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Japan: A Rising Champion of Human Rights and Democracy in East and Southeast Asia?

The 21st century, a changing approach with old continuities

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Abstract

This study explores and provides an understanding of how Japan, in its foreign policy, has approached the protection and promotion of international human rights and democracy in East and Southeast Asia during the 21st century. It sheds light on the Japanese government's official policies stated in forums like the national Diet and the United Nations, and it analyzes the main characteristics of the Japanese approach. By using international relations theory as a framework, this study argues that Japan has increasingly in its foreign policies during the 21st century emphasized the importance of human rights and democracy (in lines with a liberal approach), at levels not seen before, in general and towards Asia as region. The importance of spreading the universal values of human rights and democracy to all parts of the world has during the 21st century become a continuous notion of the Japanese government. However, Japan has not been consistent in its promotion of such values. Policies of human rights and democracy have been superseded by realist claims of security towards East and Southeast Asian nations that pose imminent or potential security threats (military or economic) to Japan. Hence, Japan is utilizing an elective and adaptive policy on human rights and democracy, adhering to a generally liberal approach where possible and a realist where needed.

Keywords: Japanese Foreign Policy, Human Rights, Democracy, East and Southeast Asia, China, Myanmar, Cambodia, North Korea.

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Abbreviations and Explanations

APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
ARF	ASEAN Regional Forum
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASEAN +3	ASEAN + Japan, China and Korea
Diet	The bicameral legislature of Japan
DPJ	Democratic Party of Japan
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
ODA	Official Development Assistance
PKO Law	Law Concerning Cooperation in UN Peacekeeping and Other Operations
SDF	Self Defense Forces
UN	United Nations

Introduction

Despite global achievements in the spread of human rights and democracy, many obstacles to the implementation of such values still remain in East and Southeast Asia. Some of the mounting problems in the region are restrictions to the implementation of human rights and democracy as well as impunity given to human rights violators (Amnesty 2008). Moreover, countries like the North Korea, Myanmar, China and Cambodia, all score extremely low in terms of political freedoms and civil liberties, and are also being criticized for their poor human rights situations (Freedom House 2009a-d). Citizens in numerous Asian countries are deprived of basic freedoms and liberties, and poor records of civil and political rights in Asia have become a concern of the international human rights community (Peerenboom 2006).

Some observers believe that as the oldest democracy in Asia (Chang, Chu & Park 2007), Japan with its high levels of human rights, education, economic well being, and health standards, would be a natural leader for advocating the spread of human rights and democracy in Asia (e.g. Human Rights Watch 2008). However, previous research states that Japan's unfortunate history in World War II, in combination with an economy-driven bureaucracy has made Japan reluctant to speak up for such values. Instead, a general position of 'learning rather than preaching' has long been the policy of Japan in terms of human rights and democracy (Onuma 2000; Yokota and Aoi 2000).

In the 20th century, Japan has been utilizing a realist foreign policy focusing on security and stability over liberal notions of human rights and democracy (e.g. Cooney 2007). However, the international community has in the 21st century come to increasingly address the importance of implementing values of human rights and democracy to all parts of the world. The Millennium Declaration adopted by all 189 members of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly at the Millennium Summit in September 2000 stated, among other things, that democratic governments are best suited for implementing human rights. In addition, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)¹ outlined in the Millennium Declaration gave a growing opportunity for improving people's human rights around the world. Upon adoption, the MDGs soon became the highest priority within the development agenda (United Nations 2000a-c; Robinson 2003). Still, previous research conducted in the 20th century, was

¹ For the full Millennium Declaration and its MDGs see United Nations (2000)c and United Nations (2000)d respectively.

uncertain of what direction the Japanese foreign policies on human rights and democracy would take in the new millennium.

This study will therefore explore how Japan has approached the protection and promotion of human rights and democracy in the new millennium, focusing on East and Southeast Asia. There is an abundance of research on Japanese foreign policies in the 21st century, nevertheless, few, if any, have set out to analyze the Japanese approach to human rights and democracy in East and Southeast Asia during the new millennium. In light of the scarcity of research investigating such an approach in Japan's foreign policy this research will contribute to filling the gap of knowledge on this topic.

Aim of research

The aim of this research is to explore and create an understanding of how Japan, in its foreign policy, has approached the protection and promotion of human rights and democracy in East and Southeast Asia during the 21st century. This study will do so by analyzing official government documents in the form of statements and speeches within the framework of international relations theory. The theoretical framework enables the investigation of continuity or discontinuity in Japan's foreign policies on human rights and democracy on a general, regional and country-specific level. The questions used for the study are:

- Has there been a change in Japan's approach to human rights and democracy in the 21st century, as compared to the previous era, and what are the characteristics of the approach?
- How has Japan targeted East and Southeast Asia in terms of its human rights strategy in the 21st century?
- How has Japan utilized its approach to human rights and democracy in East and Southeast Asia on a country specific level – targeting Cambodia, Myanmar, North Korea and China?

Points of Demarcation and Definition of Concepts

This study examines Japan's official policy in the above-mentioned context by analyzing speeches and statements but do not investigate the actual implementation of such policies. The study does not aspire to be normative or prescribing but rather aims to establish the official foreign policy approach to human rights and democracy in Asia stated by the Japanese government.

