

J A P A N E S E
F O R E I G N
P O L I C Y
T O D A Y



EDITED BY *Inoguchi Takashi*
AND *Purnendra Jain*



INTRODUCTION

Beyond Karaoke Diplomacy?

Inoguchi Takashi and Purnendra Jain

In Japan, as elsewhere, the constant rub between domestic and international politics prefigures the landscape in which national foreign policy is planned and played out. In the chapters that follow, we survey this landscape to broaden understanding of Japan's foreign policy at the approach of a new millennium. We find that internationally and domestically, this landscape has been subject to significant change in the past decade. This presents a policy picture that is rather different from those of earlier years, with new actors, interests, imperatives, strategies, and technologies inextricably shaping the policy scene. At the start of a new millennium, Japan confronts demanding challenges as an important player—a leader and a follower—in a global environment whose norms of international diplomacy are transforming swiftly. The nation's foreign policy cannot but respond.

Internationally, the powerful, ubiquitous commercial forces that many recognize as “globalization” are eroding the legitimacy of national borders and the ability of national governments to regulate international flows. The end of the Cold War sees new alliances and cleavages still forming, as international and local power plays continue in its wake almost a decade on. Domestically, the capacity of national bureaucrats to maintain their traditional hold over policy is also weakening. The domestic actors, the policy tools, and the overriding goal of national economic development that had been the steady staples of Japan's postwar foreign policy for roughly four decades no longer have their earlier predictive capabilities. New international actors, new policy instruments, and more comprehensive strategic goals now also take their place on the policy landscape. The scope of policy interest has been forced out beyond national economic well-being and security to embrace global and other strategic concerns that we can expect to invoke the powerful national actor that Japan is today.

For all the change, however, there are still constants in Japanese foreign policy. Some key policy pillars have held their place as defining features: powerful domestic actors, Japan's principal international alliance with the United States,

the compelling economic imperative to sustain essential commercial relations, and a “peace” constitution that severely constrains Japan’s overseas military engagement. Inevitably, recurrent throughout the chapters of this book is discussion of all four of these features, and particularly of the two most influential of these policy determinants. One is the preeminence of the United States among all nations as Japan’s principal ally, trade partner, and defender. The other is the preeminence of Japan’s bureaucrats, particularly those in the foreign ministry, among all of Japan’s domestic international actors who are involved in policy decision making. Thus, change and continuity are central to this foreign policy picture.

In this introduction to our volume on Japan’s foreign policy at the start of a new millennium, we explain the central concerns of this book and our motivations for preparing it. We spell out the content, its separations (into three sub-headings and 16 chapters) and the linkages between these chapters, highlighting areas of shared opinion between authors as well as their divergent assessments of this dynamic picture. Finally, we offer overall assessment of Japan’s foreign policy on the basis of findings presented in these chapters.

Earlier Explanations

Ineluctably, Japan’s foreign policy at the end of the twentieth century presents a picture that is rather different from those put forward by observers in earlier years, when the pace and nature of change were less portentous. Over time, Japanese observers have delivered mixed assessments of Japanese foreign policy. Three assessments have been offered by Japanese observers. The first notes the broadening landscape of Japanese foreign policy, both in its global aspirations and its limitations.¹ The second marks the Asianization of Japan, suggesting a parting of the ways with the United States.² The third, as advanced and debated over by Hosokawa Morihiro, Yamazaki Taku, Hatoyama Yukio, and other lawmakers, calls for abrogation of the U.S.-Japan security treaty. It may be worth noting that Japanese scholarship on Japanese foreign policy offers a more global and regional outlook than its English-language counterpart, which tends to be written by Japan specialists and to focus on bilateral relations.

English-language scholarship from outside Japan has tended to focus on specific bilateral relationships (particularly with the United States) or relationships with important regions across Asia and elsewhere. Some studies have taken up specific policy areas such as aid, trade and security, or the politics of policy making. This report card, too, is mixed. Calder has described Japan’s postwar foreign policy as “reactive”³—an influential political assessment presenting Japan as a nation where foreign pressure (*gaiatsu*) holds greater sway over national policy than domestic pressure (*naiatsu*) and political initiatives.⁴ Some observers have found Japan lacking political leadership in specific and general matters of foreign policy.⁵ Others have explored more comprehensively, finding signs of increasingly assertive policy orientation in many areas, to portray Japan as “a new kind of superpower.”⁶

