

Relationships Based on Heterogeneity: IR Studies in Japan

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“Relationships based on heterogeneity” can be considered a major characteristic of international relation (IR) studies in Japan. This indicates, first, the form taken by the relations between heterogeneous disciplines among Japanese IR scholars. The field includes four separate disciplines, which are simultaneously engaged in a partial dialogue. Second, this is the outcome of the interests and research of scholars produced within these disciplines and dialogue. Many scholars are sensitive to the individual characters of units within IR. They directly capture the heterogeneity of units and elucidate the unique relations existing among them. These characteristics, as discussed below, differ from the mainstream of IR as practiced in the US and Europe. To clarify these points, this paper discusses the history and organizational form of the Japanese Association of International Relations (JAIR) and the research conducted by its members. This paper is based on its author’s individual views and does not constitute the official JAIR stance.

JAIR was founded in 1956. This makes it one of the earliest IR-related academic associations to be formed worldwide, preceding the North America-centric International Studies Association (ISA, founded in 1959) and the British International Studies Association (BISA, founded in 1975). JAIR currently has about 2000 members, among whom the majority of Japanese IR scholars are numbered. The historical development of JAIR represents the history of IR in Japan, in the length of its history and its breadth of scholarly membership. Therefore, the characteristics of JAIR research reflect those of IR in Japan.

Nevertheless, IR comprises research on overall global structures and international phenomena, elucidating the characteristics and factors thereof. In this sense, IR should, logically, involve similar research tendencies regardless of the nationality of the researcher and their location. However, IR studies display clear national characteristics, whether in the US, the UK, or China. Likewise, Japanese IR is no exception.¹

1. JAIR and its four-discipline system

¹Existing studies of Japanese IR include the works of Takashi Inoguchi and Paul Bacon, “The Study of International Relations in Japan: Toward a More International Discipline,” *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, 2001, Vol. 1 No. 1, pp. 1–20; Chihiro Hosoya, “General Remarks,” *International Relations*, Vol. 61–62, 1979 (Japanese); Akihiko Tanaka, “International Relations Studies in Japan: Beyond ‘Compartmentalization’,” *Japanese Studies of International Politics: Theoretical Perspectives on International Politics* (1) (ed. JAIR), Yuhikaku Publishing, 2009 (Japanese); Satoshi Oyane, “International Politics Studies in Japan: Co-creation Based on Partitioned Dialogue,” *International Relations*, No. 199, 2020 (Japanese).

In keeping with the inherent diversity of IR studies, JAIR is also home to multiple disciplines. JAIR members are roughly equally divided among the four distinct disciplines of theoretical research, historical research, area studies, and new field research (a category unique to JAIR, specifically including research on transnational relations, international exchange, international migration, gender, environment studies, civil society/NGOs, and so on). When becoming a JAIR member, scholars register their disciplines based on a 56-item field code system. An estimate based on these codes indicates that theoretical researchers approximately constitute 32.9% of members, historical researchers constitute 26.8%, area studies scholars constitute 24.2%, and new field researchers constitute 16.1%.² This constitutes a relatively balanced distribution in comparison with other countries. In the simplest terms, IR in the US and Germany, for instance, focuses on theoretical research, whereas IR is heavily biased toward historical knowledge in the UK and France.

Why was this “four-discipline system” established? Why has it been maintained thus far? It was likely realized through path dependence, made possible by JAIR’s historical development and organization.

As noted, JAIR was launched in 1957; at the time, historical research and area studies were already established in Japan. Historical research gained momentum in the 1930s, producing books and papers at a high level for the time. While World War II cut off research endeavors, the postwar release of diplomatic papers enabled further research progress. Therefore, as of its inception, most JAIR members were historical researchers. Historical research at JAIR continued to make progress; a 1980 survey revealed that 37.3% of JAIR members considered Japanese historical research excellent at an international level.³ Further, a recent JAIR survey report demonstrated that although historical research is on the decline internationally, it remains active in Japan.⁴

Area studies was the next to gain momentum, developing before World War II as studies of Japan’s imperial colonies. This discipline conducted thorough fieldwork, largely in Asia, grasping the reality of its target regions in fine detail. After the war, area studies scholars were to deeply regret and cut off their relationship with government policies, thereby widening their scope to countries beyond Asia. When JAIR was founded, area studies scholars were the next largest group after historical researchers. In the US and other countries, area studies has moved away from IR to become a method of fieldwork and data collection or a part of comparative political science; in Japan, however, it has developed as a field within IR. The 1980 survey mentioned above indicated that 39.2% of JAIR members considered

²This rough estimate is not based on members’ self-identification as theoretical researchers, historical researchers, and so on. Furthermore, “theoretical research” here includes research whose fundamental concepts are theoretical and research on issues with an affinity for theory.

³Kazuo Ishikawa and Ryo Oshiba, “International Studies of Japan in 1980s,” *International Relations*, Vol. 100, 1992, p. 283 (Japanese).

⁴Masaya Inoue, “Japanese Diplomatic History in International Relations Studies in Japan,” *International Relations*, Vol. 199, 2020, pp. 123–124 (Japanese).

Japanese area studies excellent at an international level.⁵

In contrast with historical research and area studies, theoretical research remained undeveloped in prewar Japan. In the US and the UK, however, it made great strides in the interwar period, drawing the attention of Japanese scholars as well. This intellectual stimulus was one of the factors in the founding of JAIR. Thereafter, many researchers in Japan imported and examined theory from overseas, and some historical and area studies scholars also shifted their focus to theory. The imported theory stimulated JAIR members; among its contents were those with influence so broad reaching as to set off heterogeneous trends.

