

**Realist Japan?: An Examination of Japanese Foreign and Security Policy  
under Abe Shinzo in Three Case Studies**

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## Statement

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## Realist Japan?

**Candidate's statement about the impact of COVID-19 changes on the thesis.**

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Access to physical library resources were not available for several months, reducing the documents that could be included in my research project. Also, although I planned elite interviewing as one of key sources of research, face-to-face interactions have been severely restricted due to COVID-19 safety regulations. As such, much of the thesis research relied upon secondary sources.

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## Summary of Thesis

*How can international relations theory best explain the motivation and dynamism behind the making of Japan's foreign and security policy in the twenty-first century? This research provides one answer to this question by examining the policymaking of the Abe administration from 2012 to 2020 (also known as 'Abe 2.0'). It is still theoretically puzzling as to why and how the Abe administration could bring about historical changes in Japan's foreign and security policy. Structural realism might attribute such policy shifts to a changing of balance of power. Meanwhile, constructivism argues that the changes of domestic identity and norms would matter. Although different theories may have some explanatory power, this research argues that none of these approaches can solely explain the mechanism of Abe 2.0 foreign and security policy. Rather, as argued here, neoclassical realism (NCR) that incorporates domestic factors into a systemic analysis can best explain the changes in Japan's foreign and security policy during Abe 2.0. To make this case, this thesis tests a NCR framework in the three exemplary cases of Japanese foreign and security policy under Abe 2.0: 1) security policy reforms and alliance management with the United States; 2) the management of Japan-China relations; and 3) the promotion of the Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) concept. Relying principally on Japanese-language sources and qualitative data, it reveals that domestic factors, especially leader images and policymaking processes, played significant roles to translate structural factors, namely the rise of China, into specific policy planning and outcomes. It concludes that while systemic stimuli primarily drove Japan's realist shift in foreign and security policy, domestic intervening variables solidified policy agendas and approaches and occasionally moderated policies in a more practical rather than strictly realist direction.*

(284 words)

## Chapter I Introduction

How can observers best understand the motivation and dynamics behind the making of Japan's foreign and security policy in the twenty-first century? This research provides one answer to this question by examining the case of Abe Shinzo,<sup>1</sup> who served as Japanese prime minister from December 2012 to September 2020 and made historic changes to Japan's foreign and security policy.

His longevity in office and the many decisions he made provide a wide range of cases for international relations scholars to contemplate. It is still theoretically puzzling as to why and how the second Abe administration (hereinafter referred to Abe 2.0) could bring about so many remarkable policy changes and outcomes. Structural realist perspectives might attribute such policy shifts of a single state to systemic changes, especially a changing of balance of power in the region and the world.<sup>2</sup> Liberalism, which relies on an 'inside-out' approach to comprehend countries' foreign policies, gives pride of place to domestic factors, such as institutional arrangements or states' preferences, relegating systemic-level factors to a secondary role.<sup>3</sup> Constructivism highlights ideational factors, including identity and norms, to explain policy changes.<sup>4</sup> While having some overlap with liberalism and constructivism, Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) comprehensively investigates actor-specific variables, including personal characteristics of individual leaders.<sup>5</sup>

Although each theory may provide some reasonable explanations in specific cases, this thesis argues that none of these approaches can solely or comprehensively explain Abe's foreign and security policy in his second administration. Rather, this thesis finds that neoclassical realism (NCR), which incorporates domestic factors into a systemic analysis can best explain the changes in Japan's foreign and security policy during Abe 2.0. To make this case, the thesis tests NCR in the three exemplary cases of Japanese foreign and security policy under Abe 2.0:

1) security policy reforms and alliance management with the United States; 2) the management of Japan-China relations; and 3) the promotion of the Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) as a comprehensive diplomatic concept. It shows that a major structural factor, namely the rise of China and its challenge to Japan's security and economic influence, primarily stimulated Japan's realist shift while domestic intervening variables profoundly shaped specific policy agendas and outcomes. Leaders' perception on the structure (leader images) and the interactions between the leader, the foreign policy bureaucracy, and political parties (policymaking processes) translated systemic stimuli into a specific policy outcomes.<sup>6</sup> Based on the scholarly literature related to Japan's foreign and security policy and on primary, secondary, and tertiary Japanese-language sources, this research contributes not only to a better understanding of Abe 2.0 foreign and security policy, but also to the further development of NCR through its rigorous application to the Japanese case.

This introductory chapter further elaborates these points in six parts: (1) puzzle and research question; (2) theoretical framework of NCR; (3) relevance of Abe 2.0 for testing NCR; (4) selection of three case studies; (5) methodology; and (6) structure of the thesis.

## **1. Puzzle and research question**

This research aims to contribute to the ongoing debate about Japan as a realist power. Traditionally, the realist debate has been held between 'structural realism', which rigorously attributes states' actions to the international anarchical system and 'classical realism', which loosely takes anarchy and human nature into account.<sup>7</sup> In terms of Japanese foreign and security policy, prominent structural realist predicted in the 1990s that Japan would acquire nuclear weapons in the future, or at least seek a relatively more autonomous security policy.<sup>8</sup> So far, the reality seems different from this prediction as the official position of the Japanese



government continues to adhere to the three non-nuclear principles while enhancing the alliance partnership with the United States instead of seeking an autonomous security policy.<sup>9</sup>

While Japan took steps to adjust to the increasing systemic pressures as structural realism predicted in the early 2000s, Tokyo has increased its military capabilities not for autonomous purposes but for enhancing the U.S.-Japan alliance. In 2001, Michael Green labelled these trends—in which Japan takes on a realist policy while accepting the ineluctability of reliance on the U.S.-Japan alliance and domestic pacifist norms—as ‘reluctant realism’, and differentiates it from the Yoshida Doctrine, the dominant foreign policy paradigm of the post-war Japan.<sup>10</sup> When Japan further pursued a proactive security policy and strengthened the capabilities of the Self-Defence Force (SDF) in the mid-2000s, Christopher Hughes described these emerging realist trends as ‘remilitarization’ and later termed them ‘resentful realism’ which describes Japan’s balancing against China as ‘emotionally charged with revisionist sentiments that indeed resent dependence on the U.S. or being surpassed by China.’<sup>11</sup>

This debate has deepened and grown more sophisticated in recent years as scholars closely examine not only the facts of Japan’s security policy reforms but also the mechanism driving such changes that lie at the nexus between domestic and international politics or security and economics in Japan’s foreign policy. Richard Samuels and Michishita Narushige examine Japan’s hedging strategy between the United States and China, arguing that Japan keeps the alliance with the United States as a deterrent and counterbalance against the rise of China while keeping stable economic relations with China for economic gains to counterbalance the economic pressure of the United States.<sup>12</sup> Sheila Smith labels this dynamic in Sino-Japanese relations as ‘intimate rivals’, in which the two countries have conflicting agendas, as well as deep and complicated economic relations based on diverse stakeholders.<sup>13</sup> She also attributes Japan’s fear of abandonment by the United States pushed Tokyo to rearm its SDFs.<sup>14</sup> Combining realist

and constructivist schools, Andrew Oros explains Japan's 'security renaissance' by focusing on changing domestic party politics and security identities.<sup>15</sup> While these recent studies reveal the complexity of Japan's foreign policy, more case studies are necessary to explore the causal mechanisms associated with these developments.

Building on these works and theoretical debates, this thesis argues that NCR—which takes account of both structural factors and domestic perceptions and decision-making processes as key intervening variables—provides a more effective explanatory framework for understanding Japan's foreign and security policy during Abe 2.0. In comparison with the emerging works of NCR and its application to Japan, such as Watai Yuki, Raymond Yamamoto and Zakowski Karol,<sup>16</sup> as well as research on Japan's specific security matters, such as defence policy reforms<sup>17</sup> or ballistic missile defence<sup>18</sup>, this research examines a broad spectrum of Japanese foreign and security policies during Abe 2.0.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

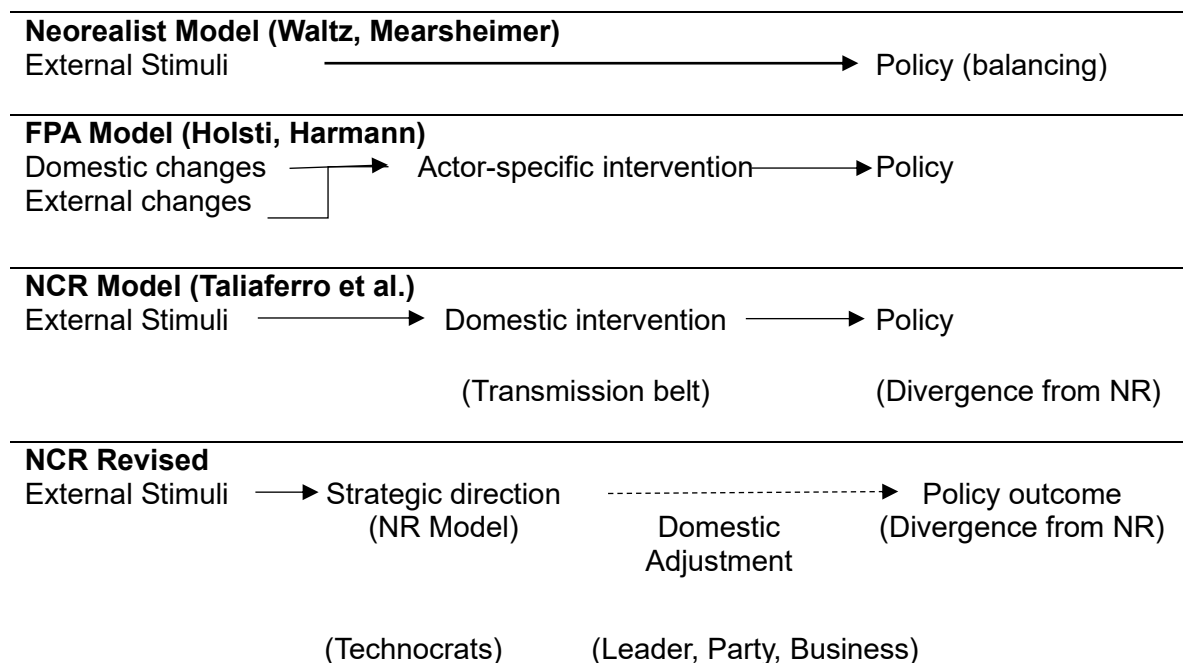
This research positions itself in the study of international relations (IR) and IR theory, and contributes to the theoretical development of realism. Acknowledging the limitations of structural realism, especially its simplification of the state as unitary and rational,<sup>19</sup> this thesis employs NCR, which explains 'why states do not move as the systemic imperatives require.'<sup>20</sup> NCR 'retains the primacy of the international system that structural realists emphasise', while relaxing the constraints of external determinism by taking unit-level/domestic variables into account.<sup>21</sup> By integrating the traditions of unit-level analysis, this research also complements the literature of FPA by seeking to achieve a generalisable framework for explaining Japan's foreign policy without being entrapped into FPA's overall focus on fact-finding (Chart 1).<sup>22</sup>

While Chapter 2 discusses the details of the theoretical framework, it should be noted that NCR has variations. As a pioneering work, Randall Schweller's domestic politics model argues essentially that domestic factors, basically a lack of elite consensus, can trump external constraints and induce under-balancing, 'where threatened countries have failed to recognise a clear and present danger or, more typically, have simply not reacted to it or, more typically still, have responded in paltry and imprudent way'.<sup>23</sup> Jeffrey Taliaferro improves this approach and explain that domestic factors play just a filtering role, which tends to mean that external constraints create a basic direction but do not fully determine the array of choices.<sup>24</sup> This research follows the latter approach by focusing on the changing power dynamic in Japan's security environment as the primary driving force for Japan's realist shift, while attributing specific policies—which could be seen as 'under-balancing'—to domestic variables. In this sense, domestic factors play the role of an imperfect transmission belt.

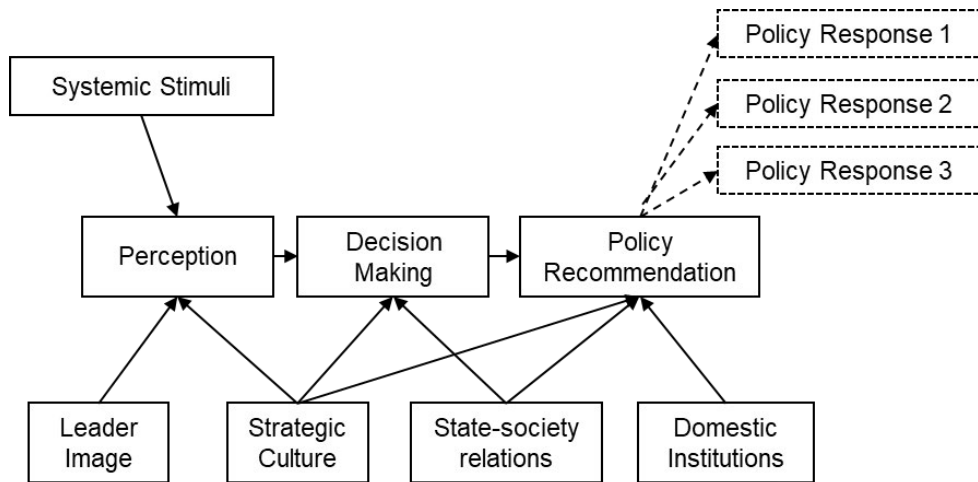
Thus, the NCR framework of this research accepts the structural realism's assumption that systemic stimuli act as the independent variable and policy outcomes as the dependent variable while recognising domestic factors as intervening variables to explain the divergence between theoretical expectations and actual foreign policy outcomes (Figure 1).<sup>25</sup> It tries not only to show the primary impact of international structural changes on Japan's policy, but also reveals the subsequent interventions of domestic variables in the translation of systemic stimuli to policymaking. NCR literature provides a range of intervening variables—such as leaders' personal beliefs, strategic culture, and state-society relations—which can play mediating roles.<sup>26</sup> However, examining a large number of domestic factors poses a problem in terms of parsimony. Therefore, this research focuses primarily on two key intervening variables: the threat perception of leaders (leader images) and the policymaking process, including interactions among relevant foreign policy executives (FPEs) in the government apparatus and inter-party interactions with coalition partners. Both had a central importance in the development and implementation of

Japan's foreign and security policy under the reformed policymaking process of Abe 2.0.<sup>27</sup> While leader's perceptions became more important due to the centralisation of power to the Prime Minister's Office (*kantei*), Japan's FPEs under Abe 2.0 consisted mainly of bureaucrats seconded from different ministries and Abe appointed to key policy and intelligence positions within the *kantei* who retained their importance by providing highly sophisticated policymaking skills and ideas to the leaders to the top leaders.

**Chart 1. Comparison of Foreign Policy Making Models**



**Figure 1. Neoclassical Realist Model of Foreign Policy<sup>28</sup>**



### **3. Relevance of Abe 2.0 as testing case**

There are four important reasons why Abe 2.0 is a worthwhile case to test the applicability of NCR. First, Abe's second premiership—seven years and eight months between 2012 and 2020 which made him the longest-serving Japanese prime minister—generated numerous important cases and time period for understanding and explaining Japan's foreign and security policy.<sup>29</sup> His lengthy second period as prime minister provides researchers with an opportunity to further elaborate on the framework of Japanese policymaking that developed around the Koizumi administration.<sup>30</sup>

Second, in addition to its longevity, Abe 2.0 is unusual and outstanding for its policy achievements. When Abe Shinzo returned as prime minister in December 2012, he demonstrated an eagerness to tackle urgent policy issues, especially security policy reforms and the restoration of the U.S.-Japan alliance, along with economic recovery. Despite the unique sensitivity and controversial aspects of security policy in Japanese politics, Abe's administration brought about a number of legal, institutional and military changes, most remarkably, the re-interpretation of the constitution to allow Japan to exercise the right of collective self-defence (though in a limited way).<sup>31</sup>

Third, the Abe 2.0 period coincided with significant structural changes on the international scene. Though China had already surpassed Japan's military expenditure in the early-2000s and its nominal gross domestic product (GDP) by 2010, Beijing further expanded its influence militarily and economically after 2010. In addition, in relation to the United States, Abe experienced both President Barack Obama in his first three years and then a very different U.S. president, President Donald Trump, from 2017 to 2020. An investigation of Abe 2.0 provides a rich case on how Japan managed its relations with the world's two most important powers—China and the United States—as they became increasingly uncertain and contentious.<sup>32</sup>

Finally, in this turbulent period for international relations, Abe 2.0 makes for an interesting case as Japan assumed unusually high-profile leadership roles in regional and global affairs. While there were some predecessors who promoted proactive foreign policies, Abe unprecedentedly reinforced the alliance with the United States and promoted stabilisation of its relations with China by combining balancing and engagement while he advanced coalition-building of like-minded nations—such as the United States, Australia, India, European and Southeast Asian countries. While his economic policy, coined as ‘Abenomics’, initially gained attention, such foreign policy concepts as ‘proactive contribution to peace’, ‘diplomacy which takes a panoramic perspective of the globe’, and, most importantly, a Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP), have generated great interest within international foreign policy circles. Thus, it is important to understand why and how Abe 2.0 could develop such outward-looking international diplomacy while his predecessors in similar structural situations could not.

#### **4. Selection of three cases**

The three cases at the centre of this research are: 1) security policy reforms and alliance management with the United States; 2) the management of Japan-China relations; and 3) the promotion of FOIP as a comprehensive diplomatic concept. These cases were selected for two principal reasons. First, they represent what are arguably the three most important pillars of Japan’s external relations. Second, these cases provide insight into debates on the relevance of different realist approaches in IR theory.

The first case is Abe 2.0’s security policy reforms and alliance management with the United States. As one of the central platforms of his return to leadership, Abe prioritised rebuilding the alliance with the United States as well as promoting broader security policy reforms.<sup>33</sup> Abe undertook important domestic reforms for Japan to move beyond ‘isolationist

pacifism.’<sup>34</sup> However, there are remaining abnormalities in this realist shift. For instance, despite the huge missile gap between Japan and China, or even between Japan and North Korea, Tokyo took only moderate measures neither to install on-shore missile defence systems nor to adopt any offensive military policy.<sup>35</sup> Although Abe repeatedly mentioned the importance of amending Article 9 of the Japanese constitution to allow greater leeway in Japan’s military policy, he was ultimately unsuccessful in bringing about such a change.<sup>36</sup>

Neorealist perspectives would see Abe’s shift as just the beginning of a further realist tilt in the long-run and would expect Japan to further strengthened its military and remove domestic constraints if China grew and continued to be assertive. They would also attribute the moderation of the realist shift to the existence and stability of the U.S.-Japan alliance which mitigates the power gap between Japan and China. That said, structural realism is not necessarily helpful to understand how structural forces are subjectively interpreted by domestic entities and policy outcomes result from a complicated internal decision-making process. While constructivist scholars would argue that the remaining abnormalities arise from domestic pacifist sentiments, this approach does not fully explain how specific social norms impact policymaking.<sup>37</sup>

NCR seems particularly well-suited to providing alternative and compelling explanations in this first case. NCR clarifies a detailed causal process by which key decision-makers perceive structural changes (leader image), come up with responses, and might be influenced by various factors (strategic culture, state-society relations, domestic institutions) before implementing policy. In this framework, while structural factors pushed Japanese policymakers to take rational balancing actions against China, and Abe’s leader images and *kantei*’s leadership solidified balancing, their policy responses remained constrained by the intervention by the coalition partner of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), New Komeito Party (Komeito). Also, NCR provides a more realistic explanation by not relying on vague ideational factors, but by translating it into a



practical question of whether the leaders were actually in a political situation that required them to consider and bargain with domestic factors.

The second case—Japan’s policy toward China during Abe 2.0—provides another important case for testing the usefulness of NCR. According to realist thinking, Japan should see China as a threat that requires balancing. While Japan took a strong stance on territorial issues and seemingly seeks to counter China’s influence in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond, Tokyo had also always kept the engagement option available. Also, structural realism has trouble in explaining why Japan did not maintain a singularly hard-line position toward China on some issues such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the Xi Jinping’s state visit to Tokyo planned for March 2020.

Japan’s China policy during Abe 2.0 may provide an exemplary test case for NCR. Building on Sheila Smith’s identification of key players in Japan’s China policy, that includes politicians, bureaucratic actors, nationalist groups and business interests,<sup>38</sup> this research looks closely at bureaucratic actors, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), Ministry of Defense (MOD), Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) and National Security Council and Secretariat (NSC and NSS) and also examines inter-party relations between the ruling LDP and their coalition partner, Komeito. It hypothesises that Abe 2.0 had a strong consensus on defence and maritime policy toward China under the leadership of Abe and security-oriented FPEs as well as strong domestic support, while there would be institutional differences over Japan’s China policy in the economic field. Abe’s personal and pragmatic belief that a strong economy was the foundation of his political capital and the views of his chief advisor from METI diluted a tougher response to China.

The third case—on Abe regional leadership and coalition-building under the FOIP banner—is also suitable for an examination through an NCR lens. After the mid-2010s, Japan

expanded security cooperation with not only the U.S., but with other like-minded countries.<sup>39</sup> Under Abe 2.0, Japan prioritised Abe's vision for regional order, the FOIP, with an emphasis on maritime security, connectivity and universal values. Neorealism can explain the broader realist direction of this shift but is not suitable to explain why Japan's balancing actions take the softer form of coalition-building which minimised military and strategic characteristics. Meanwhile constructivism may not be able to account for strategic considerations behind the promotion of value-based diplomacy, such as FOIP. It even fails to explain Japan's reluctance to promote human right issues in strategically important countries.<sup>40</sup> While liberalism, especially a neoliberal approach, may be suitable to explain the nature of FOIP or Tokyo's promotion of regional economic integration, including the Trans-Pacific Partnership and Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, based on Japan's economic interest, it has a fundamental deficiency, like constructivism, in explaining the strategic nature of Japan's choices in the midst of the changing international structure around Japan.

A NCR framework sheds light on the primary forces which drove Japan's new trajectory of proactive foreign and security policy under Abe's leadership. A major pillar of FOIP was 'regional order building' which aims at bolstering the rules-based regional and international order through advocating the importance of liberal values, especially the principle of the rule of law, and expanding security partnerships with like-minded states'.<sup>41</sup> Kanehara Nobukatsu notes that the protection of the value system of the liberal order has strategic implications and aligns with Japan's national interest, and the enhancement of universal values in Asia 'has become the backbone to sustain a free and open Indo-Pacific region'.<sup>42</sup> Examining leader images and decision-making processes, especially the role of MOFA, NCR can explain Japan's adherence to international rules and laws as a means of balancing against China, an insight which diverges from neorealist theoretical predictions.

## **5. Methodology**

As Steven Van Evera has proposed experiment and observation as methods for testing theories, this thesis will rely on observation, especially a small number of cases, to investigate whether events unfold as NCR predicts.<sup>43</sup> The relevance of NCR can be shown by the causal relations between structural factors and Japan's foreign and security policy as well as the impact of intervening variables on the decision-making process and policy outcomes.<sup>44</sup> As such, this research should demonstrate and measure the process in which structural factors impact on policymaking in credible ways. This should require not only quantitative indicators, such as military expenditure and trade and investment figures, but also key actors' perceptions of the structural factors affecting Japanese foreign and security policy. Regarding the impact of intervening variables, this research takes a qualitative approach to understand how FPEs or coalition partner interacted.

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, however, this research was unable to collect substantial qualitative data from face-to-face interactions, such as elite interviews. The thesis instead relies on primary and secondary sources, such as: official statements, government publications, research articles, media interviews and reporting, columns, and the websites and social network platforms of policymakers. Delving into Japanese language sources, this research taps into a lively debate within Japanese academic and foreign policy circles and opens it to a broader global audience. While these sources of information inevitably contain writers' intentions and subjectivity, this research aims mitigate such risks by triangulation with other sources and forms of information.

## 6. Structure of thesis

The thesis is organised as follows. Chapter II formulates a revised theoretical framework of NCR to be applied to the empirical case studies in chapters III, IV and V. The third chapter discusses Abe 2.0 security policy reforms and alliance management with the United States. It shows how FPEs in the *kantei* interacted to promote sensitive security policy reforms in spite of domestic opposition. Applying the NCR framework, the chapter finds that structural forces played a primary role in driving the realist policy shift during Abe 2.0 due to the convergence of perceptions that Abe and other FPEs share, but the interventions by coalition-partner moderated the policy outcome.

Chapter IV discusses the second case study, Japan's China policy. The chapter argues that structural pressures motivated the realist shift in Japan's China policy, including taking a hard-line on territorial disagreements over the Senkaku Islands, choosing to stay out of the Beijing-initiated Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. At the same time, Japan's huge economic interdependence with China and bureaucrats in charge of economic affairs impacted on the policymaking within the government apparatus. These intervening variables explain why policies were somewhat at odds with neorealist expectations in some areas (such as signalling support for cooperation with China's BRI).