Purposes and Motivations of This Book

This book seeks to present a comprehensive picture of Japan's foreign policy that draws on, and where necessary critiques, earlier assessments, and expands analysis with attention to policy developments particularly through the 1990s. Overall it seeks to discuss the who, what, how, and why of these developments. We have aimed to set out key policy issues and identify and explain relationships (and disparities) between them. We have asked individual authors to survey recent developments in specific areas of the policy landscape, indicating both the pushes and pulls on policy. As well as issues, we include analysis of specific regional and bilateral relationships that we recognize as essential for a comprehensive picture of the policy landscape. The insights offered here also include constructive assessment of where Japan's international relations are headed in the first decade of the next millennium.

The book was conceived as a companion volume to our 1997 collected work, *Japanese Politics Today: Beyond Karaoke Democracy?*, which surveyed recent developments on the domestic political landscape. We decided to prepare this companion volume on foreign policy recognizing the absence of a comprehensive work in the English language that offers wide-ranging perspective on the most important concerns of Japan's foreign policy, particularly the actors, issues, and relationships around which policy is built. We recognize that individual authors have individual perspectives that are shaped by their personal and professional experiences as well as their ideological persuasion. The contributors to this volume come from countries across the Pacific and the Atlantic. We believe their wide-ranging perspectives and specialized insights into Japan's foreign engagements make it richly informative.

Arrangement of Chapters

The chapters in this volume are organized around three themes: actors, issues, and relationships. The first two chapters look respectively at the domestic politics of the principal policy actors in Japan (Tanaka), and at two new types of actors emerging on this scene, subnational governments and nongovernmental organizations (Jain). We then shift our spotlight to the broad issues that are at the forefront of Japan's foreign policy today, most of which have come into this position only in the course of the 1990s. Here we consider Japan's expanding role in international institutions (Newman), in the propelling trends of globalization and (Moon and Park), in the controversial issues of international human rights (Neary), protecting the global environment (Ohta), and peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance (Rose). From these newer areas of policy we turn to two of the major long-standing policy concerns, looking at defense and disarmament (Tsuchiyama) and Japan's burgeoning Official Development Assistance (ODA) (Fukushima).

The final theme addressed in this collection is relationships, focusing on the most important bilateral and regional relationships that Japan is careful to main-

tain. We begin with the relationship with the United States (Akaha), since this is still the most important of all Japan's bilateral relationships. Not deliberately to privilege Western nations but to continue consistent treatment of Western partners, the next chapters treat relationships with the European Union (Drifte) and Russia (Braddick). We then turn to Japan's relations inside Asia—with East Asia (Kamiya), Southeast Asia (Lam), and South Asia (Purnendra Jain), and finally with its ally at the southern edge of the Pacific, Australia (Kersten).

Overall Assessment: Japan's Foreign Policy at the Turn of the Millennium

It is useful here to make some overall observations on policy development on the basis of this strong, comprehensive collection of chapters, especially given the breadth of expertise and perspective provided by our diverse collection of authors.

Overall, a mixed picture emerges. In some policy areas such as ODA, humanitarian assistance, and global environmental policy, Japan has demonstrated innovation, political leadership, and the genuine desire to assist regional and international communities. In other areas of policy, however, planners appear to remain bogged down in Cold War thinking that immobilizes policy, such as seen in relation to the disputed sovereignty of the "northern territories" currently occupied by Russia. In other areas such as involvement in international peace-keeping operations and defense and disarmament, only incremental change has been effected.

Of the changes sweeping Japan's foreign policy landscape in the past decade, the end of the Cold War at the start of the decade had a profound impact on Japan's international relations. Historical benchmark that it was, rendering many of the international strategic structures of the Cold War era no longer strategically meaningful, it did little to alter Japan's regional security concerns, for East Asia remained volatile through the 1990s, as noted below. More significantly for Japan, the end of the Cold War propelled its principal ally, the United States, into preeminence as the sole superpower; that assertive weight inevitably affects Japan's most important bilateral relationship. This power dimension has considerable policy implications for Japan in the global arena, both as a would-be independent actor and as a U.S. ally in an East Asian context sensitive about U.S. interference. Within the region, and of far greater strategic significance to Japan, China's economic resurgence is altering the power balance across the Asian-Pacific region and beyond, and the expanded military capacities of regional wild-card neighbor North Korea add extra spark to the regional picture. The region is now at least as volatile as during the Cold War—perhaps more so—and there are no effective regional institutions that could be compared with Europe's NATO to manage Northeast Asian conflict resolution.