From the 1960s, new forms of research were taken up by Japanese scholars: transnational relations, civil society/NGO research, environment studies, gender studies, and so on. Because these fields address different issues from those of conventional research, with unique concepts and analysis methods, JAIR has categorized them as “new fields” distinct from historical research, area studies, and theoretical research. Although these fields were “new,” they resonated with existing interest in cultural exchange and local governments in Japan, invigorating the research. As with the other disciplines, JAIR has convened multiple sectional meetings for these fields at its Annual Convention.

In this manner, the four disciplines came to coexist within JAIR by the late 1970s. This state of affairs has been maintained not only by JAIR members’ recognition of the significance of each discipline but by the organization of JAIR. To promote members’ research activities, JAIR holds an Annual Convention and publishes two journals, *Kokusai-Seiji (International Relations)* and *IRAP (International Relations of the Asia-Pacific)*. Exchange with overseas academic associations also takes place. The board of directors of JAIR plan these activities, establishing operational suborganizations such as the Program Committee, Editorial Committee, English Journal Editorial Committee, International Activities Committee, and so on, staffed by JAIR members. These activities and committee member selection are conducted according to established practice, which takes note of balance and blending among the four disciplines.

In this manner, the four-discipline system has been established and maintained. Our focus here is not the existence of the system but its influence on IR studies in Japan.

2. Separation and dialogue among disciplines

(1) “Compartmentalization without debate” and interest in theory

Interestingly, a paradoxical relation of separation and partial dialogue exists among the four disciplines. Historical research, area studies, theoretical research, and new fields have their unique concepts, analytical methods, and so on, which are clearly incommensurable. Therefore, while the

⁵Ishikawa and Oshiba, *op. cit.*

four disciplines coexist within JAIR, active inter-discipline debate and discussion are almost nonexistent. Former JAIR President Akihiko Tanaka has dubbed this status quo “compartmentalization without debate,” indicating the issues therewith.⁶ IR in Japan has, in fact, almost never experienced so-called paradigm debates. Interdisciplinary research and discussion are limited, with the four disciplines existing in parallel through “compartmentalization.”

By contrast, however, some JAIR members have indicated interest in other disciplines; in particular, several theories have constituted nodes connecting members. This fact can be confirmed through the field codes used by JAIR members as noted above. Members may register up to three of these 56 codes, choosing, for instance, only codes within the field of historical research. In fact, however, a surprising number of members have registered codes indicating interdisciplinary interests. In some cases, historical research and area studies overlap, but a notable number of members specializing in historical research, area studies, and new fields have registered theoretical research codes as well. That is, theoretical codes have been registered by 49.7% of registrants with historical codes, 50.5% of registrants with area studies codes, and 49.1% of registrants with new field codes.

Specifically, more than half of the members selecting historical research codes in fields including American diplomatic history, international history of Europe, and international history of Africa have also registered theoretical research codes. Nearly half of those selecting codes in Japanese diplomatic history, international history of Southeast Asia, and international history of the Middle East have also selected theoretical research codes. The theoretical codes selected include security studies, theory of foreign policy decision making, international organizations, international political economy, and so on. Meanwhile, members registering codes for international history of Southeast Asia and international history of Europe have tended to select the theoretical field of regional integration/regionalism.

In addition, area studies registrants who select theoretical research codes include those in Asia-Pacific area studies, Japanese studies, African area studies, European area studies, and North American area studies. More than half of registrants in these fields have selected theoretical codes. The theories selected are generally common with those selected by historical researchers (security studies, international political economy, regional organizations, theory of foreign policy decision making, and so on). Researchers in the new fields of environment studies, globalization, and peace building, among others, have shown interest in theoretical research. A whopping 90% of those selecting environment studies have also registered theoretical codes.

Thus, while interdisciplinary debate remains scarce within JAIR, a clear, albeit partial, interest in theoretical research serves as a connection among members. The selection of theoretical fields seen therein is thought to be affecting the character of IR studies in Japan.

⁶Tanaka, *op. cit.*

(2) Theoretical research as a node

Scholars of historical research, area studies, and new fields have, as stated above, shown interest in theoretical research. However, they have not directly cited specific theories or their core hypotheses and have not verified their validity through case studies. Their dialogue with theory is at another individual level. Three characteristics of this dialogue can be identified.

First, they cite IR theory as a perspective or worldview used to comprehend phenomena. To reconstruct facts from an integrated or unconventional perspective, theory has served as a method of systematically organizing the outcomes of research into diverse historical materials and fieldwork. For instance, historical researchers or area studies scholars like Chihiro Hosoya and Shigeaki Uno, the leading members of JAIR in its early days, were very much aware of the theories of Hans J. Morgenthau, Edward H. Carr, and so on.⁷ While they did not explicitly discuss specific theories in their writings, they gleaned insights from theory with regard to their fundamental approach to phenomena. This method of citing theory is not limited to the past. In our day as well, when, for example, a historical researcher addresses the effects of policy ideas on diplomacy, or an area studies scholar analyzes failed states and conflicts in Africa or the Middle East, they glean insights from theoretical knowledge.⁸

Second, some theories—particularly the theory of foreign policy decision making, the theory of international regimes, and so on— have drawn researchers' interest, influencing their theoretical interests thereafter as well. As we have seen, the JAIR members' field codes indicate that theories of particular interest include security studies, theory of foreign policy decision making, international organizations, international political economy, regionalism/regional integration, and so on. Among these, security studies is a diverse field, which, rather than embodying a single theory of security, includes various theoretical paradigms based on realism, such as alliances, the balance of power, and the security community.⁹ Interest in these issues is pronounced in most countries, not limited to Japan. Japanese scholarship is characterized, to begin with, by its interest in the theory of foreign policy decision making. In common with international organizations, international political economy, regionalism/regional integration, and so on, international regime theory is frequently taken up by JAIR members. This is likewise the focus of significant interest in Japan.