Chapter V explores the mechanism behind the conception and the promotion of FOIP diplomatic concept. The chapter shows how an NCR approach can explain the impact of structural changes—especially China's increasing assertiveness in the maritime sphere and their influence through regional infrastructure investment—in driving Japan's realist tilt, including the promotion of coalition-building among key partners in the Indo-Pacific. NCR also helps showing that policymakers, particularly at MOFA and NSS, not only understood the importance of promoting value-based cooperation, but also prevent Southeast Asian nations from becoming

alarmed about FOIP, and argued for a moderate form of coalition-building based on values rather than on a strategic confrontation with China.

The final chapter concludes the thesis by summarising the relevance of NCR for explaining the foreign and security policy of Abe 2.0, and suggests the importance of these findings for understanding Japanese foreign and security policy and other countries' foreign and security policy more broadly. It also sheds light on the limits of this thesis and outlines remaining scholarly challenges based on the three case studies.

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> This thesis uses the 'surname – given name' construct for Japanese, Chinese and Korean names.

<sup>2</sup> Structural realism or neorealism is the evolutionary form of the classical realism which Machiavelli, Carl von Clausewitz and Hans Morgenthau advocated. While classical realism sees human nature as the key determinant of war, structural realism systemically argues that military conflict or wars accounts for power shifts in the international system. See Waltz, Kenneth N., *Theory of International Politics*, Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley, 1979; Waltz, Kenneth N., The New World Order, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 22: 2 (1993), pp.187–195; Buzan, Barry, Charles Jones., and Richard Little, *The Logic of Anarchy: Neorealism to Structural Realism*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1993.

<sup>3</sup> Neoliberalism, which addresses international cooperation, interdependence and international organisations, emerged as an antithesis to neorealism in the 1970s. Accepting the systemic analysis of neorealism, it finds the possibility of international cooperation by focusing on states' preferences or the role of institutions. See Keohane, Robert O., and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition*, Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1977; Putnam, Robert D., Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games, *International Organization* 42: 3 (1988), pp.427–60; Keohane, Robert O., and Helen Milner, eds., *Internationalization and Domestic Politics*, Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996; Moravcsik, Andrew, Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics, *International Organization* 51: 4 (1997), pp.513–553; Narizny, Kevin, On Systemic Paradigms and Domestic Politics: A Critique of the Newest Realism, *International Security* 42: 2 (2017), pp.155–190.

<sup>4</sup> Constructivism criticised state-centric views of structural realism and neoliberalism as well as their failure to predict the end of the Cold War. It sheds light on ideational factors as key determinants of states' behaviours. See Ruggie, John, Continuity and Transformation in the World Polity: Toward a Neorealist Synthesis', *World Politics* 35: 2 (1983), pp.261–285; Wendt, Alexander E., The Agent-Structure Problem in International Relations Theory, *International Organization* 41: 3 (1987), pp.335–370; Wendt, Alexander E., Anarchy is what States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics', *International Organization* 46: 2 (1992), pp.391–425.

<sup>5</sup> Traditionally, Foreign Policy Analysis has dealt with individual countries' foreign policy making, while IR scholars focused more on the dynamic interactions among states. See Holsti, K. J., National Role Conceptions in the Study of Foreign Policy, *International Studies Quarterly* 14: 3 (1970), pp.233–309; Hudson, Valerie M; Foreign Policy Analysis: Actor-Specific Theory and the Ground of International Relations, *Foreign Policy Analysis* 1:1 (2005), pp.1–30.

<sup>6</sup> Details of NCR framework will be discussed in Chapter II.

<sup>7</sup> Even among structural realist, there has been a difference regarding ultimate objectives of states; while defensive realist argues that states act for ensuring survival, offensive realist believes that states ultimately seek the expansion of power by risking their security. Waltz, 1979; and Mearsheimer, John J.,

*The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, New York: W.W. Norton, 2003; Snyder, Jack, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991, pp.11–12.

<sup>8</sup> Waltz, 1993.

<sup>9</sup> Abe had adhered to the Three Non-Nuclear Principles through his administration. See Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), Address by the Prime Minister at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Ceremony, August 6, 2020, [https://japan.kantei.go.jp/98\\_abe/statement/202008/00001.html](https://japan.kantei.go.jp/98_abe/statement/202008/00001.html).

<sup>10</sup> Green, Michael J., *Japan's Reluctant Realism*, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002, pp.6–7

<sup>11</sup> Hughes, Christopher W., *Japan's Remilitarization*, London: Routledge, 2009; Hughes, Christopher W., Japan's Resentful Realism and Balancing China's Rise, *Chinese Journal of International Politics* 9:2 (2016), pp.109–150, p.116.

<sup>12</sup> Samuels, Richard J. and Narushige Michishita, Hugging and Hedging: Japanese Grand Strategy in the 21st Century, Nau, Henry R., and Deepa M. Ollapally eds., *Worldviews of Aspiring Powers: Domestic Foreign Policy Debates in China, India, Iran, Japan, and Russia*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2012; Samuels, Richard J., *Securing Japan: Tokyo's Grand Strategy and the Future of East Asia*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008., Heginbotham, Eric, and Richard J. Samuels, Japan's Dual Hedge, *Foreign Affairs* 81: 5 (2002), pp.110–21.

<sup>13</sup> Smith, Sheila A., *Intimate Rivals: Japanese Domestic Politics and a Rising China*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2015.

<sup>14</sup> Smith, Sheila A., *Japan Rearmed: The Politics of Military Power*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2019.

<sup>15</sup> As for constructivist view on Japan's security policy, see Singh, Bhubhindar, Japan's Security Policy: From a Peace State to an International State, *Pacific Review* 21: 3 (2008), pp.303–325; Oros, Andrew L., *Japan's Security Renaissance: New Policies and Politics for the Twenty-First Century*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2017.

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- <sup>22</sup> Snyder, R. C. et al., *Decision-Making as an Approach, to the Study of International Politics*, Princeton: Princeton University, Organizational Behavior Section, 1954; Hudson, 2005, p. 8.
- <sup>23</sup> Schweller, 2004, p.159.
- <sup>24</sup> Taliaferro, Jeffrey W., State Building for Future Wars: Neoclassical Realism and the Resource-Extractive State, *Security Studies* 15: 3 (2006), pp.464–495. See also Lobell, Steven E., Norrin M. Ripsman, and Jeffrey W. Taliaferro eds., *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- <sup>25</sup> Juneau, Thomas, *Squandered Opportunity: Neoclassical Realism and Iranian Foreign Policy*, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2015.
- <sup>26</sup> Ripsman, et al. 2016, pp.33–35, 61–79.
- <sup>27</sup> Lobell, Steven E., Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, and Norrin M. Ripsman, Conclusion: The State of Neoclassical Realism, in Steven E. Lobell, Norrin M. Ripsman, and Jeffrey W. Taliaferro eds., *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, Chap. 10, pp.282–87.
- <sup>28</sup> Ripsman, et al. 2016. p.34.
- <sup>29</sup> From 1996, when Japan introduced a new electoral system, to July 2021, the average tenure of Japan's prime minister was 821 days. See *Sidōsha (8) Shushō Koutai, Heikin 2-nen de* (Leaders (8) Change of Prime Minister, in Average of Two Years), *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, July 28, 2020, <https://www.nikkei.com/article/DGKKZO74234230X20C21A7PD0000/>.



<sup>30</sup> Shinoda, Tomohito; *Kantei Gaikō: Seiji Ridāsippu no Yukue* (Prime Minister Office's Diplomacy: Direction of Political Leadership), Asahi Sensho, 2004; Shinoda, Tomohito, *Seiji Shudō vs. Kanryō Shihai* (Political Control vs. Bureaucratic Control), Asahi Shimbun Shuppan, 2013; Takenaka, Harukata, *Shushō Shihai: Nihon Seiji no Henbō* (Prime Minister's Control: Changes in Japanese Politics), Chukō Shinsho, 2006.

<sup>31</sup> Kitaoka, Shin'ichi. *Jobun: Anzenhoshō to Goken-ron* (Preface: Security and Protection of the Constitution), in Shin'ichi Kitaoka and Fumiaki Kubo eds., *Kibō no Nichi-Bei Dōmei* (Alliance of Hope), Chuō Kōron sha, 2018.

<sup>32</sup> Samuels 2007; Smith 2015.

<sup>33</sup> MOFA, Japan is Back, Policy Speech by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, D.C., February 22, 2013.

[https://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/pm/abe/us\\_20130222en.html](https://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/pm/abe/us_20130222en.html).

<sup>34</sup> Kitaoka, 2018.

<sup>35</sup> Schreer, Benjamin, After the INF: What Will US Indo-Pacific Allies Do? *The Washington Quarterly* 43: 1 (2020), pp.143–157.

<sup>36</sup> Article 9 of the Japanese constitution articulates that 'aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes. In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.' See The Constitution of Japan, Prime Minister's Office,

[https://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution\\_and\\_government\\_of\\_japan/constitution\\_e.html](https://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution_and_government_of_japan/constitution_e.html). For discussions of Article 9, see Auer, James E., Article Nine of Japan's Constitution: From Renunciation of Armed Force 'Forever' to the Third Largest Defense Budget in the World, *Law and Contemporary Problems* 53: 2 (1990), pp.171–87.

<sup>37</sup> Berger, Thomas U., From Sword to Chrysanthemum: Japan's Culture of Anti-Militarism, *International Security* 17: 4 (1993), pp.119–150.

<sup>38</sup> Smith, 2016.

<sup>39</sup> Hemmings, John, Measuring Shinzo Abe's Impact on the Indo-Pacific, *Asia Pacific Bulletin* 536 (2020); Yoshimatsu, Hidetaka, The Indo-Pacific in Japan's Strategy towards India, *Contemporary Politics* 25: 4 (2019), pp.438–45; Schreer, Benjamin, Australia's 'Special Strategic Relationship' with Japan: Another 'China Choice'?, *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 70: 1 (2016), pp.37–49.

<sup>40</sup> Ichihara, 2018.

<sup>41</sup> Koga, Kei, Japan's 'Indo-Pacific' Question: Countering China or Shaping a New Regional Order?, *International Affairs* 96:1 (2020), pp.49–73; Koga, Kei, Japan's 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific' Strategy: Tokyo's Tactical Hedging and the Implications for ASEAN, *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 41: 2 (2019),

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[https://www.jiia.or.jp/en/ajiss\\_commentary/toward-a-free-and-open-indo-pacific-region-japans-grand-strategy.html](https://www.jiia.or.jp/en/ajiss_commentary/toward-a-free-and-open-indo-pacific-region-japans-grand-strategy.html).

See also Kanehara, Nobukatsu, The Power of Japan and its 'Grand Strategy', in Guibourg Delamotte ed. *Japan's World Power: Assessment, Outlook and Vision*, Routledge, 2018, pp.13–44.

<sup>43</sup> Van Evera, Steven, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press. 1977, Chapter 2. See also, Mahoney, James and Gary Goertz, *A Tale of Two Cultures: Qualitative and Quantitative Research in the Social Sciences*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012.

<sup>44</sup> Beach, Derek and Rasmus Brun Pedersen, *Process-Tracing Methods: Foundations and Guidelines*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013, p.1.

## **Chapter II      Neoclassical Realism Model and Policymaking Process of Abe 2.0**

This chapter provides a theoretical framework based on neoclassical realism (NCR) that will be used to explain the process and outcomes of Abe 2.0's policymaking in the following chapters. Examining the policymaking process proves worthwhile because, as many analysts have already pointed out, Abe 2.0 drew strength from its implementation of numerous policies through the centralisation of power to the prime minister and the Prime Minister's Office (*kantei*), as well as skilful distribution of key positions within the government apparatus.<sup>1</sup> The rest of this chapter briefly reviews how IR theories have been applied to the Japanese case. It then proposes a new NCR framework and explains the nature of the independent and intervening variables that are used in explaining Abe 2.0.

### **1. Literature**

Existing research on Japan's foreign policy has addressed the policymaking process of Japan's diplomacy, especially before the application of IR theory to foreign policy became widespread.<sup>2</sup> From the 1970s to the 1980s, research emphasised the dominant role of bureaucrats, especially in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) and, later the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI), in the post-war Japan's external policies.<sup>3</sup> The making of policy dominated by technocrats represented a so-called 'bureaucratic democracy' which Japanese scholar Iio Jun characterised as antithetical to parliamentary democracy.<sup>4</sup> Taking into account the changes in Japanese public administration in the early-2000s, researchers expanded the scope of their work to consider inter-ministerial competition over external economic policies,<sup>5</sup> the relationship between politicians and bureaucrats,<sup>6</sup> and the impact of public opinion and social norms on policymaking.<sup>7</sup>

One of the most important issues in recent years has been the concentration of power around the prime minister and the policymaking process centred on the *kantei*. After the central government reform initiated by Hashimoto Ryutaro, prime minister from 1996 to 1998, which aimed to give greater policymaking authority to democratically elected politicians, the Koizumi administration from 2001 to 2006 attracted attention as the exemplary case of the *kantei* leadership not only in the literature on Japanese foreign policy,<sup>8</sup> but also in areas such as domestic governance and public administration.<sup>9</sup> Takenaka Harukata distinguished this enhanced leadership style as the '2001 system' which expanded the prime minister's power in policy formulation in terms of legal responsibilities and domestic institutional settings.<sup>10</sup>

Although the literature has clarified some key variables, there is a paucity of coherent frameworks which prioritise these variables in foreign and security policy. Using NCR, Zakowski et al. point out that while international systemic imperatives shape Tokyo's foreign policy, these systemic pressures can influence policy 'only after having been filtered through the biased perceptions of statespersons, ideological and factional cleavages in the ruling parties, bureaucracy-led administrative structures, or constraints stemming from the 'pacifist' Article 9 of the Japanese constitution.'<sup>11</sup> While I agree on the structure-agent model of Zakowski et al in principle, they failed to prioritise of such different domestic intervening variables in the NCR framework. Based on the NCR framework discussed below, this research provides one model that explains the interactions between a crucial structural factor (the rise of more assertive China) and domestic variables (namely leader images, roles of foreign policy executives within the government [FPEs], and intervention by political parties) in line with actual policymaking process in Japan. This framework contributes to a richer conceptualisation of NCR in the Japanese context by illuminating how interactions between structural factors (independent variables) and domestic factors (intervening variables) result in policy changes (dependent variable).

## 2. NCR model of Japan's foreign policy in the 21st century

Building from NCR theory and applying it to the Japanese politics, this research proposes a model of understanding Abe 2.0 policymaking as shown in Figure 2.<sup>12</sup> It assumes that foreign policy outcomes are not only the direct result of systemic pressures. Rather, as Zakowski et al argue, these pressures are mediated by intervening domestic variables, including leaders' perceptions and policy-making processes both within and outside the government apparatus.<sup>13</sup> Through these filtering mechanisms, policy ideas that may be strategically optimal under specific structural conditions gradually become politically optimal.<sup>14</sup>

There are basically two policymaking processes within the government apparatus—we will term them 'top-down' and 'bottom-up'. In Japan, the top-down process starts with core FPEs in the *kantei*, namely the Prime Minister (PM), Chief Cabinet Secretary (CCS), Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary (DCCS), and their close advisors, including special advisors and executive secretaries (Figure 3).<sup>15</sup> The top-down process proceeds when the leadership takes a special interest to a given policy deliberation and its outcome. The PM, consulting with close advisors, mostly at the *kantei*, discusses the importance, feasibility, and risks of policy, and outlines the broad direction and contour of policy objectives to the Cabinet Secretariat.<sup>16</sup> The Cabinet Secretariat, especially the CCS, DCCS and Assistant Chief Cabinet Secretary (ACCS), transforms these policy guidelines into legislation and/or budget allocations, considers the division of labour within the government bureaucracy for implementing policies, and mobilises the resources of ministries to move the policies forward.<sup>17</sup>

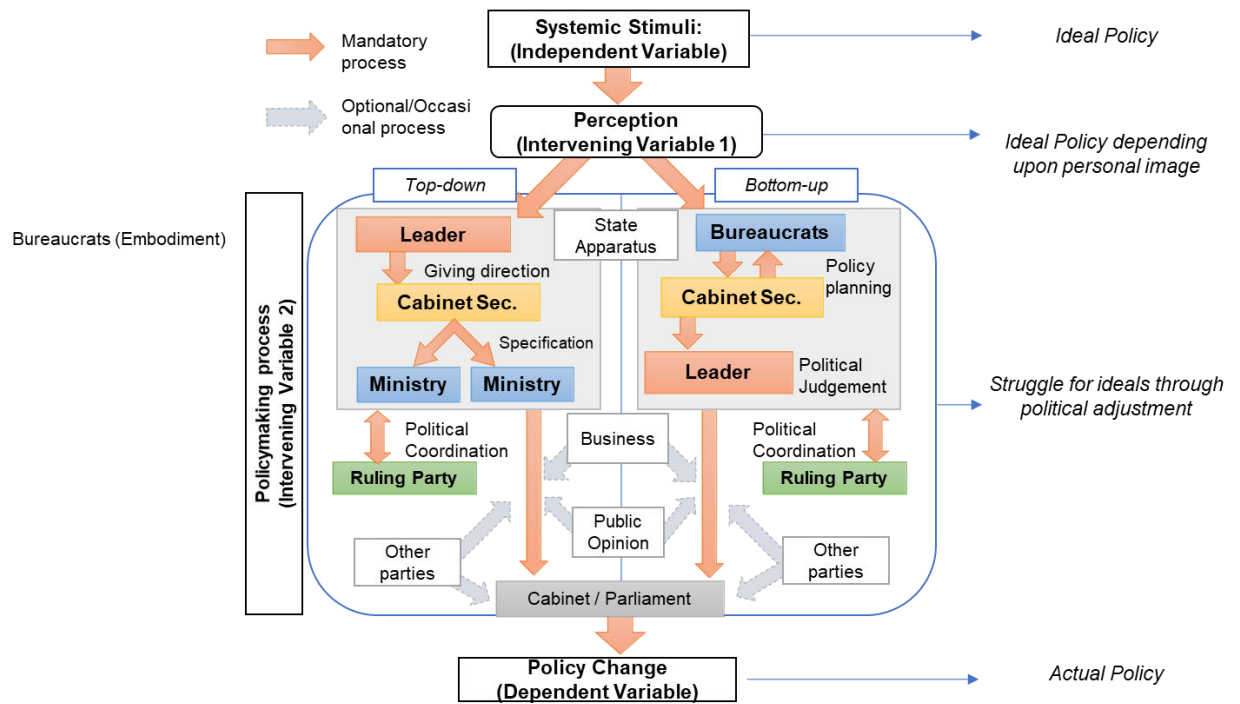
On the other hand, a bottom-up process is also at work. This process regularly arises as part of the routine conduct of foreign affairs, through for example bilateral, regional and multilateral interactions. In these cases, bureaucrats perceive changes, opportunities and risks in the international structure, formulate policy responses and bring issues to the leaders' attention.

Different from the past practice of 'bureaucratic democracy', however, today the Cabinet Secretariat works as a gatekeeper which weighs the interests and preferences of the top leadership that has substantial authority to make decisions based not only on strategic calculations, but also on intra- and inter-party politics, public support, and his or her personal ideology.<sup>18</sup> Also, while MOFA formerly took the initiative to formulate policies in the past, increasing defence and law enforcement cooperation, the securitisation of economic affairs and politicisation of diplomacy has expanded and diversified the range of actors with a voice in the bottom-up process.<sup>19</sup>

Once a given policy becomes fixed within the state apparatus, political adjustment happens mainly between the government and ruling parties. Under Abe 2.0, the ruling coalition was led by the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), that was joined by its junior partner the New Komeito Party (Komeito).<sup>20</sup> Although opposition parties have the potential to shape policies in Diet sessions, it is difficult to do so unless they have either sufficient number of seats in the Diet or strong support from the public. Business interests also aim to have their perspectives on policymaking to secure business and economic interests of Japanese private sectors. However, this research takes public opinion and business interests as peripheral factors, which only become effective when leaders or FPEs take them into account in their political calculation.

The following sections discuss how and to what extent this NCR model fits to the policymaking of Abe 2.0. It divides the model into three stages: 1) interaction between systemic stimuli and leader images; 2) policymaking processes within the government apparatus; and 3) interventions from political parties.

**Figure 2. NCR policy-making model of Japan's foreign policy: Top-down (leader-driven) process and bottom-up (bureaucrats-driven) process**



## **2.1 NCR model and Abe 2.0: Systemic stimuli**

Systemic stimuli, namely a change in the balance of power, is the independent variable for this research. For Japan in the 2010s, the principal systemic stimuli arose from China's rise, growing power, and assertiveness vis-à-vis Japanese sovereignty as well as the shift from the U.S.-centred unipolarity on which Japan relied for its survival to a more bipolar or multipolar international structure.<sup>21</sup>

While Japan had undergone a number of challenges related to national security after the end of the Cold War, the major task for Japan in the 1990s and the early 2000s was to adapt to the U.S.-led international order by fulfilling its international responsibilities in peacekeeping or counter-terrorism.<sup>22</sup> In this post-Cold War period, Japan had been able to take active regional diplomacy after the Asian Financial Crisis in the late 1990s, including its competition against and cooperation with China in the regional economic and political contexts.<sup>23</sup> This active diplomacy in Asia was triggered by American interventionist policies in East Asian nations' financial and economic policies,<sup>24</sup> but also enabled under the U.S. military and economic predominance and sustained a so-called Pax Americana on the basis of U.S. unipolarity.<sup>25</sup> As of 2005, American gross domestic product (GDP) exceeded \$13 trillion while China's was about \$2.3 trillion. At the time, U.S. military expenditure was nearly ten times greater than China's.<sup>26</sup>

After the mid-2000s, however, Japan was concerned over the changing balance of power in the region, especially between China and the United States as well as with Japan itself. China's rise began to significantly affect Japan's systemic environment beginning from around 2010. While China has not overtaken the United States in terms of GDP and military expenditure, China overtook Japan in terms of military expenditure by 2007<sup>27</sup> and nominal GDP in 2010.<sup>28</sup> As Randall Schweller and Xiaoyu Pu put it, the U.S. unipolar distribution of power could give way to either a U.S.-China bipolar system or a multipolar 'great power concert' system as China



worked to undermine U.S. unipolarity.<sup>29</sup> Because of its consistent reliance on the alliance with the United States and the U.S.-led international order, China's comprehensive challenges and its impact on Japan's security environment are the most important systemic factor affecting Japan's foreign and security policy in the 21st century.

## **2.2 NCR model and Abe 2.0: Leader images**

While such structural changes shape the basic direction and contour of Japan's external relations based on realist theory, they do not automatically lead to specific policy outcomes (Figure 2). Foreign policy executives (FPEs), who are 'charged with the conduct of foreign and security policy', play a filtering role as they perceive the incoming systemic stimuli.<sup>30</sup> This perception of FPEs –leader images– is the first intervening variable of this thesis as they are institutionally positioned to be exposed to structural shifts first and decide reactions.

Perceptions of FPEs are not always rational, but affected by multiple environmental and personal variations.<sup>31</sup> In the case of Japan, in addition to China's burgeoning economic and military power, a series of Chinese actions made Beijing a dominant factor in Japanese FPEs' threat perception.<sup>32</sup> For example, after China's nuclear submarine's submerged travelling in Japan's territorial water in the East China Sea, LDP politicians started issuing warnings about China as early as 2005.<sup>33</sup> Okazaki Hisahiko—who would later become Abe's security policy advisor—called for a more strategic approach to China, fearing the possibility that China may use force against Taiwan and would aim to degrade American primacy in Asia.<sup>34</sup> At the same time, China's actions in the mid-2000s was not as assertive as those in the 2010s, and China's rise was generally seen as a great opportunity for Japan, especially economically. In 2002, Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro, who was criticised by China for his visit to the Yasukuni Shrine in the previous year, declared that China's economic growth was not a threat to Japan.<sup>35</sup> In 2006, even

Abe Shinzo, known for his hawkish positions,<sup>36</sup> visited China as his first overseas trip as the prime minister and agreed to a 'mutually beneficial relationship based on common strategic interests' to stabilise Sino-Japanese ties.<sup>37</sup> Even though China's defence spending had already surpassed Japan's around this time, Japanese FPEs did not yet undertake a harder line against China as realist thinking might predict.