In the post-Cold War period, as the world's second largest economy and with great economic clout internationally, Japan has been urged to play a more constructive role in international and regional affairs. Japanese leaders have sought these moves as well, to some extent. The United States in particular has pres-

sured Japan to share the burden of global governance at least through practical contributions, but clearly this does not constitute in any way an invitation to Japan for shared leadership with the United States. The chapters in the second section of this book that explore key policy issues demonstrate how Japan has responded with more active involvement in a range of global and regional issues, through means other than the earlier financial contributions that were criticized outside Japan as “checkbook diplomacy.” Yet despite these initiatives, we recognize that overall, Japan’s foreign policy directions are still overshadowed by its relationship with its most important commercial partner and security ally, the United States, on whom nuclear-free Japan depends for protection under the American nuclear umbrella.

Several chapters in this volume reveal how, on a range of issues, the United States has lobbied or coerced Japan to toe its policy line. In most cases, for whatever mix of pragmatic reasons, Japan has complied. A noteworthy exception when Japan said “No” to the United States was in response to the war in the Middle East in the mid-1970s, when Japan did not follow the U.S. lead in siding with Israel. Even so, it is a constant in their bilateral relationship that the United States at times puts forward major policy agendas with which Japan complies, as exemplified in Japan’s huge financial “contribution” to the cost of the 1991 Gulf War, and more recently in the late 1990s with its tacit approval of the policy position of the United States and NATO forces in Serbia.

We have dwelt on this issue of Japan’s policy compliance with U.S. directives for two reasons. First, it is central to explaining much of Japan’s foreign policy behavior. Second, it leads to the concept presented in the title of this chapter: karaoke diplomacy.⁷ Karaoke (literally meaning “empty orchestra”) is a music system first devised in Japan before spreading beyond its shores to become a virtually global form of entertainment. Here a singer chooses a song from a set menu and sings along with lyrics shown on the screen and accompaniment provided by the equipment. The choice of songs is limited and the singer can vary the performance only through choice of specific songs and manner of delivery. So while the person singing at the microphone might change, the songs from which to choose and the background served up by the karaoke are both clearly circumscribed. What is the parallel here with Japan’s foreign policy?

It could be argued that Japan’s choice of foreign policy directions is also circumscribed in a “set menu” of alternatives provided by the United States. Japan has very little room to choose from options other than those offered by Washington on its foreign policy menu. Depending on circumstances, Japan may have some limited leeway in deciding who, when, where, what, or how it will engage internationally. But the essential choices are often predetermined by Washington with little scope for initiative, or innovation, from Tokyo. This portrayal highlights the degree of Japan’s compliance with, and dependence on, the U.S. lead. As with karaoke, the background music (the U.S. policy line) remains the same and the choice of songs (policy options) is predetermined; the only scope for singer input is the style of delivery (policy implementation).

Still, the beauty of karaoke is that the choice of songs can be incrementally increased to suit one’s convenience. One can boast of a choice of as many as

6,000 songs in a number of languages in a full-scale karaoke set. In a similar sense, karaoke diplomacy need not necessarily be considered a straitjacket. The style of delivery can change over time, as the changing environment compels one to do. This is another thrust of the present volume: just as karaoke is adaptive and can be gradually enriched, depending on the demands of the singers-cum-audience, karaoke diplomacy harbors a dimension of the adaptive and mutational.

As we see in this volume, within the broad parameters set by this U.S. "karaoke" menu, Japan has taken multiple new initiatives in recent years. These are concentrated especially in official development assistance (ODA), environmental management, and through personnel and monetary contributions to regional and international institutions. New actors (local governments and NGOs, for example) have been drawn onto the foreign policy landscape as their interests reach beyond Japan's national borders. Japan has also taken a tougher stance on some bilateral matters than its key partners, including the United States (e.g., it has maintained strict economic sanctions on both India and Pakistan since both conducted nuclear tests in May 1998). However much these actions may appear to indicate Japan's initiative, policy maturity, and diplomatic independence, all have nevertheless taken place within the broad scope of the core U.S.-Japan bilateral framework.

