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# JAPAN'S INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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## Introduction

Japan in the postwar era has evolved into one of the most crucial actors in international society. This has been enabled by an initial spectacular economic recovery, leading it at various times at the peak of its perceived power in the late 1970s and early 1980s to be talked of as displacing the United States as 'number one' (Vogel 1979) or breaking the mould of a traditional international leader as an 'aid great power' (Yasutomo 1989/1990) or 'civilian power' (Maull 1990). However, since the early 1990s, Japan has also encountered a range of challenges, including the so-called lost decades of economic and social malaise after the bursting of the financial bubble in 1991,[1] and issues for its international relations such as territorial and historical disputes with neighbouring countries. Simultaneously, the rise of China in the 21st century has influenced Japan's status and behaviour in international society, challenging its former leading position in the East Asia region and posing a range of security issues.



Hence, as Japan's international role continues to transform with potential ramifications for regional and broader international society, it has never been more important to consider ways to understand its international trajectory. In conjunction with looking at Japan's changing international and domestic environments, this chapter introduces the main extant international relations (IR) theories that have been utilized and developed to analyze and explain patterns of Japan's international behaviour. Hook, Gilson, Hughes and Dobson note that 'Japan's pattern of behaviour, exact role and agenda, and policies and strategies in the international system remain puzzling to many' (2012: 23). In this chapter, the aim is to continue the work done in the task of decoding the puzzle of Japan's international behaviour and to outline the multiple IR approaches – both mainstream and more alternative in nature – used in the case of Japan. At the same time, however, it is important to note that the optimal means to theorize and conceptualize Japan's international relations has been subject to heavy debate in recent years (Shimizu 2016). As this chapter makes clear, alongside traditional Western-oriented or Eurocentric IR theory[2] there has also been consideration of non-Western or post-Western realms of theory (Acharya and Buzan 2007). The objective of this chapter is to clearly explicate and navigate through these debates to arrive at a clear set of frameworks for better analyzing the evolving trends in Japan's international trajectory.

## IR theoretical approaches to Japan

The following sections present the existing main and alternative IR theories that have been applied to explaining Japan's international behaviour, namely, realism, liberalism, constructivism, post-structuralism and critical theory.[3] Indeed, Japan's international strategy and trajectory appear often to defy easy single categorization, encouraging some scholars to think about a blend of theoretical approaches, referred to as 'analytical eclecticism'. When explaining respective IR theories, these sections consider structure, actors and norms to elucidate the ways in which these determinants have passively or proactively shaped Japan's international relations.

### *Realism*

Realist varieties of IR theory pay close attention to the dominance of material forces of states and the structure of the international system in seeking to explain states' international behaviour. In the case of East Asia, realist analysts tend towards a view that finds the region's international relations to be 'fraught with uncertainty and danger of conflict due to the absence of conditions in Asia that ensure a multipolar peace in Europe' (Acharya 2014: 66; Friedberg 1993/1994, 1998), with the result that states may be pushed into strengthening their own economic and military capabilities to ensure survival.

Japan first came into focus within mainstream IR analysis in the late 1970s as a result of the coincidence of the emergence of neorealist theory (Waltz 1979) with Japan's own economic rise, indicating its potential resurgence as a great power and military actor. Nonetheless, neorealist analysis agreed that Japan was still, by the end of the Cold War, a 'structural anomaly' (Layne 1993; Waltz 1993: 55–70), failing to conform to the expected behaviour of rising powers due to its reluctance to remilitarize and its continued dependency on the United States for security. Japan was viewed as a marginal actor or apparent exception to realist assumptions for considering state behaviour (Hughes 2015). Instead, Japan's defiance of realist assumptions meant that it was characterized as a 'reactive state' (Calder 1988), largely devoid of initiative-making in the international system, highly dependent on the United States, and with domestic politics dominating the reaction to developments in the international structure – thereby challenging the neorealist view of the international environment as shaping state behaviours. As Sato and Hirata note:



> The Neorealist paradigm – which emphasizes both Realist security policy and mercantilist economic policy – has been dominant in the studies of foreign policy, particularly related to Japan. However, it is also true that the gap between Japan's economic superpower status since the 1980s and its contrastingly limited military power has been a major puzzle for students of Japanese foreign policy.
>
> *(Sato and Hirata 2008: 1)*