The threat perception among FPEs worsened after Japan confronted several challenges from China, including the October 2010 Chinese fishing boat collision with a Japanese Coast Guard ship in Japan's territorial waters in the East China Sea<sup>38</sup> and rapid increases in China's intrusions into the area after the Japanese government bought the Senkaku islands from their private owners in 2012.<sup>39</sup> Despite economic interdependence between Japan and China unchanged or even increased, such structural shifts in the power balance and assertive Chinese actions pushed Japan to act upon realism. Blaming these developments on the policies of the predecessor governments of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) and its efforts to 'degrade' the U.S.-Japan alliance<sup>40</sup>, Abe repeatedly insisted through the election season of late-2012—during which he became party leader and eventually PM—that only he himself and the government led by the LDP could protect Japan.<sup>41</sup> As such, structural shifts cannot solely make Japan to balance against China. The combination of power shift and the changes of leader images exerts influence on the policy outcomes and generates a realist shift in Japanese policy during Abe 2.0.

### **2.3 NCR model and Abe 2.0: Policymaking in the government apparatus**

A second intervening variable which shapes policy outcomes is the policymaking process itself, in which FPEs interact to formulate policy direction and specific policies. While this thesis accepts the variations of perceptions between actors, they only play out within a fixed decision-making process of the government apparatus.<sup>42</sup> While there are inter-ministerial interactions in

Japan, the institutional arrangements and personnel within the *kantei* is essential as Abe 2.0 was characterised by the centralisation of power to the *kantei* both institutionally and through personnel appointments.

To begin, Abe enhanced the power of the *kantei* and especially the Cabinet Secretariat as a means of overcoming bureaucratic stove-piping within and across ministries as a means of strengthening the policymaking capacity available to the *kantei*.<sup>43</sup> The number of special units or divisions under the ACCS was increased from 29 to 37 and the number of officials in the Cabinet Secretariat also increased from 826 in 2012 to 1,141 in 2018.<sup>44</sup> In the seven-years and eight-months of Abe 2.0, Abe kept CCS Suga Yoshihide and Deputy PM and Finance Minister Aso Taro in place, forming 'the foundation of the administration.'<sup>45</sup> While ministers have frequently changed over time, positions of executive secretaries and senior officials at the Cabinet Secretariat were unusually stable, with little turnover (Table 1).<sup>46</sup> Of note, Abe's executive secretary (and later special advisor to the prime minister), Imai Takaya of Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI), became an influential figure in Abe 2.0 as he was deeply involved in foreign policy, especially Japan's policy toward China.<sup>47</sup> Based on this solid and steady line-up of key officials, Abe 2.0 selectively established special units to tackle important agenda items of his administration (Figure 3).

In order to further strengthen his grip on the bureaucracy, Abe utilised the Cabinet Bureau of Personnel Affairs established in May 2014. As CCS Suga explained, the motive behind the establishment of this office was 'to implement strategic personnel assignments to carry out policies of the Cabinet and create an organisational structure that enables bureaucrats to promptly resolve various issues in a uniform and integrated manner by dismantling destructive vertically-segmented administrative structures and fostering public servants who serve the nation and people.'<sup>48</sup> Whilst the idea of establishing the Cabinet Bureau of Personnel Affairs started during

the previous DPJ administrations, Abe 2.0 inherited the idea and skilfully applied it to oversee the appointment of some 600 senior bureaucrats across the government.<sup>49</sup> According to a retired administrative vice minister, because of this organisation, 'bureaucrats who are only mindful of their own promotions are vying for higher posts by showing excessive consideration to the *kantei*.'<sup>50</sup> As a result, despite some resistance,<sup>51</sup> Abe and CCS Suga continued to rein in bureaucrats and mobilised them in support of Abe 2.0 policy objectives.

In foreign and security policy, there are two important aspects of the policymaking process: the enhancement of *kantei*'s ability to make policy; and the development of *kantei*'s intelligence and crisis-management capability. First, the establishment of the National Security Council (NSC) and National Security Secretariat (NSS) within the Cabinet Secretariat was critically important for promoting intra-ministerial cooperation. In 2013, Abe established the NSS which had approximately 70 staff from various ministries as an auxiliary organisation to support the NSC, the control centre of foreign and security policy (Figure 4). The NSC and NSS also served as well-informed consultative bodies to professionalise the *kantei*'s formulation of security policy and enhance civilian control over such matters.<sup>52</sup> Abe appointed Yachi Shotaro, a former vice-minister for foreign affairs during Abe's first administration, as the first Secretary General of the NSS. Two ACCS, Kanehara Nobukatsu of MOFA and Takamizawa Nobushige of Ministry of Defense (MOD), who fathom out international politics and security around Japan and Abe's images, concurrently served as the Deputy Secretaries General of the NSS, facilitating communications between political leaders and bureaucrats, especially when Abe 2.0 pushed the Peace and Security Legislation in 2015.

Second, Abe 2.0 focused on improving the quality of information and intelligence which flowed to the *kantei*. Despite generating some domestic political controversy, Abe saw through the enactment of the Act on the Protection of Specially Designated Secrets in 2013 in order to

advance intelligence sharing with other countries, especially the United States.<sup>53</sup> After the shocking terrorist attacks on a Japanese company in Algeria 2013 and kidnappings of Japanese citizens in Syria in 2015, Abe further promoted the enhancement of intelligence capabilities on terrorism as well.<sup>54</sup> Abe appointed Sugita Kazuhiro—a former police bureaucrat who served as Cabinet Intelligence Officer and Crisis Management Officer, as the DCCS, the position in charge of the overall administration of the *kantei*. Like CCS Suga, Abe kept Sugita in place over his entire second administration.<sup>55</sup> Abe also assigned Kitamura Shigeru—the then Director of Cabinet Intelligence and originally from the National Police Agency—as the head of NSS in 2019. Under Kitamura, the NSS established an economic division in order to address emerging economic-security issues.<sup>56</sup>

These institutional and personnel factors indicate that improvements in the policymaking process inside the state apparatus was an extremely important factor in facilitating changes in the foreign and security policy of Japan. This centralisation of power increased the role of leader images in the translation of systemic stimuli to specific policies. Also, the personnel affairs of the key positions at the *kantei* affect policy outcomes. However, the centralisation of authority to *kantei* does not indicate that the bureaucracy has lost all power in policymaking. Rather, while the politicians gained their leadership of policymaking, the centralised *kantei* still relied on bureaucrats who understood and supported Abe's perceptions and policy directions to realise and implement their preferred policy.

Figure 3. Japan's Cabinet Secretariat and National Security Secretariat<sup>57</sup>

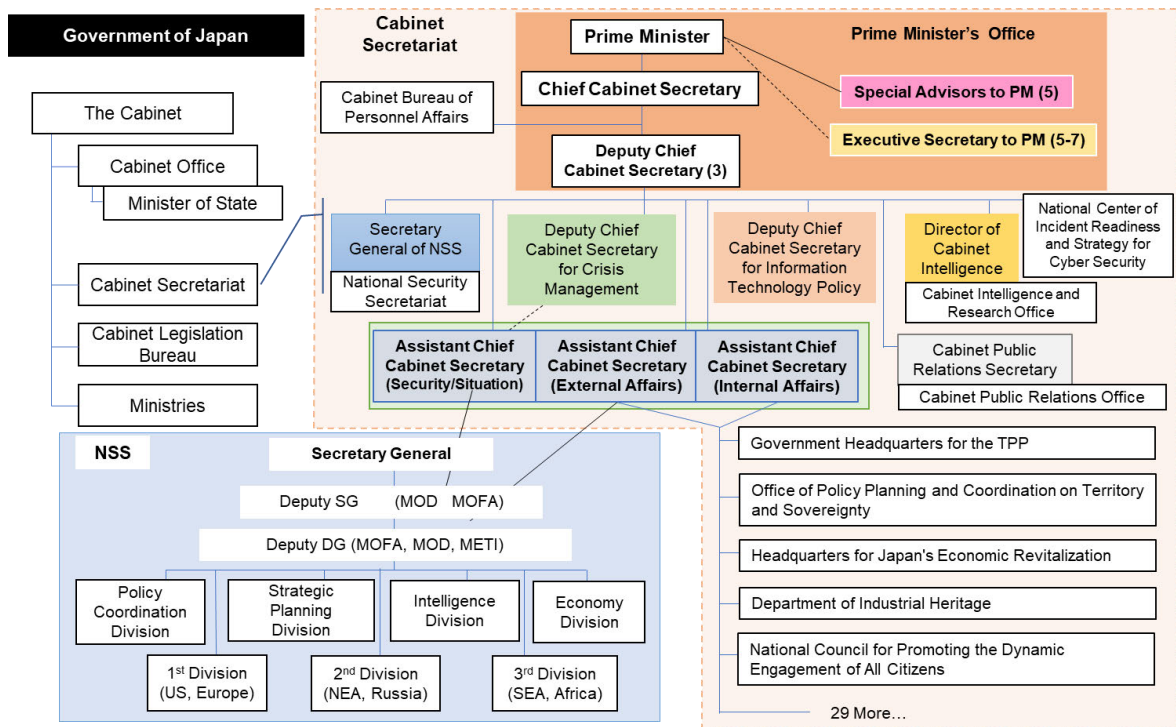
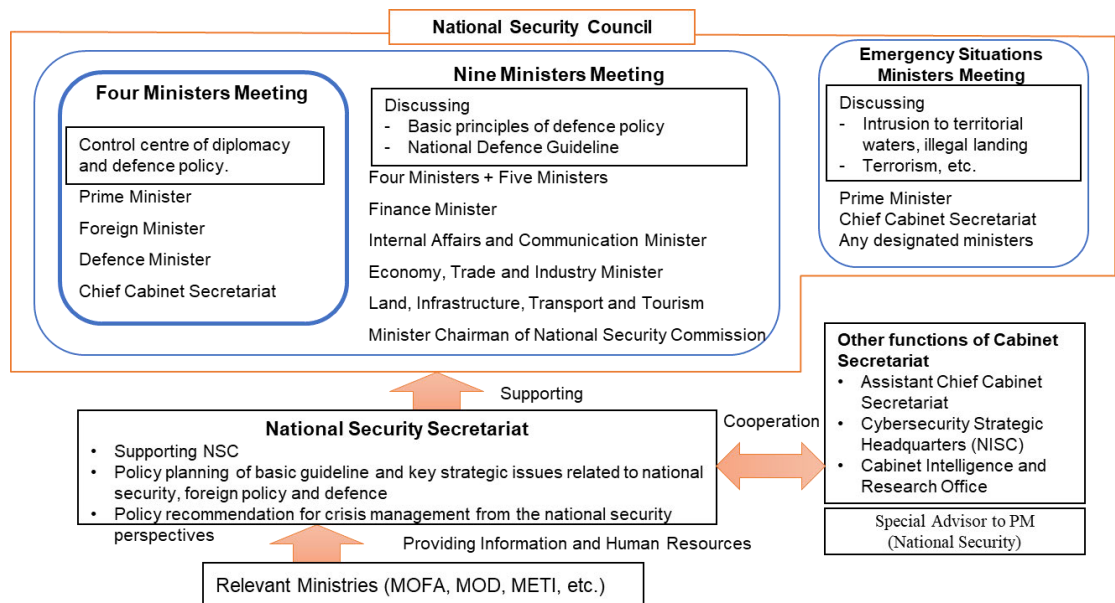


Figure 4. Japan's National Security Council<sup>58</sup>



**Table1. Number of officials during Abe 2.0 (7 years 8 months)<sup>59</sup>**

<i>Position (number of position)</i>	<i>Number of official during Abe 2.0</i>
<i>Prime Minister (1)</i>	1 (Abe Shinzo)
<i>Deputy PM (1)</i>	1 (Aso Taro)
<i>Cabinet Ministers (12) *</i>	6.1 (average: a.)
<i>MOFA (1)</i>	3
<i>MOD (1)</i>	6
<i>State Minister (9) *</i>	4.25 (a.)
<i>Chief Cabinet Secretary (1)</i>	1 (Suga Yoshihide)
<i>Deputy CCS</i>	2.6 (a.)
<i>DCCS: Bureaucrat (1)</i>	1 (Sugita Kazuhiro)
<i>DCCS: Parliamentarian (2)</i>	3.5 (a.)
<i>NSS SG (1) Jan. 2014-</i>	2 (Yachi & Kitamura)
<i>Crisis Management (1)</i>	3
<i>Information/Technology (1)</i>	2
<i>Executive Secretaries to PM (6-7)</i>	1.7 (a.)
<i>Lead ES (1)</i>	1 (Imai Takaya)
<i>Assistant CCS</i>	3.0 (a.)
<i>ACCS: Internal Affairs (1)</i>	3
<i>ACCS: External Affairs (1)</i>	2 ** (Kanehara Nobukatsu)
<i>ACCS: Crisis Management (1)</i>	4
<i>Cabinet Intelligence (1)</i>	2 *** (Kitamura Shigeru)
<i>Public Relations (1)</i>	2 **** (Hasegawa Eiichi)

\* The number of cabinet/state ministers varies depending on the administration.

\*\* Kanehara has been in the position for 6 years 10months

\*\*\* Kitamura has been in the position for 6 years 8 months.

\*\*\*\* Hasegawa has been in the position for 7 years 2 months.

## **2.4 NCR model and Abe 2.0: Intervention outside the government apparatus**

Finally, it is essential to understand interventions by other political actors outside the formal government apparatus. While the government apparatus is the primary actor in any countries' policymaking (Figure 2), NCR scholars argue that a country's state apparatus cannot be assumed to possess exclusive influence on all the nation's decisions and capabilities.<sup>60</sup> Ripsman et al. point out that state-society relations—interactions between the central institutions of the state and various economic or societal groups—can affect 'whether state leaders have the power to extract, mobilize, and harness the nations' power'.<sup>61</sup> In the context of Japanese politics, while several factors external to the state apparatus may influence the administration's ability to implement policy, three factors should be noted given their central importance to policymaking in Japan: intra-party consolidation of power within the ruling party; support within the general public; and the role of the government's coalition partner.

During Abe 2.0, the intra-party consolidation within the LDP and the general public did not become a significant intervening variable. Abe enjoyed a relatively high level of popularity from the beginning of his second administration. On 15 December 2012, Abe, as a leader of the LDP, won a landslide victory in the general election, gaining 294 seats—just over 61%—in the lower house of the Japanese Diet.<sup>62</sup> While it was not so much a show of solid support for the LDP as a reflection of dissatisfaction with the previous DPJ administrations,<sup>63</sup> Abe went on to win the upper house election in July 2013 and the snap election in December 2014. The ruling LDP overwhelmed other oppositions in terms of the number of seats in the Diet (Figure 5) and in general approval ratings (Figure 6). Compared to the previous LDP administrations, Abe 2.0 had been stable in the public approval ratio (Figure 7). This created a strong foundation for Abe within the ruling party. While Abe had a difficult fight with Ishiba Shigeru in intra-party voting to lead the LDP in 2012,<sup>64</sup> he gained re-election without a vote in 2015 and was re-elected in 2018.<sup>65</sup>



By consolidating his position in the LDP, and backed by public support, Abe shifted his focus from economic policy to controversial security policy as well as potential constitutional amendments.<sup>66</sup>

On the other hand, the LDP's coalition with Komeito appeared to be an intervening variable. The LDP-Komeito coalition, which began in 1999, enjoyed a mutually beneficial relationship: for the LDP, Komeito mobilised votes; for Komeito, it was able to influence policies as a member of the governing coalition.<sup>67</sup> Accordingly, most LDP candidates in primary elections today rely heavily on the mobilising capacity of Komeito and its affiliate, the Soka Gakkai, and need Komeito's help to win.<sup>68</sup> As discussed in Chapter III, despite Abe's stable political standing, he nevertheless agreed to some adjustments in his security policy reforms after consultations with Komeito.<sup>69</sup> While LDP held a majority in both houses of the Diet as of 2018, and Komeito held only 10% of the seats in the lower house and 20% in the upper house, their interdependence is an essential intervening variable for better understanding Abe 2.0's policymaking.

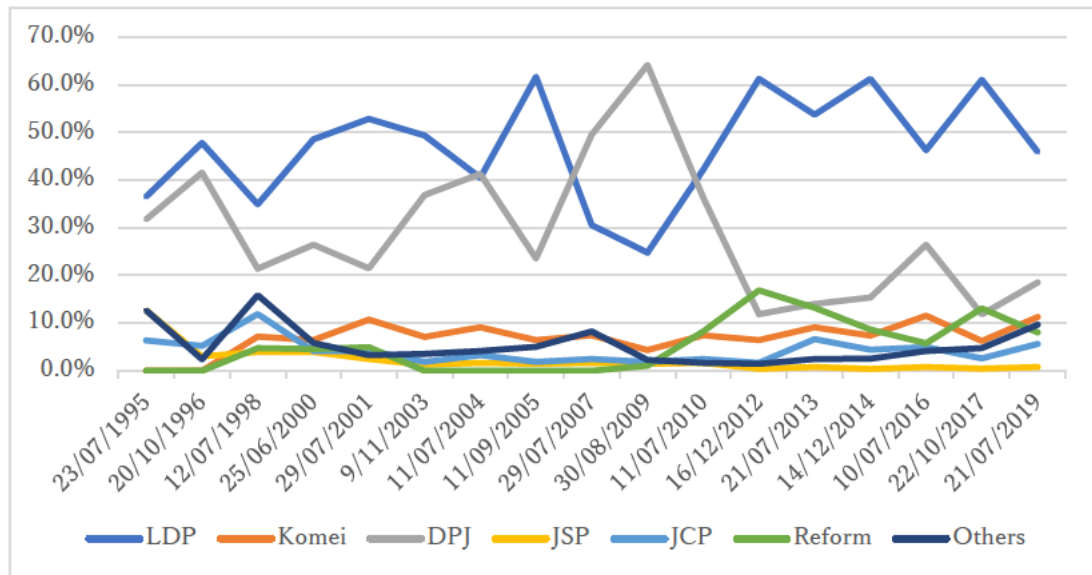
### **3. Summary**

This chapter provides an examination of how Abe policy context operated informed by some elements of NCR theory. The framework clarifies the independent, dependent and intervening variables of that are central to the analysis and the causal mechanisms in the making of Japan's foreign and security policy. Following the literature of NCR, it shows that changes in the international structure constitutes the independent variable to stimulate Japan's realist shift while domestic variables intervened to solidify or mediate the impact of systemic stimuli. Leader images of structural factors work as a filter to affect policy outcomes. The policymaking process in the government apparatus impose limits on the realisation of leaders' policies, requiring that leaders hold strong control over government institutions and bureaucrats. Finally, the government's relations with society and coalition partner also shape policymaking. Without

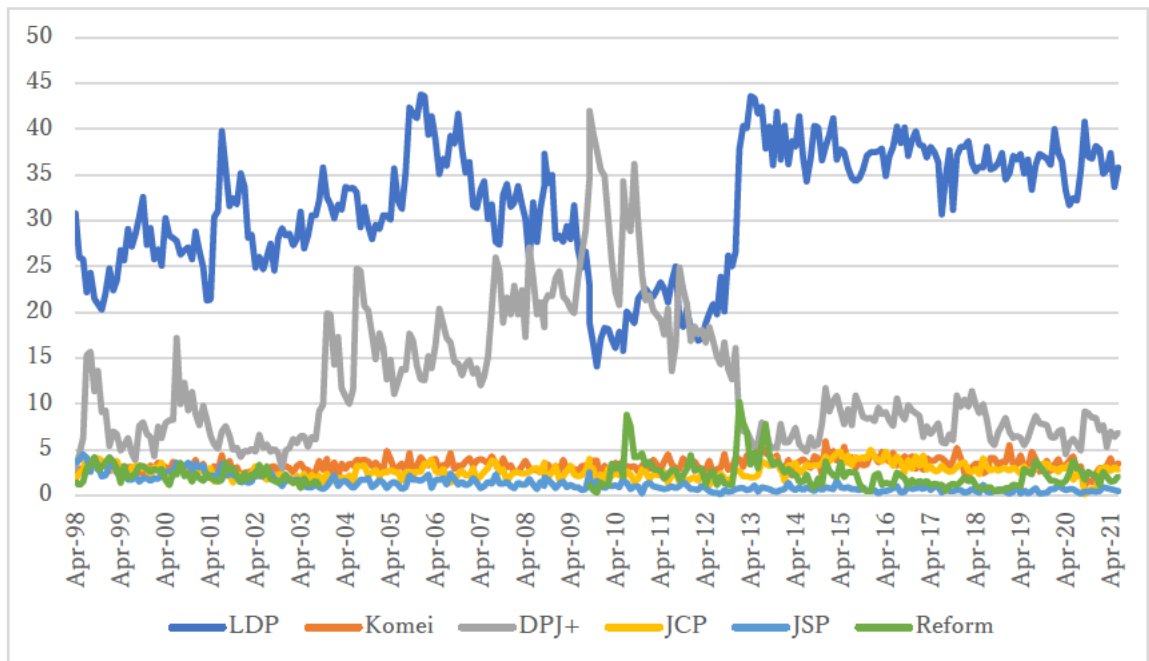
strong political capital, leaders will struggle to implement their policies in the face of countervailing societal preferences or pressure from coalition partners. This NCR framework shows that, while systemic stimuli continue to be the primary driving force for policy change, the government can implement strategically ideal policies only after accounting for and having control over these intervening variables. The following three chapters use case studies to further elaborate the relevance of the NCR framework to explain Abe 2.0 foreign and security policies.

**Figure 5. Occupation of parliamentary seats by party/group (July 1995 - July 2019)**

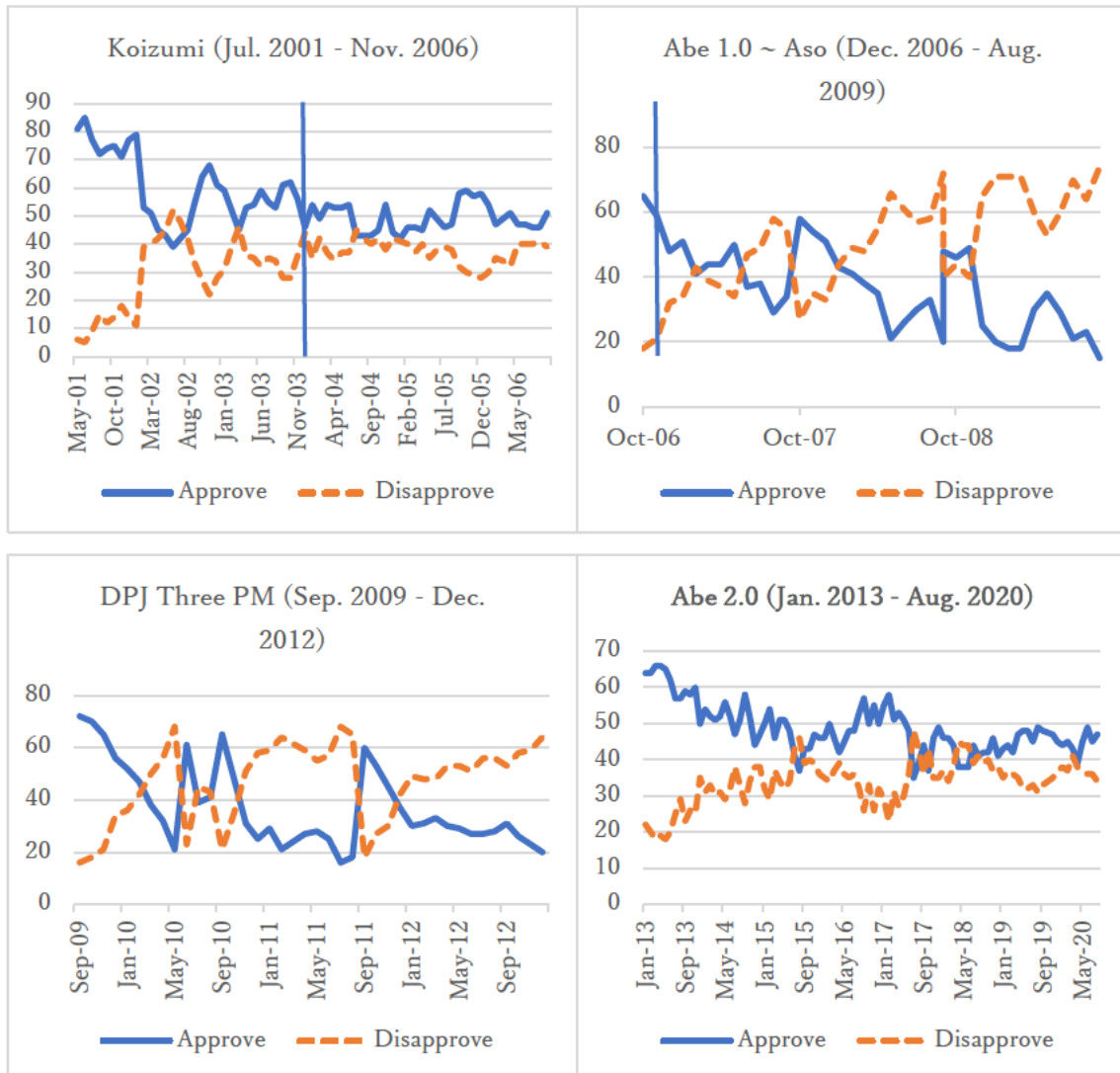
Percentage of the total seats\*70



**Figure 6. Approval rate by party (1998 - 2020)<sup>71</sup>**



**Figure 7. Administrations' Approval ratio (From July 2001 to August 2020)<sup>72</sup>**



## Endnotes

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<sup>44</sup> Counting only national public officers engaged in regular services. See Cabinet Secretariat, Budget, <https://www.cas.go.jp/jp/yosan/index.html>.