The study uses the terms human rights and democracy in tandem but also separately. It does so since the terms are used both in combination and separately by Japan in its foreign policy, and also since the two terms have become more and more intertwined (e.g. United Nations 2000c). The term ‘human rights’ in this study is not pinpointing particular or certain rights (e.g. rights of vulnerable groups such as women, children or refugees). The concept of ‘human rights’ is instead used to describe Japan’s general and overall approach to the whole concept as one universal concept. The term thus, generally adheres to the definition stipulated in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights² adopted in 1948, and to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)³ and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)⁴ ratified by Japan in 1997⁵.

However, when addressing a region, and also at a country specific level, the term ‘human rights’ is being closely connected to the values of democracy following in the traits of Freedom House’s investigations of freedom in the world – targeting personal freedom and civil liberties. The reason for using both human rights and democracy in this study and not only one or the other, is partly because these two terms are both concepts, which Japan has come to include and made into the very foundations of its rule. These terms are also frequently used in combination, and according to the Japanese government, the terms depend on each other to a certain degree. The fact that Japan makes this definition, that the spread of human rights to some extent is depending on the level of democratization in a nation, legitimizes the study’s focus on both concepts in tandem and also separately.

The area of research is targeting East and Southeast Asian as a region and also certain nations within the region that have been exposed to the Japanese aggression during World War II. Cambodia, Myanmar, North Korea and China have become matters for

² For a further definition on the concept of human rights see the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), retrieved May 2, 2010, <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>.

³The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966) retrieved May 2, 2010, <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/ccpr.htm> and <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/cescr.htm> retrieved May 2, 2010.

⁴The International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (1966), retrieved May 2, 2010, <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/cescr.htm> retrieved, May 2, 2010.

⁵ For Japan’s ratification history see “*Japan Ratification History*”, retrieved May 2, 2010, http://www.bayefsky.com/html/japan_t1_ratifications.php

country-specific analysis, since they have stood out as the Asian nations most prominently addressed in Japan's foreign policy. In combination with being prominent in Japan's foreign policies, the low levels of freedom and democracy, according to Freedom House's Country Reports (Freedom House 2009a-d), have further strengthened these choices. Cambodia, Myanmar, North Korea and China all score low on Freedom House's list of freedom in the world. However, they are of different importance to Japan. North Korea and China can be seen as nations who present a relatively imminent security threat to Japan (military or economic), while Cambodia and Myanmar are of less direct importance to the security of Japan.

This study will henceforth use the term 'Asia' when referring to East and Southeast Asian nations including the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), China, Japan, Korea, and North Korea if nothing else is explicitly mentioned. The term 'Myanmar' as compared to 'Burma' is used due to the fact that Japan has chosen to use the term 'Myanmar' for the nation. Additionally, when using the term 'unfortunate past' of Japan or other references to Japanese history in Asia, this study refers to Japan's aggressive war in the Asia-Pacific, with numerous war atrocities in neighboring Asian nations⁶.

Disposition

The next chapter will provide a short background of the given topic followed by a review of previous research. The previous research will briefly shine light on Japanese foreign policies and human rights and democracy within these policies during the 20th century. The method used for conducting this research is presented and then followed by a theoretical chapter, which offers an analytical framework suitable for establishing a continuum or change in Japan's approach. The empirical part of the study is divided into three parts, a general approach, a regional approach on Asia, and a country-specific approach. The analysis of the empirical material is interweaved into the empirical chapters and the theoretical framework is used as an analytical tool throughout the study. The study concludes with a summary of how the findings answer the posed questions.

⁶ For further readings on Japan's aggression in Asia during World War II see e.g. Buruma 1994; Ducke 2002; Honda 1999; Seaton 2007, and Tanaka 2002.

Background of Topic

Since the end of United States' occupation of the nation, throughout the Cold War and until the eve of the new millennium, Japan has been classified as a passive participant in world affairs. Scholarly literature has categorized Japan's foreign policies as reactive rather than proactive, lacking anything resembling a grand strategy and rather dealing with policies on a day-to-day basis (e.g. Calder 1988; Cooney 2007; Drifte 1996; Mochizuki 2007). Others have pointed out an adaptive nature, slowly but judiciously, adjusting to changes in the international environment (Berger 2007). In addition, some scholars claim that Japan has its shares of both reactivity and pro-activity when dealing with foreign policies (Hook, Gilson, Hughes and Dobson 2005).

A More Assertive Japan is Born

The majority of scholarly work on Japanese foreign policy states that Japan's political power is not, and has not been, commensurate to its economic authority. As the second largest economy in the world⁷, Japan's international political clout does not match its economic strength. However, most scholars also agree on the fact that Japan became more proactive in the international forum, towards the end of the 20th century and in the beginning of the 21st century (Berger 2007; Cooney 2007; Hook et al. 2005).

Until the end of the Cold War, the Tokyo government made no major attempts to grasp a larger political role in international affairs, more proportional to its economic development. The agenda instead, set by a strong bureaucracy during the Liberal Democratic Party's (LDP) rule, had its primary focus on economic development. Japan was able to pursue an economic crusade partly due to Article Nine of its constitution,⁸ forever renouncing war as a settlement of international disputes, thus limiting the focus on military power. Additionally, the signing of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty, positioning Japan under the U.S. nuclear umbrella, facilitated the economic approach (Cooney 2007). During the Cold War, Japan was not seemingly interested in carrying the cross of world order, peace and democracy, commensurate of its new economic 'super power' status. Japan's reluctance to do so became a thorn in the side for the developed West, who accused Japan of being a 'free-rider' of U.S.

