

# Japan and the dangers of multipolarisation

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How does Japan understand its place in the international order? And how do its policymakers then respond to challenges presented by that order to the country's national interests? Japan has an established discourse on *international order* (*kokusai chitsujo*), as well as a literature which focuses on questions of *multipolarisation* (*takyokuka*). This encompasses both scholarly research in International Relations (IR) and more policy-oriented analysis.<sup>1</sup> An important characteristic of the Japanese understandings of order and polarity, therefore, is the particular manner in which crossover between the scholarly and practitioner realms occurs and how this, in turn, shapes the interplay between the explanatory and normative dimensions of Japan's approach to international order.

Indeed, Japan has a strong tradition of seeking to understand the trajectory of the 'objective' international order. It is a tradition that might be described as 'foreign policy' rather than 'IR', and one centred on two broad questions. First, what does the changing international order mean for Japan? And second, how should Japan respond? With one very major exception – the tragedy of the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperty Sphere – Japan has not historically sought to establish itself as a pole in its own right. Rather, it has focused on finding ways to adapt to, maintain autonomy in, and gain prestige from the given international order. Thus, the explanatory and normative sides of the Japanese discourse have been closely intertwined, with one informing the other.

The interplay between these dimensions is evident in Japanese strategic thinking since the early Cold War. Japan's answers to these normative questions remained consistent throughout the Cold War and into the 1990s – a preference for an American-led order, whether based around a bipolar, unipolar, or multipolar structure. Bipolarity from the 1950s, US primacy within a more multipolar structure in Asia from the 1970s, and unipolarity from the 1990s: all these reinforced Japan's preference for US power in the

Asia-Pacific even as these conditions created incentives for Japan to push the regional order in different directions. At the same time, the explanatory side of Japan's discourse has continued to inform Japan's strategic thinking. Both scholars and practitioners perceive the regional order as moving towards multipolarity, with associated dangers for Japan. Such assessments tend to focus on Japan's shrinking role, China's rise (as a threatening new pole), and the possibility of American decline. Normatively, Japan's response has been to buttress American unipolarity, as illustrated by Japan's strong support for US President Barack Obama's 'pivot' to Asia. Japan's aim, in this respect, has been to shape the form of multipolarity that might emerge and so minimise the potential dangers.

This chapter considers these issues in four stages. First, it outlines the development of Japan's thinking about international order. This encompasses both the scholarly as well as the practitioner community. Second, it then explains the manner in which Japan has addressed order issues in the Asia-Pacific through the Cold War. Third, it looks at how Japan is engaging with the current shift in regional order brought about by the rise of China and (relative) American decline. In concluding, it considers the likely implications of Donald J. Trump's term as US president on how Japan approaches international order and manages the dangers of multipolarity.

### Japan's IR traditions

Japan's preference in terms of IR scholarship in the post-war period has been for policy-oriented and Japan-focused normative work. At the same time, however, Japanese scholarship has been heavily influenced by Western academic trends. In describing this Western influence, Kuniyuki Nishimura characterises Japanese IR as 'an imported discipline'.<sup>2</sup> Yet, as Nishimura shows in his study on the interpretation of E. H. Carr's works in Japan, the ways in which ideas are imported and understood are likely to depend heavily on the circumstances and perceptions of those adopting the ideas.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, Japan has developed a set of questions and approaches that, although heavily influenced by Western practice, unsurprisingly reflect Japanese perspectives. To paraphrase Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan, like other states outside the English-language IR tradition, Japanese scholars have been chiefly interested in theories which help them understand Japan's own interests.<sup>4</sup>

Western influence on Japanese IR scholars is reflected in the broad traditions of IR that have emerged in Japan. A key example has been the German-inspired *Staatslehre* (*kokkagaku*, or the study of the state) tradition of political science.<sup>5</sup> This tradition offers a method for studying international developments so far as they 'affect Japan's foreign relations'.<sup>6</sup> Heavily historical

and focused on the role of institutional contexts, it has a strong area-studies flavour, with scholars focusing on Chinese, Thai, or other specific national areas of research.<sup>7</sup> In addition to the *Staatslehre* approach, Takashi Inoguchi also identifies Marxism, historicism, and finally an American approach as key traditions in Japanese IR.<sup>8</sup> Others employ variations on these approaches. Writing in the 1960s, for instance, Tadashi Kawata and Saburō Ninomiya examined Japanese IR in the post-war period in terms of three broad approaches: international political science, international relations, and international political history.<sup>9</sup>

Unsurprisingly in light of the wider Japanese political environment, pacifist ideas played a prominent role in Japanese IR debates during the Cold War. A key debate of the 1960s and 1970s took place between scholars such as Yoshikazu Sakamoto, who argued that Japan should adopt a position of neutrality in the new bipolar international environment, and those such as Masataka Kōsaka, who adopted elements of realism that took account of the region's shifting balance of power.<sup>10</sup> Such separate approaches, as Inoguchi argues, are 'evident in Japan's IR studies even today and ... coexist fairly amicably without many efforts made toward integration'.<sup>11</sup>

