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# UNDER THE SECURITY UMBRELLA: JAPAN'S WEAK STORYTELLING TO THE WORLD

## A Review Essay by Nancy Snow

*Japan Rearmed: The Politics of Military Power*

Sheila A. Smith. Harvard University Press, 2019.

*National Identity and Japanese Revisionism:*

*Abe Shinzo's Vision of a Beautiful Japan and Its Limits*

Michal Kolmaš. Routledge, 2019.

*Peak Japan: The End of Great Ambitions*

Brad Glosserman. Georgetown University Press, 2019.

**Keywords**—*US-Japan relations, US-Japan Security Alliance, strategic communication, strategic communications, national identity*

### About the Author

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## A Country with Diminished Marginal Returns

‘Japan is understudied, undervalued, and underappreciated in the analysis and conduct of international relations.’<sup>1</sup> Brad Glosserman’s opening sentence in his book, *Peak Japan*, could not be any more obvious for those of us who reside in Japan, or any more true as it applies to the Japan of this century and specifically 2020.

Why the weak strategic communications in a year that began with so much auspicious global publicity for Japan? 2020 was to be the year of the Summer Olympics in Tokyo, the country’s big reveal to the world nine years after suffering the triple disaster—earthquake, tsunami, and Fukushima meltdown—known as 3/11.

It was preceded by a successful run of global persuasion events in 2019, from the seamless abdication of the Chrysanthemum Throne by Emperor Akihito that marked the end of the Heisei era to the ascension of his son, Emperor Naruhito. Japan’s Foreign Ministry provided an English translation of the new era, Reiwa, as ‘beautiful harmony’, despite more common meanings of ‘Rei’ (令) in modern Chinese and Japanese as ‘command’ or ‘order’. This was also the first Japanese era naming from which the characters were drawn exclusively from Japanese classical literature; in the past, era naming was drawn from classical Chinese literature. The smooth Reiwa transition was followed in June 2019 by Japan’s turn hosting the G20 Summit in Osaka, just three years after Prime Minister Abe convened the G7 Ise-Shimla Summit in May 2016.

What could have been Japan’s and Abe’s leadership moment in the spotlight was overshadowed by American presidents. Obama’s speech at Hiroshima in 2016 was instantly translated into Japanese and became a bestseller in a country whose national identity is intertwined with its relations with another country. At the G20 Summit in Osaka, the Japanese government and foreign affairs ministry relinquished its hoped-for global leadership reins by acquiescing to the American president and the senior advisers he had in tow, daughter Ivanka Trump and son-in-law Jared ‘making the peace process in the Middle East great again’ Kushner. It looked as if the G20 were taking place in Washington and the people of Osaka were all but banned from the members-only venue.

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<sup>1</sup> Glosserman, *Peak Japan*, p. 1.

For Japan, like the rest of the world, 2021 cannot come fast enough. This year's 3/11 coincided with the World Health Organization's announcement of the global COVID-19 pandemic. Japan's weaknesses are on display in glaring detail, beginning with the wide conversational gap between Japan and the English-language global media. Outside of the Japanese diplomatic community, an English-speaking government spokesperson who can carry on a live television interview with a foreign reporter is rare. Tomohiko Taniguchi, Abe's spokesman and speechwriter, and diplomat Noriyuki Shikata, former director of the Office of Global Communications, are two prominent communicators of Japan's international messaging. In the COVID-19 era, Tokyo Metropolitan Governor Yuriko Koike, with her broadcast journalism background and overseas education, has earned higher marks than Abe for holding press briefings in English. At the highest levels of government, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is unable to carry on a conversation in English. This is not to dismiss the point that there is a predominant Americanisation or Englishisation of international relations, which in some academic circles counts as a form of cultural imperialism.