From the 1990s onwards, other forms of realist thinking have emerged which offer further refinements for explaining, and predictions of, Japan's international posture. Offensive realists argue that states are compelled to take an aggressive or pre-emptive military approach to ensure their national interests in an uncertain multipolar international environment. This realist paradigm has, arguably, become increasingly relevant in explaining Japan's diplomatic relations at the state level – and most prominently in the case of ties with the United States and China. Within the realist paradigm, especially from a power transition theory perspective, the US-China-Japan relationship tends to be regarded as representing a hegemonic conflict between the United States

and a rising China (Mearsheimer 2001). In line with this analysis, the rise of China could oblige Japan to strengthen active alliance ties with the United States and convert itself into a formidable independent military power to counteract the potential threat from China (*ibid*.: 372–7).

From the defensive realist view, though, Japan is unlikely to convert its economic power into truly significant military power due to its ability to free-ride or 'buck-pass' on security by relying on US security guarantees (Lind 2004). Within this defensive realist framework, Japan is set to focus on the augmentation of defensive military capabilities in order to avoid unnecessarily antagonizing a rising China and to make only minimal military commitments to the United States as a 'circumscribed balancer' (Twomey 2000). Paul Midford (2000) argues that the US-Japan alliance has become more important for Japan's 'reassurance strategy' than for the military balance of power per se. In particular, Japan's 'pacifist outlier strategy' has been designed to reassure its neighbours, who remain deeply suspicious of its security motivations due to the experience of Japan's aggression during the imperial period (Midford 2000). Defensive realist ideas have been further developed through concepts such as mercantile realism that characterize Japan as seeking to navigate its way through the hazards of the international system by relying on economic rather than military power (Heginbotham and Samuels 1998; Samuels 2007); and reluctant realism that views Japan as slowly being pushed towards a more muscular stance by the changing external security environment (Green 2001).

Realists may see recent Chinese 'assertiveness' in the South China Sea and East China Sea 'as the vindication of their arguments about the coming instability in Asia' (Johnston 2013; Acharya 2014: 68). Meng (2014) explores the Sino-Japanese relationship by adopting a neoclassical realist approach and He and Feng (2013) employ prospect theory within neoclassical realism to explain risk-taking behaviour in the Asian security domain. He and Feng (2013) examine the irrational or risky behaviour of China and Japan in the context of the East China Sea disputes. Furthermore, in line with the transformation of Japan's security posture through attempts to revise its so-called Peace Constitution and exercise the right of collective defence, which appear to challenge the policy to date of 'exclusively defence-oriented defence', its security orientation has been described as akin to a form of 'resentful realism' whereby Japan has become less predictable and even more aggressive in its military stance (Hughes 2016).



## *Liberalism*

Liberals and neoliberals consider the role of non-state and private actors in shaping international relations, including transnational corporations (TNCs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other domestic groups. Liberalism's emphasis on the role of democracy, institutions and economic interdependence in governing the international system has meant that Japan is seen to have powerful incentives to pursue international cooperation. As noted earlier, Japan has been examined as a new form of 'civilian power' (Maull 1990/1991; Funabashi 1991/1992), 'aid great power' (Yasutomo 1989/1990) or 'trading state' (Rosecrance 1986), furthering its international interests by means of economic ties and international institutions rather than military power. In line with Japan's image as a great economic power, many early studies focused on Japan's attainment of the position as the largest provider of official development assistance (ODA) in East Asia (and indeed globally at one point in the early 1990s) (Yasutomo 1986; Orr 1990; Rix 1993; Arase 1995; Söderberg 1996).

However, looking into the potential of non-state actors, scholars have shifted their focus on actors from state to non-state levels. According to Sato and Hirata (2008), 'even though foreign policy has traditionally been an elite policymaking domain, calls to reform Japanese foreign policy since the 1980s have created openings for more participation by diverse societal groups'

(Sato and Hirata 2008: 10). As a result, the role of NGOs has been considered in Japanese foreign policy in the making of ODA policy and implementation (Hirata 2002; Jain 2002; Sato and Hirata 2008). The work by Keiko Hirata (2002) offers various case studies including the success of NGOs in lobbying the government to sign a treaty to ban landmines, as well as NGO pressure on Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) to stop providing pesticides to Cambodia for environmental reasons. Based on these case studies, Hirata explained that NGOs were able to promote global norms where liberal frameworks have become useful in explaining Japan's IR.