Where Japan's policy actions move beyond this framework, U.S.-initiated pressure is brought to bear until Japanese leaders acquiesce and policy is appropriately compromised (or abandoned). A recent case demonstrates this well. In the wake of the Asian currency crisis in 1997, the Japanese government presented a proposal to establish an Asian Monetary Fund (AMF). Because this Japanese initiative was perceived by U.S. interests as a major challenge to U.S. hegemony in the region and likely to undermine the status of the International Monetary Fund, a postwar U.S. government creation, the proposal was scotched in its early stages under U.S. pressure, without serious regard for the remedial potential of an AMF.⁸

The karaoke analogy can be drawn in yet another context, namely, domestic policy. Japanese bureaucrats retain a strong hold in determining national and foreign policy, largely at the hands of the foreign ministry. In fact, many in Japan recognize a bifurcation of power in which bureaucrats shape public policy in Kasumigaseki (the political heartland of inner Tokyo where most government ministries are located) while politicians protect their electorate's interests inside the district, which is usually geographically distant from this political inner sanctum. In the 1990s, politicians were taking a stronger hand in shaping public policy, as we see in these pages, but it is still largely the bureaucrats who put forward their menu of legislation from which politicians will choose and then attempt passage through the Diet. Because this is a distinctive feature of Japan's political system, the title of our companion volume on domestic politics similarly questions Japan's reach beyond "karaoke democracy." Foreign policy is especially suited to the karaoke menu style of Japanese bureaucrats, since politicians who are concerned with cultivating votes in their electorate are primarily concerned with pork barrel and social policy issues and have much less interest in foreign

policy. This means they are more susceptible to the legislative “karaoke” menu offered by bureaucrats in foreign policy than for most other public policy areas.

Even so, inside Japan, the players in Japan’s political system are diversifying and the capacity of any of them to maintain rigid sway over national policy is weakening. Legislative initiatives come much more from Diet members these days than from bureaucrats. Interaction between Diet members and bureaucrats prior to drafting of bills for legislation appear to enhance the chances of success in getting it passed. Such interaction was a feature of three major items of legislation in 1998–99 (the economic stimulus package, the administrative and fiscal reform package, and the defense cooperation guidelines legislation). The Democratic Party, currently the largest opposition party, was able to draft an original bill quite forcefully; Prime Minister Hashimoto Ryutaro and the Diet members of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) worked tenaciously to draft the sweeping administrative reform package; the Liberal Party, another smaller opposition force, gave the defense cooperation guidelines legislation a strong push along with some revisions to the original bill. This is not just a move toward decentralization of power away from the central government and the national bureaucrats; concomitantly the system of political parties remains in flux after the once dominant LDP briefly lost its mandate over the national government, and lasting alliances are yet to be proven. International affairs play into, and are sometimes pulled into, this domestic political fluidity. This is testimony to the thesis presented in this volume that karaoke diplomacy can be a self-transforming, adaptive diplomacy in a changing environment. As we see in the following chapters, foreign policy is usually the product of compromise between competing domestic and international interests.

Moves Toward Greater Policy Independence

For several decades there have been moves by some domestic forces, especially among right-of-center politicians within the LDP, to have Japan take a more assertive, independent policy line rather than constantly buckling to cooption and coercion by powerful U.S. interests. Even those who still prefer to maintain the alliance with the United States have advocated a stronger role for the Japanese military in international affairs.

Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro’s call in the mid-1980s to change Japan from a “peace-oriented country” (*heiwa kokka*) to an “ordinary nation” (*zainai-gata kokka*) underscored the idea of a greater role for Japan’s Self-Defense Force, reduced dependence on the United States for national security, and by implication, revision of the Japanese Constitution that currently forbids this possibility. The early 1990s notion, advocated by powerful political string-puller Ozawa Ichiro, of making Japan a “normal country” (*futsu no kuni*), is also embedded in the idea of a more independent foreign policy for Japan, through a larger role for the Japanese military. Both aspirations, for Japan to become an “ordinary nation” and a “normal country,” also suggest understandings that Japan’s present position in international life is somehow “abnormal” and therefore “unsettling” in a changing environment.

Some right-wing nationalists and others have been vocal in supporting a more independent foreign policy for Japan, as these examples suggest. Nevertheless, they are a small minority. Most mainstream politicians and officials in the foreign ministry and the Defense Agency still see the U.S.-Japan security treaty as the cornerstone of Japan's foreign policy. One could argue that passage of the new Defense Guidelines in 1999 has reinforced the security treaty.⁹ Debate as to how Japan might achieve balance in political as well as economic roles in the global arena is well and truly on in Japan.¹⁰ But apart from the above examples, there is very little debate about freeing Japan from the United States or from the bureaucrats who together generally hold sway over it.

