
FOREIGN POLICY IN PRACTICE: KEY MILESTONES IN US-JAPAN RELATIONS POST-WWII

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the complex dynamics of the Japan-U.S. relationship after WWII, which remains a pillar of stability in the Asia-Pacific region. Using a qualitative research approach combining historical and foreign policy analysis, it explores both the historical context and present-day significance of this bilateral alliance. By reviewing diplomatic documents and academic works, the research identifies key moments in the alliance's development, including the postwar occupation and the growth of economic and security ties. The findings highlight the crucial role of diplomacy in managing shifting geopolitical challenges and provide insights into the future of the Japan-U.S. partnership which deepens understanding alliance relations.

Keywords: Japan-U.S. Relations, Foreign Policy Analysis, Diplomatic History, Power Dynamics.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengkaji dinamika hubungan Jepang-Amerika Serikat pasca PDII yang menjadi pilar stabilitas kawasan Asia-Pasifik. Melalui pendekatan kualitatif dengan analisis sejarah dan kebijakan luar negeri, studi ini menelusuri konteks historis dan relevansi hubungan bilateral tersebut hingga saat ini. Dengan menganalisis dokumen diplomatik dan literatur akademik, penelitian ini mengidentifikasi tonggak penting perkembangan aliansi ini, mulai dari masa pendudukan pascaperang hingga evolusi kerja sama ekonomi dan keamanan. Temuan penelitian menekankan pentingnya diplomasi yang efektif dalam menghadapi tantangan geopolitik, serta memberikan gambaran arah hubungan Jepang-AS ke depan yang memperkaya pemahaman hubungan aliansi.

Kata kunci: Hubungan Jepang-AS, analisis kebijakan luar negeri, sejarah diplomatik, dinamika kekuasaan.

BACKGROUND

In an ever-evolving global landscape, international relations play a pivotal role in shaping the destiny of nations. Among the countless bilateral relationships that have endured the test of time, few are as significant and multifaceted as the diplomatic ties between Japan and the United States. Rooted in history and nurtured through shared values and strategic interests, the Japan-U.S. alliance has emerged as a cornerstone of regional stability and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region.

The journey towards the present-day alliance has been marked by diplomatic breakthroughs, geopolitical challenges, and a mutual understanding of the importance of cooperation in a rapidly changing international order. Following World War II, the United States undertook a transformative occupation of Japan, aimed at demilitarization and democratization, which laid the groundwork for a robust partnership. This period not only redefined Japan's political landscape but also established a framework for economic collaboration that has flourished over the decades.

Through the lens of Japan and United States relations, we can glean essential lessons about the intricacies of diplomacy, the impact of foreign policy decisions on regional and global affairs, and the value of maintaining open channels of communication even in the face of adversity. As we analyze the historical journey and contemporary state of the Japan-U.S. alliance, we are compelled to consider the implications for the future, envisioning the potential for further collaboration and the challenges that may arise in an ever-changing geopolitical landscape.

This study aims to explore the dynamics of foreign policy and diplomacy, particularly focusing on the Japan-U.S. alliance, its historical context, and its significance in the current international arena. By examining the factors that have shaped this relationship, we seek to understand how effective diplomacy can foster peace, stability, and mutual prosperity among nations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Foreign policy and diplomacy are critical aspects of international relations that govern a country's interactions with other nations on the global stage. These two interconnected concepts play a pivotal role in shaping a country's stance, interests, and actions in the international arena. Foreign policy encompasses a nation's strategies, goals, and approaches to dealing with other countries, while diplomacy refers to the means and methods used to conduct negotiations and dialogue between nations in pursuit of mutual interests and peaceful resolutions to conflicts. Foreign policy is the backbone of a country's international engagement. It is formulated by government leaders and policymakers to safeguard national

interests, maintain sovereignty, and promote national security and economic prosperity (Mintz and DeRouen 2010, 3).