⁷ Depending on different methods of measuring (GDP - PPP or GDP - Nominal), China may in fact already have passed Japan in terms of the size of the two economies (IMF 2010).

⁸ The Japanese Constitution (Japanese Constitution 1946) was written by the U.S. Occupation Government, headed by General Douglas MacArthur, in the aftermath of World War II (Cooney 2007).

security by not sufficiently adhering to the ‘burden sharing’ responsibility of an economic power (Hook et al. 2005; Mochizuki 2007). However, with the end of the Cold War, the start of the Gulf War, the terrorist attacks of September 11, and the following war in Afghanistan and Iraq, Japan has found itself committed to play a larger role than ever before in the international community. After being heavily critiqued by the Allied Powers for not being able to contribute with anything other than economic assistance during the liberation of Kuwait⁹, Japan reinterpreted its Constitution and extended the mandate of its Self Defense Forces (SDF). By passing the *Law Concerning Cooperation in UN Peacekeeping and Other Operations* (referred to as the PKO Law) in 1992, Japan allowed itself to send military personnel overseas, upon the condition that they be under UN control and be used solely for peacekeeping purposes (Cooney 2007; Togo 2005).

Human Rights Become Part of Japanese Foreign Policies

The approach to human rights and democracy in Japan’s foreign policy went from almost non-existing before the 1980s to become at least more visible during the 1990s (Yokota and Aoi 2000). The ‘Gulf War-critique’, in combination with critique of Japan’s Official Development Assistance (ODA), which was blamed to indirectly assist receiving countries’ militarization projects, eventually caused Tokyo to, in 1992, adopt guidelines for its ODA. The purpose of these guidelines was to ensure that the dispersal of aid matched the beliefs in democracy and human rights. However, implementation of the above mentioned guidelines proved to be inconsistent as aid was dispersed in a rather pragmatic and country specific manner during the 1990s (MOFA 1992; Takamine 2006;).

Japan has long felt inclined to ‘learn’ rather than ‘preach’ about human rights in the international forum and especially in relation to Asian neighbors. This position was partly taken by the Tokyo government in reference to the legacy of war and the grave violations of human rights committed by Japan in East and Southeast Asia during, World War II (Yokota and Aoi 2000). The approach fit well with the focus on economic development, avoiding political burdens through a ‘low-cost’ and ‘low-risk’ foreign policy until the end of the 1980s (Arase 1993). However, as Japan became more active in the international community during the 1990s, the government in Tokyo also made an increased effort in framing the spread of human rights and democracy as part of its foreign policy. Still, the legacy of a rigid bureaucracy along with a focus on economic development, and the memories of war, blurred

⁹ From the Iraqi attacker during the Gulf War of 1990-1991

the direction of a human rights approach in Japanese foreign policies at the end of the 20th century (ibid.).

Growing Importance of Human Rights and Democracy

The international community has increasingly stated the importance of human rights and democracy since the UN adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948¹⁰. Though most of the nine core treaties on international human rights were adopted in the 20th century, the 21st century seems to be the century where the international community has its goal set on implementing such treaties. The first eight years of the 21st millennium delivered five optional protocols to already adopted core treaties (regulating specific concerns), and two new core treaties¹¹. The eve of the new millennium and the first years of the 21st century have seen an unprecedented focus on implementing human rights around the world. In 1994, the UN General Assembly adopted the UN Decade (1995-2004) for Human Rights Education (General Assembly 1994). The UN declared in 1998 that the ten first years of the new millennium should be a ‘International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World’, by promoting human rights and democracy (General Assembly 1998). In addition, and as previously mentioned, a unanimous UN General Assembly adopted the Millennium Declaration in 2000, (stating the importance of democracy) including the MDGs giving opportunities to strengthen human rights around the world (United Nations 2000c-d). These are some of the examples that contextualize the growing importance that the international community has given human rights and democracy in the 21st century.

Literature Review

While literature on Japanese foreign policies exists in abundance (e.g. Berger 2007; Cooney 2007; Calder 1988; Drifte 1996; Hook et al. 2005; Mochizuki 2007), a relatively small amount of authors and scholars explicitly set out to distinguish the nature of policies on human rights and democracy towards Asia (e.g. Arase 1993; Yokota & Aoi 2000). In addition, the existing research on the particular subject dates back some ten to fifteen years or more, and thus provides motivation for commencing new research on the topic.

¹⁰The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), retrieved May 2, 2010, <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>.

¹¹ For a list of all core treaties and year of adoption see “The core international human rights instruments: and their monitoring bodies” retrieved May 2, 2010, <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/>

Japanese Foreign Policies

Scholars like Cooney (2007), Mochizuki (2007), Yokota and Aoi (2000), Fukushima (1999) and Drifte (1996) all describe Japan's foreign policies as somewhat atypical. It is atypical in the sense that Japan's political power is described as not being commensurate to its economic strength. The Tokyo government has had a strong focus on economic development throughout the 20th century and been unable, and sometimes unwilling, to grasp a larger role as a political leader in Asia, especially in terms of promoting democracy and human rights.