Japanese IR, then, has been a relatively segmented discipline – especially from the 1970s onwards – located more in the humanities than the social sciences and concerned with historical as much as contemporary questions.<sup>12</sup> The links to government and foreign policy debates in some of these traditions have meant that normative questions about good policy have been prominent. Indeed, Inoguchi identifies three major research questions that have preoccupied Japanese research since the Second World War. All have a strongly normative focus. They pay attention, in turn, to: Japan's foreign policy leading up to and during the Second World War in terms of what went wrong; the types of international institutions or arrangements required to establish peace and stability in world politics; and Japan's contemporary foreign policy in terms of what is lacking in the country's approach to foreign affairs and why.<sup>13</sup>

### Japanese IR and polarity

On issues of international order and polarity, Japanese scholars have been especially interested in questions relating to multipolarisation. Compared to the European experience, this reflects the more complex nature of polarity in Asia during the Cold War. As Akihiko Tanaka contends, this was largely because of the 'looming presence of China'. Indeed, Tanaka argues that Asia's Cold War experience 'cannot be compressed into a simple bipolar confrontation'.<sup>14</sup>

Writing in the 1970s, Kinhide Mushakōji examined major polarity issues at a key juncture where the Asia-Pacific shifted from a bipolar to a more multipolar order. Making use of the writings of Morton Kaplan and Richard Rosecrance, Mushakōji explored international system transitions from a bipolar order (*sōkyoku taisei* or *nikyoku taisei*) to a multipolar order (*takyoku taisei*) in a process of multipolarisation.<sup>15</sup> Accordingly, he sought to explain the conditions under which such multipolarisation – which he termed ‘multipolarisation within bipolarity’ or ‘bi-multipolarity’ (*sōkyoku nai takyokuka*) – might occur and what form such a process might take.<sup>16</sup> Tōru Yano similarly focused on the changing structure of international systems from bipolarity to multipolarity, looking especially at the operation of a subordinate system, such as a subregion like South East Asia, in response to changes brought about by great powers in the dominant system.<sup>17</sup> In the 1980s, Yoshinobu Yamamoto sought to explore system stability in international politics, by examining the relationships between structural shifts in power and overall system stability (i.e. where wars would not occur). His work considered this relationship across bipolar, unipolar, and multipolar systems.<sup>18</sup>

Early post-Cold War Japanese scholarship aimed to understand the implications of the demise of the Cold War system and the rise of globalisation. Writing in the late 1990s, scholars such as Yūzō Yabuno and Yoshitaka Ikeda assessed how the international system was moving beyond the traditional nation-state level of analysis, to include new global actors such as non-governmental organisations, coalitions, and multilateral institutions. Yabuno termed this new structure a ‘global’ rather than ‘international’ system. Ikeda, likewise, highlighted how the system was being challenged both from above and below. In his view, two simultaneous trends were occurring in global politics – fragmentation and integration – pointing to the need for a clearer two-layered model of IR.<sup>19</sup> Likewise, Seiji Endō considered the potential effects of increasing globalisation on world order (*sekai chitsujo*), as distinct from the international Westphalian order, and the potential for tensions to emerge between these two elements of world politics.<sup>20</sup> In particular, he explored the idea of a post-Westphalian order and how it was necessary for political science to better understand new types of interaction between the state, markets, civil societies, and other actors.

In the post-Cold War period, a significant focus of Japanese IR has been on notions of American primacy and, by implication, the idea of a unipolar order (*tankyoku taisei* or *ikkyoku taisei*). Japanese IR scholars have offered a different perspective on the otherwise US-centric debates around US primacy in global affairs. Inoguchi has examined the notion of ‘regional bipolarity under global unipolarity’. His work follows a logic similar to that of Mushakōji’s bi-multipolarity in placing the emerging Sino-American rivalry

following the Third Taiwan Strait Crisis within the wider context of global US primacy.<sup>21</sup> Looking more specifically at the US, Tatsuya Nishida has examined US policy under the presidency of George W. Bush in terms of how such policies influence US primacy. Nishida's argument is that the maintenance of unipolar order requires the hegemon to both constrain its unilateralism while continuing to provide international public goods.<sup>22</sup>

Contemporary Japanese work on international or world order in the post-Cold War period is influenced, at least in part, by the English School.<sup>23</sup> Hideaki Shinoda has looked into the establishment of international society (*kokusai shakai*) and sought to understand the international order on which it is based. In particular, he has adopted the position that it is possible to know the shape of order set up in international society by understanding the norms and values espoused by that society 'as a whole'.<sup>24</sup> Shinoda follows other Japanese scholars working in this field, such as Hidemi Suganami, who has explored 'domestic analogy' arguments in IR. Such arguments consider the benefits of transferring domestic political order principles to the world order.<sup>25</sup> Other scholars, such as Testuya Sakai, have looked at the evolution of thinking on international orders across pre-war, wartime, and post-war periods in Japan. Sakai highlights the influence of Japan's transition from 'imperial' to international order in terms of its subsequent IR thinking.<sup>26</sup>