<sup>45</sup> Only Aso and Suga were in the same ministerial position throughout Abe 2.0. See *Abe shushō, Asō hokusōri ya Suga Chōkan no ryūnin wo hyōmei* (Prime Minister Abe Announces Deputy Prime Minister Aso and Secretary Suga Remain in Office.), Nippon Television News Network, September 27, 2018, <https://www.news24.jp/articles/2018/09/27/04405063.html>.

- <sup>46</sup> Abe's executive secretary (and later special advisor to the prime minister), Imai Takaya of METI, executive secretary of foreign affairs, Hasegawa Eiichi (Cabinet Public Relations Secretary) and Izumi Hiroto, and DCCS Sugita Kazuhiro were not replaced in the first 6 years (Table 1).
- <sup>47</sup> Details will be discussed in Chapter 4.
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- <sup>58</sup> Chijiwa 2015, Kanehara 2021.
- <sup>59</sup> As for the names of positions, refer to the Government of Japan, Government Directory, <https://www.japan.go.jp/directory/index.html>.
- <sup>60</sup> Schweller, Randall, *Unanswered Threats: Political Constraints on the Balance of Power*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006; Taliaferro, Jeffery W., State Building for Future Wars: Neoclassical Realism and the Resource-Extractive State, *Security Studies* 15:3 (2006), pp.464-495

<sup>61</sup> Ripsman et al, 2016, pp.70-71.

<sup>62</sup> Two-third majority is a requisite for proposing a constitutional amendment. It also enables the lower house to pass legislation denied in the upper house.

<sup>63</sup> *Minshu Kōyaku Hatan, Yoron no Hanpatsu Maneku: Nidai Seitōsei Gakeppuchi* (Failure of DPJ Policy Promises Leads to Public Disenchantment: Two-party System in Danger), *Asahi Shimbun*, December 17, 2012, <http://digital.asahi.com/senkyo/sousenkyo46/news/TKY201212160185.html>.

<sup>64</sup> *Abe Shinzo sin sōsai ga tanjō* (Abe Shinzo, the New President of LDP), LDP Official Website, September 26, 2012, [https://www.jimin.jp/sousai12\\_top.html](https://www.jimin.jp/sousai12_top.html).

<sup>65</sup> LDP party conference in March 2017 approved a proposal to amend the party's rule to limit the term of office of the LDP president from the current 'two consecutive terms of six years' to 'three consecutive terms of nine years.' See Abe Reelected as LDP Leader, Securing Historical 3<sup>rd</sup> Term, NHK World Japan, September 20, 2018, <https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/backstories/248/>.

<sup>66</sup> Abe, Shinzo, Inauguration Speech, December 26, 2012, [https://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/96\\_abe/statement/2012/1226kaiken.html](https://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/96_abe/statement/2012/1226kaiken.html).

<sup>67</sup> 20 Years of LDP-Komeito Coalition Government, Jiji Press, October 2, 2019, [https://www.jiji.com/jc/graphics?p=ve\\_pol\\_politics20191002j-03-w660](https://www.jiji.com/jc/graphics?p=ve_pol_politics20191002j-03-w660).

<sup>68</sup> *Kyosan Tō ga Daiyakushin wo Togeta Futatsu no Riyū toha? Nihonjin ha Nō to Ieru Seitō wo Motometeiru* (Two Reasons for the Japan Communist Party's Major Breakthrough: Japanese People Want a Party that can Say No), *Toyo Keizai Online*, December 17, 2014, <https://toyokeizai.net/articles/-/56082?display=b>.

<sup>69</sup> Details will be discussed in Chapter 3.

<sup>70</sup> This does not distinguish between the lower and upper house. Author made based on NHK, History of Lower and Upper House Election in Japan, <https://www.nhk.or.jp/senkyo/database/history/>.

<sup>71</sup> Author made based on NHK, Public Polling, <https://www.nhk.or.jp/senkyo/shijiritsu/>.

<sup>72</sup> Author made based on NHK, Public Polling, <https://www.nhk.or.jp/senkyo/shijiritsu/>.

### **Chapter III. Case 1: Security Policy and Alliance Management**

Under Abe 2.0, Japan radically reformed its security policy, deepened the U.S.-Japan alliance, strengthened its self-defence capabilities, and promoted security cooperation with other like-minded countries with which it shares values and strategic interests. Based on structural realism, the Abe administration's proactive security policy can be explained as an attempt to balance a rising China. However, structural realism cannot explain why policy changes occurred during Abe 2.0, and not before, when China surpassed Japan's gross domestic product (GDP) or when China surpassed Japan in defence spending. Applying the neoclassical realist (NCR) framework presented in Chapter II, this chapter examines how the interaction between systemic stimuli and domestic intervening variables brought about Japan's security policy reforms and the enhancement of the U.S.-Japan alliance. As the alliance management and domestic security policy reforms in Japan are highly interconnected, this chapter discusses both interactively rather than separately.

#### **1. Security policy reforms and alliance management under Abe 2.0**

Abe 2.0 steadily took steps toward reforming Japan's security policy, aiming to enhance deterrence not by pursuing an independent security policy, but by enabling Japan to play bigger roles in the alliance with the United States. After the end of the Cold War, although Japan had gradually lifted self-imposed restrictions on its security policy,<sup>1</sup> Japan has consistently adhered to the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty, in which the U.S. provides Japan with defence obligations (Article 5), including the nuclear umbrella, and security guarantees in Japan's surrounding areas (Article 4), in exchange for the right to operate U.S. military bases in Japan (Article 6).<sup>2</sup> During Abe 2.0, while the basic relationship between U.S. forces and Japan's Self-Defence Force

(SDF)—known as ‘spear and shield’ relations—was unchanged and remained a prerequisite for Japan’s security policy, Abe legislated fundamental changes in Japan’s domestic security policy and aimed to enhance deterrent power of the U.S.-Japan alliance.<sup>3</sup>

### **1.1 Security policy reforms**

Abe implemented security policy reforms step by step. First, the administration established a control centre for national security policy under prime minister’s direct leadership. In September 2013, Abe 2.0 established the Advisory Panel on National Security and Defense Capabilities to formulate not only the National Defense Program Guideline (NDPG), but also Japan’s first National Security Strategy in the post-war era.

Following organisational reforms and the establishment of basic policies, Abe began to address three fundamental impediments to the enhancement of the alliance: underdeveloped protection of national intelligence; restrictions on arms exports and the research and development (R&D) of military technology; and the existing constitutional interpretation which did not allow the exercise of the right of collective self-defence. First, as discussed in Chapter II, Abe 2.0 reformed institutional arrangements of national intelligence and, in December 2013, adopted the Act on the Protection of Specially Designated Secrets, which stipulates penalties for leaks of state secrets by government officials.<sup>4</sup> In the context of security policy and the alliance, this act changed Japan’s weak protection system for national intelligence. Prior to this act, Japan frequently received requests from the United States to develop a better system for protecting secret and sensitive information.<sup>5</sup> Kitamura Shigeru, who, as the cabinet intelligence officer, was in charge of advancing this legislation, recalled that ‘the starting point for information exchange is that both sides have the same level of information protection systems,’ and he evaluates that the enactment of the act dramatically improved the quality and quantity of information exchange between Japan

and the United States.<sup>6</sup> Actually, the number of agreements on the security of information has increased after the enactment of the legislation, and currently Japan now has such agreements with nine countries.<sup>7</sup>

Second, Abe 2.0 also took steps to lift restrictions on arms exports and the sharing of defence technologies.<sup>8</sup> Traditionally, Japan had dealt with arms exports in a careful manner in accordance with the traditional 'Three Principles of Arms Exports'.<sup>9</sup> This gradually changed In December 2011 when the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) Cabinet Secretary Fujimura Osamu issued a statement to loosen the restrictions and to exempt some overseas transfers of defence equipment.<sup>10</sup> Following this reform, Abe 2.0's Three Principles on the Transfer of Defence Equipment and Technology, announced in April 2014, went one step farther to promote joint R&D of weapons with other countries,<sup>11</sup> that applied in particular to Japan's participation in the global logistics sustainment program for the F-35 fighter-jet.<sup>12</sup> Abe 2.0 institutionalised this by establishing the Acquisition, Technology and Logistics Agency within the Ministry of Defense (MOD) to exclusively coordinate R&D cooperation in October 2015.<sup>13</sup> As of November 2021, agreements for the transfer of defence equipment and technology have been concluded with nine countries, and with some projects already implemented.<sup>14</sup>

Third, the single-most important security policy reform implemented by Abe 2.0 was the enactment of legislation that allows for the exercise of the right of collective self-defence in the event of an armed attack on the United States or other countries with close ties to Japan.<sup>15</sup> In February 2013, Abe re-established the Advisory Panel on Reconstruction of the Legal Basis for Security, which was previously established by the first Abe administration in May 2007. Its clear objective was to change the 1972 Legislative Bureau interpretation that would prohibit the exercise of the right of collective self-defence. Based on the advisory panel's report, Abe 2.0 adopted a limited form of collective self-defence<sup>16</sup> and issued a cabinet decision to adopt a new

constitutional interpretation in July 2014.<sup>17</sup> After inter-party coordination with New Komeito Party (Komeito) between February and May 2015, Abe 2.0 submitted the Peace and Security Legislation to the diet, which added two new 'situations' in Japan's national defence: emergency situations other than armed attack (*Jūyō Eikyō Jitai*) and survival-threatening situations (*Sonritsu Kiki Jitai*).<sup>18</sup> By adding these two situations, the legislation enabled Japan to conditionally enact the right of collective self-defence.<sup>19</sup>

In addition, Abe 2.0 reinforced Japan's defence postures through upgrading NPDGs in 2013 and 2018.<sup>20</sup> The 2013 NDPG called for building up of a Dynamic Joint Defense Force, which enables the SDF to achieve maritime supremacy and air superiority, seamlessly and flexibly.<sup>21</sup> Based on the recognition that security situations surrounding Japan became increasingly severe, uncertain and expanding in new domains (space, cyberspace and electromagnetic spectrum), the 2018 NPDG and the Medium Term Defense Program (MTDP FY 2019 - FY 2023) prioritised in strengthening capabilities necessary for cross-domain operations.<sup>22</sup> Based on these plans, in conventional capabilities, Abe 2.0 decided to acquire stand-off missiles and to convert multi-function helicopter carrier destroyers (DDH Izumo-class).<sup>23</sup> Moreover, Abe increased Japanese military presence on the southwestern islands in the East China Sea, along with a network of anti-ship and anti-aircraft missiles.<sup>24</sup>

## 1.2 Alliance management

Based on these domestic reforms, Abe 2.0 enhanced the alliance throughout the Obama and Trump administrations. Initially, Abe's visit to the Yasukuni Shrine in December 2013 shook U.S.-Japan relations as Abe's visit deteriorated his reputation as a rightist at the expense of his pragmatic side in Washington.<sup>25</sup>

However, bilateral relations steadily progressed as Abe expressed his willingness to address the issue of the right of collective self-defence and to join the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) negotiations during his first visit to Washington in March 2013. In his first visit to Japan, Obama officially stated that 'Article 5 [of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty] covers all territories under Japan's administration, including the Senkaku Islands' in April 2014.<sup>26</sup> The trust between the two governments peaked at Abe's historic address at the U.S. Congress in April 2015 which underscored his determination to enhance the alliance.<sup>27</sup> Abe's 2015 visit to Washington coincided with the update of the U.S.-Japan Defense Guidelines. The new guideline reflects the potential enactment of collective self-defence, which would occur three-months later, articulating that Japan can intercept missiles targeting the U.S. and protect U.S. ships from being attacked, as well as provide supply and transportation support to U.S. forces.<sup>28</sup> The solidification of bilateral relations during the Obama administration culminated in 2016 when Obama visited Hiroshima as he attended the Group of 7 (G7) Ise-shima Summit in May, and Abe visited Pearl Harbour in December, symbolising the historic reconciliation between Japan and the United States.

Abe quickly responded to the election of Donald Trump who, during the presidential campaign, criticised U.S. alliances as one-sided and unfair and urged Japan to bear more cost of the costs of stationing U.S. troops in Japan.<sup>29</sup> Recognising that Trump was a very unique president, Abe cautiously stated that 'Japan's alliance with the United States was the foundation of peace and prosperity in Asia', and that 'the alliance would be increasingly important whoever became president' as of May 2016.<sup>30</sup> After the election, Abe became the first foreign leader to unofficially meet the president-elect in his residence in New York on 17 November 2016.<sup>31</sup> Throughout the Trump administration, Abe repeatedly emphasised the importance of the United States' military presence in Asia, especially in his meetings with Trump.<sup>32</sup> While Abe had 14 face-to-face meetings and 37 phone-calls with Trump,<sup>33</sup> he recalled those meetings as



‘repeatedly persuading Mr Trump’ that Japan bears more than 70% of the costs incurred by the stationing of U.S. troops in Japan, and that Japan’s economic contribution job creations in the United States.<sup>34</sup>

While Abe could not prevent Trump from withdrawing from the TPP or imposing tariffs on Japanese steel, Abe succeeded in selling the idea of Free and Open Indo-Pacific and finding common ground in their perception of China.<sup>35</sup> One Japanese official evaluates Trump’s confrontational China policy by saying that that ‘Japan finally has someone in the White House who properly recognizes and appreciates the challenge’.<sup>36</sup> Abe was ultimately able to gain Trump’s support for the U.S.-Japan alliance as well as his support and even appreciation of Abe’s Free and Open Indo-Pacific concept to redefine American foreign policy.

### **1.3 Limitations of realist shift under Abe 2.0**

Despite the massive reforms undertaken by Abe 2.0, these reforms still appear to go only halfway from the structural realist perspective. Japan faces not only China, a military powerhouse that possesses nuclear weapons and that has fanned tensions over maritime conflict of interests, but also faces North Korea, which aggressively conducts missile and nuclear tests and views Japan and the United States as its potential enemies. This makes Japan’s security environment one of the most challenging on the planet today. According to some structural realists, who assume that no country can ultimately be trusted, Japan should have bolstered its independent military capabilities and even pursued its own nuclear options.<sup>37</sup>

In reality, however, Japan has not sought an autonomous security policy, but maintained the alliance with the United States which offers significant advantages for Japan, including nuclear deterrence, mutual defence obligations, access to military technology, and opportunities to improve the capabilities of the SDF through joint exercises. Even in the debates over the right

of collective self-defence, Abe rejected the idea to fully permit the exercise of that right.<sup>38</sup> Regarding Japan's defence budget, Abe 2.0 has increased defence spending every year from 2012 to 2020, after ten consecutive years of cuts from 2002, to a record high of 5.3 trillion yen in 2020.<sup>39</sup> However, the MTDP for 2018-23 sets a target of 25.5 trillion yen for defence spending over that period, making it difficult to increase the defence budget in a flexible manner.<sup>40</sup> While North Atlantic Treaty Organization countries, Australia, South Korea and others are spending the equivalent of 2% of their GDP on defence, Japan, which arguably faces a more severe security environment, remains restrained in its defence expenditures, spending only 1.2% of its GDP in 2020.<sup>41</sup>

Another seemingly puzzling factor for Japan's defence policy is its largely defensive posture. Based on the principle of 'Exclusively Defense-Oriented Policy' (*Senshu Bouei*), Japan uses its military only when it is under armed attack by an enemy, and even then, it will limit its forces to the minimum necessary for self-defence. Abe repeatedly stated that *senshu bouei* is 'a natural premise.'<sup>42</sup> This policy of defensive pragmatism is, to a certain extent, politically understandable, but in a situation where some neighbouring countries have increased nuclear-armed missiles, the cost of maintaining an overly defensive posture appears also extraordinarily high as an appropriate deterrence necessitates offensive capabilities to guarantee retaliation. Although there is an ongoing debate on the capability to attack enemy bases, Abe 2.0 maintained an extremely self-restrained policy on the use of force against other countries. Also, Abe 2.0 failed to enact a constitutional amendment despite gaining the supermajority needed for proposing a constitutional amendment in both houses of the Diet in the 2017 general election. The fact is that Abe's realist shift was limited to urgent reforms and did not touch on fundamental constitutional issues.

In addition, in relation to constitutional restrictions, Abe 2.0 could not fundamentally change the restrictions on the use of weapons by the SDF. While it is true that the peace and security legislation expanded the circumstances in which the SDF may use force, that expansion was not open-ended: in the future, adding new circumstances where force could be used still requires changing different legislations each time.<sup>43</sup> Because the SDF and Japan Coast Guard (JCG) are restrained by Article 7 of the Police Duties Execution Law, they are not allowed to use weapons unless in the cases of legitimate self-defence or emergency evacuation in principle (although the SDF has more exemptions). As Jimbo Ken points out, the SDF, as well as JCG, is still limited in its flexibility to use force in certain grey-zone situations.<sup>44</sup> Even for international operations, the strict criteria for the use of weapons requires the consent of the parties involved in the conflict and adherence to the principle of proportionality<sup>45</sup>, thereby maintaining unique restrictions on the SDF when conducting such activities.<sup>46</sup>

## **2. NCR Analysis**

The NCR framework will explain the mixture of the accomplished security policy reforms and remaining abnormalities by examining intervening variables, including leader images, policymaking process within the government apparatus, and inter-party relations. Although it was certainly Abe himself who played a central role in changing Japan's security policy thanks to his political capital, technocrats who have realist mindsets played a significant role in the process of formulating legislations. Regarding the inter-party relations, the partnership with the coalition partner of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), Komeito, also prevented a full-scale realist shift which could have potentially consisted of full-fledged collective self-defence, massive increases of the defence budget, and constitutional amendment.

## **2.1 Leader images: Abe's realist mindset and increasing threat perception on China**

As a politician, Abe consistently worked on Japan's defence policy and the U.S.-Japan security cooperation. In 2006, Abe himself perceived Japan's pacifism as damaging Japan's international reputation, saying other countries view Japan's unwillingness to participate in upholding international security as 'cunning'<sup>47</sup> and arguing that collective self-defence is the key to Japan's contribution to regional security.<sup>48</sup> During his leadership as the opposition party leader, Abe noted that 'the South China Sea seems set to become a "Lake Beijing"... a sea deep enough for the People's Liberation Army's navy to base their nuclear-powered attack submarines, capable of launching missiles with nuclear warheads' and concluded 'nothing is more important for Japan than to reinvest in its alliance with the United States.'<sup>49</sup> When Abe 2.0 began, this sense of urgency and the need to restore the alliance with the United States pervaded the minds policymakers, including Abe, owing to the degradation of Japan's security environment and DPJ's mismanagement of the U.S.-Japan relations.

As a result, Abe 2.0 was off to a good start. Abe already started reiterating the importance of the principle of the rule of law in Japan's diplomacy during his first visit to Southeast Asia in January 2013, keeping China's assertive behaviours in the South China Sea in his mind.<sup>50</sup> His foreign minister, Kishida Fumio, unprecedentedly pointed out specific security concerns in his inauguration speech, namely North Korea's nuclear test, the Chinese government ships' repeated intrusions into Japan's territorial waters, a Chinese government aircraft's violation of Japan's airspace, and the Chinese Navy vessels' locking of their fire-control radar on Japanese naval vessel—all of which happened between December 2012 and February 2013.<sup>51</sup> This was clearly different from his DPJ predecessor's speech in January 2012 which never mentioned sovereignty-related issues with China.<sup>52</sup>

Also, Abe was concerned about a strained and weakened U.S.-Japan alliance, which would destabilise Japan's national security. During the DPJ era, for example, senior U.S. official Kurt Campbell cautioned against Prime Minister Hatoyama Yukio's comments in Beijing which indicated Japan enhancing ties with China and South Korea at the expense of the relations with the United States. Campbell warned, '[I]magine the Japanese response if the U.S. Government were to say publicly that it wished to devote more attention to China than Japan.'<sup>53</sup> In sharp contrast to his first term as prime minister when Abe selected China and South Korea as his first destinations, Abe 2.0 repeatedly articulated the importance of the alliance and placed alliance-rebuilding as a primary objective of his foreign policy.<sup>54</sup> In his first telephone call with Obama upon his inauguration, Abe sent the message that Japan will not only enhance the alliance with the United States but take responsibility to keep the balance of power in Asia.<sup>55</sup> His 'Japan is Back' speech declares that 'Japan is not, and will never be a tier-two country' as a direct response to the concerns expressed in the high-profile Armitage-Nye report.<sup>56</sup>

## **2.2 Policymaking process 1: Centralisation of power and mobilisation of FPEs**

Abe took steps to act on these perceptions by reforming government organisations and appointing relevant, like-minded officials. As discussed in Chapter II, Abe centralised authority to the Prime Minister's Office (*kantei*) through the establishment of the National Security Council (NSC) and National Security Secretariat (NSS) in 2013. The Four Minister's Meeting of the NSC, which was held most frequently, works as the 'command centre' for national foreign and security policies. The NSS strengthened *kantei*'s ability and capacity to advance security policy reforms as it provided personnel and resources by integrating officials and information of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), MOD, and SDF under the National Security Strategy. Officials recall that the creation of NSC/NSS significantly changed the decision-making process in Japan's

foreign and security policy in five ways: (1) smoother information and intelligence sharing; (2) a foundation of seamless coordination and collaboration; (3) enrichment of resources to deal with crisis situations and to develop medium- and long-term policy objectives simultaneously; (4) enhancement of leadership of prime minister and expansion of his awareness of new areas such as cyber and space; and (5) the creation of a new and effective channel to counterparts in other countries' national security systems, especially with the United States.<sup>57</sup>

Inside the strengthened *kantei*, Abe assigned key posts to aides sympathetic to his perceptions and thinking. The three top executives of the NSS<sup>58</sup> –Yachi Shotaro, Kanehara Nobukatsu<sup>59</sup>, and Takamizawa Nobushige<sup>60</sup>– have overlap with Abe's worldview. Kanehara previously worked as Director of MOFA's Policy Coordination Division during Abe 1.0, leading the formulation of the Arc of Freedom and Prosperity under Yachi's initiative.<sup>61</sup> Takamizawa, who previously headed the Defense Policy Bureau from 2008 to 2011 and the MOD's thinktank– National Institute for Defence Studies–from 2011 to 2013 had comprehensive expertise in security affairs.<sup>62</sup> He was also known for his statement at the LDP research committee on National Security, in which he said Japan should recognise a crisis in the Taiwan Strait as a threat to Japan's security.<sup>63</sup> Abe also appointed Ambassador Komatsu Ichiro, who has a legal expertise and sense of national security, as Director General of the Cabinet Legislative Bureau, which is in charge of government's interpretation of the constitution.<sup>64</sup> As for intelligence policy, Abe turned to Sugita Kazuhiro<sup>65</sup> and Kitamura Shigeru<sup>66</sup>, both from National Police Agency.<sup>67</sup> As the process of passing the security legislation required the development of a detailed legal framework, Abe mobilised these bureaucrats with expertise in diplomacy, intelligence and law to make a breakthrough in Japan's security policy.