The theory of foreign policy decision making was originally proposed in the 1960s and 1970s by the US scholars Richard Snyder and Graham T. Allison, among others. Their findings acceptance

⁷Satoshi Oyane ed., *International Relations in Japan: Between Importation and Originality of Theory*, Keiso Shobo, 2016, p. 4 (Japanese).

⁸For example, Shinichi Takeuchi, "Conflict Studies by Africa Scholars: International Relations Studies and Area Studies in Japan," *International Relations*, Vol. 200, 2020, pp. 23–36 (Japanese).

⁹See Yasuhiro Izumikawa, "Security Studies at JAIR," *International Relations*, Vol. 199, 2020, pp. 97–107 (Japanese)

among some historical researchers as well as theoretical researchers in Japan. In particular, historical researchers were strongly drawn to Allison's "bureaucratic politics model".¹⁰ However, almost all of them adopted only the basic perspective of the theory—the idea that policy and political outcomes are regulated by the micro-political processes of negotiation and push and pull among decision makers—without using the model itself. This perspective enabled them to position a diverse range of decision makers as units, reconstructing their interactions. The scholars' original interest was in using historical materials, autobiographies, etc., to examine how political leaders, ministers, bureaucrats, and so on thought, how much influence they wielded, and in what way they opposed and cooperated with one another. The theory of foreign policy decision making satisfied this interest while also providing a clear and integrated framework. Moreover, its influence was sustained thereafter, a fact reflected in the use of JAIR field codes (which can be re-registered at will by members at any time) today. The Annual Convention still includes a Foreign Policy Decision Making Section, which hosts a series of lively research presentations.

However, this theory has mostly fallen out of favor in the US, where it originated, since the late 1970s. The focus of theoretical research there has shifted to a macro view of international structures. The widespread acceptance of the theory of foreign policy decision making is peculiar to Japan. In Japan, the theories imported thereafter have also been "grafted" onto the analysis of micro-level political processes of phenomena. The same applies to theories on macro-level international structures such as the theories of international regimes (international institutions) and hegemonic stability. Many Japanese scholars have traced the micro-level development of case studies, closely focusing on how the interactions among units are affected by the fall of hegemony and the establishment of international regimes.

International regime theory is likewise cited in a uniquely Japanese fashion. International regimes were initially discussed as international frameworks of the "convergence of expectations" between the actors involved in a specific problem.¹¹ However, through the paradigm debate between neorealism and neoliberalism, international regimes came to be reconsidered as elements affecting the possibility of international cooperation.¹² In accordance with this shift, they came to be referred to as "international institutions." They were positioned as international rules to be formed and followed through rational behavior by state actors. While this paradigm debate drew interest in Japan as well, hardly any scholars participated in the debate themselves to verify the possibilities of international cooperation. Therefore, Japanese scholarship continues to use the term "international regimes" rather

¹⁰ Graham T. Allison, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuba Missile Crisis, 1 ed.*, Little Brown, 1971.

¹¹ Stephen D. Krasner, *International Regimes*, Cornell University Press, 1983, p. 8.

¹² David A. Baldwin, "Realism, Neorealism and the Study of World Politics," in Baldwin, ed., *Neorealism and Neoliberalism: The Contemporary Debate*, Columbia University Press, 1993, pp. 8–11.

than “international institutions.” Further, due to this concept’s continued use in the sense of “convergence of expectations,” it has become close to the concept of international norms in constructivism. This is one factor in the acceptance of constructivism in Japan without the mediating step of the paradigm debate.

Through this nonparticipatory interest in the paradigm debate, the methodology of rationalism was likewise accepted in Japan. From the 2000s, quantitative analysis gained momentum in Japanese research as a result of this process.¹³ Research based on quantitative and experimental analyses has more in common with mainstream international IR than with the unique characteristics of Japanese scholarship.

The third characteristic of the dialogue with theory is the reflexive discomfort and resistance to theory. In particular, some historical researchers and area studies scholars feel significant discomfort with theory, which conversely may have promoted reinforcement of their research identities. Distrust for theory has been a factor since the earliest days of JAIR. As noted above, at one time historical and area studies scholars were interested in the Morgenthau theory as well, at the same time, they resented the theory’s dismissal of the historical and cultural contexts of international phenomena. They also questioned Morgenthau’s oversimplification of complex phenomena into abstract concepts. They had even harsher criticism for the more parsimonious neorealism and neoliberalism. Naturally, theory is inevitably accompanied by abstraction and parsimony. However, these scholars considered essential the political beliefs and recognition of policymakers, along with the ethnic contexts of the relevant nations and regions, rendered abstract by theory.

This characteristic, conversely, influenced theoretical researchers as well. Japanese theoretical researchers have preferred to accept and apply overseas theories rather than proposing and verifying bold theories of their own. Many of them have attempted to grasp the reality of the case in question rather than using case study as a method of verifying theories. This involves confirming whether the theory is a beneficial tool for their purposes. Therefore, the feedback gained from case study serves to affirm or deny the theory itself. It rather serve to amend or adjust the theory to grasp reality.