Some contemporary Japanese scholars have sought to combine power-balance thinking with the English School's wider conceptualisation of order. Akio Takahara has argued that international order, because of its normative dimension, does not change merely because of an altered power distribution. He cites Japan's brief rise and failed international order as an example of power distributions shifting without leaving a significant impact on international order as a normative concept. Instead, change in international order, Takahara argues, moves from the extent to which rising revisionist powers seek to change the order and promote new values and norms of their own. In Japan, what this means for normative order in East Asia, in light of China's rise, is a key question for both theory and policy.<sup>27</sup>

Indeed, Japanese scholarship has focused on the policy implications of power and order redistributions. According to Inoguchi, Japanese policymakers focus firstly on the likely shifts in power distribution before considering how to address any potentially negative implications for Japan. He thus characterises Japanese policymakers as 'order-takers' rather than 'order-makers'. Japan, he suggests, has sought to 'cope with uncertainty by riding high on the wave of US unipolarity'.<sup>28</sup>

As a result, Japan is unsurprisingly preoccupied with the 'rise of China' (*chūgoku no taitō*) and the associated 'China risk'.<sup>29</sup> Yoshihide Soeya has outlined China's growing territorial assertiveness in the Asia-Pacific region

since the Cold War, especially after the US reduced its regional presence, such as by withdrawing from the Philippines. He notes that China accepted US hegemony in the region under a separate coexistence or ‘same bed, different dreams’ (*dōshōimu*) approach, arguing that the “same bed” is the American-led international order’.<sup>30</sup> Yet he also suggests that, in terms of its long-term outlook, China has not let go of its ‘sense of discomfort and resistance’ to the US-led order.<sup>31</sup>

Japanese scholars such as Tanaka have also considered how China’s rise is influencing the structure of the international system.<sup>32</sup> Making use of power transition analysis, especially by A. F. K. Organski, Tanaka argues that the likelihood of conflict between the US and China is not high and that, accordingly, ‘the chances of a peaceful transition are great’.<sup>33</sup> Nonetheless, even with a peaceful transition, he suggests, it is reasonable to expect that a more Chinese-centred international order is likely to be more advantageous to China and correspondingly disadvantageous to the interests of other countries. Given its historical and territorial differences with China, Japan can easily be imagined as one of these countries. Indeed, Shin Kawashima has argued that Japan has a ‘special place’ (*tokushu na ichi*) in Chinese foreign policy as the sole major power from the G7 in its immediate neighbourhood.<sup>34</sup> Given China’s view of the regional order and its difficult relationship with Japan, bilateral cooperation between the two appears much less realistic.

### Japan’s Cold War: from bipolarity to multipolarity

On the policy front, Japan’s early Cold War approach was clearly reshaped by its changed circumstances following the Second World War. Defeat to the US and subsequent US-led occupation meant that Japan could no longer establish itself as an independent pole in the international system, but instead had to return to its practices of adapting to regional power shifts. Japan’s position in this newly emerging international order was unsurprisingly influenced most by the US. At the same time, however, because the Soviet Union and China sought to contest America’s primacy in the Asia-Pacific after the Second World War, Japan aimed to establish a clear national strategy that ensured some national security in the context of a contested rather than harmonious regional order – that is, Asia’s emerging bipolarity.

The strategy that emerged was influenced most by Japan’s early post-war Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida and thus came to be known as the ‘Yoshida Doctrine’. Operating from a weak position, Yoshida essentially pursued a strategy that would achieve a grand bargain with the US while also finding a domestic political balance between conservatives who supported rearmament

and progressives who argued for unarmed neutrality. Even as scholars continued to debate these positions through the 1960s and 1970s, as noted earlier, the Japanese government had decided clearly where Japan would sit in the new bipolar structure of the Cold War. Consequently, Yoshida accepted US hegemony in return for security guarantee – a formal alliance. The quid pro quo was Japan's acceptance of US military bases on Japanese territory.<sup>35</sup>

By aligning itself so closely with the US in the Cold War order, Japan made the management of its relations with the other poles of the Asia-Pacific – the Soviet Union and China – more difficult. The messy end to Japan's Second World War was particularly apparent in Japan's Cold War relations with the Soviet Union. The Soviets only entered the war against Japan in August 1945 and then occupied Sakhalin, the Kuril Islands, and Japan's Northern Territories (Hoppō Ryōdo) or South Kuril Islands. It also captured around 600,000 Japanese soldiers, whom it sent to prison camps. These decisions caused major damage to subsequent bilateral relations. Not only did the two countries now share an unresolved territorial dispute, but subsequent Soviet conduct contributed, as Kazuhiko Togo explains, to Japan's 'sense of injustice and wounded feelings', absent from many of Japan's other post-war relationships.<sup>36</sup>