One of the basic liberal assumptions is that the shared values of the regional and liberal political order help to stabilize the region. For example, Mochizuki and O'Hanlon (1998) argue that the US-Japan alliance should be supported by democratic principles and shared political values because systems based on liberalism are far more stable than the type of anarchical international environment that realists assume. According to these theorists, liberal values and cooperation can resolve international conflicts through peacekeeping and collaborative maritime operations. In a similar vein, O'Hanlon argues that Japan has developed its defence posture for the purpose of multilateral security missions including humanitarian relief, or humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR). In line with this view, despite its considerable military capabilities, Japan is unlikely to become aggressive because its interests are vested and achieved in liberalism and multilateralism (O'Hanlon 2007). At the same time, he explicates that

> the same liberal and moral values that influence many pacifists can lead to a strong argument in favour of Japan's doing its fair share to help with global security problems that are likely to remain prevalent and to put many innocent lives at risk in the future. *(ibid.: 101–2)*



The notion of power interdependence, which means the mutual vulnerability and sensitivity of all governing and economic units in the world (Keohane and Nye 1989), is considered as another variable making for Japan's attachment to the liberal order, and is explained in literature such as Inoguchi's (1991) 'Japan's politics of interdependence'.

Furthermore, placing a greater emphasis on structure, neoliberal institutionalism has emerged to explore the institutional mechanisms of hegemony, which have been at the centre of the US-Japan alliance. Ikenberry exemplifies the liberal features of US hegemony, which locate the United States at the centre of an expanding institutionalized and legitimized political order. He argues that the liberal order functions as a strategic restraint by reassuring partners and facilitating cooperation because of the phenomenon of increasing returns that provides institutions with a 'lock-in effect' (Ikenberry 1998). On the basis of a neoliberal institutional framework, Ikenberry and Inoguchi argue that the US-Japan alliance is not merely a military pact but 'a political partnership' with an institutional mechanism. They maintain that the US-Japan alliance is a crucial mechanism which restrains the use of power and allows Japan to solve its security issues without becoming a militarized great power (2003). In this regard, the liberal framework provides a set of explanations that help to clarify the reasons for the sustainability of the alliance.

Indeed, it can also be seen that realism and liberalism have significant overlaps when applied to Japan that tend to blur their distinctiveness. Berger suggested the concept of a 'liberal adaptive state' in order to explain Japan's behaviour in international relations. According to Berger, 'Japan has managed, in its own low-key way, to adapt to a series of often quite serious foreign policy challenges' (Berger 2007: 284). Japan has demonstrated pragmatism in foreign policy-making defence and national security policy to adapt to the international environment. However, at the same time, Japan's liberal values have been key in continuing to mould the nature of Japanese foreign policy in response to external challenges over the past two or three decades.

### *Constructivism and post-structuralism*

Constructivists demonstrate the way in which policymaking actors are socialized through mutual interaction and patterns of behaviour (Onuf 1985; Wendt 1994), and the way in which norms have defined Japan's position in international relations. In the case of Japan, constructivists' analysis has been particularly useful in relation to the role of domestic norms. For the norm-oriented constructivist approach, norms matter primarily as a determinant of national interest and, in turn, as a source of Japan's foreign and security policy (Katzenstein 1996; Finnemore and Sikkink 1998; Hopf 2002; Wendt 1994). These constructivists argue that societal norms of anti-militarism resulting from Japan's experience of wartime defeat have become deeply vested in its defence and security policy and thus formed one of the most prominent features shaping Japan's diplomatic outlook (Katzenstein and Okawara 1993; Berger 1993, 1999; Katzenstein 2008; Oros 2008).