3. Research styles in Japan

What type of research has resulted from the four-discipline system described above? Research styles in Japan include, first of all, a focus on grasping the reality of a phenomenon. Owing to the initial dominance of historical research and area studies, IR in Japan focuses on the use of historical materials, fieldwork, and various other documents. Scholarship has taken a meticulously detailed approach to the attitudes, beliefs, and actions of the units concerned with international phenomena. It works to

¹³Keisuke Iida, “Foreword: Rational Choices in International Politics,” *International Relations*, Vol. 181, 2015, p. 2 (Japanese).

depict the facts of international conflict and cooperation as well as disorder and formation of order, which constitute the interactions among these subjects. Naturally, some Japanese IR studies have extracted generalizable hypotheses from phenomena. However, the most of the research has focused on the spatiotemporal context thereof, clarifying unique political dynamics and logic. In this sense, IR in Japan is highly “context-sensitive”.¹⁴

Second among Japanese IR research styles is the approach to the relationship among heterogeneous units. Mainstream IR studies in Western simplify units within IR. This is typified by Kenneth N. Waltz’s theory,¹⁵ innovative in its orientation toward generality, and mathematical models, among others. The units here are almost always national states, which are assumed to possess functional homogeneity. IR is considered as the patterns of interactions among these homogeneous units, focusing on whether their nature is oppositional or cooperative. Mainstream IR has also attempted to clarify whether these patterns are affected by the distribution of international power or by international institutions and norms. This analysis is premised on scientism. However, according to Takashi Inoguchi, scientism has failed to find sufficient acceptance in Japan.¹⁶

Much of Japanese IR research has focused on the individual characters of the units as an inevitable result of grasping the reality of the phenomenon. Therefore, the units’ heterogeneity has been emphasized. If the units are heterogeneous, their interactions vary according to the combination of units, becoming diverse and complex. It is no easy task to derive general patterns from these relationships among units.

Relations among heterogeneous units are likely to involve care on the part of each unit to maintain a degree of autonomy while stabilizing shared relationships. Each unit has a different domestic political system, stage of economic development, society, culture, and so on, but they all work to avoid needless friction and ensure the utility of their interactions. In this situation, the functions and operational methods of frameworks such as alliances, international institutions, and international norms acquire characteristic tendencies. Scholars who can extract these tendencies should be able to make significant intellectual contributions to IR.

That is because these tendencies constitute important anomaly cases, which cannot be explained through mainstream IR studies. Further, they highlight the limitations of existing IR and the potential for new theory. If these characteristic tendencies can be broadly identified in the foreign relations of emerging nations as well as those of Japan and Asia, they may enable the development of new middle-range or partial theories.

¹⁴This term was used by Pichamon Yeophantong in a session on “International Relations Studies from the Perspectives of History and Area Studies: A Japanese Approach” convened by JAIR at the 63rd ISA Annual Convention, March 30th-April 2^{ed}, 2022.

¹⁵ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, Addison-Wesley, 1979.

¹⁶Takashi Inoguchi, *Genealogy of International Relations*, University of Tokyo Press, 2007, pp. 172, 180–181 (Japanese).

4. IR studies in Japan: In search of relationships of heterogeneity

Let us examine IR studies in Japan more specifically. Since a comprehensive discussion here is not possible, this section will present a few distinctive studies as examples.

Because Japan's diplomatic relations are centered on the US–Japan alliance, their analysis is often categorized into “cooperation with the US (taibei-kyocho)” and “autonomy from the US (taibei-jishu).” The former, in simple terms, refers to diplomatic action prioritizing the US–Japan alliance and emphasizing relations with countries cooperative with the US. The latter refers to diplomatic action in cooperation with a wider range of countries based on Japan's autonomous interests and profits, even at risk of jeopardizing the alliance. However, these categories have been criticized, with some validity, as arbitrary classifications based on insufficient logical evidence.¹⁷ In any case, there is in fact a wealth of research on Japan–US relations, including some 130 papers on the topic published in JAIR's *International Relations*.

(1) The asymmetric US–Japan alliance

With regard to Japan–US relations, historical researchers have accumulated numerous empirical studies of history in great detail. Specific research targets include the conclusion and revisions of the Japan–US Security Treaty, the operation of the alliance thereafter, related issues such as the handling of the US military bases in Okinawa and involvement in East Asian security, Japan–US defense cooperation, and so on. A number of these studies, as noted above, have indirectly cited the theory of foreign policy decision making.¹⁸ Area studies scholars have clarified the political dynamics within the US government and between the government and Congress regarding the US–Japan policy. Area studies addressing the US, unlike those of other regions, has focused on the elucidation of the actual political and economic actual situations, rather than unique social and cultural aspects.¹⁹ Further, theoretical researchers have analyzed factors leading to change in the US–Japan alliance based on theories of alliances, deterrence, or realism.²⁰

¹⁷Hiroyuki Hoshiro, “Reconsidering the Diplomatic Theory of ‘Cooperation with the US vs Autonomy from the US,’” *Leviathan*, Vol. 40, 2007 (Japanese).

¹⁸Among the many extant studies, those explicitly citing the theory of foreign policy decision making include Chihiro Hosoya, *The Road to the San Francisco Treaty*, Chuo Koronsha, 1984 (Japanese); Makoto Iokibe, *The US Policy of Japanese Occupation: Blueprints of Postwar Japan*, Chuo Koronsha, 1985 (Japanese); Haruhiro Fukui, “The Okinawa Reversion: Decision-Making in the Japanese Government,” *International Relations*, Vol. 52, 1972 (Japanese); Akio Watanabe, “The Roles of Non-Governmental Groups in the Okinawa Reversion,” *International Relations*, Vol. 52, 1974 (Japanese), and so on.

¹⁹Takeshi Igarashi, “The Social Sciences as ‘Knowledge’ and Area Studies as ‘Love,’” *Regional Studies*, Vol. 1, 1997, pp. 53–56 (Japanese). See also Igarashi, *Politics of Policy Innovation: American Politics in the Reagan Years*, University of Tokyo Press, 1992 (Japanese).

