by China, such as RCEP and BRI. Japan's engagements with China are aimed at part in stabilizing the security situation with China, as well as ultimately moderating China's policies. As China challenges the US-led liberal order, Japan's approach to international organizations has become increasingly intertwined with its security policies. Amid questions about the US-led order, Japanese officials and experts have increasingly sought to pursue proactive measures to buttress its national security beyond dependence on the US-Japan alliance (Tamaki 2020a).

Conclusion

This is a fascinating time for scholars of Japan and international organizations. After the end of World War II, Japan's engagement with international organizations was stable and predictable, largely shaped by the country's position within the US-led liberal international order. As a key democratic ally of the United States, Japan largely acted as a reformist status quo power, supporting and upholding the order while pursuing incremental changes to improve its status from a position of initial weakness (Lipscy 2020b; Tamaki 2020a).

However, recent developments have introduced considerable uncertainty about Japanese policy toward international organizations. The liberal order is under challenge from all sides, with the rise of powerful autocratic states and turbulence in core Western democracies like the United States and United Kingdom. The Covid-19 pandemic heavily affected leading Western democracies, further eroding the legitimacy and global leadership position of these states. Japan's engagement with international organizations is thus closely intertwined with the future of global democracy and what role Japan wishes to play as the order evolves in response to these major challenges.

Japan has stepped in to support the order in crucial areas, resuscitating the TPP after US withdrawal and promoting quality infrastructure investments as an alternative to China's BRI. However, Japanese policymakers have also become more assertive and willing to threaten exit from international organizations that do not suit their interests. This new assertiveness could provide leverage to facilitate constructive reforms. However, if Japan focuses its attention on narrow, nationalistic prerogatives, it will likely accelerate the weakening of the order and allow autocratic states to assert greater influence.

Which direction will Japanese policymakers choose? The outcome is not predetermined, and Japanese leaders face a real choice in how they approach international organizations. States tend to leave international organizations when their preferences diverge from existing members and when other countries also leave (von Borzyskowski and Vabulas 2019). This means Japan can actively help sustain the order by working to forge consensus among member states, refraining from exit itself, and helping to address grievances of dissatisfied states. The main impediment to Japan playing such a constructive role may be the evolution of Japanese domestic politics, which has increasingly shifted foreign policymaking authority from bureaucrats to politicians sensitive to popular sentiment and nationalistic impulses (Catalinac 2016; Lipscy 2020a).

Compared to other areas of research in Japanese politics, such as elections or security studies, Japan's policies toward international organizations remain relatively understudied. There are several reasons for this lack of attention. First, there is a nontrivial divide in the way the topic is studied by scholars based in Japan and those based in Western academic institutions. Much of the Japanese literature focuses on diplomatic history, while the Western literature often studies Japan's engagement with international organizations from a broader, theoretical perspective. There is room for greater, collaborative research that draws on the strengths of both approaches.

Second, there is a misguided perception that Japan's policy toward international organizations is less substantively important than other topics. It may be true that Japan's participation in international organizations has less immediate implications for Japan's national survival than the US-Japan alliance. However, the centrality of international organizations in the liberal international order, as well as intensifying institutionalized contestation, make this a critical topic for scholars to study and evaluate.

Third, it is sometimes difficult to study Japan's policy toward international organizations due to practical constraints, such as lack of data or other forms of information. Easily quantified measures, such as voting shares or personnel representation, may not necessarily be the most important dimensions of Japan's engagement with international organizations. There is ample room for the incorporation of methods unavailable to previous generations of scholars, such as text analysis and various strategies of causal inference, to study Japan's diplomacy toward international organizations.

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