Such antagonisms were exacerbated by the emerging bipolarity of the Cold War. When Japan signed the San Francisco Peace Treaty in September 1951, with the Korean War under way in the background, the US would not allow amendments proposed by the Soviet Union. In response, the Soviets refused to sign the treaty, arguing that it was part of a wider preparation on the part of the US for a new conflict in East Asia.<sup>37</sup> This hardening of positions then complicated subsequent attempts by Tokyo to negotiate a separate peace with Moscow. Negotiations took place between 1955 and 1956, but broke down over the issue of how many islands to return. The US and then Japan hardened their positions and, in the end, only a minimal Soviet-Japanese agreement ending their state of war was achieved.<sup>38</sup> Such tensions would impede better Soviet-Japanese relations for the remainder of the Cold War. When Japan began to participate more fully in the US-Japan alliance through the 1970s and 1980s, for instance, it did so in part because of the threat it saw in Soviet missile deployments to Asia.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, the differences between the two sides persisted beyond the collapse of the Soviet Union as a Cold War pole and now complicate Japan's relations with Russia in the emerging multipolar Asia-Pacific.<sup>40</sup>

Japan's relations with China (the People's Republic) were similarly complicated by emerging bipolarity in Asia in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Tokyo's capacity to re-engage Beijing was constrained, in particular, by the American stance on China following the communist victory in the

Chinese Civil War, subsequent Sino-Soviet strategic alignment, and the Korean War. This is not to suggest that Japan did not pursue a more independent stance where possible. In seeking to circumscribe the constraints imposed by the bipolar conditions of the early Cold War, Japan adopted its policy of *seikei bunri* (separating economics and politics), which allowed it to open indirect relations with China on trade. Indeed, the two sides re-established trading relations not long after the end of the Second World War.<sup>41</sup>

Nonetheless, America's decision to recognise Taiwan (the Republic of China) ahead of communist China forced Japan to follow suit. Yoshida had favoured a more open approach to China, by normalising relations with a view to splitting Beijing from Moscow. A similar line was also pushed by Prime Minister Ichirō Hatoyama. Yet American insistence overwhelmed such attempts at independence and, especially after Kishi became prime minister, Japan fell into line on the American side of the new bipolar order.<sup>42</sup>

From the 1970s, the US under the administration of President Richard Nixon began to reorient its own strategic posture towards China. America's sudden shift proved a painful experience for the Japanese government. In July 1971, when Nixon announced that he would visit Beijing the following year, the Japanese government received only a one-hour warning, with Prime Minister Eisaku Satō learning of the news just minutes before it became public. This was despite US Secretary of State William Rogers reassuring Japan that 'close contact would be maintained regarding the China issue'.<sup>43</sup> The 'betrayal', as Mataka Kamiya describes it, meant that some Japanese worried that the US was shifting away from Japan and towards China, and that a new multipolar environment in Asia would disadvantage Japan.<sup>44</sup> Japanese scholarly attention on multipolarisation, noted earlier, corresponded to this shift.

China's subsequent participation in international politics provides some substantial evidence in support of Japan's 'non-strategic' approach. Under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping, China opened up its economy and became a more reliable player in regional affairs. Sino-Japanese economic relations grew substantially over the remainder of the Cold War, with trade growing from around US\$1.1 billion in 1972 to nearly US\$20 billion in 1988.<sup>45</sup> Relations between Japan, China, and the US – and thus the regional order in the Asia-Pacific – became more stable.<sup>46</sup>

Japan's new relationship with China did have its challenges, however. In the lead-up to the signing of the Peace and Friendship Treaty in 1978, armed Chinese fishing vessels entered the waters around the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, administered by Japan but also claimed by China. China's assertiveness at this time was a response to suggestions from conservatives in Japan that the status of the islands should be dealt with as part of the normalisation process. In the end, rather than let the negotiations fail, Deng suggested

that the two sides should concentrate on joint resource development and postpone any negotiations over the islands' sovereignty until another time.<sup>47</sup>

### Japan's post-Cold War globalism and uni-multipolarity

For a brief period at the end of the Cold War, some in Japan – but more accurately, many outside Japan – saw the country as an emerging, or potential, new pole in the international order.<sup>48</sup> In the late 1970s, American scholars such as Ezra Vogel had recognised Japan's increasing economic power and its potential implications for the US.<sup>49</sup> By the late 1980s, Japan's growing economic influence led Vogel to talk of the international trade order 'moving toward a Pax Nipponica'.<sup>50</sup> In Japan, greater economic confidence led to a more robust attitude in some quarters about the post-Cold War order and Japan's likely place in it. In 1989, nationalist politician Shintarō Ishihara, together with the founder of Japanese electronics company Sony, Akio Morita, published '*No' to Ieru Nihon* [The Japan that Can Say 'No']'.<sup>51</sup> Ishihara described Japan as an 'economic and high-tech superpower' and argued that it had the 'power to say no to the United States'.<sup>52</sup> He further contended that the twenty-first century would 'be a tripolar world – the United States, Japan, and Europe'.<sup>53</sup> Given what he saw as the increasing importance of economic capability in underpinning national power, Ishihara viewed China and the Soviet Union as 'losers in economic power'.<sup>54</sup>