With regard to the US-Japan alliance, Berger (1993) argues that, in spite of its capability to develop a formidable military-industrial base independent of the United States, Japan remains reliant upon the United States not only for its military security but also for the maintenance of the anti-militarist culture in Japan. Berger indicates that the initiatives most likely to have the greatest chance of success to induce Japan to expand its military and security roles are those which do not run counter to Japan's anti-militaristic culture. He further explains that the Japanese public is afraid of being subject to authoritarian rule by the government due to memories of the Asia-Pacific War, when the Japanese state slipped into militarism (Berger 1999). This approach has also been used to demonstrate why Japan adheres to particular environmental and economic policies, even at times apparently working against its rational interests in the international system due to the contestation between its own domestic and international norms (Miyashita 2003, 2007; Sato and Hirata 2008). Singh has further updated the existing constructivist analysis, addressing the concept of Japan's 'peace-state identity'. He argues that 'the peace-state concept no longer captures the nature of Japanese post-Cold War security policy. Instead, the current trajectory is better captured by the "international-state" label' (Singh 2008: 304), which emphasizes that Japan's identity is evolving to take on greater international responsibilities but still in line with past traditions of a restrained military stance.



The constructivist approach has been further advanced by inter-diffusion of constructivism and post-structuralism. Drawing on a relational concept of identity and the distinction between norm and exception, Hagström's (2015) work shows that the 'abnormality-normalisation nexus' can be understood in terms of such identity productions as pacifism and the abnormality of Japan. Adopting the analytical framework of identity, Hagström and Gustafsson explore the ways in which identity constructions are maintained and being transformed, explaining that identity entrepreneurs and emotions exert influences on foreign and security policymaking. This approach considers that 'identity entrepreneurs are political actors who promote their desired versions of Japanese identity through the discursive representation of issues and actors. These entrepreneurs operate most obviously at the least sedimented layer where agency [actors] is less constrained by structure' (Hagström and Gustafsson 2015: 8).[4] Hagström and Gustafsson's work also shows that, in the case of Japan's relationship with China, the potential for Japan's identity as 'peaceful' might be retained through its differentiation set against 'less peaceful' external Others (Hagström and Gustafsson 2015). Examining discursive construction is important for understanding Japan's IR, especially in identifying which norms, for example pacifism, have shaped or reshaped its foreign and security policymaking. This IR approach may have the potential to reveal the features of Japan's relationship with other Asian countries that may assume 'troubled' relationships due to the legacy of Japan's wartime imperialism.

## Critical theory

Critical theoretical approaches have also been adopted to analyze Japan's international relations, although these have not always been entirely explicit in approach. Marxism has been recognized among intellectuals and politicians in Japan since the Taishō period (Hoston 1986) and the early postwar period with such Marxist thinkers as Uno Kōzō, Tosaka Jun and Yoshimoto Takaaki playing an important role to develop Marxist thinking in Japan.[5] Also, inspired by Japanese Marxist economist Kawakami Hajime, Uchida Yoshihiko and Hirata Kiyoaki developed the notion of 'civil society'.[6] Indeed, its influence on international relations waned especially after the 1980s when realist views became more prevalent.[7] Still, it can be said that critical theory 'converges somewhat with Realism in emphasizing the inherently conflictual nature of international politics, especially around economic issues, the material motivations driving state behaviour and the propensity of states to aspire to hegemonic and even imperialistic power designs' (Hughes 2015: 443). Stevens (1990) argues that Japan is seen to assert a form of neo-imperialism over East Asia and other regions by locking developing states into a relationship of direct economic subordination and into new regional frameworks geared to reinforce Japanese dominance. Critical theory has viewed Japan as asserting its potential hegemony not only through economic ties but also more subtly through creating ideological parameters and international institutions (Cox 1987). McCormack (2007) analyses Japan's position of being dependent on the United States in terms of political and security affairs as a form of US neo-imperialism.[8]

In addition, some concepts from Antonio Gramsci's work can be deployed concerning the role of actors, specifically intellectuals, in understanding the power dynamics of civil society and their role in shaping international relations. For instance, Matsuda (2007) analyzes the role of actors, including intellectuals, in shaping the 'cultural hegemony' that has strengthened US-Japan relations in the early postwar period through the example of the Rockefeller Foundation.[9] Avenell (2011) examines the empowerment of civil society (or rather as he puts it *shimin*, or citizens in Japanese), while Lam (1999) focuses on the development of green politics in Japan in a similar manner.[10]