The Japanese government has proclaimed a 'UN centered diplomacy' as its main focus of foreign policy since being admitted to the UN in 1956. However, the first decades of Japan's involvement in the UN saw it take a passive involvement by merely contributing to the UN budget (Cooney 2007; Hook et al. 2005). In addition, by signing the United States-Japan Security Treaty in 1952, Japan has been comfortably positioned under the U.S. security umbrella and been able to shift its priorities to economic development (ibid.). Japanese foreign policies have been driven by domestic need-based policies controlled by a bureaucracy with a biased agenda focusing on economic welfare and development (e.g. Arase 1993; Cooney 2007; Drifte 1996; Mochizuki 2007; Yokota & Aoi 2000;). However, Japan became more active in the UN during the 1970s as the U.S. became less engaged in the UN.¹² Japan continued to assert itself within UN diplomacy during the 1980s and participated more independently of the U.S., taking a stand when Japanese interests were at stake. However, Article Nine of the Japanese Constitution¹³ still forbade Japanese military assistance to the U.S. or the UN (Cooney 2005; Hook et al. 2005). Consequently, when the U.S. called for Japan to participate in the Gulf War (1990-1991) with a human or military contribution, commensurate to its economic super-power status, Japan was not ready to comply. As a result, Japan was heavily criticized for its inability to contribute to the war-effort and its wish to keep the SDF out of harm's way. Instead Japan contributed financially with a total of \$13 billion, making Japan the second largest financier of the UN coalition in the Gulf War effort (Cooney 2007). However, Japan's 'checkbook' diplomacy¹⁴ did not receive

¹² Japan had more or less been forced to follow suite in international matters where the U.S. has been calling on the Japanese for support, a kind of pressure visible in the U.N. until the 1970s and 1980s (Hook et al. 2005).

¹³The Constitution forever renounces war, and the threat, or use, of forces as a way of settling international disputes and was written by the US Occupation Government (e.g. Cooney 2007)

¹⁴ 'Checkbook' diplomacy refers to economic rather than human/military contribution (e.g. Cooney 2007; Drifte 1996; Fukushima 1999; Ito 2007)

much gratitude by other nations sending its troops to the Gulf. Consequently, the massive critique of Japan's inability to assist with a human contribution, and the lack of appreciation of the Japanese financial contribution in the Gulf War, paved the way for the PKO law and an increasingly active Japanese stance on human contribution and participation in the UN (Ito 2007; Cooney 2007; Drifte 1996; Fukushima 1999;).

According to Cooney (2007), Japan has no explicit or official principals through which policies are being made, except for its UN-based pacifist foreign policy. Japanese senior government officials have even claimed that foreign policies are “a day-to-day business of avoiding conflicts” (Cooney 2007: p. 131) and, should not be ‘goal-oriented’, giving leverage to observes regarding Japan as a reactive rather than active state (e.g. Calder 1988; Fukushima 1999; Mochizuki 2007). Furthermore, Japan has by being reactive rather than active, avoided losing political capital, but unfortunately, Japan has not been so well prepared to deal with a major foreign policy crisis (Cooney 2007; Drifte 1996).

There are nevertheless opportunities for change in Japanese foreign policies. The Article Nine, created a barrier for Japan to become a ‘normal’ nation in international affairs.¹⁵ Through the PKO Law however, Japanese soldiers could be sent overseas for the first time since World War II, although under the condition that the soldier would be exclusively under UN command. According to Cooney (2007), the passing of the PKO law is the most significant change in Japanese foreign policies since the creation of the SDF in the 1950s. Cooney (2007) also notes a small but growing shift in power and policy-making from the economy-driven bureaucracy to the Diet. An increased power-shift would thus be at the expense of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), which has come to symbolize bureaucratic rigidity with little or no room for dissent within thought or policy, mainly focusing on economic development. The outcome of such a power-shift and a Japanese foreign policy under Diet control rather than the bureaucracy, would be a less predictable and stable but more democratic foreign policy, reflective of the nation as a whole (Cooney 2007).

Japanese Policies on Human Rights in the 20th Century

Yozo Yokota and Chiyuki Aoi are two of a small number of authors who explicitly set out to distinguish the role of human rights in Japanese foreign policies until the end of the 20th century. Yokota and Aoi (2000) conclude that there has been a change in Japanese foreign

¹⁵ To clarify, ‘normal’ in this sense is having the possibility to use military force, or at least the threat of force, to settle international disputes (Cooney 2007).

policy regarding human rights in the last 50 years of the 20th century but that a future direction was uncertain at the eve of the 21st century. To begin with, Japan did not have a clear-cut approach to human rights in its foreign policy before the 1980s. One of the major determinants behind Japan's reluctance to promote human rights abroad before the 1980s is a legacy of the nation's aggressive war and atrocities in the 1930s and 1940s. The legacy of war has hindered Japan from promoting democracy and human rights abroad and specifically in Asia (e.g. Berger 2007; Cooney 2007; Drifte 1996).