Hegemonic or not, Japan needs more English speakers. It was once all so different and promising. At the time of Akio Morita's death in 1999, *The Washington Post* described his life as equal parts cultural diplomat and company CEO: 'Garrulous and fluent in English, he traveled abroad extensively and counted as friends such people as the late conductor Leonard Bernstein and Katharine Graham, chairman of the executive committee of The Washington Post Co.; US ambassadors were guests at his home in Tokyo.' Morita, like UN High Commissioner for Refugees Sadako Ogata, transcended their nationality. They were global citizens, with Morita playing the role of master conductor. In his autobiography, *Made in Japan*, he writes: 'Our plan is to lead the public with new products rather than ask them what kind of products they want.'

Glosserman's astute observation would be an unimaginable statement in the 1980s. The United States reeducated Japan after its defeat in World War II and, by the 1980s, it felt like the most studious pupil in democratic capitalism had outgrown its instructor. The fear then was that Japan, Inc. would overtake America, Inc., long before there was any concern about a rising China. Not only was Japan's binge buying of cultural landmarks in Hollywood and Manhattan threatening American soft power, but also Japan, with its growing economic power, was being perceived in Washington less as employee and more as carpetbagger.

Japan's prowess was paradoxically fascinating and disconcerting in its challenge to the US and to the West, warranting a global interest that it cannot hold today. Imagine a country whose real estate speculation became so 'Wild West' legendary that the land below the Imperial Palace in Tokyo was once said to have higher speculative value than the entire state of California. Shintaro Ishihara's 1989 bestselling book (co-authored with Sony's Morita), *The Japan That Can Say No: Why Japan Will Be First Among Equals*, was translated into English in 1991 for an American audience. It was Japan's last hurrah before things began to go in a southerly direction. In it, the future Tokyo Metropolitan Governor (1999–2012) spelled out a common sentiment among rightwing conservatives—Japan follows no one: not the United States in the 1990s, and not, by extension, China today. It called for a strong and independent military separate from the United States. Ishihara's charismatic prognostications aside, none of this bore out. Japan's dutiful economy continued to make products that over time were much more cheaply manufactured elsewhere throughout Asia.

Japan was doing exactly what it was forced to do under occupation (1945–52) with the creation of the toothless Japan Self-Defense Forces. With an imposed orientation toward non-intervention and a total focus on rebuilding its economy, Japan received add-on 'gifts from heaven'—American reforms that gave women the right to vote, broke up feudalistic landlord control of rural areas, and strengthened labor unions. Likewise, the victorious US reeducated Germany from its fascist past and, although Germany continues to host US troops, its political leadership is unquestioned, while Japan by comparison is politically-stunted. Germany is acknowledged as the leading state of a weakened EU. Japan has no comparable regional position, certainly not in East Asia, where neighbourly political economic relations go hot and cold, bitter histories pervade the atmosphere, and China casts a long military and maritime shadow.

The Japanese economy was once projected to overtake the US economy by 2000. As late as 1990, books still abounded about how to be more like the Japanese in business management. To spur growth, US companies needed to adapt their workers to the Toyota Way or the Honda Way of *weigela*, a made-up Japanese word loosely translated as hubbub or chatter, to signify the chaotic communication and disagreement buzz that leads to continued improvement on the production line. Akio Morita's 1986 biography *Made in Japan: Akio Morita and Sony*, became an international bestseller and was translated into twelve languages. Morita wrote, 'I believe there is a bright future ahead for mankind, and that future

holds exciting technological advances that will enrich the lives of everybody on the planet. Only by expanding world trade and stimulating more production can we take advantage of the possibilities that lie before us. We in the free world can do great things. We proved it in Japan by changing the image of the words ‘Made in Japan’ from something shoddy to something fine.’ A nearly fifty-year trajectory of growth was all but gone by the lost decade of the 1990s. All that is left of Ishihara’s and Morita’s vision is a stagnant economy, a declining and aging population, a weakened higher education system that struggles to keep up with its upstart authoritarian neighbouring state, and nonsensical nationalism.