Although not necessarily strictly in the realm of IR scholarship that focuses on Japan, it is observable that there is a growing awareness of the value of exploring critical theory approaches. This may be due to recent events such as the 3/11 Great East Japan Earthquake that pose questions about the government and state-society relationship. Increasingly, social protests are becoming more visible and these also provide opportunities to rethink the ways in which international relations are shaped. Furthermore, civil society actors have increasingly attempted to exert political influence by creating think tanks. For instance, the New Diplomacy Initiative (ND) was established in 2013 to deliver the voices of Okinawa people to Washington, DC, and this may be one means for improving the US-Japan relationship. Hence, the lens of critical theory enables reconsideration of which actors have shaped Japanese IR, as well as whether the international structure has been subject to change or not.

## Analytical eclecticism

The previous sections demonstrate those IR theories that have been used in explaining Japan's international behaviour. It is further argued that '[t]he insights from realism, liberalism and constructivist approaches . . . offer jointly, more than singly, a deeper understanding of the historical material and normative forces which account for the external and structural factors shaping a state's international behaviour' (Hook et al. 2012: 36). According to Sil and Katzenstein (2010), going beyond the paradigm, or research traditions, does not mean ignoring the existing

paradigms, but rather 'explor[ing] substantive relationships and revealing hidden connections among elements of seemingly incommensurable paradigm-bound theories, with an eye to generating novel insights that bear on policy debates and practical dilemmas' (2010: 2). Developing an 'eclectic approach', Katzenstein and Okawara contend that Japanese security policies have been influenced by normative structures and institutions. They remark that 'an eclectic theoretical approach finds that there is nothing "natural" about a multipolar world with US primacy and nothing that is "normal" about a Japan without the institutional legacy of Hiroshima and defeat in the Asia-Pacific War' (2002: 155). It has been argued that 'Constructivism should be understood as an epistemology that shares theoretical attributes with both Realism and Liberalism' (Sato and Hirata 2008: 4).

Nonetheless, there are the downsides of making use of analytical eclecticism as a research method. Miyashita (2007) claims that '[Katzenstein] does not fully elaborate his approach by failing to specify how exactly different perspectives can be combined, or how power, interests, and identity interact with one another to shape policies' (Miyashita 2007: 107). Analytical eclecticism can be a usable method to consider all power, interests and identity as the elements of foreign policymaking, yet it is not an adequate guide as a research method. The strength of this method can be its capability in taking into consideration useful elements within existing IR theories which may be able to bridge gaps in examining the US-Japan alliance. Conversely, this research method may be difficult to use due to its lack of guidance and a requirement of a highly discerning ability in selecting the elements of existing IR theories. As Hughes notes, 'there were virtually no systematic attempts to interpret Japan's international relations embedded within wider theories of International Relations (IR) as a discipline' (Hughes 2015: 441).





### *IR as a Western/Eurocentric approach?*

One reason that scholars may prefer to adopt analytical eclectic approach to Japan's international relations may be due to the fact that IR theories tend to be based upon American or European experiences (Hoffman 1977; Hobson 2012). Moreover, as has long been observed, IR is taught mainly in English in the Anglophone world as a Western, or American, discipline (Hoffman 1977; Wæver 1998; Crawford and Jarvis 2001; Acharya 2014). While the period in which IR studies emerged as a discipline is often debated (e.g. Schmidt 1998), the theoretical orientation of IR studies around the world became established once the United States took a leading global role in the second half of the twentieth century (Yamamoto 2011). Buzan and Little (2001), furthermore, argue that IR has never been truly 'independent' in orientation and that, in the case of the English School,[11] it is a partial countermovement to 'IR as an American discipline' (Brown 2011: 311; Shimizu 2016). Prominently, Acharya and Buzan pose the question about the absence of non-Western IR theories. According to them, Western IR is considered 'too narrow in its sources and too dominant in its influence to be good for the health of the wider project to understand the social world in which we live' (2007: 289).[12] Rozman (2015) also suggests the need to consider historical legacies in Asia to understand IR in the region. Although it can be said that this is not the first time to question the applicability of IR theories, it can be considered as the first explicit question about how IR theories that originated in the West are applicable to other countries.