The war-legacy made the post-World War II governments of Tokyo feel as if they were not in a position to preach the values of human rights and democracy to other countries in Asia. Yokota and Aoi (2000) note a Japanese position of 'learn, rather than preach', fitting well with the non-confrontational reactive approach to international relations. David Arase (1993) as well as Yokota and Aoi (2000) claim that a strong bureaucracy, which set the foreign policy agenda, supported the non-confrontational and low-profile approach to international relations. The LDP, incumbent until 2009 with the exception of 1993-1994 (Seaton 2006), and the bureaucracy filled the Japanese foreign policy agenda with primarily big-business interests and emphasized policies devoted to 'traditional' concerns such as national security and economic interests in Japanese foreign policies. The strong 'autonomous' bureaucracy prevented democracy and human rights from becoming a larger part of the foreign policy agenda, and often served as a way for the financial supporters of the LDP to set the agenda of foreign politics (Arase 1993; Yokota and Aoi 2000).

Although Japan joined the UN in 1956, pledged a 'UN centered diplomacy', and became party to the ICCPR and the ICESCR in 1979¹⁶, it was not until the 1990s that Japan publicly voiced its thoughts on human rights in the international community. At the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, Japan asserted the universality and indivisibility of human rights, distancing itself from the group of Asian nations championing 'Asian Values'¹⁷ (Yokota & Aoi 2000). In preparation for the 1993 conference in Vienna, the UN sponsored an Asia Regional meeting in Bangkok. Arase (1993) argues that Japan at that time found itself sitting in two chairs. On the one hand, Japan felt pressured by the west to

¹⁶ For Japan's ratification history see "*Japan Ratification History*", retrieved May 2, 2010, http://www.bayefsky.com/html/japan_t1_ratifications.php

¹⁷ The group of nations championing 'Asian Values' was led by the ASEAN nations of Malaysia and Singapore and opposed the universality of human rights (Grimheden 2008). For further information on Asian Values and human rights see e.g. Bruun and Jacobsen 2000.

link foreign aid with the attention to human rights and democracy in receiving countries. On the other hand, the government in Tokyo signed the Bangkok Declaration¹⁸, which stipulated that developed countries should not tie aid to human rights. Furthermore, the Bangkok Declaration emphasized the importance of respecting the sovereign right of nations to handle their own domestic human rights situations.

Yokota and Aoi (2000) and Arase (1993) have noted the problematic nature of Japan's aspirations to mediate between Asia and the West. Japan's emphasis on economic development in Asia has at times stood in contrast with the notion of liberalization, democratization and human rights, prioritized by the West. Although Japan has stated its commitment to the promotion of human rights and democracy the government in Tokyo has been reluctant to implement such commitments in Asia. An example of such reluctance was seen in the disbursements of ODA to Asian nations without providing adequate conditions determining the purpose of aid. Concerns in the international community were voiced that the Japanese ODA in fact facilitated a military build-up in some aid-receiving countries. Consequently, Japan eventually adopted a set of principals in 1992 regulating the disbursements of ODA¹⁹, taking human rights and democracy into consideration. However, the implementation of such principals was during the 1990s inconsequential and pragmatic (Takamine 2006).

A Japanese commitment to human rights in international affairs became more visible during the 1990s but the government in Tokyo still utilized pragmatic and country-specific policies on human rights when dealing with Asia. Yokota and Aoi (2000) and Arase (1993) argue that the pragmatic approach to Asia is sprung out of security concerns for Japan. The Japanese government regards the need to hold China politically stable and keep up the nation's economic 'modernization' as crucial. As a consequence, Japan has been reluctant to apply conditionality to its aid based on the human rights records in China. According to Söderberg (2002), however, Japanese ODA to China will decrease and be replaced by an increase in Trade. Today that replacement has taken place and China has gone from being the

¹⁸ The declaration was the result of the Asia Regional preparation meeting held in Bangkok in 1993,

¹⁹ The principles stipulated, among others that, any military use of ODA should be avoided and attention to a receiving country's military expenditures should be considered. The democratization process and the securing of human rights, together with the introduction of market-oriented economy should be paid attention to. For a more comprehensive summary of the ODA principles see http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/oda/summary/1996/c_8.html

largest receiver of Japanese ODA to becoming Japan's largest trading partner.²⁰ Furthermore, since the mid-1950s, Japan has been trying to identify with its Asian neighbors while at the same time build a foreign policy based upon cooperation with Western nations. In addition, due to the legacy of its imperial history Japan has not felt that it was in a position to promote human rights and democracy in Asia. Consequently, Japan's establishment of friendly relations and a leadership role in Asia have long been viewed with suspicion by neighboring countries where hostile feelings still remain (Arase 1993; Yokota & Aoi 2000).

Nevertheless, Arase (1993) sees potential for Japan to further promote and facilitate the democratization and the spread of human rights in Asia. A potential derived from Japan's economic power in the region. Still, being in a key position to promote human rights and democracy in Asia, the Tokyo government has failed to implement its commitment to such values. Yokota and Aoi (2000) note that the Tiananmen Square massacre is one example of Japanese reluctance to commit. Japanese Prime Minister Uno's initial response to the massacre was that: "in essence, we are not thinking about taking punitive sanction" (Arase 1993: p. 943). Not until heavily pressured by western states did Japan shortly suspend its foreign aid to China (ibid.).