In my talks on Japan as a nation-brand, I show a photo of Morita on the May 1971 cover of *Time* magazine with the heading, ‘How to cope with Japan’s business invasion’, or the *New York Times* Sunday magazine cover from September 1988 showing Morita embracing pop singer Cyndi Lauper with a caption that reads, ‘Sony and CBS Records: What a Romance!’ The students are nonplussed. I tell them that Morita’s Sony and Matsushita’s Panasonic were the Apple and Microsoft of their era. Morita said about Sony’s success that ‘curiosity is the key to creativity’. So where is the curiosity of the young Japanese students I regularly encounter in the classroom? They don’t know who directed *Tokyo Story* while their film buff peers outside of Japan do. They are hard pressed to name one Akira Kurosawa film. They are apathetic to Japan’s postwar rise in significance—when a nation of pragmatists shifted from imperial war ambitions to manufacturing goods that the world didn’t even know it wanted until it was presented with them. We’re often told that in life there are only two guarantees, death and taxes. But I tell my Japanese students that there is a third guarantee: The United States and Japan will never go to war against each other. They should not only embrace that guarantee but also be able to explain why Japan-US relations are so important to the rest of the world. It isn’t for any military reason. It’s an arranged marriage that has outlasted any conventional marriage. As Glosserman points out, Japan’s economic success after WWII led to complacency in the present generation of young people, who cling apathetically to Japanese values and comfort foods. I once asked my class: Would you take your dream job if it were located outside your home country? None of the Japanese students said yes while all of the international students said they would. I asked them to tell me why in writing. One Japanese male said that he would worry that he couldn’t find ingredients overseas to make Japanese food.

## Japan to the World: We Don't Need to Explain

Japan is mostly quiet on the global and Western front. Its weak international relations profile is acknowledged from the chambers of the parliamentary Diet to the high-rise executive suites of advertising giant Dentsu. Government ministers inside the *Gaimusbo* [Ministry of Foreign Affairs] and at the Prime Minister's Office of Global Communications bemoan the taciturn international [*mukachina kokusai*] reputation Japan has among its economic peers in the G7 and G20 and in intergovernmental organisations like the United Nations. Takashi Inoue, Chairman and CEO of Inoue Public Relations in Tokyo, says that Japan possesses a 'unique communications format due to the impact of its homogeneity and the influence of Confucianism'. Unique. If there were one overused word to describe Japan, unique might be it. The Japanese are unique, the island nation is unique, the culture is unique, the cuisine is unique, the language is unique. Even the four seasons are unique, or so it was explained to me in a PowerPoint presentation designed by a group of Japanese executives who had spent a year studying how to represent Japan to the world. *Nihonjinron* [theories/discussion about Japan and the Japanese] is the name for this cultural nationalism. It is just part of the story as to why Japan suffers so much in explaining its identity to the world.

The other challenge is Japan's sense of superiority in all matters except for its relationship with the United States. As Michal Kolmaš points out in *National Identity and Japanese Revisionism*, a sense of national identity superior to China, Korea, the rest of Asia pervades, just beneath the surface of Japanese *tatemae* [public behaviours and attitudes], commingling with an arrogant aversion to having to explain itself. Japan has always operated in a hierarchical structure, both internally and also in its relations with the outside world. Even the ritual of exchanging *meishi* [name cards] is a rank and order rolodex for the mind. Kolmaš observes that Japan's acceptance of much of Western modernity during the Meiji period paved the way for the country to differentiate itself from what were thought to be backward Asian countries. 'Japanese narratives have tended to portray Asia as inferior to Japan.' With that in mind, it does not take much to understand Prime Minister Abe's focus on becoming the great fixer, making Japan great again—not great 1950s style à la Trump, but more like the Japan that existed before its postwar infantilising security submission to America. Abe's 2012 election campaign slogan was *Nihon wo torimodosu* ['I will recover/regain Japan'] explained in his books, *Toward a New Country* and *Toward a Beautiful*

*Country*, where he portrays himself as the proverbial man with a plan. But as Brad Glosserman reveals in *Peak Japan*, the country's demographics (126 million and declining) and its Mt Fuji of national debt (270% of GDP, the highest of any developed democracy) forecast driving winds against Japan's first-tier status. It all begins and ends with the Japanese people and their attitudes. Glosserman doubts that the majority of the Japanese people share Abe's, much less the government's, ambition to be a major power player that can stand on its own beside China and the United States. The pacifist mindset built into Japan's 1947 Constitution has pacified the country as a whole. It is hard to imagine tolerance for any normalisation that might involve Japanese troops returning in body bags.