Arguably, it is hard to categorize Japan as part of the West or non-Western in character. According to Inoguchi, 'by the non-West I mean those areas which have not been seriously affected by what is called modernity in the nineteenth and the former half of the twentieth century' (Inoguchi 2007: 369). Regarding Inoguchi's (2007) labelling of the 'First Great Debate

in Western IR (that is "American" IR)', the idealism-realism debate that occurred in Japan reflects the country's experience of the San Francisco Treaty. In the 1960s, Sakamoto Yoshikazu and Kōsaka Masataka, two of the most high-profile scholars of international politics, heatedly debated the US-Japan Security Treaty. According to Sato (2011), this debate does not resemble the one in the United States since it was a debate over 'means' and 'ends' within the paradigm of realism. However, it should also be noted that this situation for the study of IR was not peculiar to Japan before the end of the Asia-Pacific War.

Inoguchi (2007) notes that, since IR in Japan accommodates different disciplinary traditions like diplomatic history, international law, and international economics, area studies and various political theories, it is more difficult for Japan's IR community to produce IR theories.[13] It 'has something to do with Japan having been an abortive regional hegemon in the past and being the second largest economic entity now. Great powers often produce theories of IR. But Japan occupies a somewhat ambivalent position in this regard' (Inoguchi 2007: 370). Similar remarks are made by Hughes:

> Japan's anonymity within mainstream IR was no doubt a reflection of its perceived lack of actual international influence, and its heavy reliance internationally on the shield of US economic and military hegemony, which seemed to provide a ready overall explanation of the limited ambitions of its international relations.
>
> *(Hughes 2015: 441)*

Some IR scholars have also attempted to explain the existence of Japan's own theories of IR as well as the localization of IR in Japan. One example of Japan's IR theory can be said to be the 'Kyoto School', a set of prewar philosophical traditions, which has been brought to the table to demonstrate Japan's own view on IR theories (e.g. Ong 2004; Shimizu 2015).[14] Regarding the amalgamated nature of IR theories in Japan, so-called Western-originated IR theories have become localized. For example, Inoguchi (2007) argues that the arguments advanced by Nishida Kitarō, Tabata Shigejirō, and Hirano Yoshitarō are fledgling versions of Japanese IR theories, which can be legitimately characterized as 'Constructivist with Japanese characteristics' (Ong 2004; Jones 2004; Inoguchi 2007). Nakamoto (2015) notes Nagai Yōnosuke's view on realism, which differs from classical realism and neorealism and instead has a rather stronger emphasis on 'pragmatism'.[15] Considering ongoing discussions about Japan's IR, it is important to consciously deploy existing IR theories to Japan's IR cases in order to avoid over-generalization that might misunderstand Japan's IR behaviour.



## *Changing state-society relationship?*

To understand how Japan's behaviour is being shaped in international relations, the element of state-society relationship may be crucial to affect our analysis concerning the actors and structures in Japan's IR. It is important to note that the idea of civil society in Japan differs from the European and North American model that emerged in the late 18th century (Garon 2003: 42–5; Avenell 2011; Kawato et al. 2015: 406). This may be due to Japanese history, where civil society played a less visible role in political activities. As Iokibe (1999) notes, with Japan's history of *kanson minpi* (the culture whereby government officials are respected and ordinary citizens denigrated), it can be said that, depending on the political standpoints of actors, their degree of political involvement may differ.[16] As Koschmann remarks, 'all power is relative, it depends upon obedience, and can be repossessed from those who abuse it merely by refusing to cooperate' (Koschmann 1978: 4).