²⁰For example, Jitsuo Tsuchiyama, *International Politics of Security: Anarchy and Hubris*, Yuhikaku,

The US–Japan alliance qualifies as an “asymmetric alliance” with a background of unequal power; even so, Japan has attempted to maintain equality between the two countries.²¹ Both countries have pursued this through the exchange of people and things—Japan provides military bases, and the US provides military force for the defense of Japan. Various studies, such as the work of Kazuya Sakamoto, have clarified the nature and historical process therein.²² Furthermore, recent historical research has revealed that even within this asymmetric alliance, a joint defense framework was developed in the 1970s, leading to more substantive equivalence over time.²³

In this manner, although Japan and the US share values such as liberalism and democracy as well as security interests, they are considerably heterogeneous. This implies that the quantitative difference in power between Japan and the US is accompanied by a qualitative difference as well. As one member of bipolar system, or as a hegemonic country, the US plays a decisive role in international order and institutions. By contrast, Japan, as a junior power, has remained at the level of regional and passive action until recent years. In addition, as the first decade after its defeat in World War II had to be devoted to economic recovery and development, Japan adopted the so-called “Yoshida Line” or “Yoshida Doctrine”, limiting its military role from an economic perspective.²⁴ This economy-centered policy came to constitute domestic norm that restricted Japan’s military role in the alliance, with anti-militarism based on the experience of defeat and the Constitution of Japan. On the latter anti-militarism, Japanese scholars found Thomas Barger’s constructivism-based research.²⁵

In this manner, the US–Japan alliance is of interest as an “asymmetric alliance,” serving as a material for significant added knowledge in IR-concerning alliances. The historical development of this alliance was a process of mutual adjustment of heterogeneity, exploring the stability of the relationship.

Focusing on the friction within the alliance, scholars such as Yonosuke Nagai and Chihiro Hosoya have identified a factor of this friction as the previously mentioned difference (heterogeneity) between

2004 (Japanese); Tsuyoshi Kawasaki, *Japanese Diplomacy Studies as Social Science: Toward the Integration of Theory and History*, Minerva Shobo, 2015 (Japanese); Yasuhiro Izumikawa, “Binding Strategies in Alliance Politics: The Soviet–Japanese–US Diplomatic Tug of War in the Mid-1950s,” *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 1 No. 1, 2018, etc.

²¹ Isao Miyaoka, “A Review of the Autonomy–Security Trade-Off Model: The Case of Japan’s Behavior in the Asymmetric Alliance with the United States,” JAIR website.

²² Kazuya Sakamoto, *Postwar Japanese–US Relations: The Men Who Shaped the Alliance*, Yuhikaku, 2000 (Japanese).

²³ For instance, Mayumi Itayama, *The Formation of the US–Japan Alliance Joint Defense Framework*, Minerva Shobo, 2020 (Japanese).

²⁴ For example, Masataka Kosaka, “The Dialectics of Japanese Diplomacy,” in *Lectures on International Politics 4: Japanese Diplomacy* (ed. Tadashi Aruga, Shigeaki Uno, Shigeru Kido, Akio Watanabe), University of Tokyo Press, 1989 (Japanese); Yoshihide Soeya, “The Yoshida Line and the Yoshida Doctrine,” *International Relations*, Vol. 515, 2008 (Japanese).

²⁵ Yasuko Kono, “The Institutionalization of the ‘Alliance’ and Japan–US Relations,” *International Relations*, Vol. 127, 2001, pp. 213–214 (Japanese); Thomas U. Barger, *Cultures of Anti-militarism: National Security in Germany and Japan*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998.

the countries in the foreign policy decision-making process.²⁶ Hosoya argued that this difference led to misunderstandings between Japan and the US and that this was a cause of the Pacific War, indicating the failure of the US deterrence policy. Hosoya's paper on the topic was published in a US foreign relations textbook as well.²⁷ According to Hosoya, the main roles in Japan's foreign policy decision-making process were played by middle-ranking bureaucrats and military officials, who failed to understand the point of the US government's Japan deterrence policy and took the lead in a hardline stance. In turn, the leaders of the Japanese government failed to sufficiently adjust their policy, unable to correct the errors in the approach.

This kind of miscommunication or miscalculation can be mitigated with reassurance. With regard to reassurance, a number of scholars have emphasized the role of Japan's uniquely restrictive security policy—exclusive defense, the three non-nuclear principles, Article 9 of the Constitution, etc.—and discussed how these points have mitigated the “security dilemma” with neighboring countries.²⁸

(2) Frictions in interdependence

Interesting dynamics have been identified in the economic aspect of Japan–US relations as well as the security aspect. In spite of interdependence between the US and Japan, the two countries repeatedly underwent intense economic friction from the late 1960s through the mid-1990s. Various researchers have focused on the heterogeneity of the two countries as a factor in this.

In short, the primary factor in the friction between Japan and the US was their differing policymaking process. Diverse interest groups appeared in both countries due to their economic interdependence. Failure to adjust these interests suitably led to lingering economic friction between the two. Thus, the discontents of industry in the US were promptly reflected in Congress, which promoted hardline policies toward Japan on the part of the executive branch. Both governments were split into agencies with different policy preferences, including domestic economy and labor, international economy, security, and so on. Therefore, coordination between and within governments became difficult, leading to more complex issues.²⁹

²⁶Yonosuke Nagai, “The Pitfalls of Alliance Diplomacy,” in Nagai, *Multipolar Global Structure*, Chuo Koronsha, 1973 (Japanese); Chihiro Hosoya and Joji Watanuki ed., *A Comparison of the Foreign Policy Decision-Making Process in Japan and the US*, University of Tokyo Press, 1977 (Japanese).