Glosserman is deputy director of and visiting professor at the Tama University Center for Rule-Making Strategies; he served as executive director of the Pacific Forum International in Honolulu for sixteen years. As a senior scholar and Japan watcher, he offers readers a lively discussion on Japan's loss of dynamism. In contrast, Kolmaš is an active and ambitious junior scholar who first visited Japan just twelve years ago. Being Czech, he finds himself in familiar territory when he explores intercultural differences related to national identity. Reading Kolmaš is like participating in a highly interesting Theories of International Relations class. He dissects Abe's vision of a beautiful Japan using theoretical assumptions—constructivist, neo-realist, and post-structuralist—drawn from European debates about security. He offers a refreshing analysis that breathes life into Glosserman's negative prognosis by using national identity as an analytical tool to explain state behaviour, a long-overlooked point of view in political science and international relations. He then goes further to answer questions about how political concepts are socially constructed, more in keeping with gender theory, green theory, and post-structuralism. He even holds up a mirror to Hans Morgenthau, dean of the dominant school of international relations, who, in 1948, wrote in *Politics Among Nations* that 'the kind of interest determining political action in a particular period of history depends on the political and cultural context within which foreign policy is formulated'. Culture and identity—state and individual—determine national interests and socioeconomic wellbeing.

Both Kolmaš and Smith write about Japan's military power, but from very different perches. Kolmaš, assistant professor at the Metropolitan University in Prague, offers a new theoretical approach to Japanese national identity in international relations. Of the three authors, Kolmaš has the most ambition

about moving the needle forward in how global scholars talk about Japan. His scholarship not only serves to advance his career in the academy but also helps a spectrum of stakeholders—from old Japan hands and other non-Japan-hand scholars to curious observers—to understand why Japan continues to find itself unable or unwilling to raise its global profile in diplomacy and security. Specifically, his research poses three main questions: How is national identity constructed and reconstructed? How did Japan's post-war pacifist identity emerge? What influence does the pacifist identity have on Shinzo Abe's contemporary revisionism?

Sheila A. Smith's name is well-known among scholars of Japan. More importantly, she is the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) Senior Fellow for Japan Studies and her recent book, *Japan Rearmed*, was published by Harvard University Press. The Japanese conundrum, heard ad nauseum in security policy circles in Tokyo, is printed on the book sleeve: 'Japan has one of Asia's most technologically advanced militaries and yet struggles to use its hard power as an instrument of national policy.' Smith was an Abe Fellow at Keio University (2007–08) where she researched Japan's foreign policy toward China, and she holds a Ph.D. in political science from Columbia University. She has been a visiting researcher at leading Japanese foreign and security policy think-tanks, including the Japan Institute of International Affairs (JIIA), a think-tank connected to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Before joining the CFR, Smith was at the East-West Center in Honolulu, Hawaii. This pedigree is important to understanding how detailed and dryly predictable her analysis of Japan's defence policy is. It is shaped, she says, by three principal factors: the US-Japan security alliance, domestic politics, and external threat perceptions.

When Smith says something about Japan, the world pays attention and Japan listens and nods along. This is both an advantage and a disadvantage for Japan's storytelling. An underappreciated Japan gets noticed when Smith publishes, but her prominence brings into sharp focus the fact that Japan cannot produce either an organisation equal in authority to the Council on Foreign Relations or a comparable Japanese native Senior Fellow for American Studies. The reality of Japan's dependency on the United States for its own global messaging is like an anti-cherry blossom phenomenon: it just never dies. Japan is a US ally, but one that does not have equal status with its security benefactor. In fact, and in rank, Japan is the weaker interlocutor. One might consider the position of the US as the spoils of victory going back to World War II, but it's more than that. Japan's

lack of an equivalent influence to Smith means that Japan's narrative about itself does not originate in Tokyo, Okinawa, Sapporo, Osaka, Kyoto, or anywhere else in Japan. It begins and ends in Washington.