However, the presence of civil society may have become more visible in the postwar period following the creation of the San Francisco system and further political activism at the level of civil society. As explained in the preceding section regarding critical theory, actors in civil society may have become more influential in the political arena as well as in international relations. Another example regarding think tanks and the influence of civil society in Japan is 'Re:Demos', a think tank organized by citizens including youth and scholars, which also discusses such political issues as security, the economy (e.g. the Trans-Pacific Partnership, or TPP), and other problems that affect Japan's IR. Making use of social media including Facebook and Twitter, one of the changes from the past is that these types of think tanks also actively interact with like-minded politicians, which may influence Japan's IR, thereby leading us to rethink how actors and structure are shaping Japan's IR. In this regard, to analyze the changing nature of the state-society relationship and its influences on Japan's international relations in the contemporary period, the way in which structures, actors and norms are used respectively need to be carefully reconsidered and re-examined before using IR theories. As noted by Hook et al. (2012), these determinants do not only play passive but also proactive roles in determining Japan's IR. Hence, when exploring Japan's IR, it is important to pay closer heed to the changing nature of the state-society relationship as well as to the roles of structures, actors and norms.

## Conclusion

This chapter has introduced a range of IR theories that are used to explain Japan's international behaviour, as well as a number of issues that challenge the use of such theories. Regarding IR theories that are adopted to illustrate Japanese security and foreign policymaking, it is observable that the existing IR theoretical frameworks were developed in accordance with Japan's changing security postures. In this regard, when analyzing state-level interactions, such as the US-Japan alliance or the Sino-Japanese relationship, the realist focus on external structures might be sufficient for understanding the power relationships between these countries. On the other hand, when looking at the influences of society on Japan's international relations, specifically within the frameworks of liberalism, and to some extent constructivism and critical theories, we can see how domestic actors and norms may reshape Japan's approach to IR. This allows us to depart from the often standard structure-determined approach to Japan's international relations. In this regard, it can be said that, arguably, neo-realists may face difficulties in explaining Japan's behaviour unless it fits with their conception of the dynamics of the international system. In other words, the rigidities of the neo-realist framework may be less useful in explaining Japan's behaviour and instead rather likely to raise more questions.



Introducing existing IR theories with regard to Japan, this chapter also raises some issues which cannot be overlooked, especially considering the ways in which IR theories have been developed. While it explains analytical eclecticism as one of the possible solutions allowing for the adoption of multiple theoretical concepts to achieve more precision in presenting certain elements of Japan's behaviour in the context of international relations, this chapter also illustrates issues of the absence of 'non-Western' or 'post-Western' perspectives that have come to be debated in recent years in the field of IR. Even though some IR theories may not cause problems in explaining certain Japanese behaviour in IR, it is important to be aware of the existence of the debate concerning the absence of Japanese perspective in IR theories that can be useful in comprehending Japan's position in international relations. In addition, raising such issues will allow further space for alternative viewpoints for addressing Japan's international relations that may have been unknown in the realm of standard IR scholarship. Hence, this chapter points to the importance of remaining attentive to changing or unchanging features of international

relations from the Japanese viewpoint. In particular, considering the potentially changing nature of the state-society relationship in Japan may transform the ways in which Japan engages with its international relations.

In this regard, as Acharya argues, 'Western IR theory, despite its ethnocentricism, is not to be dismissed or expunged from Asian classrooms or seminars, but universalized with the infusion of Asian histories, personalities, philosophies, trajectories, and practices' (Acharya 2014: 60). Furthermore, the ways in which IR theories are used or Japanese IR is explained depend on the topic areas. As Shimizu notes:

> To understand IR, we naturally feel the need to internalize not only the language structure but also its historical and cultural background. This, of course, shapes our language pattern and the logical arrangement of knowledge production. Thus, when we write our ideas in English, the arguments we make often result in subconsciously representing, or at least partially representing, the culture and history shared by English speaking societies.
>
> *(Shimizu 2015: 86)*

Hence, in an attempt to explain Japan's behaviour in international relations, it is crucial for us to identify epistemological and ontological conditions that may have affected our thinking. Analytical eclecticism may be one of the solutions to combine relevant explanations in examining Japan's international relations, although this may not allow Japan to develop its own 'indigenous' coherent IR theory. Hence, by acknowledging the gap between theories and practices, IR scholars dealing with Japan will continue to explore or re-explore existing theories in an attempt to identify as authentically as possible Japan's international relations behaviour.