Conflicting Tugs on Japan's Foreign Policy

The discussions above and in the 16 chapters that follow point to how Japan's foreign policy is caught at times between virtually antithetical tugs. We see a quest for independence to act as a nation on the international stage free of U.S. intervention in policy. Yet as we have also seen, Japan's national security arrangements lock Japan into this bilateral relationship and to accepting its benefits on terms dictated by powerful U.S. interests that erode Japan's capacity for policy autonomy. A second tug concerns the constraints of Japan's "peace" constitution, vis-à-vis a yearning by some policy makers for a more active overseas military engagement for Japanese forces. A third tug behind much of policy interaction is that of money. For much of the 1990s, Japan's economy has been in recession, which severely undermines Japan's capacity for expensive "international contributions" through ODA and programs that involve large and direct injection of funds. A final tug that is worthy of note here is that surrounding Japan's national identity. Japan is in some international forums (such as G7) a "Western" industrialized nation one moment and others (such as APEC or ASEAN regional forum meetings) an "Asian" regional nation the next. Mediating between these two standpoints is Japan's unavoidable task from now on.

Summary

Overall we see that Japan's foreign policy is complex, sometimes contradictory and certainly subject to considerable change beyond the year 2000. The pace of these changes is likely to maintain its momentum as technological developments enable new forms of communication, as globalization moves forward apace, and as ever more people are engaging in private international relationships without leaving their homes. Japan's foreign policy in the 1990s tells a story of expansion virtually across the board, and it is for this reason, especially given Japan's important position in regional and global affairs, that we have compiled the present collection of studies.

We are grateful to all the contributors for their cooperation in preparing work for this volume. Most presented draft papers at a workshop in Tokyo in October 1998, which was held especially for this project. We are grateful to Ishii Motofumi, head of policy planning of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs,

for sharing with us his rich experiences in his luncheon speech on the first day of the workshop. We would like to thank Doi Sakiko for her assistance in holding the workshop and the staff of the Institute of Oriental Culture, University of Tokyo, for making available the conference venue and other facilities and providing backup support for the workshop.

Comments, suggestions, and feedback from the workshop have been useful to authors in revising for publication these papers piecing together a comprehensive picture of Japan's foreign policy landscape at the end of the twentieth century. We thank Ellen Dowling, Karen Wolny, Ruth Mannes, and the editorial staff of Palgrave, and Lynne Riggs and Takechi Manabu for their support at every stage of publishing this book.

October 1999

Notes

1. Takashi Inoguchi, *Japan's International Relations* (London: Pinter Publishers; Boulder: Westview Press, 1991); Akiko Fukushima, *Japanese Foreign Policy: The Emerging Logic of Multilateralism* (London: Macmillan, 1999).
2. Yoichi Funabashi, "Japan and the New World Order," *Foreign Affairs* 70:5 (1991): 58–74.
3. Kent Calder, "Japanese Foreign Economic Policy Formation: Explaining the Reactive State," *World Politics*, XL:4 (1988): 517–41.
4. Most who have advocated this view are scholars examining Japan's relations with the United States. See, for example, Leonard Schoppa, *Bargaining With Japan: What American Pressure Can and Cannot Do* (NY: Columbia University Press, 1997).
5. For example, Alan Rix, *Japan's Foreign Aid Challenge: Policy Reform and Aid Leadership* (London and NY: Routledge, 1993).
6. Craig C. Garby and Mary Brown Bullock, eds., *Japan: A New Kind of Superpower?* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994).
7. Purnendra Jain would like to thank Chris Braddick for suggesting the term and for his input regarding the concept of karaoke diplomacy.
8. This example is explained in further detail in the chapters by Lam Peng Er and by Moon Chung-in and Park Han-kyu in this volume.
9. Both Tsuchiyama in his chapter on defense and disarmament and Akaha in his analysis of U.S.–Japan relations look at this issue in greater detail.
10. Tokyo's desire to be a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council is one such means. Others have advocated that Japan's true contribution lies in its role as a global civilian power. See Yoichi Funabashi, "Tokyo's Depression Diplomacy," *Foreign Affairs* 77:6 (1998): 35–36.