Smith's book has 240 pages of text and 72 pages of notes, but her narrative voice is lacking. There is no 'as seen through the eyes of' biographical flourish, nor does she provide much in the way of a theoretical underpinning. This book does not give the Japan-curious much access. As a close Japan watcher for the last eight years, I kept waiting for her expert opinion to rise above the descriptive. It did in a few sections. She pulls back the curtain a bit to reveal how much 'Tokyo 2020' was part of Abe's nostalgic vision for a beautiful Japan and a reconstituted Constitution. Smith writes that, in a video message Abe prepared for his pro-revision supporters in May 2017, 'he linked constitutional revision with the upcoming 2020 Tokyo Olympics, arguing that, just as the 1964 Olympics had been a new beginning for postwar Japan, so too would the 2020 Olympics be a moment of rebirth for the nation'. His plan was to revise the Constitution within a few years of this message. Smith writes:

The Japanese public remains sensitive to the possibility of military action abroad. The SDF [Self-Defence Forces] too have become accustomed to this low-risk conditioning of their overseas deployments. No member of the SDF has died abroad, while Japanese police, diplomats, and aid workers have lost their lives. Should Japan's military be found wanting in response to a dangerous situation abroad, or should the situation end up costing SDF lives, the Japanese will have to decide if they are ready to accept that. If the SDF is to be effective in international military coalitions, it will need to be able to confront risk.<sup>2</sup>

The risk avoidance conclusion Smith reaches in *Japan Rearmed* is that Japan is ready, it is armed, but it does not accept that the best defence is a good offence.

### **Prognosticators of Japan's Economy and National Identity**

Both Glosserman and Kolmaš present Japan from a perspective much closer to the ground, reminding us that Japan's military is adapting to change—assessing external threats and undertaking the global humanitarian need for more Peacekeeping Operations (PKO) and international assistance operations, such as Japan itself needed post-3/11. But neither author believes that Japan is

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<sup>2</sup> Smith, *Japan Rearmed*, p. 237.

becoming a ‘normal’ militarist country. Within its cultural DNA is a strong need to remain unique. As Kolmaš reminds us, the Japanese public still matters, even if it is ignored. ‘All of the Japanese security laws in the last few decades were passed despite massive political protests.’<sup>3</sup>

Glosserman’s assessment of Japan’s national identity, economy, and security is reflected in the title of his book—*Peak Japan: The End of Great Ambitions*. Japan’s ascendancy has peaked. Regardless of headlines overselling Abenomics and womenomics—more pipedream than reality, even at the start—this once first-tier nation is now on the wane. The weakening of the yen has prompted droves of international visitors to flock to Japan, and its soft power appeal in terms of culture and cuisine has never been higher, but beneath the dazzle of its Michelin star restaurants, the structure cannot hold. Whereas Abe should be credited for understanding the power of public relations in political matters (slogans, buzzwords) he forgot rule number one: pigs shouldn’t wear lipstick. After the colour fades, the pig will still be slaughtered. Glosserman is correct in his assessment that the status quo persists despite calls for reform. Habits of rhetoric, ritual, and consensus are hard to break. One need look no further than to the Abe government’s coronavirus communications and its management of the Diamond Princess debacle and postponement of the Tokyo 2020 Olympics.

The Japanese sensibility does not jibe with the current political necessity to ‘brand ideas’ such as the normalisation of Japan’s Constitution. In the 1980s, Akio Morita’s ‘It’s a Sony’ ad campaign helped get the world hooked on Japanese electronics. What happened to that confidence? The three books reviewed here help uncover the pressure points in Japan’s global storytelling as we begin the third decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. What is Japan’s story?