### **2.3 Policymaking process 2: Intervention by coalition-partner**

While reshaping the policymaking process within the government brought impetus to policy reforms, another intervening variable, inter-party politics, moderated Abe's security policy reforms. Komeito whose support base is a religious organisation is a party that emphasises pacifism, and until the debate on the peace and security legislation began, had been opposed to the use of collective self-defence.<sup>68</sup> As of May 2014, the Komeito newspaper clearly states that Komeito believes that [quoting Party President Yamaguchi Natsuo] 'the existing government interpretation of the constitution is appropriate'.<sup>69</sup> To reflect their hesitation of changing the existing constitutional interpretation, Komeito resisted the original draft of the cabinet decision to reinterpret the constitution until June 2014.<sup>70</sup>

As a condition for accepting a limited form of collective self-defence, Komeito continuously insisted on the adherence to Article 9 of the constitution and required the clarification of the limits of self-defence. As a result, the security legislation included several key restrictions. First, the legislation eventually refers to 'other countries with which Japan has close relations' as a subject to the right of collective self-defence, instead of simply 'other countries' used in the original draft.<sup>71</sup> Second, the legislation requires a 'clear and present danger' to the fundamental rights of Japanese citizens and the existence of Japan itself as a condition of enacting collective self-defence. Furthermore, the right of self-defence can only be invoked when there is no other appropriate means.<sup>72</sup> Also, regarding the overseas deployment of the SDF, Komeito struggled to push the government to accept certain conditions, including requiring a UN resolution, requiring prior approval without exception by the Diet, and ensuring the safety of SDF personnel.<sup>73</sup> Consequently, a political compromise was reached in which Abe 2.0 and its realist FPEs achieved a major but still limited step to implement the right of collective self-defence while Komeito could protect its pacifist position and remain committed to the basic interpretation of Article 9 of the constitution.

At the same time, it was remarkable that Komeito accepted the need for collective self-defence. Mikuriya Takashi points out that Komeito transformed to a more realist position from its previous pacificism through both inter-party coordination as well as backstage meetings that include LDP Vice President Komura, Komeito Vice President Kitagawa, Kanehara and Takamizawa, and Cabinet Legislation Bureau Director Yokobata Yusuke.<sup>74</sup> As of 2016, Kitagawa came to support the peace and security legislation, arguing that ‘when the first blow is struck against U.S. forces conducting surveillance activities for the very purpose of defending Japan, we cannot be arguing about the right of individual self-defense or the right of collective self-defense’.<sup>75</sup> Thus, Komeito had been committed to being a braking mechanism on the LDP’s more reformist ambitions, but its transformation mitigated the intervention in the reforms.

### **3. Summary**

This chapter has shown that the systemic stimuli captured by the NCR framework fostered the realist perceptions of key policy actors in Abe 2.0 to shape their approach to security policy reform and strengthening the U.S.-Japan alliance. Based on the threat perceptions—particularly the rise of China and the weakened alliance with the U.S.—Abe 2.0 implemented a series of policies to improve the alliance through reforming domestic security policy. In the policy-making process, bureaucrats with expertise and close views to those of Abe were appointed to key posts, which enabled the implementation of complex security legislation. However, in spite of the degradation of Japan’s security environment, the government has not moved beyond the existing defence-oriented security policy assumed by structural realism. This can be attributed to the fact that the policy makers are extremely aware of the benefits of the U.S.-Japan alliance and that they took into consideration the wishes of Komeito.



## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Japan's first participation in UN-sponsored peacekeeping and the subsequent dispatch of troops was in 1992 in Cambodia. In 2001, the Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law was enacted in response to the September 11 terrorist attacks and subsequently led to the dispatch of naval ships for refuelling operations in the Indian Ocean in support of US and allied forces. Other legislation includes the 2003 legislation for war contingencies (including armed attacks), the 2003 Law Concerning Special Measures in Iraq and the subsequent dispatch of troops to Samawah, Iraq, and the 2009 Anti-Piracy Measures Law and subsequent counter-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden.

<sup>2</sup> Funabashi, Yoichi, *Dōmei hyōryū* (Alliance Adrift), Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1997.

<sup>3</sup> The Takeo Miki administration (1974-1976) made a cabinet decision in 1976 to limit defence spending to 1% of gross domestic product (GDP) and to refrain from exporting arms.

<sup>4</sup> Cabinet Secretariat, *Tokutei himitsu no hogo ni kansuru houritsu* (Law for Protection of Specified Secrecy), <https://www.cas.go.jp/jp/tokuteihimitsu/gaiyou.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> Armitage, Richard L., and Joseph S. Nye, U.S.-Japan Alliance: Anchoring Stability in Asia, *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, August 2012, [https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy\\_files/files/publication/120810\\_Armitage\\_USJapanAlliance\\_Web.pdf](https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/publication/120810_Armitage_USJapanAlliance_Web.pdf), p.12.

<sup>6</sup> Interview with Kitamura Shigeru. See President Online, September 14, 2021, <https://president.jp/articles/-/49479?page=4>. See also, Kitamura, Shigeru, *Jōhō to kokka: kensei shijou saichō no seiken wo sasaeta interijensu no genten* (Information and the State: The Origin of Intelligence Undergirding the Longest Administration in Japan's Constitutional History), Tokyo: Chuō Kōron sha, 2021.

<sup>7</sup> There are two ways to identify an information-related agreement in Japan: General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) and General Security of Information Agreement (GSOIA). Japan agreed on the GSOMIA with the U.S. (August 2007), India (December 2015), and ROK (November 2016), and on a GSOIA with NATO (June 2010), France (October 2011), Australia (March 2013), U.K. (January 2014), Italy (June 2016) and Germany (March 2021). There are no significant differences in the substance of the agreements. Due to the increasing complexity of security affairs, such as increasing importance of cyber, space, high-tech and electromagnetic realms, the agreement not only covers military but broader technological information stipulated as state secrets.

<sup>8</sup> Japan concluded the agreements concerning the transfer of defence equipment and technology with the United Kingdom in July 2013, Australia in July 2014, France in March 2015, India in December 2015, Italy in May 2017, Germany in July 2017, Malaysia in April 2018, Vietnam in October 2020, and Indonesia in March 2021. With the Philippines, it established regular working-level consultations on defence equipment and technology cooperation in January 2019.

<sup>9</sup> Sakaki, Alexandra and Sebastian Maslow, Japan's new arms export policies: strategic aspirations and domestic constraints, *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 74:6 (2020), pp.649–669.

- <sup>10</sup> Sato, Heigo, From the 'Three Principles of Arms Exports' to the 'Three Principles of Defense Equipment Transfer', *AJISS-Commentary* No.197 (2014). In terms of U.S. pressure, See Japan Lifts Decadeslong Ban on Export of Weapons, *Wall Street Journal*, December 28, 2011, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052970203479104577123710031180408>.
- <sup>11</sup> MOFA, The Three Principles on Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology, April 1, 2014, [https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press22e\\_000010.html](https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press22e_000010.html).
- <sup>12</sup> Hatakeyama, Kyoko, *Japan's Evolving Security Policy: Militarisation within a Pacifist Tradition*, London: Routledge, 2021, p.66.
- <sup>13</sup> Acquisition, Technology & Logistics Agency (ATLA), MOD, Defense Equipment and Technology Cooperation, [https://www.mod.go.jp/atla/en/policy/defense\\_equipment.html](https://www.mod.go.jp/atla/en/policy/defense_equipment.html).
- <sup>14</sup> Projects include the provision of TC-90 training aircraft to the Philippines (2016), the provision of UH-1 Iroquois helicopters to the Philippines (2018), and the export of J/FPS-3 and JTPS-P14 radar systems to the Philippines (2020). See MOD, *A Reference Guide to the Defense Industrial Base of Japan (2<sup>nd</sup> edition): Introduction to the Equipment of the Japan Self-Defense Forces*, [https://www.mod.go.jp/atla/soubiseisaku/soubiseisakugijutu/introduction2020\\_en.pdf](https://www.mod.go.jp/atla/soubiseisaku/soubiseisakugijutu/introduction2020_en.pdf).
- <sup>15</sup> The 183rd Diet House of Representatives, Plenary Session No. 1, January 28, 2013, <https://kokkai.ndl.go.jp/#/detail?minId=118305254X00120130128>.
- <sup>16</sup> Prime Minister's Press Conference, May 20, 2014, <https://www.niigata-nippo.co.jp/feature/anpo-conference.html>.
- <sup>17</sup> MOFA, Cabinet Decision on Development of Seamless Security Legislation to Ensure Japan's Survival and Protect its People, July 1, 2014, [https://www.mofa.go.jp/fp/nsp/page23e\\_000273.html](https://www.mofa.go.jp/fp/nsp/page23e_000273.html).
- <sup>18</sup> 'Situations that will have an important influence' (*jūyō eikyō jitai*) refers to situations that will have an important influence on Japan's peace and security, including situations that, if left without response, could result in a direct armed attack on Japan. In this situation, the SDF will be able to provide necessary logistics support and search and rescue services to armed forces of foreign countries engaging in activities for ensuring Japan's peace and security. A 'survival-threatening situation' (*sonritsu kiki jitai*) is when an armed attack against a foreign country that is in a close relationship with Japan occurs and as a result threatens Japan's survival and poses a clear danger to fundamentally overturn people's right to life, liberty and pursuit of happiness. In this situation, the prime minister can issue a Defense Operation Order to all or part of the SDF when it is deemed necessary for the defense of Japan. See MOD, *Defense White Paper 2020*, pp.231–35.
- <sup>19</sup> E-Gov, Law Concerning Measures to Ensure Peace and Security in Japan in the Event of a Significant Impact, <https://elaws.e-gov.go.jp/document?lawid=411AC0000000060>.
- <sup>20</sup> Liff, Adam P., Japan's Defense Policy: Abe the Evolutionary, *The Washington Quarterly* 38: 2 (2015), pp.79–99; Pugliese, Giulio and Alessio Patalano, Diplomatic and Security Practice under Abe Shinzo: The Case for Realpolitik Japan, *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 74: 6 (2020), pp.615–

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<sup>21</sup> MOD, National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG) for FY 2014 and Beyond, December 17, 2013.

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<sup>22</sup> Heginbotham, Eric, Japan's New NDPG and MTDP: An American Perspective on Operational Issues and Implications, in James L. Schoff and Sayuri Romei eds., *The New National Defense Program Guidelines: Aligning U.S. and Japanese Defense Strategies for the Third Post-Cold War Era*, Washington DC: Sasakawa Peace Foundation USA, 2019, pp.13–20.

<sup>23</sup> MOD, NDPG for FY 2019 and Beyond, December 18, 2018, p.19; MOD, Medium Term Defense Program (FY 2019–FY 2023), December 18, 2018, pp.10–11.

[https://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/agenda/guideline/pdf/chuki\\_seibi31-35\\_e.pdf](https://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/agenda/guideline/pdf/chuki_seibi31-35_e.pdf)

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<sup>25</sup> Jen Psaki, the U.S. Department of State's spokeswoman, said 'the United States is disappointed that Japan's leadership has taken an action that will exacerbate tensions with Japan's neighbors.' See U.S. response to Abe's Yasukuni Visit Re-Examined, *The Korea Herald*, December 27, 2013,

<http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20131227000241>. See also Yakushiji, Katsuyuki, The Implications of Abe's Yasukuni Visit, The Tokyo Foundation for Policy Research, January 24, 2014. <https://www.tkfd.or.jp/en/research/detail.php?id=291>

<sup>26</sup> Joint Press Conference with President Obama and Prime Minister Abe of Japan, White House, April 24, 2014, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/04/24/joint-press-conference-president-obama-and-prime-minister-abe-japan>.

<sup>27</sup> Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, Toward an Alliance of Hope - Address to a Joint Meeting of the U.S. Congress by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (Speeches and Statements by the Prime Minister), April 29, 2015. [https://japan.kantei.go.jp/97\\_abe/statement/201504/uscongress.html](https://japan.kantei.go.jp/97_abe/statement/201504/uscongress.html).

<sup>28</sup> MOFA, Japan, The Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation, April 27, 2015. <https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000078188.pdf>.

<sup>29</sup> Trump rips U.S. defense of Japan as one-sided, too expensive, Japan Times, August 6, 2016, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/08/06/national/politics-diplomacy/trump-rips-u-s-defense-japan-one-sided-expensive/>.

<sup>30</sup> Japan's Abe Says He Will Work with Whoever Wins U.S. Election, *Reuters*, May 5, 2016. <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-usa-election-japan-idUKKCN0XW1EO>

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<sup>32</sup> *Abe Gaikō Dōmei Kyōka ga Kiten, Abe Zen-Shushō Intabyū: Chūgoku Taitōde Bei to Kikikan Kyōyū* (Strengthening Alliances as Abe's Diplomacy's Starting Point, Interview with Former Prime Minister Abe: Sharing Sense of Crisis with U.S. on China's rise), *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, September 26, 2020, <https://www.nikkei.com/article/DGXMZO64254760V20C20A9SHA000/>.

<sup>33</sup> 'Saichō' no Owari, Nokosareta Kadai 6: Nichibei Kankei, Dōmei Kyōka, Atsui Shinrai, Kōkei Shushō *Futan Omoku* (The End of the 'Longest': Remaining Challenges 6: Japan-U.S. Relations, Strengthening the Alliance, Deep Trust, and Heavy Burden on the Successor), *Mainichi Shimbun*, September 3, 2020.

<sup>34</sup> Interviews with former Prime Minister Abe Shinzo. See Cozyup with Iida Koji, Nippon Broadcasting System, Inc., June 21, 2021. <https://omny.fm/shows/cozy-up/ok-cozyup>.

<sup>35</sup> RESOLVED: Abe's Investment in His Relationship with President Trump Has Advanced Japanese Interests, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Debating Japan 3: 1, January 30, 2020, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/resolved-abes-investment-his-relationship-president-trump-has-advanced-japanese-interests>.

<sup>36</sup> Y.A. The Virtues of a Confrontational China Strategy: A View from Japan, *The American Interest*, April 10, 2020, <https://www.the-american-interest.com/2020/04/10/the-virtues-of-a-confrontational-china-strategy/>. (Y.A. is an anonymous author. According to the publisher Y.A. is an official of the Government of Japan.)

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<sup>39</sup> MOD, *Defense Programs and Budget of Japan*, 2021, [https://www.mod.go.jp/j/yosan/yosan\\_gaiyo/2022/yosan\\_20210831.pdf](https://www.mod.go.jp/j/yosan/yosan_gaiyo/2022/yosan_20210831.pdf).

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- <sup>46</sup> Kitaoka Shin'ichi, *Gaikō to Anzen Hoshō ni Abe Naikaku ga Nokoshita Regashī* (Legacy of the Abe Cabinet on Diplomacy and Security Policy), *Tōyō Keizai Online*, March 11, 2021, <https://toyokeizai.net/articles/-/413415?page=4>.
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- <sup>48</sup> Ibid. p.133.
- <sup>49</sup> Abe, Shinzo, Asia's Democratic Security Diamond, Project Syndicate, December 27, 2012, <https://www.project-syndicate.org/onpoint/a-strategic-alliance-for-japan-and-india-by-shinzo-abe>.
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- <sup>52</sup> Gamba, Koichiro, Foreign Policy Speech, January 24, 2012, <https://worldjpn.grips.ac.jp/documents/texts/fam/20120124.SXJ.html>.
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- <sup>55</sup> *Abe Jimin Sōsai ga Bei Daitōryō to Denwa Kaidan, Seiji, Keizai Ryōmen de Renkei Kyōka* (LDP President Abe's Telephone Conversation with U.S. President, Strengthening Political and Economic Ties), *Reuters*, December 18, 2012, <https://jp.reuters.com/article/t9n09o02u-abe-obama-telephone-conference-idJPTYE8BH00920121218>.
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<sup>57</sup> Kanehara also said that the NSC connected the 'nerves' between politics, the military and different government agencies. See *Anzen Hoshō to Dejitaru wo Renketsu seyo* (Link Security and Digital), Voice, December 2020, pp.85–88.

<sup>58</sup> *Naikaku Kanbō no Kenkyū (jō): Kantei Shuken, Shōchō ha Teashi* (Research on the Cabinet Secretariat (1): Concentration of Power in the Kantei, Marginalisation of Ministries and Agencies), *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, January 26, 2014.

<sup>59</sup> Kanehara took the key positions in MOFA, including Director of Policy Coordination Division, Deputy Director-General of Foreign Policy Bureau, and Director General of International Legal Affairs Bureau. From January 2011 to September 2012, Kanehara was posted to South Korea as the Deputy Chief of Mission. Just three months after taking the Director General of International Legal Affairs role, he was assigned to be the ACCS of Abe 2.0.

<sup>60</sup> Takamizawa has strong expertise in the U.S.-Japan alliance and Japan's defence posture. He took positions in MOD, including Director of Defense Policy Division, Director General of Defense Policy Bureau and Director General of Bureau of Operational Policy. He is known for his remark at the LDP committee on security policy in March 2008 regarding Japan's response in the event of a contingency in the Taiwan Strait, Takamizawa reportedly said, 'naturally, the Self-Defense Forces must increase its vigilance and take appropriate measures before a situation in the vicinity arises,' and 'if the Chinese ask us what we should do about the situation, Japan will naturally respond. This is a matter of Japan's own security'. See *Taiwan Yūji 'Nihon no Mondai', Bōei Seisaku Kyokuchō Jimin Chōsakai de Hatsugen* (Taiwan contingency 'is Japan's problem', Director General of the Defense Policy Bureau said at a meeting of the LDP's Research Council), *Yomiuri Shimbun*, March 14, 2008.

<sup>61</sup> Aso, Taro, *Arc of Freedom and Prosperity*, Minister for Foreign Affairs on the Occasion of the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Founding of the Japan Forum on International Relations, Inc., March 12, 2007, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/pillar/address0703.html>.

<sup>62</sup> Takamizawa has broader expertise related to security, including nuclear deterrence, security cooperation, and cyber security. See Takamizawa, Nobushige, *Taikokukan Kyōsō no Motodeno Anzenhoshō Kyōryoku to FOIP no Un'yō, FOIP Un'yō Taisei no Seibi* (Strategic Development of Security Cooperation under Great Power Competition and FOIP: Organising Operational Structure of FOIP), *Anzen Hoshō Tasuku fōsu* (Taskforce for Security), Kajima Institute of International Peace, 2021, pp.109-121; *Anzen Hoshō Kankyō to Kaku Haizetsu eno Torikumi: Shiten Ronten* (Security Environment and Efforts to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (Viewpoints and Issues)), NHK, January 21, 2021, <https://www.nhk.or.jp/kaisetsu-blog/400/442256.html>.

<sup>63</sup> *Yomiuri Shimbun*, March 14, 2008.



<sup>64</sup> New legislation bureau head eager to discuss collective self-defense, *The Japan Times*, August 20, 2013, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/08/20/national/politics-diplomacy/new-legislation-bureau-head-eager-to-discuss-collective-self-defense/?appsule=49>.

<sup>65</sup> Sugita was Director of Foreign Affairs Division, Director of First Division of Public Safety, and Head of Security Bureau at the NPA. He became the first Cabinet Intelligence Officer in January 2001. While he retired from the public service after taking his responsibility as Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary for Crisis Management from April 2001 to January 2004, he returned to public service under Abe 2.0 as the DCCS in December 2012.

<sup>66</sup> Kimurata was the Director of Foreign Affairs Division, Director of Security Division, and Head of Foreign Affairs and Intelligence Department of NPA. He had close ties with Abe as he served as executive secretary to the prime minister during Abe 1.0. He was committed to resolving the abduction of Japanese citizens by North Korea around 2004.

<sup>67</sup> Kotani, Ken, *Nihon no interijensu jijō* (Japan Intelligence Situation), *Gaikō* (Diplomacy), 27 (2014), pp.54-57.

<sup>68</sup> *Anpo Housei ga Abe Shushō no Kokorozashi to Chigatta Mono ni Natteshimatta Riyū* (Why 'Security Legislation' Becoming Different from Prime Minister Abe's Aspirations), *PRESIDENT Online*, December 23, 2020, <https://president.jp/articles/-/41482?page=2>.

<sup>69</sup> *Shūdan Teki Jieiken Rongi no Ronten* (Issues in Debate on Collective Self-Defence), *Komei Shimbun*, May 18, 2014, [https://www.komei.or.jp/news/detail/20140518\\_13999](https://www.komei.or.jp/news/detail/20140518_13999).

<sup>70</sup> Accordingly, Kanehara implied that Komeito has opposed to making the cabinet decision. See *Kakushin, Seiji Shudō Jitsuha Kanryō Yūdō, Gaimushō Shūdanteki Jieiken, Keisanshō Genpatsu Suishin, Hōjin Genzei* (Focus: Bureaucratic guidance not Political Leadership, MOFA for Collective Self-Defence, METI for Promoting Nuclear Power and Corporate Tax Cuts), *Chūnichi Shimbun*, July 20, 2014.

<sup>71</sup> *Defense of Japan 2016*, Tokyo: Ministry of Defense (2021), p.247.

<sup>72</sup> *Kakugi Kettei, Kokumin wo Mamoru Anpo Housei e* (Cabinet Decision on Security Legislation for Protecting the People), *Komei Shimbun*, July 2, 2014; *Tō Gōdō Kaigi, Kōmura Shian wo Rongi* (Joint Party Meeting Discussing Komura's Private Proposal), *Komei Shimbun*, June 20, 2014.

<sup>73</sup> Interview with Kitagawa. See *Shūdanteki Jieiken no Gentei Koushi Yōnin: 'Kenpou 9-jō' ni Ihansezu* (Authorization of Limited Exercise of Right to Collective Self-Defense Does Not Violate Article 9 of the Constitution), *Nippon.com*, June 19, 2015, <https://www.nippon.com/ja/features/c02104/>.

<sup>74</sup> Mikuriya, Takashi, *Yotou Reki 13-nen de Hirogaru Gakkai-in Tono Kyori* (Distance between the Ruling Party and Soka Gakkai Community Widened over the past 13 years), *Asahi Shimbun*, November 10, 2015, <https://webronza.asahi.com/journalism/articles/2015103000015.html>.

<sup>75</sup> *Heiwa Anpo Housei ga Sekou, Kenpou 9-jō no Wakunai de Anzen Mamoru* (Peace and Security Legislation Enacted: Protecting Security within the Framework of Article 9 of the Constitution), *Komei Shimbun*, March 29, 2016, [https://www.komei.or.jp/news/detail/20160329\\_19561](https://www.komei.or.jp/news/detail/20160329_19561).

## **Chapter IV Case 2: Japan's China Policy during Abe 2.0**

This chapter examines Abe 2.0's foreign policy toward China and demonstrates how the proposed neoclassical realist (NCR) framework accounts for changes that occur during this period. As in the previous chapter, the following pages will focus on how domestic intervening variables—namely leader images and the decision-making process—affected the impact of systemic stimuli on Japan's external policy toward China. It addresses how Japan has used balancing and engagement vis-à-vis China, and what mechanisms it has used to coordinate these two approaches.

### **1. Abe 2.0's Policy toward China**

First, this section will outline the changes in Japan-China relations under Abe 2.0, focusing on three areas: consultations at the summit level, security policy, and economic policy.

#### **1.1. Intergovernmental exchange between Japan and China**

At the summit level, the leaders of Japan and China did not have an opportunity to meet for one year and nine months, between December 2012 and the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in Beijing in September 2014. Although Japan-China relations had been extremely fraught during the previous Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) administrations, Abe did not prioritise repairing them, but prioritised the United States to confirm with U.S. President Obama his plan to strengthen the U.S.-Japan alliance and Southeast Asian countries—making them his first foreign visit in Abe 2.0. In light of the fact that Xi Jinping became the leader of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in November 2012 and President of China in February 2013 and took a while to consolidate his political foundation in Beijing, Abe might take a wait-and-see attitude toward the newly installed Chinese leader. Still, this choice was in stark contrast to Abe's



first administration in 2006, when he chose China as his first foreign destination to repair bilateral relations which had suffered during the Koizumi administration from 2001 to 2006.

At the administrative level, regular contacts continued behind the scenes, with Yachi Shotaro visiting China twice as a cabinet counsellor during 2013, before he became the head of the National Security Secretariat (NSS).<sup>1</sup> Yachi had a series of meetings with Yang Jiechi, a member of the Central Committee of the CCP and China's top diplomat. However, the two sides could not reconcile fundamental differences over the Senkaku Islands (which the Chinese side calls the 'Diaoyu Islands'). The Chinese side appealed for recognition of the existence of a territorial dispute as a condition for a summit-level meeting, a decisive compromise the Japanese side was not prepared to take.<sup>2</sup> As a result, an eclectically worded statement, named 'Regarding Discussions toward Improving Japan-China Relations', which labelled their uncompromisable positions on the Senkaku as 'different views',<sup>3</sup> was agreed upon in November 2014 just before Abe attended the APEC summit in Beijing. This allowed the two leaders to hold a meeting during the gathering.<sup>4</sup> The Japanese side viewed this as a success as the diplomatic workaround secured an opportunity for dialogue while Tokyo adhered to its consistently stated position that it would not accept any preliminary conditions for holding a dialogue.

After this meeting, Abe and Xi resumed a summit-level meetings, including at the Bandung Conference in April 2015, at the Group of 20 (G20) in Hangzhou in September 2016, at the G20 in Hamburg in July 2017, the APEC Summit in Hanoi in November 2017, and at the G20 in Osaka in 2019. Abe also had several meetings with Premier Li Keqiang on the sidelines of international conferences, including the China-Japan-South Korea Trilateral Summit in November 2015, the Asia-Europe Summit in April 2016, and the East Asia Summit in Manila in November 2017. In May 2018, Li finally visited Japan for the first time in six years as Chinese Premier, and in October, Abe paid an official visit to Beijing.