Various factors influence foreign policy decisions, such as historical ties, geographical location, economic interests, security concerns, cultural affinities, and global power dynamics (Mintz and DeRouen 2010, 20). Countries often align their foreign policies with like-minded allies or form partnerships and alliances to amplify their influence and protect their interests.

Diplomacy, on the other hand, is the art and practice of conducting negotiations and dialogues between countries to foster cooperation, resolve disputes, and promote common goals. Diplomats, who are representatives of their respective governments, engage in diplomatic activities, including formal meetings, summits, and informal discussions, to exchange ideas, address concerns, and negotiate agreements (Sharp 2009, 20). Diplomatic efforts aim to prevent conflicts, reduce tensions, and build mutual trust among nations.

According to Morgenthau, diplomacy is a central instrument in the conduct of foreign policy. He emphasizes the importance of diplomacy as a means to manage and mediate the struggle for power among nations (Morgenthau 1973, 146). He believes that diplomacy is the art and practice of negotiation and communication between states to pursue their national interests. These national interests are often shaped by the desire for security, territorial integrity, economic prosperity, and the preservation of the state's sovereignty. Diplomacy involves not only formal diplomatic interactions, such as negotiations and treaties, but also informal channels of communication and backchannel diplomacy, where states seek to influence one another's behavior and policies.

In Morgenthau's realist perspective, diplomacy is guided by the principle of prudence. States must carefully assess their own capabilities and the intentions of other states, recognizing that the international system is characterized by a struggle for power and the pursuit of self-interest (Morgenthau 1973, 529-530). Diplomats must act with a clear understanding of the balance of power and the potential consequences of their actions on the international stage. He also emphasizes the significance of national interest as the primary driver of diplomatic actions. He contends that states act as rational actors, pursuing their interests in a self-interested manner. Consequently, diplomatic negotiations are often marked by a degree of competition and conflict, as states seek to advance their interests and maximize their gains.

One of the primary objectives of foreign policy and diplomacy is to maintain international peace and security. This often involves supporting or participating in

multilateral organizations such as the United Nations, where countries collaborate to address global challenges such as climate change, terrorism, and humanitarian crises. Through diplomacy, countries can find common ground, mediate conflicts, and seek peaceful resolutions to disputes, reducing the likelihood of armed conflicts and fostering stability.

Economic interests are another essential aspect of foreign policy. Nations engage in trade agreements, economic partnerships, and foreign aid to promote economic growth and enhance their prosperity. By fostering economic ties with other countries, nations can access new markets for their goods and services, attract investments, and benefit from the transfer of knowledge and technology.

Cultural diplomacy is also an important dimension of foreign policy. It involves promoting a country's culture, language, and values to foster understanding, build bridges, and enhance people-to-people connections. Educational and cultural exchange programs, as well as international media initiatives, are common tools used in cultural diplomacy.

Furthermore, foreign policy and diplomacy play a critical role in addressing global challenges, such as climate change, pandemics, and migration. These issues require international cooperation and collective action, and diplomatic efforts are instrumental in forging global agreements and commitments to tackle these complex problems. However, foreign policy and diplomacy also face challenges and limitations. Divergent national interests, historical animosities, and power struggles can hinder diplomatic progress. Sometimes, countries resort to coercive or aggressive actions that undermine diplomatic efforts, leading to tensions and conflicts.

Factors Influencing Foreign Policy Decision Making

In examining the factors that influence foreign policy decision-making, we can look into the work of Alex Mintz and Karl DeRouen, who have worked extensively and written about foreign policy decision-making. In their work, they identify and analyze various factors that influence foreign policy decisions, including international, domestic, and cultural factors (Mintz and DeRouen 2010, 121-146). Here's an overview of their perspectives:

1. International Factors:

International factors refer to the conditions and dynamics in the global arena that influence a country's foreign policy decisions. These factors can include:

- a. **Power and Security Concerns:** The distribution of power among states and the security threats they face play a significant role in shaping foreign

policy decisions, especially concerning deterrence power. States are often motivated to protect their security interests, form alliances, and counter potential threats.