### **The Three G’s of Japan’s Story to the World**

Shinzo Abe 2.0 returned triumphantly to the Prime Minister’s Office in December 2012, where he remains to this day—the longest-serving prime minister in Japanese history. Six months into Abe’s second term, I began my Abe Fellowship focusing on Japan’s global strategic communications after 3/11. I chose this as a starting point because it encompasses the nature/nurture combination of unavoidable *force majeure* disasters (earthquake and tsunami) with the avoidable human error (the Tokyo Electric Power Company’s mishandling

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<sup>3</sup> Kolmaš, *National Identity and Japanese Revisionism*, p. 19.

of the Fukushima-Daiichi nuclear power plant meltdown). 3/11 also reignited domestic opposition to nuclear energy expansion and government-industry collusion. Once Abe secured the 2020 Summer Olympics for Tokyo in September 2013, Japan was globally relevant again. But becoming relevant in the eyes of the world cuts both ways. The media also turned a critical eye towards the Abe administration's public policies and 'Abenomics', and scrutinised embarrassing events the administration would rather have kept quiet. A quiver full of arrows was aimed at ministerial resignations, sales tax increases, low levels of consumer confidence, executive fiats, and state secrets. Most controversial has been the proposed revision of Article 9 of the constitution that would once again give Japan limited powers to fight in foreign wars, not strictly in defence of the nation as had been the rule ever since WWII. Global campaigns against Japan's whaling and dolphin hunting policies were soft power opportunities to align national policies with global standards. But that didn't happen. Japan took offence at being told what to do in relation to its fishing heritage.

Japan has persistent security challenges that I call the three Gs: gender, generation, and globalism. As with Japan's three Cs to avoid in the COVID-19 pandemic—closed spaces, crowded places, and close contact—there is no quick fix for these challenges. Each of the three Gs impacts military security readiness and national identity.

In April 2013, when Abe laid out the details of his Abenomics plan, he said that active participation by women would serve as the core of his growth strategy. The major goal was to have no less than 30 percent of leadership positions filled by women by 2020. The most recent World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report shows that Japan is ranked 121<sup>st</sup> of 153 countries, just before Kuwait and after the United Arab Emirates. This ranking is an all-time low for Japan, which also makes its gender parity ranking the lowest of any developed country. Among its G7 peers, Germany ranks highest for gender parity in 10<sup>th</sup> place followed by France (15<sup>th</sup>), Canada (19<sup>th</sup>), Britain (21<sup>st</sup>), United States (53<sup>rd</sup>), and Italy (76<sup>th</sup>). Japan fails to rank within the top 100.

### **Gender and Media Diplomacy Must Be National Priorities for Japan**

'Womenomics' was the Abe administration's dream for diversity and inclusion. It was designed to increase the appointment of women to high-level public and private sector positions and to support the creation of economic opportunities for women. In the political empowerment category of the 2020 Global Gender

Gap report,<sup>4</sup> gender parity in Japan lags far behind the global average, with women holding only 10% of parliamentary positions and 5.3% of ministerial positions. This is seven years after Abenomics was set in motion. Women's empowerment continues to decline, despite five high-profile ministerial-level World Assembly for Women (WAW!) gatherings in Tokyo since 2014 that included speeches by IMF president Christine Lagarde and her successor Kristalina Georgieva, along with Trump presidential adviser and first daughter, Ivanka Trump, who gave a keynote in 2017.<sup>5</sup>

With regard to demographics, Japan is an outlier among Asia Pacific nations. The generation gap in Japan is a common topic of concern with a high proportion of ageing Japanese. A 2004 report by the Pew Center's Global Attitudes Project, *A Global Generation Gap*, cited no major generation gaps in Asia, except in Japan, where 84% of older people thought that their culture was superior, compared with only 56% of those under the age of 30 who held the same view. The same report stated that there was 'widespread agreement' in Asia across all age groups regarding the importance of learning English, a sentiment held in common with other regions such as Latin America and Western Europe. (In the US and Britain there was widespread agreement across generations that learning a foreign language is important.) The lone exception was Japan, where 75% of those aged 65 and older 'completely agreed' that it was important for children to learn English, while only 45% of those aged 18–29 'completely agreed'.<sup>6</sup> Although the study is dated, more recent studies by Rakuten and McKinsey & Co and my own interactions with hundreds of Japanese university students and elderly people, reinforce the idea that there is no reason to believe the generation gap is shrinking; attitudes diverge, not only with regard to learning English as the global *lingua franca*, but also with regard to politics and culture.