In reality, Japan was ill-prepared to deal with the ending of the Cold War and its implications for international polarity. On the one hand, Japan's economy began to struggle just as politicians such as Ishihara were trumpeting its virtues. The collapse of share market and property bubbles across 1990–91 and subsequent 'lost decades' of economic stagnation undermined Japan's position as an economic superpower.<sup>55</sup> This would later be weakened further by China's economic rise. On the other hand, the events of the 1991 Gulf War and the return to pre-eminence of the US led to a new political debate in Japan concerning how the country might better adapt to the new international order based around US primacy.<sup>56</sup>

The Gulf War exposed the limitations of the Yoshida Doctrine for dealing with the challenges of a new post-Cold War order. In what came to be known as Japan's 'Gulf War trauma',<sup>57</sup> the US heavily criticised Japan for being unable to do more than provide 'checkbook diplomacy' in support of the American-led coalition as it pushed Iraq out of Kuwait.<sup>58</sup> Even as Japan was able to contribute US\$14 billion to the war effort, the government led by Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu found itself split over how to respond in terms of offering support beyond the financial. After acrimonious debate, it duly failed to pass the legislation needed to even allow for a relatively

low-key contribution, the dispatch of Japanese minesweepers to the Persian Gulf.

Kaifu's Gulf War failure helped set off a wider debate over Japan's future international role. At its heart, the debate has been concerned with the idea of Japan transforming itself into a 'normal nation' or *futsū no kuni*. Andrew Oros views this debate as one focused on security 'identity' as well as 'practice'; in other words, it has revolved around questions of what might be 'normal' for a country such as Japan in the twenty-first century.<sup>59</sup> As a proposed new security identity, however, the idea of 'normal' in this case assumes that what had gone before – primarily the tenets of the Yoshida Doctrine along with wider concepts of pacifism and anti-militarism – no longer function, and indeed have become 'abnormal' in the context of the post-Cold War international order.<sup>60</sup>

Initially, the debate took on a globalist outlook, with a strong emphasis on what Japan should be doing as a more active contributor to the international community and the United Nations. A major contributor in the early 1990s was the political figure Ichirō Ozawa, then a leading politician in the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). Ozawa contended that Japan had to 'become a "normal nation"', and defined a normal nation in terms of two important features.<sup>61</sup> First, a normal nation was a country that willingly shouldered 'those responsibilities regarded as natural in the international community'. It would not, he added, 'refuse such burdens on account of domestic political difficulties' (i.e. as the Kaifu government had done). Second, a normal nation would 'cooperate fully with other nations in their efforts to build prosperous and stable lives for their people'. Japan would have to 'satisfy these two conditions' if it were to 'go beyond simply creating and distributing domestic wealth and become what the world community recognizes as a "normal nation"'.<sup>62</sup>

Ozawa's characterisation of normal, however, rested on two ideas. First, he assumed that such a thing as 'normal nation' existed in international affairs, even though it is not clear what a typical nation might look like in security affairs. In the early 1990s, at the height of US unipolarity and the 'end of history', Ozawa's idea of 'normal' was most obviously shaped by US global dominance.<sup>63</sup> Second, he saw the decline of ideology in international relations as creating an opportunity to develop a new international 'security edifice' which, in his view, would be centred on the United Nations (UN).<sup>64</sup> According to this argument, Japan should seek to strengthen the UN framework and reform its institutions, especially the Security Council; it should also seek to cooperate with the US to ensure that it remained engaged in the UN process. Indeed, as a vision for international order and a certain form of polarity, Ozawa's thinking is not dissimilar to the idea of unipolarity described by Samuel Huntington.<sup>65</sup>

Despite locating his idea of normalcy within the context of international community, Ozawa had made his argument mostly with a view to Japan itself. Much of Ozawa's key work, *Blueprint for a New Japan*, was focused on domestic reform in Japan and the development of a more coherent foreign policy.<sup>66</sup> Ozawa's thinking, therefore, fits within the Japanese tradition of adapting to either an international order that is already established or one that is perceived to be emerging. His idea of normal was less about redefining the international order and more about redefining Japan's role in that order. As Oros argues, 'the question is not what is "normal" in the abstract, but what is considered normal by Japan, and by Japanese'.<sup>67</sup>

Ozawa's vision was to be undermined, however, by subsequent events. First, the security situation in Northeast Asia, despite the collapse of the Soviet Union and the supposed acceptance of US primacy by China, remained unstable. The North Korean nuclear crisis of 1993–94 and the Taiwan Strait Crisis of 1996 pushed the Japanese government to reinvigorate its alliance with the US rather than pursue a more independent, UN-centric foreign policy.<sup>68</sup> Second, the nuclear tests conducted in 1998 by India and Pakistan revealed the limits of Japanese influence in the UN system. Given its historical experience of nuclear weapons, Japan reacted strongly. At the time a non-permanent Security Council member, it sought to have an emergency Council meeting opened and pushed for a resolution condemning the nuclear tests. Japan argued for a strong international response, froze grants and loans to Pakistan and India, and sought to have other international actors criticise the tests as well.<sup>69</sup> Yet Tokyo's actions had little impact, other than to expose weaknesses in its own diplomacy. Domestically, the episode undermined globalists' arguments about the utility of a multilateral UN-based order. Combined with instability in Northeast Asia and the 'war on terror' after 2001, these failures pushed Japan away from policies based on multipolarity or uni-multipolarity and back towards a more orthodox reliance on American unipolarity.<sup>70</sup>