- b. International Institutions or Alliances: The presence and role of international institutions and alliances can influence foreign policy decisions. Membership in such organizations may lead countries to comply with international norms and agreements.
- c. International Norms and Values: The acceptance and adherence to international norms, such as human rights, democracy, and non-proliferation, can shape foreign policy choices.
E.g., democracy vs. non-democracy.

2. Domestic Factors:

Domestic factors pertain to the internal dynamics within a country that influence its foreign policy decisions. These factors can include:

- a. Political Institutions: The structure and functioning of a country's political institutions, such as the government system and decision-making processes, play a crucial role in foreign policy formulation.
- b. Economic Interests: Economic considerations, including trade relations, access
- c. to resources, and investment opportunities, have a considerable impact on foreign policy. States may prioritize economic interests in their decision-making processes.
- d. Public Opinion: The attitudes and preferences of the public can exert pressure on policymakers to adopt certain foreign policy positions, especially in democracies where public support is essential for political legitimacy, more especially during the election cycles.

3. Cultural Factors:

Cultural factors refer to the shared values, beliefs, and norms that influence a country's foreign policy. A country's historical experiences, including past conflicts, alliances, and colonial legacies, can shape its perceptions of the world and impact its foreign policy decisions. A nation's sense of identity and how it perceives its place in the world can influence foreign policy choices, including cooperation, competition, or isolation. Moreover, religious beliefs and ideological factors can have a profound influence on a country's foreign policy positions, particularly in the case of religious states or those driven by specific ideologies.

Mintz and DeRouen emphasize that foreign policy decision-making is a complex and multifaceted process, and understanding the interplay of these international, domestic, and cultural factors is crucial for comprehending a

country's foreign policy behavior. Policymakers must navigate and balance these diverse influences to advance their country's interests and objectives on the global stage.

Entangling International Factors and Domestic Factors through Two-Level Games

Robert D. Putnam introduced the concept of "two-level games" (Putnam 1988, 434). The theory aims to explain how the interactions between international diplomacy and domestic politics shape a country's foreign policy decisions. Putnam's framework helps to understand how political leaders negotiate and make decisions in the context of both international and domestic constraints and opportunities. The basic idea of the "two-level games" is that leaders engage in two separate but interconnected negotiation processes: one at the international level with foreign counterparts, and the other at the domestic level with various domestic actors, such as interest groups, legislators, and the public. The outcomes of these negotiations at both levels can significantly impact the final foreign policy decision.

At the international level, leaders represent their country's interests and preferences, seeking to achieve favorable outcomes through negotiations with other countries. These negotiations involve complex issues such as trade agreements, security alliances, or environmental treaties. During these interactions, leaders must consider not only their country's interests but also the interests and preferences of the other negotiating parties. The bargaining process at the international level involves give-and-take and often requires compromises to reach mutually acceptable agreements.

At the domestic level, political leaders face a different set of challenges. They must navigate the political landscape at home and consider the preferences and demands of various domestic actors. Interest groups may advocate for specific outcomes that align with their interests, while legislators may push for policies that appeal to their constituents. Public opinion and media coverage also play a significant role in shaping domestic political considerations (Putnam 1988, 436, 452). In democratic systems, public support for a particular foreign policy decision can be crucial for a leader's political standing.

Putnam argues that political leaders engage in a balancing act between these two levels of negotiation. They seek to find a solution that not only satisfies the demands of foreign counterparts but also gains sufficient support from domestic actors. Leaders must manage these competing pressures to arrive at a foreign policy decision that is both feasible at home and acceptable internationally, to find the win-sets (Putnam 1988, 435-436).