While the frequency of high-level dialogue does not represent the entirety of Japan-China relations, it is still an important indicator. Compared to the roughly two years from December 2012, there was a slight thaw in the relationship from November 2014 to the beginning of 2018, after the two leaders confirmed the importance of the meeting based on administrative coordination. For example, at the summit meeting in 2016, Abe pointed out maritime security issues in the East and South China Seas, and Xi continued to state China's position as before, but there were also constructive discussions, with the Japanese side suggesting possible areas of economic cooperation.<sup>5</sup> Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) Secretary-General Nikai Toshihiro attended the first Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) Summit in May 2017 to deliver Abe's letter of intent to Xi, which included a favourable assessment of the BRI's massive infrastructure development plans. In the period from early 2018, which marked the 40th anniversary of the Japan-China Peace and Friendship Treaty, to Abe's resignation in July 2020, Abe encouraged dialogue with China: Li and Abe's mutual visits and Xi's visit to Japan in May 2019 to attend the G20 Osaka summit, where expanded cooperation in the economic field was touted. The bilateral relations reached the level in which Abe officially invited Xi to pay a state visit to Japan; however, those plans were eventually cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>6</sup>

## **1.2 Japan-China relations on security affairs**

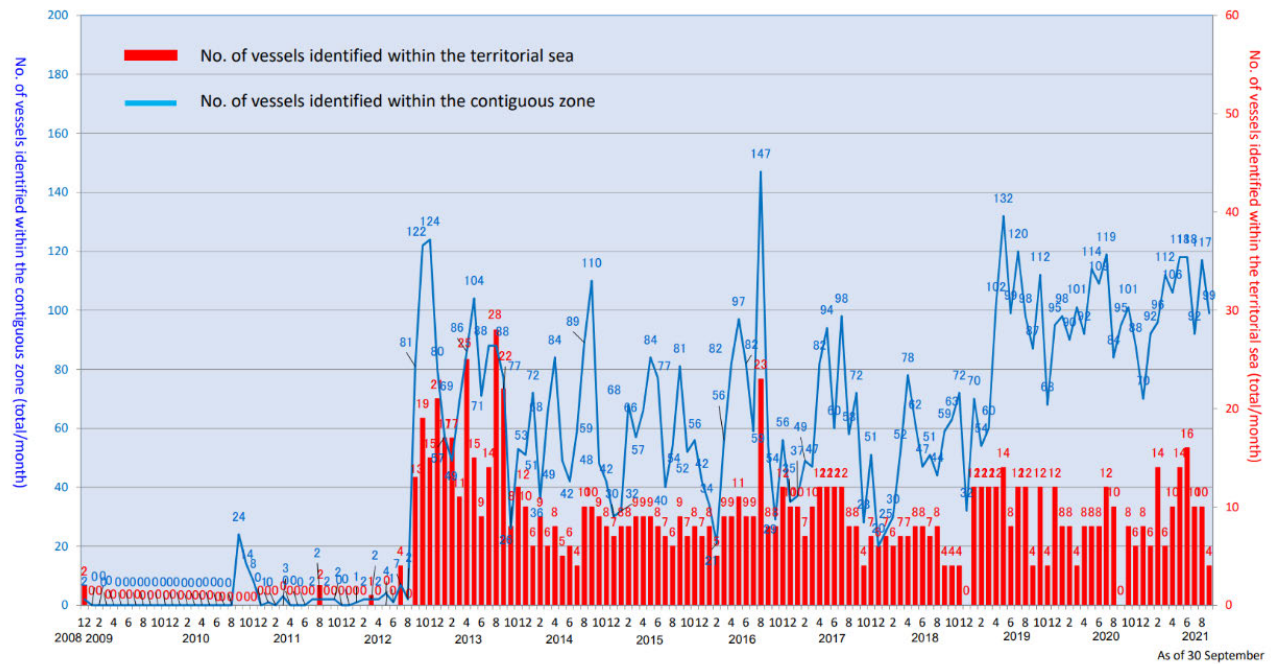
Compared to the reconciliation of the summit-level, Abe 2.0 security policy toward China was very cautious from the outset and remained so. The reason for this is that since their first incursion into Japanese territorial waters in December 2008, Chinese Coast Guard and other vessels regularly appeared around the Senkaku Islands (Figure 8).<sup>7</sup> In September 2010, when a Chinese fishing boat collided with a Japanese coast guard vessel, the Japanese government released the captain and repatriated him to China after China put various pressures on Japan,

including suspending the export of rare earths and arresting several Japanese expatriates living in China on dubious espionage charges.<sup>8</sup> After the Japanese government acquired ownership of the Senkaku Islands from private citizens in October 2012, Chinese ships ramped up presence operations in violating the territorial waters and contiguous zones around the islands (Figure 8). This became an urgent issue when Abe took office in December 2012. In addition, after the inauguration of Abe 2.0, a Chinese navy vessel pointed and 'lit up' its fire control radar on a Japanese Maritime Self Defence Force (SDF) destroyer in January 2013.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, tensions at sea soon spread to the air. In November 2013, China established an Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ) over the Senkaku Islands which overlap with the Japanese airspace,<sup>10</sup> and in May and June 2014, Chinese military aircraft flew dangerously close to SDF aircrafts.<sup>11</sup> In 2012, the number of scrambles against Chinese military aircraft exceeded those against Russian military aircraft, and since then, the number of approaches to Japanese airspace by Chinese military aircraft considerably increased and have remained high (Figure 9).

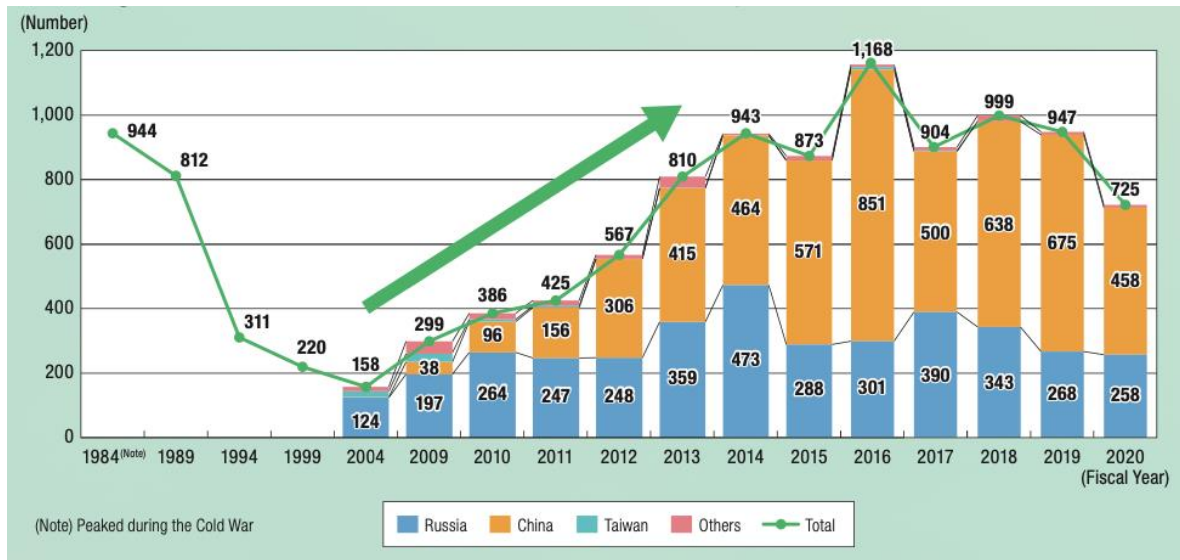
Thus, in the area of security, Abe 2.0 demonstrated no willingness to compromise with China, but nonetheless acted with restraint to avoid escalation and conflict. Abe 2.0 worked on strengthening crisis management mechanisms with China in an effort to alleviate the potentially dangerous situation around Japan's outlying islands.<sup>12</sup> In January 2018, the two governments agreed on the Japan-China Maritime and Air Communication Mechanism between their defence agencies.<sup>13</sup> In another area of security tension, Abe 2.0 moved to internationalise South China Sea issues by invoking the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and working to shape international perceptions of China's actions by appealing to the principles of the rule of law and the value of open seas as an international public good.<sup>14</sup> Still, like the case in the East China Sea, Japan's policy toward the South China Sea carefully avoided the risk of escalation. Japan has refrained from directly participating in the freedom of navigation

operations conducted by the U.S. Navy while it sent its military vessels for joint exercise on the high seas, capacity-building and friendly port visits.

**Figure 8. Number of intrusions by Chinese Coast Guard and other vessels into Japan's territorial waters and contiguous zones<sup>15</sup>**



**Figure 9. Changes in the Number of Scrambles by the Japanese Air Self Defence Force by Fiscal Year<sup>16</sup>**



### **1.3 Japan-China relations over economic affairs**

In the area of trade policy, Abe 2.0 prioritised negotiations of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) originally led by the United States, and the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with the European Union. After the withdrawal of the United States from the TPP in January 2017, Tokyo led the effort to redesign the deal and realise the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement on TPP (CPTPP) in March 2018.<sup>17</sup> This prioritisation is in line with Abe's emphasis on the importance of the U.S.-Japan alliance and cooperation with the like-minded nations.

At the same time, Japan held regular ministerial and working-level meetings for the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) and (less frequently) the China-Japan-Korea Free Trade Agreement negotiations. While Japan tried to keep India within RCEP, only 15 countries—the ten countries of ASEAN plus China, Japan, Korea, Australia, and New Zealand—agreed on RCEP in November 2019. In the field of investment, the China-Japan-Korea Investment Agreement, which was agreed upon in May 2012 during the DPJ administration, passed the Diet and came into effect in November 2014 under the Abe administration. This trilateral agreement helped improve the investment environment between China and Japan, including in relation to intellectual property rights and the principle of 'national treatment—providing non-discriminatory rules for foreign investors.'<sup>18</sup> In the financial sector, at the Japan-China summit held in May 2018, the two governments agreed on several cooperative agendas, such as China's granting Japan a 200 billion yuan (about 3.4 trillion yen) Renminbi Qualified Foreign Institutional Investor quota and granting licenses for bond business to Japanese financial institutions.<sup>19</sup>

Also, as mentioned above, Abe sent Nikai to the China-led BRI Summit in May 2017 with his own letter of intent to favourably evaluate the BRI. In April 2015, when the question of whether to join the Beijing-initiated Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) became a global

issue, Japan ultimately decided not to participate, citing a lack of transparency and fairness in the governance of the institution.<sup>20</sup> In the end, Japan and United States were the two major world economies—and the two largest stakeholders in the Asian Development Bank (ADB), a potential rival to the AIIB—which did not join the AIIB.<sup>21</sup> Notwithstanding Japanese and American concerns over the AIIB governance, however, the AIIB seems to have established a fairly high level of governance system with the participation of many developed countries such as the United Kingdom and Australia<sup>22</sup> and acquired a AAA rating for its bonds.<sup>23</sup> In 2016, the Japan-led ADB and the AIIB started co-financing the infrastructure projects based on a Memorandum of Understanding.<sup>24</sup> It is consistent with this trend that the Japanese government expressed its implicit support for the BRI, asking the BRI to ensure basic transparency, accountability, and economic viability, and to seek room for cooperation. Thus, while keeping its priority on the United States and other like-minded economies, Abe 2.0 aimed to expand the room for mutual cooperation between Japan and China and stabilise bilateral relations.

## **2. NCR Analysis**

As such, Abe 2.0's policy toward China is a patchwork of balancing and engagement. On the one hand, it is balancing China, which has exerted pressures on neighbouring countries including Japan and renewed its economic influence. Structural realist finds Abe's balancing as consistent with its theoretical expectations. On the other hand, Abe 2.0 was also open to exploring the possibility of cooperation with China, which was already Japan's largest trading partner and an important part of its major manufacturing supply chain, through RCEP, financial cooperation and the BRI. A NCR framework helps clarify how this ambivalent China policy emerged in Abe 2.0 by focusing on leader images and internal differences within the government apparatus over Japan's China policy.

## 2.1 Leader images: Ambivalent perception on China

As discussed in Chapter II, there was a shared perception within the administration, including Abe himself, of the threat that China's military and maritime expansion posed to Japan's national interests. While this threat perception was shared, there was a difference of priority in foreign policy executives' (FPEs) perception on China depending on their assigned roles and responsibility within the government.

On the one hand, Japan's hard security policy toward China can be explained as the accomplishment of the FPEs in charge of security policy within the administration who pursue a strong balancing policy. Those FPEs, especially in the NSS, but also in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) and Ministry of Defence (MOD), who shared a strong sense of purpose to build a superior position against China by continuously affirming common strategic interests and values with the United States, Australia, India, and Western European countries. While each ministry and agency built its own foreign relations with China based on their ministerial interests in the past, those NSS officials within the Prime Minister's Office's (*kantei*) held strong grips on policymaking and could design Japan's overall security policy toward China.

However, Japan's balancing was not for antagonising against China. Rather high-level national security bureaucrats recognised balancing China help stabilise Japan-China relations. Yachi, the then director general of the NSS, stated Abe 2.0 had no intention to contain China, and Japan had no ability to do so.<sup>25</sup> Kanehara Nobukatsu, one of key FPEs under Abe 2.0, believed that Abe 2.0's security policy could build strategic stability between Japan and China only by maintaining the balance of power through solidarity among countries that share values.<sup>26</sup> Thus, the realist bureaucrats in charge of security within the *kantei* pursued defensive balancing with China rather than unnecessarily fomenting confrontation. This astute approach led to such



initiatives as 'diplomacy with a global perspective' and 'a free and open Indo-Pacific' (discussed further in Chapter V).

On the other hand, those in charge of economic policy at home and abroad who recognised China as not only a security threat to Japan, but also an extremely important partner to the Japanese economy. The liberal faction within the LDP and the dovish political forces such as the New Komeito Party (Komeito) also held favourable views on China and promoted Japan-China cooperation with a focus on mutual economic benefit.

In this regard, it was economic officials, especially the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI), which had an economic-oriented perception on China. For instance, Abe's letter of intent evaluating the BRI was originally drafted by NSS Director-General Yachi with a clear request to the BRI to adhere to principles of transparency, accountability and fiscal responsibility in its dealings with recipient states. However, the letter was later rewritten by the executive secretary to the prime minister, Imai Takaya, from METI.<sup>27</sup> Imai was known to be critical of MOFA's policy toward China, and confessed that he rewrote the letter to be given to LDP secretary-general Nikai so that it would not be disrespectful to Xi Jinping.<sup>28</sup> In addition, engagement with China took place mainly as a form of economic cooperation around the framework of 'Third Country Market Cooperation', over which METI has an exclusive control. During Abe's visit to China in October 2018, the 'First Third Country Market Cooperation Forum' was held and 52 memorandums of understanding on specific infrastructure development projects were exchanged. Many of them are still at the level of general agreements, but the Japanese side stated that they would be implemented within the framework of 'promoting cooperation among enterprises that meets international standards and benefits third countries.'<sup>29</sup>

Other key economic agency, the Ministry of Finance (MOF), which holds the strong authority to manage both tax revenue and government's expenditure also perceived China as an

opportunity for Japan's economy and promoted Japan-China financial cooperation. At the outset of Abe 2.0, the Japan-China Financial Ministers' meeting was suspended for two years from 2013 to 2015, and the Japan-China swap arrangement also terminated in 2013 as neither side requested the extension.<sup>30</sup> Also, Japanese Finance Minister Aso Taro was cautious about the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and BRI as of March 2015.<sup>31</sup> Still, the finance ministers of Japan and China –Aso and Lou Jiwei –met in Beijing in June 2015 and agreed on strengthening communications and exchanges in financial areas and also jointly promoting Asian infrastructure development.<sup>32</sup> After the 2018 Japan-China summit, the financial cooperation became one of the most essential cooperative agendas for the two countries. The two leaders, Abe and Li Keqiang agreed on revising the bilateral swap arrangement in October 2018. Officials of the Financial Services Agency under the jurisdiction of the MOF explicitly said that they want to promote financial cooperation with China 'as much as possible' by supporting Japanese financial companies to expand their business in China.<sup>33</sup> They also evaluated the first Japan-China capital markets forum held in April 2019, in which more than 100 businessmen and officials from Japan visited Shanghai for promoting further financial cooperation, such as mutual listing of exchange-traded funds and designations of Japanese banks as renminbi clearing banks.<sup>34</sup>

Thus, the two opposing perceptions on China coexisted within the Abe 2.0 and played out as an ambivalent policy toward China. Kanehara and Takamizawa, who were key figures of national security FPEs, recalled that in the economic bureaucracy, the logic of stimulating the economy and boosting business took some precedence over strategic and security issues and the policy linkage between economic and security interests was weak at that time.<sup>35</sup> Regarding Japan-China infrastructure cooperation, while security FPEs acknowledged the importance of the bilateral cooperation as a means to encourage China's adherence to international standards such as transparency and fiscal soundness, there were concerns among MOFA officials that METI was being not cautious enough in its thinking.<sup>36</sup> While it would be unrealistic to think there would be

entirely homogenous perceptions, principles and policies amongst the highly professionalised FPEs of a modern nation, Abe 2.0 was not an exception.

## **2.2 Policymaking process: Roles of economic officials**

This competition between security and economic logics can be observed in the policymaking process. In general, the NSS and their security realist thinking took the leadership in the making of Abe 2.0's foreign and security policy. However, despite a growing recognition of China's threat to Japan's security and strategic interests, the economic official could exert significant influence over China policy related to economic affairs<sup>37</sup> because of the economic dependence of Japanese companies on the Chinese market, Abe's prioritisation of economic revitalisation<sup>38</sup>, and his closeness to economic advisors, such as Imai Takaya.

First, as a background to these economic thinking in Japan's policy toward China, it is important to understand the increasing economic interdependence between the two countries. Since 2004, when total trade between Japan and China exceeded that between Japan and the United States for the first time, China has been Japan's largest trading partner.<sup>39</sup> The total annual trade remained stable at around 35 trillion Japanese Yen.<sup>40</sup> According to the report of the Headquarters for Japan's Economic Revitalization at the Cabinet Secretariat, Japanese exports to China increased from 3.3 trillion yen (6.3% of its total export) in 2000 to 14.7 trillion yen (19.1%) in 2019, and its import from 5.9 trillion yen (14.5% of its total import) to 18.4 trillion yen (23.5%) (See also Figure 10).<sup>41</sup> The report also points out that Japan's dependence on China in intermediate goods is the highest among advanced economies, reaching 24.7% in its total exports of intermediate goods and 21.1% in its imports.<sup>42</sup> This demonstrates that Japan and China are interconnected through the regional supply chain of manufactured goods. According to a survey by the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC), while India ranked first and

China second for three consecutive years from 2014 to 2016 in terms of countries/regions in which to expand overseas business, China regained the top spot in 2017, underscoring the importance of the Chinese market for Japanese firms.<sup>43</sup> Also, the number of Chinese tourists visiting Japan quadrupled from 2.4 million in 2014 to a record 9.59 million in 2019, as the Abe administration eased visa conditions for Chinese tourists in January 2015, in line with its policy of boosting the domestic economy through increased tourism (Figure 11).<sup>44</sup>

In the policymaking process, Imai of METI had been the leading executive secretary for Abe throughout the administration. Abe also assigned two officials from METI as his executive secretaries, Imai and Yanase Tadao (later succeeded by Munakata Naoko and Saeki Kozo). This was different from Abe's predecessors who either assign MOF official as the leading secretary or employing two MOF officials. This means that Abe was cautious of the strong influence of MOF and diluted their presence in his *kantei*. At the same time, Abe also considered the MOF's interests. Abe assigned Kuroda Haruhiko as the governor of the Bank of Japan,<sup>45</sup> and raised the consumption tax from 5% to 8% in 2014, and 8% to 10% in 2019 as MOF desired for long. However, the hikes of the consumption tax damaged domestic consumption, resulting in the need to expand global markets for Japanese companies.<sup>46</sup> In that sense, for METI and MOF officials, sound economic relations with China were important. For Abe himself, because of his promise of economic revitalisation, it was not possible for him to ignore all of these economic indicators and the view of METI or MOF in the process of achieving his promised economic revitalisation.

Figure 10. Japan's trade relations with China from 2004 to 2021<sup>47</sup>

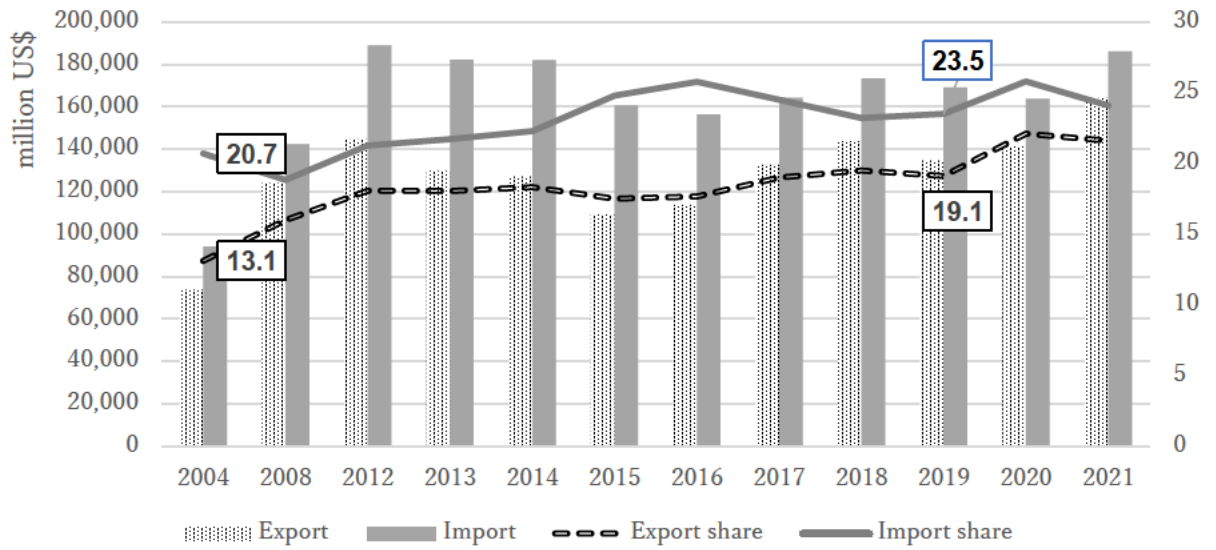
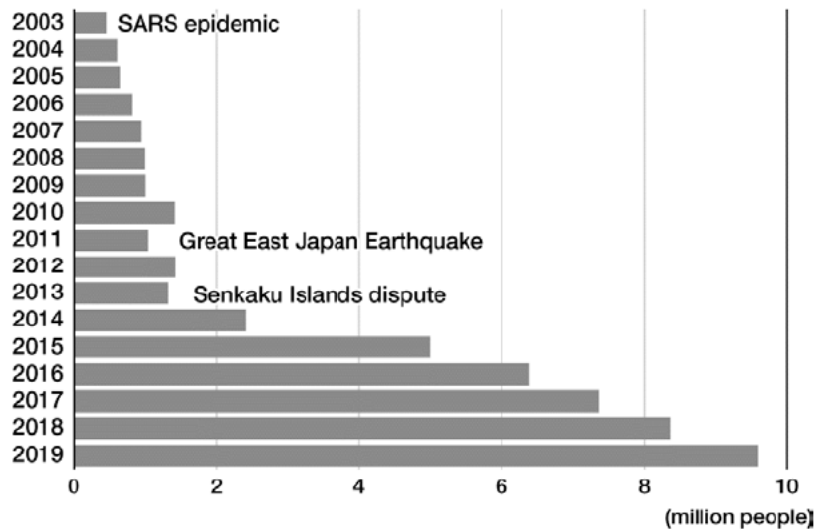


Figure 11. Changes in Chinese tourists to Japan<sup>48</sup>

### Chinese Visitor Numbers to Japan



Compiled by Nippon.com based on data from the Japan Tourism Agency.

nippon.com

### **2.3 Policymaking process: Outside government apparatus**

Finally, other potential cause for Abe 2.0's China policy was the role of the LDP's coalition partner, Komeito, as discussed in Chapter III. In fact, many of the policies of dialogue and reconciliation between the leaders of Japan and China were those desired by Komeito. One of the symbolic events was the visit of Komeito's leader, Yamaguchi Natsuo, to Beijing in January 2013 (less than one month following the initiation of Abe 2.0) where he met with General Secretary Xi Jinping and personally delivered a letter from Abe.<sup>49</sup> Komeito welcomed the sea-air liaison mechanism, a measure that Komeito had stressed for years.<sup>50</sup>

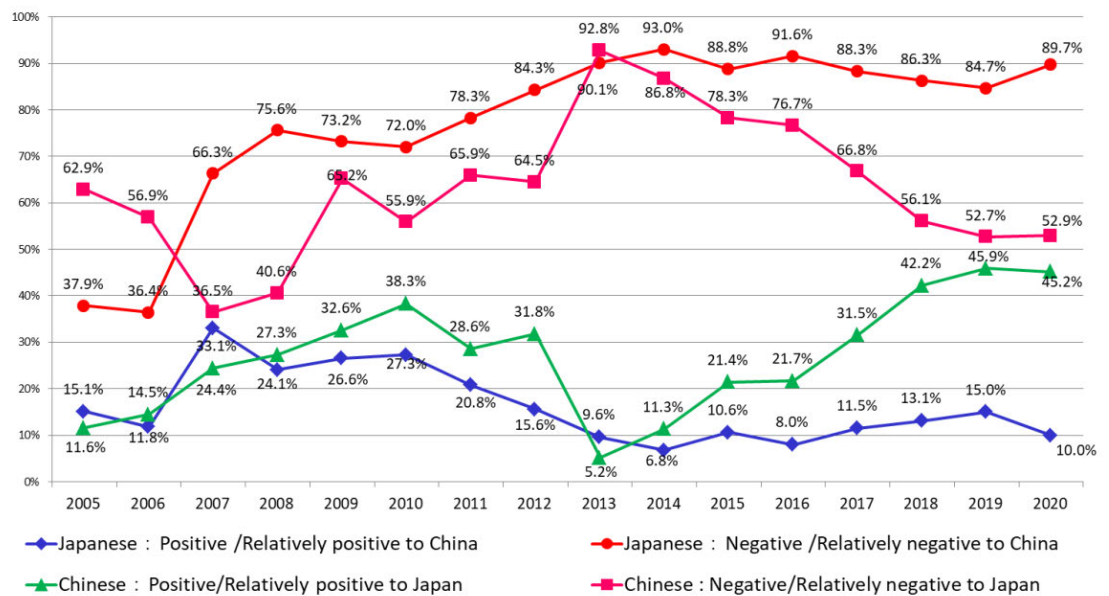
However, not all policies were implemented in the way Komeito wanted: when Abe visited the Yasukuni Shrine in December 2013, Komeito officially opposed the visit and expressed regret on the grounds that it would cause political and diplomatic problems.<sup>51</sup> In the same way, while Komeito strongly supported Xi's state visit to Japan scheduled in March 2020,<sup>52</sup> this also conflicted with the hawks in the LDP (the visit was eventually cancelled owing to the COVID-19 pandemic).<sup>53</sup> In this light, while Komeito sees its traditional role as a bridge between Japan and China,<sup>54</sup> its influence was limited. Abe 2.0 has occasionally adopted policies regarding China that conform to the wishes of Komeito, but based on its own judgment at the time, and not as a result of Komeito's direct influence over the administration.