²⁷ Chihiro Hosoya, “Miscalculations in Deterrence Policy: Japanese–U.S. Relations, 1938–1941,” *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 5 No. 2, 1968; Frank Costigliola and Michael J. Hogan, eds., *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations*, Cambridge University Press, 2016.

²⁸For example, Atsushi Ishida “Game theory analysis of alliances: The advance consultation system and reassurance,” in *Methods of International Relations Research* (ed. Motoshi Suzuki and Keisuke Iida), University of Tokyo Press, 2021 (Japanese); Hiroyuki Fukushima, “Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution as Reassurance for the Defeated,” *International Relations*, Vol. 195, 2019 (Japanese).

²⁹For example, I.M. Destler and Hideo Sato eds., *Coping with U.S.-Japanese Economic Conflicts*, Lexington Books, 1982; Atsushi Kusano, *Japan–US Orange Negotiations: New Perspectives on Economic Friction*, Nihon Keizai Shimbunsha, 1983 (Japanese), etc.

The second factor was different stances of the Japan–US power gap. Having lost its economic power as a hegemonic country, the US was no longer easily able to support GATT as an international regime. Researchers have revealed that the US government came to focus on domestic economic profit, taking a more hardline stance on Japanese economic policy. They also argued that Japan was unable to adapt suitably to this change. This analysis involves the grafting of the macro-level perspective of hegemonic security theory onto the micro-level analysis of the theory of foreign policy decision making.³⁰

However, despite the US's ever more hardline stance toward Japan, in the mid-1990s, Japan came to strongly resist the US. The third factor is the legalization of international trade regimes. It has been argued that the development of GATT into the WTO caused these tougher free trade norms to influence Japan's policymaking process. Japanese scholars' interest in this legalization process has been reflected in a number of studies.³¹

These studies differ from research on Japan–US economic friction in the US. American scholars, based on the previously mentioned capitalist developmental state theory, reactive state theory, and so on, heavily emphasized the heterogeneity of Japan's reactions. They argued that the Japanese government and industry cooperated strategically and developed a hardline stance in negotiations with the US to maximize economic profit. Others have suggested that the Japanese government gave way cleverly in US negotiations, actually managing to secure economic gains.³²

(3) Systems of bilateral relations

Research on Japan–China relations is second only to its on the Japan–United States relations.³³ Given its status as an authoritarian socialist state, the research materials and information available on China are limited. Area studies scholars in Japan have thus made the most of the limited information, focusing on content made publicly available, to deduce the personnel composition of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) elite and their ideology. Based on this information, researchers have explored the unique logic of domestic politics in China and extrapolated therefrom Chinese foreign policy and involvement in the international order.³⁴ China studies along these lines are rank best among those

³⁰Hideo Sato, "Japan–US Economic Friction and Policy-Making," *The Journal of International Law and Diplomacy*, Vol. 84 No. 2, 1985 (Japanese).

³¹For example, Keisuke Iida, *Legalization and Japan: The Politics of WTO Dispute Settlement*, Cameron May, 2006; Satoshi Oyane, "The Paradox of the Legalization-Compliance Hypothesis: The Asymmetry and Limitations of the WTO's Legalization," *The Journal of International Law and Diplomacy*, Vol. 112 No. 3, 2013 (Japanese).

³²Chalmers Johnson, Laura D'Andrea Tyson, and John Zysman, *Politics and Productivity: How Japan's Development Strategy Works*, Harper Business, 1989; David Yoffie, *Power and Protectionism: Strategies of the Newly Industrializing Countries*, Columbia University Press, 1983.

³³For studies on China in the JAIR journal *International Relations*, see Rumi Aoyama, "The Characteristics of 'China and Asia' Research: From the Perspective of *International Relations*," *International Relations*, Vol. 204, 2021.

³⁴For example, Shigeaki Uno, *China and International Relations*, Koyo Shobo, 1981 (Japanese);

found in other countries.

Detailed historical research on Japan–China relations has been accumulated. In particular, the historical examinations of the 1972 negotiations on the normalization of relations based on plentiful historical material are excellent. Some of these studies have adopted the perspective of the theory of foreign policy decision making.³⁵ The political and economic relations involved in the normalization of relations became institutionalized, functioning thereafter as a system stabilizing Japan–China relations. Ryosei Kokubun has called this the “1972 system.”³⁶ On opposite sides in the Cold War and with different political and economic systems, Japan and China were markedly heterogeneous. However, Japanese politicians and industrialists developed solid personal relationships with CCP cadres, supported by the cultural affinity of Japanese and Chinese society. The 1972 system enabled historical and territorial issues to be managed under the table for over a decade, avoiding severe conflict between the two countries. However, this peculiar relation between Japan and China is already lost.

The China of recent years has demonstrated trends in common with those of other major countries. In response to economic globalization, it has proposed arrangements of international order such as AIIB and the Belt and Road Initiative. Therefore, some historical and area studies scholars have considered whether the use of the IR global standard theory is appropriate in analyzing China’s behavior.³⁷

Research on Japan–South Korea relations shares certain aspects with research on China. Before its democratization in the late 1980s, South Korea was likewise an authoritarian system, with insufficient research materials and information. Based on this limited information, area studies scholars discussed South Korean politics and diplomacy as well as its authoritarian system and subsequent democratization, drawing on comparative political science for their analyses.