The two-level games framework highlights the importance of understanding the domestic political context when analyzing foreign policy decisions. It emphasizes that leaders cannot solely focus on international negotiations; they must also consider how those negotiations align with domestic political realities (Putnam 1988, 460). The theory provides insights into why certain foreign policy decisions may be difficult to achieve or why leaders may need to make concessions or compromises to strike a balance between international and domestic concerns.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research methodology, utilizing a historical analysis framework to explore the dynamics of the Japan-U.S. alliance and its implications for foreign policy and diplomacy. By examining historical documents, diplomatic communications, and scholarly literature, the study aims to uncover the factors that have shaped the bilateral relationship between Japan and the United States over time. This approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of how domestic political realities influence foreign policy decisions and the negotiation processes at both international and domestic levels. As Thies (2002) emphasizes, qualitative historical analysis allows researchers to draw on primary and secondary sources to provide rich, contextualized explanations of complex international relations phenomena.

Data collection involves a systematic review of primary and secondary sources, including government archives, diplomatic correspondence, and academic publications. The analysis focuses on key historical events, such as the U.S. occupation of Japan post-World War II and the Okinawa Reversion Agreement, to illustrate the evolution of the alliance and the strategic decisions made by both nations. By synthesizing insights from various sources, the research aims to provide a nuanced perspective on the effectiveness of diplomacy and the role of cultural, economic, and political factors in shaping foreign policy outcomes. Furthermore, as highlighted by de Orellana (2020), this methodology not only highlights the historical context of the Japan-U.S. alliance but also offers valuable lessons for contemporary international relations.

DISCUSSION

American Occupation of Japan (1945-1952)

The US occupation of Japan refers to the period immediately following World War II when Japan came under the control of the Allied Powers, primarily the United States. The occupation began in 1945 and lasted until 1952. The primary

goal of the occupation was to demilitarize and democratize Japan, as well as to hold those responsible for the war accountable. This period of intense transformation had a profound impact on Japanese society, politics, and economy.

During the initial stages of the occupation, General Douglas MacArthur was appointed as the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP) and played a pivotal role in shaping Japan's post-war future. MacArthur implemented sweeping reforms to dismantle Japan's military and authoritarian institutions. The occupation also led to the establishment of a new constitution in 1947. This document enshrined democratic principles, granted fundamental rights to Japanese citizens, and renounced Japan's right to wage war. It transformed Japan from an imperial state with a powerful emperor to a parliamentary democracy with the Emperor as a symbol of the state's unity. Additionally, the US occupation fostered economic reforms that helped Japan's post-war recovery and laid the groundwork for its rapid economic growth in the following decades.

The US Occupation of Japan after World War II is widely regarded as a successful case of diplomacy and foreign policy. The United States, under General Douglas MacArthur's leadership, implemented a comprehensive and strategic approach to rebuilding Japan as a democratic and prosperous nation. The occupation aimed to demilitarize Japan, dismantle its war machine, and promote democratic reforms.

The success of this diplomatic effort can be attributed to several elements. Firstly, the US displayed a commitment to nation-building and fostering democratic institutions, enabling Japan to transform from a militaristic regime to a peaceful and democratic state (Dower 2000, 212-213; Moore and Robinson 2002, 106-108). Secondly, the occupation allowed Japan to retain its cultural identity and institutions while introducing essential reforms, which helped garner support from the Japanese population (Takemae and Ricketts 2003, 349, 363, 367, 403; Reischauer 1960, 26). Thirdly, the US demonstrated a long-term vision, engaging in nation-building and assisting in Japan's economic recovery, leading to Japan becoming a stable and prosperous ally in the Asia-Pacific region (NSC 6008/1 1960).

Okinawa Reversion

After Japan's defeat in World War II in 1945, the Okinawa Prefecture came under the administration of the United States military. For over two decades, the islands were controlled by the U.S., which utilized them as strategic bases to counter regional threats and maintain influence in the Asia-Pacific region. The prolonged American presence had a profound impact on Okinawa's society, culture, and economy, leading to tensions and resentment among the local population.