Japanese exceptionalism persists. What's more, the generation gap intersects with gender inequality: more often than not, young women in Japan express greater openness toward learning English and/or going abroad for travel or study. Japanese females make up between 60 and 70% of all study abroad participants, a phenomenon so noteworthy that it has spawned several new concepts in

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4 See [World Economic Forum 2020 Global Gender Gap Report](#).

5 The fifth [World Assembly for Women WAW!/W20](#), was held at the Hotel New Otani Tokyo on March 23–24, 2019, three months before the G20 in Osaka.

6 These findings are based on the Pew *Global Attitudes Project's* surveys conducted during 2002 and 2003 among more than 66,000 people in 49 nations plus the Palestinian Authority.

public diplomacy research—‘gender diplomats’ and ‘gender diplomacy’.<sup>7</sup> The more globally-oriented mindset of women in Japan can be explained in part by the expectations traditionally placed on the stereotypical salaryman, or corporate (male) employee, to remain faithful to company and country for the chance of promotion, but there seems to be something else at stake here.

The more leaders such as Abe emphasise women’s empowerment in Japan, allowing for marriage/motherhood to be combined with work, the more Japanese women—and not men—awaken to their global potential. This new empowerment includes leaving Japan never to return. Nobuo Tanaka, chairman of the Sasakawa Peace Foundation in Tokyo, said that the brain drain phenomenon with regard to women in Japan is what led him to focus on women’s empowerment. When he worked abroad at the OECD and the IEA, he met many talented bilingual and trilingual female Japanese professionals who told him that they had no plans to return to Japan, and even if they did, they could not make use of their abilities there.<sup>8</sup>

Finally, globalisation/globalism, or the lack thereof, is an ongoing challenge for Japan. The country has had incredible success in creating a relatively safe and secure society, largely due to its traditional cultural values. The proportion of Japan’s population in jail is one-tenth that of the United States. Japan’s liberal democratic political structure, warts and all, is quite stable, though in need of greater ideological diversity and greater inclusiveness in ideology in political representation. Japan has much to be proud of—its prowess in science and innovation, rich culinary traditions, and family culture. On the minus side, individuals are discouraged from risk-taking and entrepreneurship—to be blunt, Japan is a red tape nightmare. It also lags behind its regional neighbours in understanding, explaining, and promoting its values and strengths to the international community. This is where third-party advisors in Japan, who have greater credibility than government spokespeople, can be of enormous value in helping the country to hone its communications to the outside world.

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7 See for example, Nancy Snow, ‘Japan must take lead in gender diplomacy’, *Japan Times*, 5 May 2017; Felicia Istad, ‘Gender in Public Diplomacy’, *USC Center for Public Diplomacy Blog*, 20 February 2020.

8 See ‘Women’s empowerment works in Japan’s interest: A call for male leaders to realize its value and promote it’, Sasakawa Peace Foundation. Interview by W20 Steering Committee member Renge Jibu with SPF Chairman Nobuo Tanaka, 15 May 2019.

## **Conclusion: Global Communications as If People Mattered**

Unlike its immediate neighbours, South Korea and China, Japan has concentrated its institutions of higher education (like its hot spot tourist destinations) in only a few cities—Tokyo, Kyoto, and Sapporo. Japanese universities have no renowned international relations departments, and public relations as a discipline does not exist. Strategic communications, specifically public relations or public diplomacy, is largely a matter of on-the-job training. In contrast, China and the United States have well-developed infrastructures for the study of communications and international relations. At Schwarzman College in Tsinghua University, where I work, teaching public diplomacy falls to the School of Journalism and Communication and the Department of International Relations. As of yet, there is little foundation to support the development of professionalism and global sophistication that Japan needs to be able to communicate about its national interests and security in the global arena.