### **Revisionism, Asianism, and Indo-Pacific multipolarity**

What followed the globalism of Ozawa was a more realist assessment of international order and Japan's role in that order. Led by Prime Minister Jun'ichirō Koizumi, the LDP government sought to introduce a revisionist vision of Japanese security. This vision emphasised the importance of Japan's alliance with the US over multilateralism and sought to revise Japan's security institutions to allow the country to play a more active role in international affairs. According to Christopher Hughes and Ellis Krauss, Koizumi 'smashed long-standing taboos and created the conditions for ending Japan's foreign

and security policy inertia'.<sup>71</sup> As part of Japan's contribution to the 'war on terror', for instance, the Koizumi government passed legislation for anti-terrorism efforts, including sending Japanese naval forces to the Indian Ocean to provide support to the US, which was then involved in the conflict in Afghanistan. Subsequently, Japan sent the Ground Self-Defense Forces to contribute to humanitarian activities as part of the US engagement in Iraq.<sup>72</sup>

Compared to Ozawa's thinking, Koizumi's idea of a normal Japan was directed at the country's capacity to manage a more threatening security environment. Rather than take a liberal institutionalist approach, Koizumi focused on Japan's internal security capabilities and the country's capacity to cooperate with the US. Although Koizumi sought to maintain some independence from the US over foreign policy initiatives, such as on Iraq and North Korea, he also set out a pattern of increasingly close US–Japanese cooperation. He pushed for the further development of ballistic missile defence systems, as well as further rationalisation of US bases in Japan, and an improvement in interoperability between the two allies.<sup>73</sup> Publicly, Koizumi cultivated a closer relationship with President George W. Bush.

Koizumi's revisionist agenda, and that of his successor Shinzō Abe, reflected in part the international climate at the height of the 'war on terror'. Growing American unilateralism in an international order already seen as unipolar meant that allies and partners such as Japan were under greater pressure to 'do more' as part of a 'coalition of the willing'. In Tokyo, there emerged a strong view that greater 'risk sharing' was now required to maintain the alliance.<sup>74</sup>

By the late 2000s, however, the international environment and Japan's own outlook and preferences began to shift. First, as the US struggled to extract itself from Afghanistan and Iraq, Japanese perceptions of American power became more negative. Meanwhile, difficulties over America's military presence in Japan began to weaken alliance solidarity.<sup>75</sup> Second, the global financial crisis weakened American power and undermined the idea of a unipolar international order. How to manage in a post-American economic order now became a key question for Japanese policymakers.<sup>76</sup> Third, the Japanese public began to lose confidence in the ruling LDP and the political leadership of Koizumi's successors. Abe, for instance, resigned in September 2007 after only twelve months as prime minister.<sup>77</sup>

Japan was therefore ready for a historic change of government in late 2009. Led by the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) and Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama, the new government pursued not only a significant break in Japanese politics but also a reorientation of Japan's approach to regional order. In response to the apparent shift in the global economic order ushered in by the global financial crisis, the DPJ sought to establish Japan as a

'bridge between China and the US'.<sup>78</sup> Japan would move away from the US to pursue closer relationships with partners in Asia, especially China. Hatoyama's vision for a new regional order was based on the idea of *yūai* (fraternity) and a new 'Asianist' outlook on regional engagement.<sup>79</sup> Hatoyama saw Japan's national interests as better served by being part of Asia than by sticking with 'US-led globalism'. This would be especially important, he argued, as the world 'was becoming increasingly multipolar'.<sup>80</sup> Japan 'aspired to be within Asia', operating on a policy based around 'open regional cooperation'.<sup>81</sup>

But this new strategy proved fragile and was quickly abandoned after Hatoyama's resignation as prime minister in June 2010.<sup>82</sup> Hatoyama's ambition was undermined in two ways. The key institutional pillar of his *yūai* vision was the establishment of an East Asian Community (EAC) intended to bring about 'mutual trust with China, South Korea, and other Asian countries'.<sup>83</sup> Yet the idea proved problematic. There was initial confusion over America's role.<sup>84</sup> China was also sceptical, viewing the EAC as an attempt by Japan to establish a 'Japan-led order' in the region.<sup>85</sup> More broadly, Hatoyama's Asianism was undermined by growing regional tensions from 2010 onwards, including the worsening of Sino-Japanese relations due to the territorial dispute over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands as well as growing tensions on the Korean peninsula. In response, Hatoyama's successors reverted to foreign policy orthodoxy in the form of greater dependence on the US alliance. They also began to reform Japan's own security posture, aware that US unipolarity was no longer a given, but would be increasingly challenged by China.<sup>86</sup>