A detailed historical clarification of the Japan–South Korea normalization of relations in 1965 also

Kazuko Mori, *Modern Chinese Politics*, Nagoya University Press, 1993 (Japanese); Ryosei Kokubun, *Politics and Bureaucracy in Modern China*, Keio University Press, 2004 (Japanese); Shin Kawashima, *The Formation of Modern and Contemporary Chinese Diplomacy*, Nagoya University Press, 2004 (Japanese), etc.

³⁵Sadako Ogata, *Defiance in Manchuria: The Making of Japanese Foreign Policy*, Hara Shobo, 1966 (Japanese); Haruhiro Fukui, “Tanaka Goes to Peking: A Case Study in Foreign Policymaking,” in *Policymaking in Contemporary Japan* (ed. T.J. Pempel), Cornell University Press, 1977; Yukio Besshi, “The Normalization of Japan–China Relations in 1972: The Decision-making Group and the Background of Their Behavior,” *International Relations*, Vol. 65, 1980 (Japanese). Studies of diplomatic history, which do not make use of policymaking theory, include Masaya Inoue, *A Political History of the Normalization of Japan–China Relations*, Nagoya University Press, 2010 (Japanese).

³⁶Ryosei Kokubun, “From the ‘1972 System’ to ‘Strategic Reciprocity’: Foreign Relations with China,” in *Japanese Diplomacy Vol. 4: Foreign Policy and Regions* (ed. Kokubun), Iwanami Shoten, 2013 (Japanese).

³⁷For example, Go Ito, “The ‘Power Approaches’ Toward Current Chinese Politics and Diplomacy: What is a ‘Normal Country’ in Academia?,” *International Relations*, Vol. 145, 2006 (Japanese).

was made.³⁸ In this case, the political and economic relationships surrounding the normalization became institutionalized, with the connections among politicians and businessmen of both countries developing into the “Japan–South Korea Treaty System” (Masao Okonogi).³⁹ This bilateral system likewise managed for over a decade to suppress the development of historical and territorial issues into serious diplomatic problems. This system, too, is now disturbed, with bilateral relations significantly deteriorated as of today. However, in accordance with the democratization of South Korea and the construction of transnational relationships in civil society, new dimensions have appeared in Japan–South Korea relations. Researchers are now working to clarify these new aspects.⁴⁰

In Japan’s relations with South Korea and with China, historical issues have persisted and deepened. However, Western-based mainstream IR lacks sufficient concepts and theory for the analysis of historical issues. The accumulated Japanese research may contain knowledge to make up for this lack.⁴¹

In addition, Japanese researchers have been quick to pick up on the individual characters of various countries and regions, from Asia to Africa, the Middle East, and beyond. Many scholars have suggested that global mainstream IR is not applicable to actual situations of these regions and countries, arguing for “exceptionalism.” However, after the Cold War, phenomena shared on a global scale—democratization, civil war, terrorism, peace-building, etc.—have arisen in these countries as well. Therefore, a significant number of researchers have come to apply the theories of mainstream IR and comparative political science.⁴² Data on democratization, civil movements, and civil war have become available in organized form to be used by certain researchers for internationally standardized quantitative analyses.

(4) Loose-knit regional and international regimes

The Asian countries surrounding Japan are extremely diverse in everything from political systems

³⁸Recent research outcomes include Eunjung Kim, *A Political History of the Japan–South Korea Normalization of Relations Negotiations*, Chikura Shobo, 2018 (Japanese); Jong Won Lee, Tadashi Kimiya, and Toyomi Asano, eds., *The Japan–South Korea Normalization of Relations as History (Vols. I–II)*, Association of Japanese University Presses, 2020 (Japanese).

³⁹ Masao Okonogi, “Post-Cold War Diplomacy with a Divided State: Foreign Relations with the Korean Peninsula,” in *Kokubun, op. cit.*, 2013 (Japanese).

⁴⁰For example, Noriyo Isozaki, “Security Assembled from Civil Society: Focusing on the ‘Reality’ of East Asia and Japan/South Korea Civil Society Initiatives,” in *The Korean Peninsula and East Asia* (ed. Tadashi Kimiya), Iwanami Shoten, 2015 (Japanese).

⁴¹For example, Kan Kimura, *What is the Japan–South Korea Historical Awareness Problem?*, Minerva Shobo, 2014 (Japanese); Sumio Hatano, *Nations and History: Postwar Japan’s History Problem*, Chuo Koronsha, 2011 (Japanese), etc.

⁴² Shinichi Takeuchi, “Africa in Japanese International Political Science,” *International Relations*, Vol. 204, 2021 (Japanese); Keiko Sakai, “International Politics in the Middle East: Regions and Conflicts Defined by Others,” *International Political Science in Japan (3): Regional Views of International Politics* (ed. JAIR), Yuhikaku, 2009 (Japanese).

to stages of economic development and cultural characteristics. In this context, ASEAN has worked to integrate the region, with numerous regional regimes including APEC, ASEAN+3, the East Asia Summit, RCEP, and so on. Area studies and historical research have elucidated the diversity and independent orientations of the nations of Asia. These heterogeneous nations, while insistent upon their sovereignty, have cooperated to form regimes. This format differs from the situation in Europe, where homogeneous nations have moved toward functional integration. IR studies in Japan have analyzed the realities of regional integration in Asia and have clarified the unique formats and dynamics of the regional regimes therein.