The bilateral security alliance has been hotly debated in Japanese domestic politics and among American elites. Issues that strain the longstanding relationship continually crop up; for instance, the rift between mainland Japan and Okinawa pertains to the vast US military presence in Japan's poorest prefecture and the seeming love/hate relationship native Okinawans have with local US military bases. On mainland Japan, US bases are discreetly tucked away: Yokosuka Naval Base is 61 kilometers from central Tokyo and Yokota Air Base is 54 kilometers distant. These military outposts go largely unnoticed by Japanese citizens going about their business. More concerning are external threats from a nuclear North Korea and an assertive China, particularly in the South China Sea, where rumblings of a new US-China cold war percolate despite the global public health crisis.

US-occupied post-war Japan had to 'embrace defeat'. In place of an imperial war system and a samurai past, Japan would be conditioned to embrace its newfound aversion to war as a tool for resolving conflicts. Article 9 of Japan's postwar constitution clearly states:

- (1) 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.

(2) 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 recognised.

The Japan-US Security Treaty of 1960 further cemented the marriage between the two countries. It was overseen by the unforgettable and formidable General Douglas MacArthur on the American side and Shinzo Abe's grandfather, Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi, on the Japanese side. In *Rearmed Japan*, Smith writes forebodingly that since Tokyo can no longer 'rely on Americans to defend Japan, Tokyo's political leaders are now confronting the possibility that they may need to prepare the nation's military for war'.

Under Abe, in 2015, the Japanese government gave \$5 million each to Columbia, Georgetown, and MIT to endow professorships in contemporary Japanese politics. Japan's political leaders may think it is gaining leverage in global capitals by funding endowed chairs, but elites talk to other elites and travel in the same small circles. The result has been a homogenizing reinforcement of the power dynamic. Japan follows orders while Cambridge, in Massachusetts or in the United Kingdom, gives them. Japan doesn't follow the habits of its Asian neighbours because its main economic competition is with the West. Japan's global communications needs an egalitarian overhaul. It does not need to grab headlines such as 'Japan sets aside \$22 million to buff government's global image amid pandemic struggles' published in April 2020 in *The Washington Post* about the money earmarked for the foreign ministry 'to dispel negative perceptions of Japan related to infectious diseases',<sup>9</sup> and 'to strengthen communications about the situation in Japan—over the Internet and through its embassies'.<sup>10</sup> In the age of a global pandemic, a country that can communicate naturally and seamlessly to both domestic and global publics is more likely to raise its global reputation.

In 2007, I published *The Arrogance of American Power*<sup>11</sup> in response to what I saw as an out of control executive branch engaging in a post-9/11 global war on terrorism with no end in sight. When crisis comes, as it has come to us now, we need all hands on deck, not just elected or self-elected leaders making unilateral

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<sup>9</sup> Simon Denyer, 'Japan sets aside \$22 million to buff government's global image amid pandemic struggles', *The Washington Post*, 15 April 2020.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Snow, *The Arrogance of American Power: What U.S. Leaders are Doing Wrong and Why It's Our Duty to Dissent*, (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006).

decisions. The inspiration for my book came from *The Arrogance of Power* by J. William Fulbright, the namesake of the exchange programme that brought me to Germany as a student and to Japan as a professor. Fulbright wrote: ‘We know so very much more about things than we do about people, so very much more about the workings of jet planes and nuclear missiles than about our own inner needs. We are exploring the mysteries of outer space while we remain puzzled and ignorant about the mysteries of our own minds. Far more than supersonic airplanes or rockets to the moon, we need objective perceptions of our own fears and hopes and a broader perspective about our own society, our relations with others and our place in the world.’<sup>12</sup> Fulbright could have easily been talking about Japan and its quest for an independent and critical voice on the global stage.

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<sup>12</sup> Fulbright, *The Arrogance of Power*, p. 173.