## Notes

1 The 'Rebuild Japan Initiative Foundation' (currently 'Asia Pacific Initiative'), founded by Yoichi Funabashi, published a book about Japan's lost decades with the intention of demonstrating that Japan was an example which other countries might follow in the future (Funabashi and Kushner 2015: xx–xxxiv).
2 The critiques of Western-centred or Eurocentric IR theories stem from questions about the absence of other countries' experiences related to IR theories. Celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of its establishment, the Japan Association for International Relations (JAIR) published a special issue, 'Why Is There No Non-Western IR Theory?' which considered the absence of Japanese insights and perspectives on international relations.
3 Peace studies has also shaped Japan's perspectives on international relations, such as the issues of pacifism, engagement with the United Nations and other forms of peace diplomacy including reconciliation. Yamamoto (2011) notes that the idea of pacifism has been the pillar of Japanese IR 'even though the theoretical orientation of research has become increasingly stronger' (273) with diverse approaches to IR.
4 The literature on Japan, which adheres to this concept, has identified a number of Others, both externally (e.g. the West, Europe, the US, Asia, China, North Korea and South Korea) and internally (e.g. *burakumin*, the *Ainu* people, Okinawans and the Korean minority in Japan) (Oguma 2002).
5 Maruyama Masao was also inspired by Marx's methodology, although it remains debatable whether his work can be considered as Marxist. While Barshay (2004) regards him as a Marxist thinker, Kersten (2013) argues that it would be misleading to regard him as such.
6 According to Gayle (2003: 1), Marxist historians were concerned that 'the formal end of the Occupation signalled a deepening of Japan's "colonization" under the postwar system of capitalism and American hegemony, or imperialism'.
7 Fujita (2013) notes that the waning popularity of Marxism was due to the emergence of postmodernism and neoliberalism.
8 According to Hughes, as in the case of McCormack's work on the US-Japan alliance, forms of critical theory can be 'filtered through into other critical analyses of Japan's foreign relations, even if they are not explicitly termed in line with these theories' (Hughes 2015: 444).

9 Similar investigations can be found in Parmar's (2015) *Foundations of the American Century: The Ford, Carnegie, and Rockefeller Foundations in the Rise of American Pow*er, analyzing the Rockefeller Foundation which exerted US diplomatic influences on Japan over the long term.
10 Using the neo-Gramscian framework, Matsuoka (2018) examines the roles of actors, including intellectuals, to understand the sustainability of the US-Japan alliance and US hegemony in the Asia-Pacific.
11 The English School provides the basis for the study of international and world history with roots in world history, international law and political theory. It is built around distinctions between three key concepts: international system, international society and world society. Ikeda (2008) uses the English School's concept of 'international society' to explore the worldview of Japanese IR scholars between the 1920s and 1940s. Suzuki (2005) examines Japan's socialization into the normative framework of European 'international society' during the Meiji period while calling for the need to instil non-European perspectives into this society.
12 This triggered IR scholars in Asia to create their own schools of IR learning from the English School (Inoguchi 2007).
13 Rosenau (2002) aptly characterizes this age as the age of 'fragmentegration'. Both fragmentation and integration take place simultaneously and ubiquitously. Similar views are exhibited in Oguma's (2002) work, explaining that Japan's postwar discourse can be regarded as 'a hybrid' amalgam of thoughts and ideas (Takeda and Hook 2008).
14 The applicability of the Kyoto School to IR was discussed at the Symposium of the Japan Society for Intercultural Society (JSIC) (Afrasian Research Centre and Japan Society for Intercultural Studies, 2013). Indeed, due to the connection between the Kyoto School of geopolitics and Japanese military authorities, the ideas of the Kyoto School translated into an ideological project of 'Pan-Asianism' (Shibata 2014).
15 Similar remarks are made by other scholars in the security field (Kamiy 2010).
16 This may relate to the debate on subjectivity (*shutaisei*) that took place under the Occupation regime influenced by the principles and policies of the Supreme Commander for Allied Powers (SCAP). The debate about 'democratic revolution' was contested in the early postwar period between critics from *Kindai Bungaku* (modern literature) and the Association of Democratic Scientists (*Minshushugi Kagakusha Kyōkai*) (Koschmann 1996: 4–5).



## List of further readings

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