Summary

A war legacy and a strong bureaucracy focusing on traditional matters of security and economic development have been determining factors for Japan's approach to human rights and democracy in Asia during the 20th century. These factors, in combination with the dual role of Japan as a mediator between Asia and the West have hindered Japan to play an active role in Asia commensurable to its economic power. The government in Tokyo has been reluctant to promote and protect human rights in the region and has rather focused on traditional matters of foreign policies, such as national security and economy.

Japan did not really have an approach to human rights in its foreign policy until the late 1980s. During the 1990s the most prominent approach to human rights and democracy in Asia was through the ODA program and economic development. However, the consideration to such values and the implementation of the ODA charter has been

²⁰ According to some observers China overtook the United States as Japan's largest trading partner already in 2004 with some 20% of Japan's total trade (Washington Post 2005). Other observers claim that China became Japan's largest trade partner in 2009, at least when combining figures of import and export (e.g. Global Times 2009).

characterized as country-specific and pragmatic during the 1990s, and not providing adequate conditions determining the purpose of aid. Although, Japan spoke up for the universality and indivisibility of human rights in 1993, the Tokyo Government also signed the Bangkok declaration, which stipulated that human rights should not be tied to aid and that nations should deal with domestic human rights situations on their own. Thus, Japan became increasingly assertive of human rights and democracy in the 1990s than before. Still, Japan has during the 1990s seemed reluctant to include Asia in its official promotion of human rights and democracy. Previous literature stated that the Japanese approach to the promotion and protection of such values in Asia was still at the eve of the millennium unclear and it was difficult to determine what direction it would take.

The Japanese approach to international human rights seems to have been characterized by the same factors that have determined Japan's foreign policies in general. Japan's foreign policies appear to be under change, moving into the new millennium - going from reactive to becoming more and more proactive in the international community. As noted earlier, the international community has been increasingly focusing on implementing values of human rights and democracy around the world, highlighted by the Millennium Declaration and its MDGs adopted at the start of the new millennium. Thus, it becomes vital to investigate if the new millennium presents a visible change in Japan's approach to human rights and democracy as well, as compared to the earlier era, or if old continuities of Japanese reluctance to promote such values in Asia still remain. Hence, this study will explore and create an understanding of how Japan has approached the protection and promotion of human rights and democracy in Asia during the new millennium, shining light on a topic not sufficiently researched.

Methodology

Methodological starting points

This study adheres to the notion that there are phenomena ‘out there’ independent of our knowledge and interpretation. However, outcomes are shaped by our interpretation of these phenomena. Critical realism is therefore a suitable label of ontological and epistemological points of departure (Marsh & Furlong 2002). By observing what can be observed in the Japanese approach to human rights in foreign policies towards East and Southeast Asia, we can gain knowledge and understanding of structures and phenomena not directly observable. When knowledge and understanding of the unobservable is gained it further enhances our perception the observable. Additionally, this study will approach the procedure of analysis and understanding in lines with a hermeneutic approach – the interpretation of parts in relation to a wholeness and vice versa (Alvesson & Sköldberg 1994; Sjöström 1994).

Design of study

This research has the structure of a case study. It focuses on a contemporary event or matter, over which the researcher has little or no control, and it is set to a time-frame and a geographical context (Creswell 2003; Yin 2003). Until the end of the 20th century, secondary data in form of previous research has been vital in framing Japanese foreign policies and the approach to human rights within these policies. A document analysis of primary data consisting documents accessed from archival records, provide an in-depth understanding, and develop a thorough description and analysis of the chosen case (Creswell 2007). The analyzed documents include mainly official speeches and statements from Prime Ministers and Foreign Ministers to the UN and to the Diet. Additionally, major speeches and statements from ‘Japanese Representatives of the Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations’ are used. Not only what has been visible in the documents but also what has been left out have become subject for analysis. Furthermore, notice has been taken to the researchers pre-understandings of the researched matter, which could affect the analysis. (May 1997; May 2001). The implication of the researchers pre-understanding in this study is a presumable biased notion regarding the universality of human rights as normative. Therefore, considerations to that fact have been taken to an as large extent as possible.

A hermeneutic approach to analyzing the collected data is employed, by noting that, understandings of meanings must be set in relation to their contexts; every interpretation

is part of a wholeness and vice versa; and, every understanding is based on, or presupposes, a preconceived idea or knowledge (Sjöström 1994). By keeping the pre-understandings in mind, the researcher is able to actively test the interpretations and minimize biased conclusions (Alvesson & Sköldbberg 1994; Sjöström 1994).