As the Cold War thawed and diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Japan improved in the 1960s, negotiations over the future of Okinawa gained momentum. The Reversion was not a straightforward process, and both parties had to navigate complex issues such as military strategy, local sentiments, and broader geopolitical considerations (Aldous 2003, 163-164). The U.S. government was concerned about losing a vital military foothold in the region, while Japan sought to regain full sovereignty over all its territories and address growing anti-American sentiments on Okinawa (Mendel 1975, 398-412).

Finally, in 1971, the Okinawa Reversion Agreement was signed between the United States and Japan. The agreement stipulated that the U.S. would return control of the Okinawa Prefecture, and the islands would be fully reintegrated into Japan's administrative structure. However, the U.S. retained some military bases on the islands under a bilateral security treaty with Japan, ensuring their continued strategic presence in the region.

In my opinion, the reversion was a significant diplomatic accomplishment for both the US and Japan. The US sought to consolidate its military presence in the region, while Japan aimed to regain control of the strategically important island of Okinawa (Joint Statement 1969). The successful reversion of Okinawa was a testament to diplomatic negotiations and compromise; more interestingly, this was done through back-channel means as told by Wakaizumi (Wakaizumi 2002, 230-252). It reflected the US's willingness to recognize Japan's sovereignty over Okinawa, while Japan agreed to maintain a US military presence on the island. The reversion marked a significant milestone in the US-Japan alliance, demonstrating mutual respect and cooperation between the two countries.

US-Japan Alliance in the mid-1990s

In the mid-1990s, the US-Japan Alliance was a crucial pillar of regional security and economic cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region (Japan-U.S. Joint Declaration on Security 1996). The alliance had evolved significantly by the 1990s, reflecting the changing geopolitical landscape and economic dynamics. The security dimension of the alliance remained important during this period. The United States stationed a significant military presence in Japan, including troops, aircraft, and naval assets. This forward deployment acted as a deterrent against potential adversaries, especially in light of North Korea's provocative actions and the uncertain security environment in Asia. The alliance also facilitated joint military exercises and intelligence sharing, enhancing interoperability between the two countries armed forces.

The mid-1990s also marked a period of intensive economic cooperation between the United States and Japan. Despite occasional trade disputes, both countries recognized the importance of their economic partnership (Funabashi 1999, 262-263). Japan had become a major trading partner for the United States, with bilateral trade reaching significant levels. The two nations collaborated on various economic issues, such as market access, currency exchange rates, and regulatory frameworks, to foster a more open and mutually beneficial economic relationship (Krauss 2021, 819-820).

The US-Japan Alliance played an essential role in regional security issues beyond Japan's borders. The two countries closely coordinated their policies on broader Asian security matters, such as the Korean Peninsula crisis and territorial disputes in the South China Sea. They sought to uphold the principles of free navigation, peaceful resolution of conflicts, and the promotion of democratic values in the region.

Moreover, the mid-1990s saw a reevaluation of the US-Japan Alliance's role in response to emerging challenges (Gabe 2003, 55-72). As the Cold War came to an end, both nations sought to adapt the alliance to address new security concerns and foster greater regional cooperation. This involved enhancing diplomatic efforts, increasing engagement with other Asian nations, and exploring avenues for multilateral security dialogues.

The US-Japan alliance during this period demonstrated the resilience of a successful diplomatic relationship. Both countries recognized the strategic importance of their partnership and worked to address their differences through negotiations and dialogue. The alliance allowed the US to maintain a strong presence in the Asia-Pacific region and ensured Japan's security in a changing geopolitical landscape.

On Foreign Policy and Diplomacy: Lessons from the US-Japan Relationship Post-WWII

The analysis of effective foreign policy reveals several essential characteristics that illustrate a nation's capability to manage international relations while advancing its national interests. A successful foreign policy not only meets its goals but also fosters peace, stability, and compliance with international standards. This approach prioritizes collaboration, conflict resolution, and dialogue over military action, aiming to establish and sustain robust diplomatic ties that

encourage mutual trust and understanding. The US-Japan Alliance serves as a prime example of this principle, where both nations engaged in extensive diplomatic efforts to address regional security issues, demonstrating a commitment to peaceful conflict resolution.