The hardening of Japan's policy toward China under Abe 2.0 was largely supported by the extreme deterioration of the public sentiment toward China. Since the collision of the fishing boats around the Senkaku Islands in 2010, Japanese sentiment toward China has worsened, and the percentage of respondents who said they had a negative or relatively negative impression of China went from 72% in 2010 to 93% in 2014. It has remained around 90% since then (see Figure 12). While these trends in public opinion are by no means directly guiding any particular policy, they have certainly reduced the political risk for the government in implementing hard-line

## Realist Japan?

policies toward China.<sup>55</sup> In addition, while adopting a realist orientation, Abe adopted limited measures, such as slightly increasing military spending and allowing the exercise of the right of collective self-defence in a limited form, rather than taking steps such as amending the Article 9 of the constitution that would have radically altered Japan's defence posture.

**Figure 12. Surveys on perceptions on each country: China and Japan<sup>56</sup>**



### 3. Summary

This chapter proposed an analysis of Abe 2.0's policy toward China, and showed that the policy attempted to strike a balance between balancing and engagement. This overall approach from Abe 2.0 runs counter in many ways to expectations of structural realists. In applying a NCR framework, the chapter explained that leaders' realist perceptions, mediated by domestic policymaking processes—especially a policy struggle between security and economic bureaucrats within the government apparatus—sheds light on why Abe 2.0 struck the balancing-engagement approach toward China. Diplomacy with China—which was largely based on economic engagement—and diplomacy outside of China—which consisted largely of external balancing through coalition-building among like-minded states—resulted in the multifaceted nature of Japan's foreign policy toward China.

To take a balance between these two perceptions, Abe has combined balancing and engagement. He avoided measures that would lead to direct confrontation with China, and promoted soft-line policies, such as risk management through naval and air liaison mechanisms. Japan's defence and law enforcement agencies promoted capacity building of other countries' law enforcement agencies with keeping the grey-zone coercion of China in mind.<sup>57</sup>



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<sup>36</sup> *Nicchū no Daisangoku Kyōryoku ha Ze ka Hi ka: 'Ittai Ichiro' Ato oshi Keikai* (Is Japan-China Third-Country Economic Cooperation, Right or Wrong? Concerns over Promoting 'One Belt, One Road' Remaining), *Sankei Shimbun*, September 20, 2018, <https://www.sankei.com/article/20180920-KKMB2QF2FFIPL3O23PMMYOLQ4/2/>.

<sup>37</sup> *Chōyō Sareta Keisan Kanryō: 'Shiroji kara Kaku Chikara' Tayotta Abe Seiken* (Reliance on 'Power to Build from Scratch' Heavily Employed METI Bureaucrats under Abe 2.0), *Asahi Shimbun*, January 21, 2021, <https://digital.asahi.com/articles/ASP1H3Q10P15UTFK010.html>; *'Suga Gaikō' Gaimushō Kaiki e, Keizai Jūshi no Keisan Kanryō Tainin, Taichū Shiseini Nikai-shi Eikyō mo* ('Suga Diplomacy' to Return to MOFA, Resignation of Economy-focused METI Bureaucrat, Influence of Nikai on Policy toward China), *Sankei Shimbun*, September 19, 2020.

<sup>38</sup> Abe Sōri, *Shoshin Hyōmei Enzetsu* (Prime Minister Abe's policy speech), January 28, 2013, <https://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/headline/183shoshinhyomei.html>.

<sup>39</sup> Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Japan, *Chugoku, Nihon no Saidai no Bōeki Aitekoku ni: Beikoku Nuku* (China becoming the largest trading partner for Japan: Surpassing the United States), January 28, 2005, <https://www.mfa.gov.cn/ce/cejp/jpn/jmhzs/t181523.htm>.

<sup>40</sup> *2020-nen no Nicchū Bōeki ha Kako Saikōni* (Japan-China trade in 2020 to account for record high share of Japan's trade with China), *Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO)*, June 15, 2021, <https://www.jetro.go.jp/biz/areareports/2021/114272012ce2ba22.html>.

<sup>41</sup> *Kiso Shiryō* (Basic Document), Headquarters for Japan's Economic Revitalization of the Cabinet Secretariat, Council on Investments for the Future, March 6, 2020, <http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/singi/keizaisaisei/miraitoshikaigi/dai36/siryou1.pdf>.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC), FY2020 JBIC Survey (the 32<sup>nd</sup>) Report on Overseas Business Operations by Japanese Manufacturing Companies, January 15, 2021, <https://www.jbic.go.jp/ja/information/press/press-2020/0115-014188.html>.

<sup>44</sup> *Hōnichi Chūgokujin, Kono 12-nen de 10-bai zō: 2019-nen no Ryokō Shōhigaku ha 1-chō 7700-okuen ni* (Chinese Visitors to Japan Increased Tenfold in the past 12 Years: Travel Spending in 2019 Reaching 1.77 trillion yen), *Nippon.com*, January 28, 2020. <https://www.nippon.com/ja/japan-data/h00646/>.

<sup>45</sup> Kuroda was a career MOF official throughout his career, including Director-General, International Bureau, Vice Minister of Finance for International Affairs, and the President of the Asian Development Bank. See. Governor [The 31st]: Mr. KURODA Haruhiko, About the Bank, the Bank of Japan, [https://www.boj.or.jp/en/about/organization/policyboard/gv\\_kuroda.htm/](https://www.boj.or.jp/en/about/organization/policyboard/gv_kuroda.htm/).

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- <sup>47</sup> *Japanese Trade and Investment Statistics*, Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO), <https://www.jetro.go.jp/en/reports/statistics.html>.
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- <sup>49</sup> That was already the fourth meeting between Yamaguchi and Xi. See *Tō Hōchūdan Shū Kinpei Sōshoki to Kaidan* (Party Delegation to China Meeting General Secretary Xi Jinping), Komeito, January 26, 2013, [https://www.komei.or.jp/news/detail/20130126\\_10159](https://www.komei.or.jp/news/detail/20130126_10159).
- <sup>50</sup> *Nicchū Ka -Kū Renraku Mekanizumu* (The Japan-China Maritime and Air Communication Mechanism), Komeito, May 14, 2018, <https://www.komei.or.jp/komeinews/p2504/>.
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- <sup>52</sup> *Shu Shuseki Kokuhin Hōnichi*, 'Taikyoku teki Kanten de Suishin Subekida', Komei Yamaguchi Daihyō (President Xi's State Visit to Japan 'Should be Promoted from Broad Perspectives'. Komeito President Yamaguchi says), *Sankei Shimbun*, July 7, 2020, <https://www.sankei.com/article/20200707-NPZ3RAT3VVMHNFQW343O4SNTQ/>.
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- <sup>55</sup> Suzuki, Shogo, The rise of the Chinese 'Other' in Japan's Construction of Identity: Is China a Focal Point of Japanese Nationalism?, *The Pacific Review* 28:1 (2015), pp.95-116.
- <sup>56</sup> *Analysis Paper: The 16th Joint Public Opinion Poll Japan-China Public Opinion Survey 2020*, Genron NPO, November 2020, [https://www.genron-npo.net/en/201117\\_en.pdf](https://www.genron-npo.net/en/201117_en.pdf).
- <sup>57</sup> Details of capacity-building are discussed in Chapter 5.

## **Chapter V Case 3: Regional Diplomacy: Free and Open Indo-Pacific**

As the third case study, this chapter uses a neoclassical realist (NCR) framework to analyse the 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific' (FOIP) concept which constituted Japan's overall foreign policy direction adopted by Abe 2.0. Compared to Japan-U.S. or Japan-China bilateral diplomatic relations discussed in the previous two chapters, FOIP is an overarching strategic concept for maintaining and strengthening freedom and openness in maritime security, promoting connectivity, and expanding 'universal' values (Figure 12). In other words, FOIP attempted to preserve a rules-based international order.<sup>1</sup> Focusing on two aspects of the NCR framework: the leaders' image and the decision-making process, this chapter examines the motivations and mechanisms by which Abe 2.0 created and realised this strategic concept to guide its foreign policy.

### **1. Emergence of the FOIP concept**

This section will track the inception of FOIP from Abe's first short tenure in 2006 to 2007 to its realisation in his second administration.

#### **1.1 Legacy of Abe 1.0**

To understand the FOIP, it is necessary to look back from the foreign policy of Abe 1.0. As Abe himself acknowledges, the concept of the Indo-Pacific originated in his first administration from 2006 to 2007, especially his speech at the Indian Parliament, titled 'Confluence of the Two Seas', delivered in August 2007.<sup>2</sup> The 2007 speech had two critical aims: expanding the definition of the Asia region and promoting values-based diplomacy. First, Abe aimed to expand the regional concept used in Japanese diplomacy from the traditional Asia-Pacific or East Asia to the broader Indo-Pacific by illustrating his recognition of the importance of connecting the two seas as global public goods in which cultures can intersect, trade can develop, and people's lives can become

more prosperous.<sup>3</sup> In fact, expansion of the regional concept was in line with Abe's predecessor, such as Koizumi's broader Asia concept in 2002 which sought to expand East Asia to include Australia, New Zealand and India. As Terada Takashi points out, Koizumi's expansion was a realist policy to counter the growing influence of China in East Asia—where developing and non-democratic nations maintain a majority—in order to promote high-level economic rules in the region.<sup>4</sup>

Second, Abe 1.0 also promoted values-based diplomacy—a foreign policy that promotes, supports, and spreads cooperation and collaboration with countries and peoples that share an interest in preserving individual liberties, democratic processes, fundamental human rights, the rule of law, and market economics.<sup>5</sup> Aso Taro, the then Foreign Minister of Abe 1.0 advocated the 'Arc of Freedom and Prosperity', calling for cooperation among like-minded states, namely the United States, Australia, Canada, India, the European Union, and others in order to establish a circle of freedom along the Eurasian continent.<sup>6</sup> The emphasis on values overlapped with the 'Eurasian diplomacy' promoted by Hashimoto Ryutaro in the late 1990s and the diplomacy of the Mori Yoshiro administration, which emphasised Africa.<sup>7</sup> While Abe 1.0 attempted to promote cooperation among the four members of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (or 'Quad'—Australia, India, Japan, and the United States), it could not be sustained due to the sudden resignation of Abe as well as hesitation on the part of Canberra and Delhi.<sup>8</sup> Abe's successors, namely Fukuda Yasuo from 2007 to 2008 as well as DPJ administrations from 2009 to 2012, did not prioritise this values-based diplomacy or coalition-building, and instead focused on improving relations with key neighbouring states, especially China and South Korea.<sup>9</sup> While Aso Taro from 2008 to 2009 aimed to succeed value-based diplomacy, he was preoccupied with the economic policies after the Global Financial Crisis and lost the lower house election in August 2009.

## 1.2 Emergence of FOIP under Abe 2.0

Abe expressed the foundational idea of FOIP from the beginning of Abe 2.0. Abe published an article titled 'Asia's Democratic Security Diamond' in December 2012, the day after he assumed the prime minister, and called for a strategic cooperation among the Quad members.<sup>10</sup> In January 2013, in his first overseas trip in Southeast Asia, Abe stressed the importance of maritime security and freedom of navigation as a common interest for all in the region stretching from the Asia-Pacific to the Indian Ocean.<sup>11</sup> He also used the term Indo-Pacific for the first time in his speech in Washington a month later, saying that 'when the Asia-Pacific or the Indo-Pacific region becomes more and more prosperous, Japan must remain a leading promoter of rules.'<sup>12</sup> After succeeding in achieving domestic security policy reforms and the strengthening the alliance with United States in 2015 (see Chapter III), Abe's embrace of the Indo-Pacific region culminated in his speech in August 2016, at the Sixth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD VI) in Kenya. Although he did not use the term FOIP itself, Abe outlined the basic values of FOIP, saying, 'Japan bears the responsibility of fostering the confluence of the Pacific and Indian Oceans and of Asia and Africa into a place that values freedom, the rule of law, and the market economy, free from force or coercion, and making it prosperous.'<sup>13</sup>

Thus, while Abe 2.0 vigorously promoted the FOIP concept after 2016, those efforts were based on foundations built during Abe 1.0, especially promotion of the Arc of Freedom and Prosperity, as well as the accomplishment of the first three years of Abe 2.0.<sup>14</sup> Given that Abe 1.0 foreign policy considered two aspects of international politics—power and values—FOIP is also a product of the convergence of Japan's post-Cold War diplomatic focus on liberal values and careful management of the balance of power in the rapidly changing security environment caused by China's rise. Sahashi Ryo views the importance of FOIP in its role in rule-making and order-building, which Japan has prioritised after the end of the Cold War.<sup>15</sup> Kanehara Nobukatsu, the then deputy director-general of the National Security Secretariat (NSS) during the Abe 2.0,



also calls FOIP as a grand strategy, akin to George Kennan's famous 'X' article in the early days of the Cold War. Kanehara argues that FOIP is a strategy that concerns not only matters of power and strategic balance, but also economics and values, and aims to protect and nurture a liberal international order that spans Japan, the United States, ASEAN, Australia, and India, as well as the east coast of Africa and the west coast of Latin America (Figure 13).<sup>16</sup>

### **1.3 FOIP and China**

FOIP was formulated by keeping China in mind. Chen Dingding argues that some Chinese experts see the aim of FOIP as containment of China.<sup>17</sup> Yet, the Japanese government has always responded to such concerns by saying that FOIP is not aimed at any third countries.<sup>18</sup> In fact, FOIP never intended to impede China's economic development or thwart China from contributing to the global economy. To be more precise, FOIP aims to realise Japan's national interest by encouraging and pressuring China to follow existing international rules and thus supports a rules-based international order in the twenty-first century. John Lee argues that FOIP should not be seen as containing China, but is rather a collective effort to ensure that growing Chinese power is not used to challenge or circumvent the rules-based order, and ultimately shapes China's decisions in line with existing rules and principles.<sup>19</sup> This suggests that FOIP was the response to the rise of China and increasing uncertainty over the future of the liberal international order, but not targeting China as a hostile nation.

These goals related to China were reflected in the basic principles of FOIP. First, one of the pillars of FOIP is maritime security which reflects not only Japan's determination to protect its sovereignty over the Senkaku Islands, but also its concerns about the sea lanes of communications from the Middle East to the Far East, passing through the South China Sea. Japan's first post-war National Security Strategy, released in December 2013, outlines Japan's

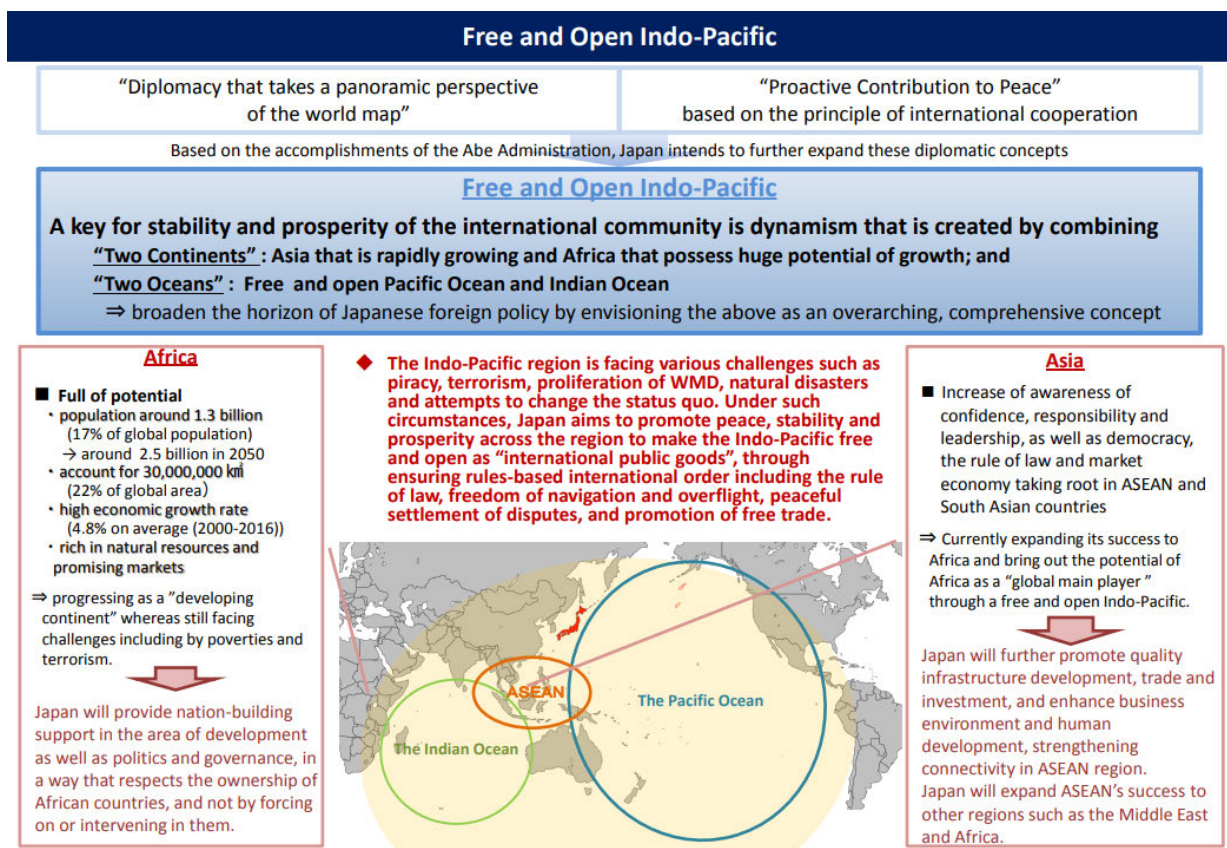
identity as a maritime nation which will play a leading role in the maintenance and development of an 'open and stable ocean' based on the rule of law, freedom and security of navigation and overflight, and the peaceful resolution of disputes in accordance with international law.<sup>20</sup> That strategy document also describes China's actions as 'an attempt to change the status quo by force based on its own claims' and 'incompatible with the existing international order.'<sup>21</sup> Abe pushed this agenda at the Shangri La Dialogue 2014, promulgating the three principles of the rule of law at sea.<sup>22</sup> FOIP follows from these overtures, and further elaborates the need for strengthening maritime domain awareness (MDA) capabilities of maritime South and Southeast Asian nations' military and law enforcement agencies.<sup>23</sup>

The second factor behind FOIP was China's active infrastructure investment activities, especially across Asia and Africa, including through the Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank (AIIB), the New Development Bank, and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). According to a diplomat of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) who was involved in the 2016 FOIP speech at TICAD VI, FOIP reflects Japan's commitment to regional development in Africa and to maintain and strengthen liberal values in the face of China's investment practices which are more opaque and financially unsustainable.<sup>24</sup> Like for maritime security, the promotion of connectivity also has accomplishments before 2016, for example, at the '21st International Conference on the Future of Asia' held in Tokyo in May 2015 in which Abe expressed his commitment to promote 'quality Infrastructure investment' in collaboration with other countries and international organisations.<sup>25</sup> He announced a plan to strengthen the Asian Development Bank (ADB), as well as a new investment promise totalling 110 billion U.S. dollars to the Asian region over five years.<sup>26</sup> This came just after Xi Jinping announced a 100 billion U.S. dollar investment in the AIIB. Although the Japanese government denies any correlation, Tokyo has kept a close watch on China-led infrastructure initiatives after the BRI was announced in 2013 and reflected their concerns on FOIP.<sup>27</sup>

## Realist Japan?

Therefore, although FOIP cannot be equated in any sense with a containment strategy, the emergence of the concept should be seen in the context of Japanese efforts to maintain its national interests by ensuring the international values standards—including with regard to the principle of the rule of law in maritime commons and transparency, sustainability and accountability in international investment and development practices—in the face of troubling Chinese maritime activities and expansive foreign investment and infrastructure development programs that often differ from widely accepted standards.<sup>28</sup> Recalling Abe 1.0's failure to promote deep cooperation among liberal democracies, such as the Quad, some experts argued that 'reality finally caught up with Abe's rhetoric.'<sup>29</sup> In other words, FOIP is a fundamentally realist strategy which also respects the complicated nexus among power, interests and value.

**Figure 13. MOFA's official graphic explaining the FOIP concept<sup>30</sup>**



## **2. NCR Analysis**

From a structural realist perspective, FOIP raises several puzzles. For instance, while neorealist perspectives can explain why Japan opted for a coalition-building among like-minded nations as a means to keep or create a favourable balance of power, it cannot explain why FOIP is so value-oriented or why it does not push hard power military cooperation and instead promotes infrastructure or MDA capacity-building. Neorealist views also fail to explain why the government of Japan changed the term to describe FOIP from 'strategy' to 'vision' in mid-2018 and what this change indicates about Japan's foreign and security policy.<sup>31</sup> NCR provides a set of answers to these puzzles based on an analysis of domestic intervening variables.