Execution of method

This study has examined all official government policy speeches and statements by Japanese Prime and Foreign Ministers to the Diet and also to the UN during the designated time frame from 2000 to 2009. To clarify, all official documents, used in this study have been made available by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), and originate from MOFA's English online archives. In addition, similar documents from 1994 to 1999 have been put under scrutiny in order to answer the questions posed for this study. In order to paint a more comprehensive picture of the research topic, speeches and statements from the Japanese Representatives of the Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations have also been analyzed. However, documents regarding the Permanent Mission of Japan to the UN have been put under a selection process. At a first level, the process of selection has been targeting human rights and democracy in general. At a second step the focus has been to target documents concerning human rights and/or democracy in Asia. Finally, and as a result of the findings in previously scrutinized documents, particular countries within Asia have come to stand out and thus been incorporated in the selection process. All in all, close to one hundred official documents have been put under scrutiny and furthermore, been analyzed for this study. The process of analysis has been characterized by a constant oscillation between the empiric material and the chosen theory, in order to provide an understanding of the researched matter, (see Danmark 2006)

Validity, Reliability and Data

An important part of the research process is whether the researcher actually measures what he or she sets out to investigate and how that is measured (Bjereld, Demker, Hinnfors 2002). The *validity* of the research concerns to what degree 'you are observing, identifying, or "measuring" what you say you are' (Mason 1996: 24). This research aims to explore how Japan, in its foreign policy, has approached the protection and promotion of human rights and democracy in Asia. Analyzing foreign policy speeches thus becomes a valid choice of method for casting light on the official policies stated by the Japanese government in the given context. The advantages of using documents, as sources of evidence, are that they are stable,

exact, and broad – covering many settings, long spans of time, and many events. The disadvantage lays in the reporting bias, reflecting the author(s) of the documents (Yin 2003).

Reliability of the research depends on *how* the researcher measures what he or she has decided to measure. In order to acquire reliability, the methods of collecting data must be stable and reliable, and not distort the findings (Bjereld et al. 2002; Denscombe 2004;). This study achieves reliability by carefully document the procedure of data collection, allowing other investigators to repeat the research process (Yin 2003).

Limitations of Study

This study has been limited to English material and translations from Japanese. Even though the MOFA has translated the primary data, one should always keep in mind the discrepancies of nuances likely to appear in translations. This study sets out to investigate the official policy of Japan in a certain context. Using official policy documents as empirical material should thus be considered a strength rather than a limitation. However, the official documents used in this study might not be able to provide definite answers to questions of *why* human rights and democracy in Asia has been approached in way or the other. Still, the research questions of *how* can be discerned by the chosen material, and in light of previous research, suggestions to *why* can also be made.

Ethical consideration

This study is not based on interviews and there are thus no interviewees whom have to be taken into consideration. Also, there are most likely no individuals, organizations or institutes risking any subjection to negative effects in regard to the conclusions of this study. Since the aim of this study is not to be normative or prescribing, the only ethical consideration that the researcher has is to diligently and honestly analyze the collected data, and strive for the conclusions to be useful for further deepening the understandings and knowledge about the researched matter.

Theoretical Framework

By applying a theoretical framework of international relations theory, this study will be able to discern if Japan continues to adhere to a realist approach focusing on security rather than liberal notions of human rights and democracy. Thus the theoretical framework enables the investigation of a continuum or a change in Japan's foreign policies on three levels, general, regional and country-specific.

Realism

The realist notion of international relations holds that the world is an anarchic place and the main objective for any given state is to assure the nation's security. According to Hans J. Morgenthau (1985), protection of the state's territory, people and economy from non-domestic attacks constitute traditional security. However, the security concept has grown to encompass additional sectors in what Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde (1998) call the securitization process. "[...] securitization is constituted by the intersubjective establishment of an existential threat with a saliency sufficient to have substantial political effects." (Buzan et al. 1998 p. 25). An example in Japanese context would constitute the domestic economy and the growing dependence on trade with China, which has come to be regarded as a nontraditional security concern.

Another main argument of the realist approach to international relations is the general skepticism toward international cooperation and institutions. Realist apologists find it hard to believe that states, concerned with power and security, and relative gains rather than absolute gains, would be influenced by international cooperation to the level of degree that it would affect the action of the state (e.g. Cooney 2007; Grieco 1993; Hall 2006; Tallberg 2006).

Unsurprisingly realism does not see the spread of human rights and democracy as a paramount notion of foreign policy, but rather a matter of minor importance. According to Marie Demker (2006), human rights are not a main pillar of the realist analysis. Human rights, at best, become a matter of secondary significance, and the state's sovereignty holds precedence over individual rights. However, norms and values such as human rights and democracy can be used as means of publicly legitimizing political actions such as military interventions or sanctions (ibid.).

Liberalism

As opposed to realism, liberalism holds that individuals and states are rational and in possession of the ability to regulate their relations in order to enhance the common good in a world characterized by interdependence (Ericson 2006). The liberal approach has to some extent a normative objective in that it holds peace, welfare and justice as positive values. In addition, liberalism regards cooperation in international politics as a mean by which nations should strive to acquire and maintain many of the previously mentioned values. Apologists of liberalism resent the divide of domestic and foreign politics, and furthermore believe that institutions for peace, development and freedom can bridge and reconcile conflicts of interest between states (ibid). Democracies tend not to go to war with other democracies. Furthermore, democracies tend to go to war less frequently than dictatorships, due to the institutionalized framework characteristic of democracies, according to Ericson (2006). In contrast to realism, liberalism finds the spread of human rights and democracy as a goal in itself, in order to create a more peaceful and stable world. As aforementioned, liberal apologists place great value and trust in international institutions and cooperation, and human rights is one field where international cooperation has been institutionalized and given a supranational component in the establishment of international tribunals and courts (Demker 2006).