Still, major change only got under way after the DPJ's election loss to an LDP-led coalition in September 2012. Led once again by Abe, Japan became more active in countering China's growing influence and minimising the dilution of US primacy. From 2012, Japanese analysts and policymakers clearly perceived China as adopting a 'creeping expansionism' aimed at intimidating other regional players through 'coercive behavior' (*iatsuteki na furumai*).<sup>87</sup> For Japan, this was occurring not just in territorial disputes but also in terms of wider strategic competition. A common view was that China demonstrated 'little room for compromise' on contentious issues.<sup>88</sup> It was, moreover, undermining key aspects of the established international order on its way to creating a new, undesirable (from Japan's perspective) multipolarity. Indeed, China's promotion of the Belt and Road Initiative from 2013 was viewed by Japan as a challenge to the established trade, investment, and development order. Its refusal to acknowledge the 2016 ruling by the Permanent Court of Arbitration against its territorial claims in the South China Sea was seen in Japan as a threat to international law.<sup>89</sup>

To address what it saw as the emergence of a coercive Chinese-dominated regional order, the Abe government promoted a broader vision of a rules-based order, which came to be known as the 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific' or FOIP. With FOIP, as well as creating a rules-based order, Japan aimed to develop greater regional connectivity and build regional resiliency via capacity building.<sup>90</sup> The expressed intention was to construct a regional order that allowed for China's rise but also counterbalanced China when it engaged in creeping expansionism or coercive behaviour.<sup>91</sup> The region within FOIP, moreover, was not Asia or the Asia-Pacific. Rather, FOIP entailed an expansion of the region to cover an 'Indo-Pacific' linking together the Pacific and Indian Oceans in what Abe described as the 'confluence of the two seas'.<sup>92</sup> Under Abe, Japan actively promoted this vision around the region. It engaged multilaterally with regional entities such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and bilaterally with countries such as India and Australia. But perhaps most significantly, it engaged minilaterally by helping to reinvigorate the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue or 'Quad' with India, Australia, and the US.<sup>93</sup>

In addition to FOIP, Abe also sought to transform Japan's own foreign and security policies. In what has been called the 'Abe Doctrine', the Abe government sought to boost Japan's defence capabilities, its alliance with the United States, and its regional diplomacy. It established a National Security Council and issued a National Security Strategy in 2013, with a view to the country making a 'proactive contribution to peace' (*sekkyokuteki hewiwashugi* or 'proactive pacifism').<sup>94</sup> It also loosened earlier restrictions on Japan's right to collective self-defence (CSD) – that is, having the right to defend an ally – by 'reinterpreting' Article 9 of the Constitution in 2014 and passing an array of security legislation in 2015.<sup>95</sup> The government also worked closely with the US to revise the two countries' joint security guidelines in 2015 in order to make the alliance more flexible, give Japan a more active role, and integrate the alliance into regional security frameworks such as the Quad.<sup>96</sup>

### **Conclusion: Japan and the dangers of Asia's new multipolarisation**

Japan's approach has clearly been focused on identifying the shifting patterns of international order and seeking to adapt effectively to these changes. Japanese scholars have often adopted a strongly normative outlook regarding the region and Japan's place within it. This is well illustrated by Inoguchi's assessment of the three key questions that have dominated the Japanese discourse.<sup>97</sup> Linking academics to policymakers has been an awareness of the shifting balance of power and polarity in the Asia-Pacific and its likely

impact on Japan's own position in the region, especially the dangers posed by multipolarisation or *takyokuka*. During the Cold War, considerable attention was paid to the shift to multipolarity from bipolarity. During the post-Cold War period, attention has moved to a different form of *takyokuka* – this time, the potential shift from US-led unipolarity to a new, potentially Chinese-dominated, multipolarity.

Japanese policymakers have long paid close attention to the risks in *takyokuka*. They have, as Pyle notes, been determined and persistent in their 'attentiveness to power' and in their 'fundamental realism' and readiness to accommodate themselves to the 'conditions of the external world'.<sup>98</sup> Such a characterisation strongly echoes Inoguchi's assessment of Japan as 'order-takers' rather than 'order-makers'.<sup>99</sup> Indeed, as this chapter indicates, Japan's adaptiveness is evident throughout the Cold War. Japan was able to adapt to rising bipolarity in the 1950s as well as to the multipolarisation of the 1970s, maximising trade and diplomatic opportunities along the way. Since the Cold War, Japan has sought to rethink its formerly low-key international role to take a more 'normal' approach to international affairs within a unipolar context. Since 2012, it has sought to hedge against the risks to the international order stemming from America's decline and China's rise.

This is not to suggest that Japan has always succeeded in its efforts at accommodation. At times, it has even found maintaining its American relationship difficult, as illustrated by the troubled periods after the Gulf War and during the Hatoyama-led government of 2009–10. Japan's approach to China has also been beset by difficulties over the past two decades. Nor is it to argue that Japanese political figures have always refrained from trying to 'make' rather than just 'take' the regional order. When leading political and corporate figures such as Ishihara and Morita began talking of Japan as a new economic superpower in the late 1980s, it seemed that Japan might establish itself as a central pole in a new trade-focused international order. Notwithstanding such difficulties or the odd temptation to make a new order, however, Japan has largely stuck with and benefited from its order-taking strategy.