### **2.1 Leader images: Abe's strategy to manage China's rise**

First, despite some under-balancing characteristics, FOIP is in nature a key part of Japan's realist shift.<sup>32</sup> This is the view of Kanehara when he refers to FOIP as a policy of protecting and promoting Japan's national interest in the face of China's rise.<sup>33</sup> This realist aspect first emerged from Abe's personal image and perception on the structure of the international system. In describing the idea of 'Asia's Democratic Security Diamond', published in December 2012, Abe stated that 'freedom of navigation across the Pacific and Indian Oceans is being threatened by China's challenges in the South China Sea' and warned of the risk of the South China Sea becoming a 'Chinese lake'.<sup>34</sup> Abe then proposed the security diamond concept as a collective security system connecting Japan, Hawaii (U.S.), Australia, and India to counter challenges posed by China.<sup>35</sup> In the new version of his book entitled 'Towards a Beautiful Country' published in January 2013, he added his concerns over China's behaviours toward Japan during the period of Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) leadership and criticised Beijing's actions as 'damaging economic relations by attacking and boycotting Japanese companies in order to achieve its

political goal of the Senkaku'.<sup>36</sup> Abe's personal perception was consistent with realist views and as well as his embrace of cooperation among like-minded nations, which later appeared in the 2013 National Security Strategy and FOIP.<sup>37</sup>

China's assertive activities in the East and South China Seas pushed Abe 2.0 to implement specific policies in maritime security. In 2012, the government documents such as the Defence White Paper and the Diplomatic Bluebook started noting the incidents such as the confrontation between Chinese maritime law enforcement vessels and Philippine naval vessels in the waters surrounding Scarborough Reef. Furthermore, in 2013, the Defence White Paper has expressed concerns over China's anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) capabilities. In addition, after China actions in the East China Sea, the Defence White Paper intensified its criticism of China's unilateral actions in the South China Sea, such Chinese ship's harassment of Philippine fishing boats around the Scarborough Shoal in January 2014, unilateral oil drilling activities around the Paracel Islands in May 2014, and land reclamation after 2015. This indicates that the broadening range of Chinese maritime threats were seen as threat from the Japanese government.<sup>38</sup>

However, Abe stopped using overly critical expressions about China after coming back to power, and his prudence appears on FOIP.<sup>39</sup> In fact, Abe 2.0 did not officially support the Democratic Security Diamond or hard balancing against China. His policy, including FOIP, was not solely about balancing, but also allows room for consideration toward ASEAN and engagement with neighbouring countries, especially China.<sup>40</sup> Abe does not appear to believe that balancing should be the only way to deal with China as discussed in Chapter IV. Abe 2.0 inherited the concept of a 'mutually beneficial relationship based on strategic interests' adopted during Abe 1.0 (as discussed in the previous chapter) and was always willing to have dialogue with China.

Based on the past experience that the Arc of Freedom and Prosperity was seen as an encirclement against China, Japan carefully designed FOIP as an inclusive concept. This perception was shared among the key foreign policy executives (FPEs). In the context of 'diplomacy with a panoramic perspective', which later became the foundation of FOIP, Yachi Shotaro clearly stated that 'the Abe administration has no intention of encircling China, nor does Japan have the capacity to do so', but he also notes that 'China should quickly learn to abide by international laws and rules.'<sup>41</sup> Kono Taro, foreign minister from 2018 to 2020, said in his foreign policy speech, that 'maintaining and strengthening a free and open maritime order of the Indo-Pacific region as a "global commons" will bring stability and prosperity equally to all countries in this region'.<sup>42</sup> In the same speech, while Kono criticised China's unilateral actions in the East China Sea, he also said that '[Japan will] hold discussions with China in order to make the East China Sea a "Sea of Peace, Cooperation and Friendship"'<sup>43</sup>. Thus, while Abe's threat perception made FOIP a realist policy, he did not intend to use FOIP as a tool of containment, the FPEs' perceptions created a moderate balancing strategy which aimed to create more favourable conditions for managing and stabilising relations with a rising China.

## **2.2 Policymaking process: Roles of MOFA and value-diplomacy**

While Abe's personal perception or image became the foundation of FOIP, the specific idea of FOIP originated within the bureaucracy, and especially within MOFA. Around late 2015, the then director of MOFA's Policy Coordination Division, Foreign Policy Bureau, Ichikawa Keiichi, stated 'there was the need for Japan's diplomacy to clearly express what Japan aims for as a nation in words and concrete actions in order to increase Japan's presence in the world'.<sup>44</sup> After his consultation with his boss, Akiba Takeo, the then director general of Foreign Policy Bureau (later vice-minister for foreign affairs), he presented the idea of FOIP to Abe before the TICAD VI, and

got Abe's approval. In short, FOIP was MOFA's successful effort to draft an overall diplomatic vision consistent with Abe's personal perception on international structure.<sup>45</sup>

Also, FOIP was the result of MOFA's effort to find a new policy agenda in which they could take an initiative. The increased public profile of FOIP coincided with the finalisation of Abe's major foreign and security policy reforms in 2015 (see Chapter III). Before the FOIP was publicly released in 2016, MOFA, together with the Ministry of Defense (MOD), had supported Abe's foreign and security policy, including security policy reforms and alliance management with the United States as well as Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) negotiations and security cooperation with Australia<sup>46</sup> and India during this period.<sup>47</sup> They also worked hard for Abe's active schedule of visits to foreign countries.<sup>48</sup> It was around the late 2015 to 2016, MOFA found its space to push forward their policy ideas under Abe 2.0 with Abe's personal agenda of security policy reforms completed.

Thus, it was a bottom-up, not top-down approach which generated the basic ideas and policies of FOIP based on Abe's leader images (a right-side stream of Figure 2). The Policy Coordination Bureau of MOFA took advantage of thinking beyond traditional regional divisions of the organisation, and of the close communications with the Prime Minister's Office (*kantei*) and the NSS. At the same time, this process meant the original contour of FOIP was based on MOFA's interests and areas of responsibility. This explains why while FOIP is basically a realist policy, it is not primarily focused on the military and defence sectors, but rather on areas that Japanese diplomacy has focused on since the end of the Cold War: strengthening diplomatic relations with like-minded states, emphasising value diplomacy, and economic diplomacy. Meanwhile, after Abe approved and supported the formal FOIP concept, it evolved to a whole-of-government policy covering not only MOFA, but MOD, the Japan Coast Guard (JCG), and the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) with the NSS playing a central role. Since early

2018, MOD's International Cooperation Bureau actively promoted capacity building in other countries by the Self-Defence Forces under the name of FOIP. Similarly, the JCG, in response to the increased regional need for maritime surveillance technology and technical assistance, established the JCG Mobile Cooperation Team in October 2017, which is dedicated to support capacity building of foreign coast guard agencies.<sup>49</sup> While the quality infrastructure initiative belonged to METI, it was later embedded to FOIP.<sup>50</sup>

The case of FOIP construction is one case that bureaucrats who understand Abe's personal image professionally created the policy and appealed to the leader. It was not originally top-down policy development in which the leader directed each ministry to work on a specific strategic goal. Rather, MOFA carried out a bottom-up process to develop the concept, and with Abe's approval and support from NSS, the top-down process worked out to assign tasks to each ministry to implement specific policies under the banner of FOIP.

### **2.3 Ambiguity of FOIP: Strategy or vision**

The analysis above demonstrates the process by which FOIP was constructed by FPEs based on Abe's perception. While FOIP is a basic guideline that oversees foreign policy with a realist aspect, it is fundamentally different from general national security or defence strategies, which encompasses strategic objectives, criteria for action, policy options, and military objectives, with an awareness of dealing with potential adversaries in order to maintain national survival.<sup>51</sup>

An important milestone in this regard is the Japanese government's revision of FOIP from a 'strategy' to a 'vision' in late-2018. It was around November 2018 when the term 'strategy' was removed from the FOIP concept. Accordingly, the reason for this omission was that Southeast Asian nations, especially Singapore and Malaysia, pointed out that 'friction between Japan and China is undesirable' and 'when you say "strategy", people think we are considering



confrontation with the other'.<sup>52</sup> Media reports also pointed out that 'ever since Abe proposed FOIP, it has been seen as a containment strategy against China' and 'the government decided to remove strategy before Abe's visit to China in October 2018'.<sup>53</sup> The flexible action of removing the strategy from FOIP was possible because of the central role of MOFA in FOIP.

Structural realists may see this as a step-back or under-balancing against China. However, the making of FOIP shows that, from its inception, it was not designed as an adversarial strategy. Applying an NCR analysis, FOIP is certainly a Japanese style of balancing against China, but because of Abe's balanced view and the initiatives taken by MOFA, the content of FOIP remained mainly composed of diplomatic measures. Ichikawa Keiichi argues that the reason why it is no longer called a strategy was that the Japanese government, through its interactions with ASEAN and other countries, had come to believe that it is better for each country to share a vision and have a sense of ownership for FOIP. He adds that there would be no need to emphasise that it is Japan's 'strategy', and the positive consequence of removing that term was that ASEAN launched its own Indo-Pacific initiative, ASEAN Outlook of Indo-Pacific, in 2019, which included the principles of openness, transparency, and respect for international law.<sup>54</sup> From a scholarly perspective, Kamiya Mataka explained this process by focusing on the making of the international order. Kamiya argues that the international order cannot be established by the unilateral efforts of a few countries alone, and a 'free and open order' in the Indo-Pacific can only be successfully established if there is a widespread willingness among other countries to accept the concept.<sup>55</sup> In other words, in order for Japan to succeed in promoting a concept of Indo-Pacific order as a 'competitive strategy' against China, FPEs and experts concluded that Japan must show a certain degree of consideration for its 'cooperative strategy' against China.<sup>56</sup>

### **3. Summary**

This chapter proposed a NCR interpretation of the rise of FOIP under Abe 2.0. As explained above, FOIP resulted from Abe's perception and the policy-making process led by MOFA. From the perspective of structural realism, FOIP would be seen as a form of containment against China, in which Japan, which is facing a challenging security environment, cooperates with other countries in order to counter China and to ensure its own survival. In reality, both Abe and MOFA FPEs were aware of the risks posed by China, and materialised their leader image as FOIP. However, their motivation was to create new diplomatic guidelines that would help maintaining liberal values, market economy, and stability in the Indo-Pacific and receive supports from as many countries as possible. Also, the central role of MOFA in the policymaking process determined the specifics of FOIP. FOIP is therefore the result of systemic pressures that transforms Japan's threat perceptions but also domestic processes, including FPEs' perceptions and the bottom-up process of its making, that can best be explained by NCR.

## Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> MOFA, Free and Open Indo-Pacific, April 1, 2021, [https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/page25e\\_000278.html](https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/page25e_000278.html).
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- <sup>33</sup> Kanehara, 2020, p.269.
- <sup>34</sup> Abe, Shinzo, Asia's Democratic Security Diamond, Project Syndicate, December 27, 2012, <https://www.project-syndicate.org/onpoint/a-strategic-alliance-for-japan-and-india-by-shinzo-abe>.
- <sup>35</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>36</sup> Abe, Shinzo, *Aratashi Kuni: Utsukushi Kunihe Kanzenban* (Towards a New Country: Perfect version of 'Towards a Beautiful Country'), Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū, 2013, p.250.
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- <sup>39</sup> The article and book were published immediately after his inauguration on December 26, 2012. It means that these were written before winning the general election on December 16, 2012.
- <sup>40</sup> Regarding Abe's Security Diamond idea, the then foreign minister Kishida Fumio said that 'while there were certain overlaps, the article was not Abe 2.0's official foreign policy'. See The 183rd Diet Session, House of Representatives, Budget Committee, Subcommittee 3, No. 2, April 15, 2013.
- <sup>41</sup> Interview with Yachi Shotaro, see *Chikyū-gi wo Fukansuru Abe Gaikō*: Yachi Shotaro Naikaku Kanbō Sanyo Intabyū (Abe's Diplomacy from a Global Perspective: Interview with Yachi Shotaro, Special Advisor to Cabinet (1)), *Nippon.com*, June 27, 2013, <https://www.nippon.com/ja/currents/d00089/>.
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<sup>46</sup> This is seen in the conclusions of the Information Security Agreement (ISA, in 2012), defence equipment transfer agreement (DET in 2014), Trilateral Information Sharing Agreement with the U.S. (TISA in 2016), and Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA in 2017). See Kusaka, Sumio, Ambassador's Address, November 9, 2016, <https://www.au.emb-japan.go.jp/files/000201976.pdf>. Regarding the strategic motivations of Japan and Australia, see Wilkins, Thomas S., After a Decade of Strategic Partnership: Japan and Australia 'Decentering' from the US Alliance?, *The Pacific Review* 31:4 (2018), pp.498-514.

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<sup>48</sup> As of February 20, 2016, Abe had visited '63 countries/regions (a total of 86 countries/regions)' and held nearly 400 summit meetings, while Kishida had visited 42 countries/regions (a total of 65 countries/regions) and held 604 meetings with foreign dignitaries (including a total of 247 meetings with 104 foreign ministers). See MOFA, Diplomatic Bluebook 2017.

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<sup>50</sup> METI, Toward 'Economic Prosperity' in the Indo-Pacific Region: Supporting Business Activities, 2020, [https://www.meti.go.jp/english/policy/external\\_economy/trade/foip/index.html](https://www.meti.go.jp/english/policy/external_economy/trade/foip/index.html).

<sup>51</sup> Oba, Mie, *Nihon no Indo Taiheiyō Kōsō* (Japan's 'Indo-Pacific' Vision), *Kokusai Anzenhoshō* (Journal of International Security) 46:3 (2018), pp. 27-28. Oba identifies 'two contradictory directions of Japan's Indo-Pacific concept', which includes one that dilutes as much as possible the message of the coalition building against China and presents an inclusive 'Indo-Pacific' vision that aims for peace and prosperity and the other direction that strives to form a desirable order while keeping China in check.

<sup>52</sup> *Indo Taiheiyō 'Kōsō' ni Shūsei = 'Senryaku' wo Fūin* (Indo-Pacific 'vision' revised = 'strategy' sealed, consideration for Asia), *Jiji Press*, November 14, 2018, <https://www.nippon.com/ja/news/yji2018111401238/>.

<sup>53</sup> *Abe Shushō ga Fūin Shita 'Senryaku' no Futamoji – Hōchu Mae ni Chūgoku eno Shigeki Sakeru?* (The Word of 'Strategy' Sealed by Prime Minister Abe – Avoiding Provocation to China before his Visit?), *Business Insider*, October 26, 2018, <https://www.businessinsider.jp/post-178169>.

<sup>54</sup> *NHK*, June 30, 2021, <https://www.nhk.or.jp/politics/articles/feature/62725.html>.

<sup>55</sup> Kamiya, Matake, '*Kyōsō Senryaku*' no Tameno '*Kyōryoku Senryaku*': *Nihon no 'Jiyū de Hirakareta Indo-Taiheiyō' Senryaku (Kōsō) no Fukugōteki Kouzō* ('Cooperative Strategy' for 'Competitive Strategy': The Complex Structure of Japan's 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific' Strategy (Concept)), Kajima Institute of International Peace, *Anzen Hoshō Kenkyū (Security studies)* 1:2 (2019), pp.47-64.

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## **Chapter VI Conclusion**

This thesis examined the formulation of foreign and security policy during the administration of Abe 2.0.<sup>1</sup> In order to strike a balance between generalisation and description, this thesis applied a neoclassical realist (NCR) theoretical framework which posits that changes in the international environment – systemic stimuli – work as independent variables, which are mediated by the perceptions of domestic leaders (leader images) and the domestic policymaking processes, especially the coordination within the government by foreign policy executives (FPEs) and inter-party consultations within the ruling coalitions. In applying this framework, the thesis has shown how and why Japan's realist shift has occasionally diverged from the expectations of structural realism in three key cases: security policy reforms and alliance management with the United States; the management of Japan-China relations; and the promotion of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP).

The thesis has generated three major findings. The first is the importance of structural factors in the policymaking for Abe 2.0. In the period from December 2012 to September 2020, it was not domestic factors such as the personal preferences or ideology of state leaders, but the structural change in international politics, namely the rise of China, which chiefly shaped Japan's foreign policy. How to manage relations with a rising China was (and still is) a central question affecting a range of Japanese policies, including not only Japan's policy toward China, but also the strengthening of the U.S.-Japan alliance through security-related legislative reforms, the development of security partnerships with like-minded countries, and the promotion of a FOIP. While official statements largely avoid direct reference to China or any specific third country as a target of security and economic partnerships, this research argues that the foreign and security policies of Abe 2.0 were consistently shaped with China in mind.



The second major finding of this thesis is the importance of domestic intervening variables, namely leader images and policymaking mechanisms, in determining the foreign and security policy of Abe 2.0. Relying primarily on Japanese-language information and resources, the thesis revealed how Abe tactically utilised the bureaucracy and appointed advisors to reform security policy and promote the FOIP. While domestic policymaking processes may be considered opaque and 'black boxed' by some parsimonious international relations theories, this research formulated a simple, but appropriately detailed, framework of the Japanese policymaking process based on neoclassical realist studies (Chapter II). This NCR framework—in which structural changes are mediated through leader images and policymaking processes, both inside and outside the government apparatus—provides a basic guideline for understanding Japan's policymaking in recent years. Although the leader is not always the starting point for policy formation, leader images become more and more important because of the strengthened capacity and authority of the Prime Minister's Office (*kantei*). In addition, the framework adopted in this study shows that FPEs with bureaucratic backgrounds are particularly important in tackling the political and legal technicalities involved in foreign and security affairs and that Abe 2.0 effectively utilised these bureaucratic players (e.g., the appointment of bureaucrats to key posts whose views were close to those of Abe). As Jimbo Ken points out, the consistency and continuity of policy, backed by strong political power and a active international coalition-building strategy based on the principle of the rule of law, enabled Abe 2.0 to successfully improve Japan's international presence and accomplish diplomatic and security partnerships throughout the Indo-Pacific region.<sup>2</sup>

A third finding, flowing from the second, is that a more realist shift was occasionally restrained by intervening factors, particularly the policymaking process. Abe could not accomplish the fully-fledged right of collective self-defence posture because of objections raised by the ruling Liberal Democratic Party's coalition partner, the New Komeito Party. Similarly,

while Japan has consistently sought to counter China's expansionist policy and maritime intrusions in the East China Sea, Japan took a more accommodating policy toward China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) due to differences of opinion within the *kantei*. In another example, while Japan promoted the FOIP, Abe 2.0 was reluctant to emphasise military aspects of this concept. As Abe himself pointed out, the key to Abe 2.0's success was 'team power': as long as the foreign policy executive team is looking in the same direction, the concentration of power and resources in the *kantei* can transcend the compartmentalisation among government agencies and produce results more quickly.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, as shown in this thesis, there were also cases when the differences within the strengthened *kantei* caused fluctuations and contradictions in the overall policy. Given its theoretical consistency and a balanced parsimony and complexity, this thesis' framework can be applied to examine future administrations in Japan.

In sum, this thesis has demonstrated the relevance and utility of the NCR framework to explain Abe 2.0's foreign and security policies. Still, there are remaining tasks for future research. First, the relevance and utility of the NCR framework could be further tested by investigating the policy coordination process within the LDP. Traditionally, the LDP's internal policy coordination process was extremely important for policymaking in Japan in the post-World War II era.<sup>4</sup> Terada Takashi points out that even during Abe 2.0, in the run-up to negotiations for membership in the Trans-Pacific Partnership, the administration and the LDP carefully coordinated with one another, especially with concern to the agricultural and fisheries sectors.<sup>5</sup> This suggests that, depending on certain agenda items, intra-party negotiations may be another important intervening variable in the NCR framework. For several reasons, this thesis did not consider the potential impact on policy of internal differences within the LDP: Abe was from the *Seiwakai*, the largest LDP conservative faction; his repeated electoral victories gave him enormous power within the party; and foreign and security policies are traditionally

less divisive within the LDP. However, considering intra-party politics may be more relevant for assessing the policies of the current prime minister, Kishida Fumio (in office since October 2021) as he is from a small, liberal LDP faction, *Kouchikai*, and does not dominate the LDP in the same way as Abe.

Second, space limitations meant the number of cases was likewise limited. Specifically, this thesis could not sufficiently examine and explain the failures of Abe 2.0. In the area of foreign and security policies, Abe 2.0 failed to realise its promises on the issue of Japanese abductees in North Korea, was unable to deter Pyongyang from developing their nuclear and missile capabilities, did not advance Japanese interests in territorial disputes and peace treaty negotiations with Russia, failed to pursue a strategic partnership with South Korea despite all the shared threats and the alliance with the United States, and fell short of its goals for constitutional reform. Repatriating Japanese abductees in North Korea was one of the most important pledges Abe made at the time of his inauguration and he was personally and actively engaged in exchanges with the abductees' family associations.<sup>6</sup> Yet, Abe 2.0 could not formally achieve any concrete results with North Korea on the abduction issue and was unable to significantly slow or halt North Korea's nuclear and missile development programs. Further research could demonstrate the benefit of using a NCR framework to understand whether Abe 2.0 was able to conduct a more hard-line, realist policy toward North Korea.

As for Russia, Abe visited the country 11 times during his tenure and had a total of 27 summit meetings with Vladimir Putin in order to conclude a peace treaty to bring a formal end to their World War II hostilities and to negotiate a resolution to their territorial dispute over the Russian-held Kuril Islands (known as the Northern Territories in Japan). However, negotiations for a peace treaty did not proceed and in July 2020, one month before Abe's resignation, the Russian constitution was amended to include a ban on territorial cession despite Abe's offer of

economic and technological assistance in the development of Siberia and the Arctic.<sup>7</sup> This would be another fascinating case for testing the relevance of the NCR framework because some Japanese authors have reported on critical differences of opinion between key government bureaucracies—such as the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA)—over relations with Russia.<sup>8</sup>

Another area ripe for further research is the effect of domestic ideational factors, especially social norms and state-society relations, as mediating variables shaping foreign and security policy outcomes. Constructivists as well as neoclassical realists identify the significance of state-society relations in assessing foreign and security policies, especially when such relations are characterised by discord.<sup>9</sup> This thesis attempts to incorporate some societal factors, namely domestic public opinion, norms, and identity, as being in the back of the minds of policymakers. But the thesis largely treats these normative factors as secondary mediators of the intervening variables. However, this does not mean that ideational factors cannot be independent variables. Rather, it will be a challenge for future research to show the impact of ideational factors on policy in a clear and measurable manner, and to explicitly test their role as variables shaping policy outcomes within an NCR framework.

Despite those insufficiencies, the most important contribution of this thesis is making the findings of this research comparable to similar work on other countries by utilising the NCR framework to examine, assess, and explain the foreign and security policy of Abe 2.0. By identifying a very limited number of domestic factors that explain the trajectory of Japan's foreign policy under Abe, it could refine the NCR framework. It is my hope that this research is not only consumed by those who closely follow Japan, but that—by showing the strong relevance of the NCR framework for understanding one of the most important post-World War II

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administrations in Japan—it can also make a small contribution to the development of NCR theories and the study of international relations more broadly.

## Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> Abe 2.0 still attracts scholarly attentions as of 2022. Asia Pacific Initiative published the editing volume of Abe 2.0 in January 2022. Asia Pacific Initiative ed., *Kenshō Abe Seiken: Hoshu to Riarizumu no Seiji* (Examining Abe Administration: Politics of Conservatism and Realism), Tokyo: Bunshun Shinsho, 2022.
- <sup>2</sup> Jimbo, Ken, *Gaikō Anzen Hoshō: Senryakusei no Tsuikyū* (Diplomacy and Security: The Pursuit of Strategy), in Asia Pacific Initiative ed., *Kenshō Abe Seiken: Hoshu to Riarizumu no Seiji* (Examining Abe Administration: Politics of Conservatism and Realism), Tokyo: Bunshun Shinsho, 2022, pp. 152-193.
- <sup>3</sup> Nakakita, Koji, *Joron: Chōki Seiken ni Natta noha Nazeka* (Introduction: Why Abe 2.0 Became a Long-Term Administration), in Asia Pacific Initiative ed., *Kenshō Abe Seiken: Hoshu to Riarizumu no Seiji* (Examining Abe Administration: Politics of Conservatism and Realism), Tokyo: Bunshun shinsho, 2022, pp. 33-34.
- <sup>4</sup> Schoppa, Leonard J, Zoku Power and LDP Power: A Case Study of the Zoku Role in Education Policy, *Journal of Japanese Studies* 17: 1 (1991), pp.79–106.
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- <sup>6</sup> *Shushō ga Rachi Higaisha Kazokukai to Menkai, 'Kanarazu Abe Naikaku de Kaiketsu'* (Prime Minister Meets with Abductees' Family Association, 'Abe Cabinet will Surely Resolve the Issue'), *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, December 28, 2012.
- <sup>7</sup> Nakoshi, Kenrou, *Abe 'Yūwa Rosen' ni 'Ryōdo Katsujō Kyōhi' de Nozonda Rosia Gaikō no Kinō Fuzen* (Malfunctioning Russian Diplomacy, Responding to Abe's Appeasement with Constitutional Amendment), *Foresight*, August 2020. [https://www.jiji.com/jc/v4?id=foresight\\_00323\\_202008240001](https://www.jiji.com/jc/v4?id=foresight_00323_202008240001).
- <sup>8</sup> Mori, Isao, *Kantei Kanryo* (Kantei Bureaucrats), Tokyo: Bungei Shunju, 2019, pp.49-52 and pp.215-220.
- <sup>9</sup> Ripsman, Norrin M., Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, and Steven E. Lobell, *Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2016, pp.70-71.