These regional regimes are loose-knit institutional frameworks, with relatively low institutionalization and binding force on the relevant nations. Much of mainstream IR studies have argued that the effects of these regional regimes are limited. However, Japanese scholars call them a model for cooperation among heterogeneous states, possessed of interesting theoretical significance.⁴³

These models of regional regimes have commonalities with what Amitav Acharya, discussing ASEAN, has called the “ASEAN way.”⁴⁴ However, Japanese researchers have analyzed the formation and fluctuation processes of regional regimes at a more historical/ empirical, micro level. The ASEAN Way is wavering as of today. The regional regimes of Asia have come to be relied on for dependable outcomes, thus requiring institutionalization. At the same time, however, many Asian nations are becoming domestically unstable, and the dramatic rise of China has also brought power politics to the surface. The loose-knit regional regimes are in the process of structural change. The analysis of this shift and its dynamics will be highly significant going forward.

Research on international regimes shares characteristics with research on regional regimes. Because Japan is heavily dependent on the global economy, researchers have conventionally been extremely concerned with international economic regimes. In the fields of security and the global environment, considerable research on international regimes has addressed nuclear nonproliferation and “human security.”⁴⁵

⁴³For example, Hiro Katsumata, *ASEAN's Cooperative Security Enterprise: Norms and Interests in the ASEAN Regional Forum*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009; Sanae Suzuki, *ASEAN as a Model of Consensus Building: The Host Country System in International Politics*, University of Tokyo, 2014 (Japanese). See also Taku Yukawa, “A Reexamination of Constructivism in ASEAN Studies: The Origins of the ‘ASEAN Way’,” *International Relations*, Vol. 156, 2009 (Japanese).

⁴⁴ Amitav Acharya, “Idea, Identity, and Institution-Building: From the ‘ASEAN Way’ to the ‘Asia-Pacific Way’?,” *The Pacific Review*, Vol.10 No.3, 1997; Amitav Acharya, *Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia: ASEAN and the Problem of Regional Order*, Routledge, 2001.

⁴⁵For example, Yoshinobu Yamamoto, *International Regimes and Governance*, Yuhikaku, 2008 (Japanese); Nobumasa Akiyama, *The International Politics of Nuclear Non-Proliferation: Compliance with Norms and the Shifting Order*, Yushindo Kobunsha, 2012 (Japanese); Kaoru Kurusu, “The Human Dimension of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe: A Case Study in Regime Theory,” *International Relations*, Vol. 112, 1996 (Japanese); Hiroshi Ohta, “International Relations Theory and Global Environmental Issues: Focusing on Climate Change,” *International Relations*, Vol. 166, 2011 (Japanese), etc.

Interestingly, Japanese scholarship has shown considerable engagement with loose-knit international and private regimes. Among the former, loose-knit regimes such as the G7 Summit, the OECD, and international frameworks on finance and food safety have been the subjects of analysis,⁴⁶ as have private regimes and the roles of corporations and NGOs among the latter.⁴⁷ These regimes, while limited in the binding force they can apply to individual states, still possess compliance mechanisms to some extent. Further, having become established and functioning even without the leadership of hegemonic states or robust cooperation among major states, they have offered opportunities for the Japanese government and Japanese corporations to participate and exercise leadership. As noted above, the Japanese interest in loose-knit regimes has led to an interest in international norms based on constructivism. These interests have led to subsequent interest in cooperative frameworks among diverse units and the resolution of conflicts on the global agenda thus achieved, stimulating research on global governance.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the characteristics of IR studies at JAIR, which based in Japan. In simplified terms, IR studies in Japan have focused on the social and historical contexts of the units of international phenomena, working toward an overall grasp of the individuality of these units, including nations and their governments' policymakers, industrial organizations, NGOs, ethnic and religious groups, and so on. Researchers have worked to highlight the differences among these units to clarify their relationships. This means that international relations cannot be approached as a simple dichotomy of cooperation versus conflict or order versus disorder. IR in Japan is an attempt to clarify the ambiguous and complex relationships among units.

This has also led Japanese researchers to shed light on the interesting aspects and dynamics of

⁴⁶ For example, Yoshiko Kojo, "Loose-knit International Institutions and Compliance: IMF Conditionality as a Case Study," *Journal of International Law and Diplomacy*, Vol. 100 No. 2, 2001 (Japanese). Yoshiko Naiki, "Accountability and Legitimacy in Global Health and Safety Governance," *Journal of World Trade*, Vol. 43 No. 6, 2009.

⁴⁷ Takahiro Yamada, "The Possibilities of Private Governance in Public Spaces: The Formation of Diversifying International Orders," *International Affairs*, November 2009 issue (Japanese); Isao Sakaguchi, "The Roles of Activist NGOs in the Development and Transformation of IWC Regimes: The Interaction of Norms and Power," *Journal of Environmental Studies and Sciences*, Vol. 3 No. 2, 2013.

institutional frameworks that are taken for granted, such as alliances and international institutions. They have, as well, tended to assess the loose-knit, multi-layered relationships among units and the incremental processes of institutionalization. This indicates that diverse units have accepted others to focus on the process of mutual accommodation.

This form of IR studies has been brought about by JAIR's four-discipline system. This system has enabled historical research, area studies, theoretical research, and new field research to coexist and has promoted their partial dialogue. While accepting the mainstream IR studies originating in the West, this Japanese scholarship has constantly questioned and reconsidered Western IR research. However, further reconsideration is needed. IR in Japan has not yet attained original concepts, new categories, or alternative hypotheses or theories. Having focused on the individuality and context of their units, many Japanese scholars are hesitant about abstraction and clear conceptualization. Conversely, Japan is seeing increased research in pursuit of theoretical generalities upon acceptance of mainstream IR. Through interactions with research of this type, IR in Japan has the potential for bold and clear theorization based on its conventional meticulous and diverse research. Should this come to pass, IR in Japan will render possible deeper and richer analyses, making the most of the strengths of global mainstream IR studies while amending their oversimplifications and widening their perspectives.