Flexibility and foresight are critical components of an effective foreign policy, enabling timely responses to emerging global challenges. The adaptability of the US- Japan relationship, particularly in response to crises such as the Korean Peninsula situation, showcases the importance of being able to navigate complex geopolitical landscapes. This flexibility allows nations to adjust their strategies in light of new developments, ensuring that they remain relevant and effective in their diplomatic efforts. Proficient diplomacy, characterized by adept negotiation and compromise, is essential for achieving agreements that benefit all parties involved, as illustrated by the Okinawa Reversion Agreement, which balanced US military interests with Japan's sovereignty.

Moreover, a strong foreign policy emphasizes long-term interests over short-term gains, taking into account the future effects of decisions on international relations. The US's commitment to nation-building in Japan after World War II exemplifies this focus, as it aimed to create a stable and prosperous ally in the Asia-Pacific region. This long-term vision reflects an understanding of the interconnected nature of global issues and the necessity for collaborative efforts to address them. By prioritizing sustainable outcomes, nations can foster enduring relationships that contribute to regional and global stability.

Finally, an effective foreign policy reflects a country's values and promotes international standards that resonate with its principles. Cultural diplomacy plays a significant role in this context, using soft power to advance a nation's culture, language, and ideals, thereby fostering understanding and goodwill with other countries. The US occupation of Japan not only aimed at demilitarization but also promoted democratic values and cultural identity, enhancing the nation's reputation and influence on the global stage. In conclusion, a sound foreign policy is characterized by the attainment of objectives through peaceful and cooperative methods, skilled negotiation, and a thorough understanding of both international and domestic contexts, ultimately contributing to a stable and prosperous world community.

CONCLUSIONS

The post-World War II evolution of the U.S.-Japan alliance offers profound insights into the practice of foreign policy and diplomacy. Through key historical milestones, such as the American occupation, the Okinawa Reversion Agreement,

and the strategic recalibrations of the 1990s the bilateral relationship demonstrates how nations can navigate complex international and domestic pressures to foster enduring cooperation.

The U.S. occupation of Japan reflected a realist pursuit of stability and influence in a war-torn region, while Japan's compliance and eventual re-emergence as a democratic state aligned with Morgenthau's view that diplomacy is a tool for managing power relations. The emphasis on prudence, balance of power, and national interest explains why both nations sustained the alliance even amid challenges.

Furthermore, the foreign policy decision-making model by Mintz and DeRouen helps unpack how international, domestic, and cultural factors shaped the evolving alliance. For instance, the reversion of Okinawa was not only about U.S. strategic concerns but also about Japanese domestic pressures, including public opinion and national identity. This reflects the layered influence of internal and external stimuli that policymakers must consider, illustrating the multifactorial decision-making process posited by Mintz and DeRouen.

Perhaps most powerfully, Putnam's two-level game theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how the U.S. and Japan negotiated agreements like the Okinawa Reversion. These decisions involved parallel negotiations: externally between the two governments and internally with domestic constituencies, including military planners, legislators, and local populations. The theory's concept of "win-sets" is evident in how leaders sought mutually acceptable outcomes that would also be politically viable at home, such as maintaining U.S. bases on Okinawa while returning administrative control to Japan.

The U.S.-Japan alliance emerges not merely as a result of strategic calculation but as a product of interdependent diplomacy, shaped by both realist imperatives and domestic political constraints. The alliance's resilience into the post-Cold War era reflects an ability to adapt through continuous diplomatic engagement, driven by shared interests, evolving norms, and institutional collaboration.

In conclusion, the historical cases of the American Occupation of Japan, the Okinawa Reversion, and the US-Japan alliance in the mid-1990s exemplify successful diplomacy and foreign policy. These cases demonstrate the importance of strategic vision, compromise, mutual respect, and a long-term commitment to maintaining strong diplomatic relationships. Postwar US-Japan relations have proven to be beneficial to both countries, contributing to peace, stability, and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region.

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