Even if Japan has successfully responded to the dangers of *takyokuka* in the past, can the same be said of the future? The Trump presidency posed major challenges for Japan. Still, the Abe government demonstrated adroit diplomacy towards Trump. Abe in particular actively promoted Japanese views to Trump, especially on the importance of the alliance, the US–Japan trading relationship, and the wider security and economic order underpinning America's role in the region. He also sought to instil in the mind of the US president Japan's interests in strategic issues of mutual concern, such as relations with China, the idea of the 'Indo-Pacific', and the tensions over

North Korea. Overall, Abe was able to limit the damage that Trump inflicted on US–Japan relations during his four years as president.<sup>100</sup>

However skilled its diplomacy, Japan still faces two deeper challenges further exposed, and indeed exacerbated, by Trump. These stem from the uncertainty around America’s likely future role in the Asia-Pacific order – whether maintaining the order (as a central pole), destabilising it (as a unilateral interventionist), or disengaging from it (as an isolationist). Although these challenges have been apparent for some time, and have long been debated in Japan, Trump’s erratic diplomacy brought to the fore serious questions for America’s allies as to the long-term reliability of the US as a strategic partner in a more contested multipolar order.<sup>101</sup> Such problems were further worsened, moreover, by Trump’s continued attacks on some of the key principles that have underpinned the US-led order, notably a commitment to shared rules and institutions.<sup>102</sup>

Paradoxically, in his careless and often aggressive rhetoric, Trump heightened both abandonment and entrapment fears for Japan. On the one hand, Trump eroded allies’ confidence in America’s commitment to the region. If the US were to abandon its allies’ interests in the North Korean nuclear issue, for instance, this would force Japan to begin pursuing more independent hedging strategies.<sup>103</sup> On the other hand, Trump stoked fears of entrapment in Japan, for instance by suggesting that the US should intervene unilaterally in the region’s various disputes. Japan’s fear was that, so soon after it had loosened its own defence restrictions by reinterpreting CSD, it would find itself drawn into a conflict precipitated by the US.<sup>104</sup>

Abandonment and entrapment fears will persist beyond Trump and so will inevitably create alliance frictions between the government of Abe’s successor, Yoshihide Suga, and the new US President Joe Biden. Japan cannot easily ‘pivot’ away from its strategy of supporting the US-led order to counter the dangers of multipolarisation. The ‘pivot in Asia’, as Japan’s ‘diversification of external balancing’ has been described, may constitute an early form of hedging against US decline.<sup>105</sup> However, it was originally envisaged as a way to supplement US power by increasing Japan’s international role and helping to integrate the cooperative efforts of US allies and partners around the region. Japan’s aim, until now, has been to buttress US power, not find a substitute for it.<sup>106</sup> Indeed, Abe’s FOIP vision should be viewed in this light. After all, for Japan, as with other partners to the US, there is no realistic replacement for the US in an increasingly contested, multipolar region.

How, then, might Japan respond to the dangers of multipolarity and declining US power in the coming years? Japan may hope to persuade the Biden administration of the value of its alliances and partnerships in the

Asia-Pacific (especially with Japan), and return to the *status quo ante* of the alliance. Again, FOIP offers an obvious mechanism for pursuing this goal, and Japan will also probably promote the Quad. The Biden administration is likely to be more receptive to these ideas; however, it may be constrained in what it can do on much regional order-building, especially on trade.<sup>107</sup> Japan still has the alternative option – of moving towards a more autonomous and independent strategic posture. It could establish itself, if not as a new pole in a regional order, then at least as a counterweight to growing Chinese influence.<sup>108</sup> But such a posture would involve substantial costs, fly in the face of past incrementalism in Japan’s security policymaking, and may also be beyond Japan’s capacity. A properly independent deterrence capability, for example, would require Japan to reconsider its hitherto ‘nuclear allergy’ and develop its own nuclear weapons.<sup>109</sup> Whatever its response, the country faces a more contested and challenging multipolar regional order. The era of dependence on US hegemony, under either bipolar or unipolar conditions, is passing. For Japan, the dangers of multipolarity await.

## Notes

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- 2 Kuniyuki Nishimura, ‘Nihon no kokusai seijigaku keisei ni okeru no “yunyū”’: E. H. Carr no shoki no juyō kara’ [‘Importing’ theories in the creation of Japanese international studies: insights from the early readings of E. H. Carr], *Kokusai Seiji* [International Relations], 175 (2014), 41–55, at 41.
  - 3 *Ibid.*, 41–2.
  - 4 Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan, ‘Why is there no non-Western international relations theory? An introduction’, in Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan (eds), *Non-Western International Relations Theory: Perspectives on and Beyond Asia* (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 1–25, at p. 3.
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  - 14 Akihiko Tanaka, *Japan in Asia: Post-Cold-War Diplomacy*, trans. Jean Connell Hoff, 2nd edn (Tokyo: Japan Publishing Industry Foundation for Culture, 2017), p. 1.
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