Using Insights From Two Approaches

This study uses the insights from more than one of the international relations theory fields – namely, realism and liberalism. By using these approaches we are able to gain a deeper understanding of Japan's foreign policies on human rights and democracy. Realism focuses on security as the main pillar of foreign politics. Liberalism, on the other hand, emphasizes the spread of values such as human rights and democracy. In analyzing Japanese foreign policy, other fields of international relations theory could be used. Constructivism, to mention one, is such a field. Constructivism holds identity, history, culture, norms and expectations as important part of the analysis (Eriksson 2006; Wendt 1994). However, Japan has been categorized as a nation utilizing realist approaches in Asia during the 20th century. In addition, others have noted the liberal traits of adhering to pacifism and emphasizing international cooperation. Thus, this study finds it suiting to use the two dichotomized fields of liberalism and realism in the theoretical framework. In doing so, this study enhances the understanding of how Japan has come to approach above-mentioned values in its foreign policy in the 21st century and if there are continuities or discontinuities with its approaches.

Japan's Approach to Human Rights and Democracy in Asia

When Japan proclaimed the universality and indivisibility of human rights at the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in 1993, Japan instantly received criticism from ASEAN nations championing 'Asian Values,' as opposed to the universality of human rights. The first nation in Asia with a fully consolidated democracy and high levels human rights, Japan has been characterized as both a 'eastern' and a 'western' nation (e.g. Arase 1993). Japan has and continues to aspire to work as a bridge between the 'orient' and the 'occident', and to spread universal values of democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms (Statement to the UN 2009a). Nevertheless, the spread of values such as human rights and democracy were not regarded as matters of high priority in Japanese policies at the eve of the new millennium. Not until the first couple of years in the 21st century would Japan come to emphasize human rights and democracy in its foreign policy (Statement to the UN 1994, 1996-2000, and 2002).

Towards a New Millennium: 1994-1999

Prior to the new millennium, the Japanese government prioritized economic development, national security, and reform of the UN Security Council in its foreign policy. The protection and promotion of human rights was hardly mentioned in Japanese foreign policies statements during a period from 1994 to 1999. Japan has continuously regarded the spread of human rights as a task for the UN to shoulder (Statement to the UN 1994, and 1996-1999). In addition, Asia has not been an explicit target for policies concerning the promotion and protection of human rights. When Japan voiced any policy on human rights in the international forum, the policies had low priority, always playing a secondary role to security, disarmament and non-proliferation, development, reform of the UN, and environmental issues (Statement to the UN 1994, and 1996-1999).

The importance of human rights for peace and prosperity was, however, mentioned explicitly by Japan in 1996, alongside the support for the democratization of developing countries and economic reform (Statement to the UN 1996). Nevertheless, Japan was reluctant to voice support for democratization in Asia, despite voicing support for the spread of democratic values, and introducing market-oriented economies in South America, Eastern Europe and Africa. Thus, an outspoken approach to the democratization of Asia had not yet been crystallized at the end of the 20th century (Statement to the UN 1994 and 1996). When Japan addressed Asia, values such as human rights and democracy were put aside for

the benefit of economic development and enhanced cooperation, sustaining claims of a realist Japan. However, an exemption to the lack of focus on human rights and democracy in Asia was Japan's support for the democratization process in Cambodia. In 1994 the Japanese government proclaimed its will to support the democratization processes in Cambodia, and the importance to assist in the strive for free and fair elections (Statement to the UN 1994) However, the 1994 statement was made in relation to the successful UN peacekeeping operations in Cambodia where Japan later came to play a significant part in facilitating the elections (e.g. Oishi & Furuoka 2003).

Thus, the Cambodia example set aside, Japanese foreign policy before the 21st century has not deliberated on the promotion and protection of human rights and democracy in Asia (Policy Speech to Diet 1997, 1998a-c, and 1999). Traces of the 'learn rather than preach' policy were still noticeable in Japanese foreign policies during the 1990s. Foreign Minister Yohei Kono addressed Japan's unfortunate history at the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II, and stated the importance for the international community to respect human rights and democracy. However, Kono made no explicit reference to Asia in that particular matter (Policy Speech to Diet 1995a).

The pre-millennium era has been characterized by realist traits emphasizing security and prosperity for the Japanese people, particularly within the Asian context. Though Japan has given the UN a prominent position in its foreign policy, the nation has addressed Asia mainly in terms of economic cooperation and stability in the region. Japan has given highest priority to establishing better relations with the rapidly growing China. In addition, one of Japan's most important foreign policy goals during the era has been to further enhance cooperation with China and support Chinese economic reforms. However, the lack of democracy and/or human rights in China has not been voiced (Policy Speech to Diet 1995a, 1996, 1997, and 1998a).

Hence, the pre-millennium data of this study confirms the findings of previous research. Japan has prioritized realist foreign policy goals such as traditional security and nontraditional security (securitization of the domestic economy) particularly when addressing Asia. In addition, the few references to democracy have been made in relation to free market economy transitions. Human rights have in the 1990s usually been given a non-prominent and low-key position, never with any specific references to the situation in Asia as a region, let alone on a country-specific level (Policy Speech to Diet 1995a,b, 1996, 1997, 1998a-c, and 1999).

The 21st Century – A New Millennium

Though Japan has come to perceive the world-wide promotion and protection of human rights as vital, the Japanese approach has been characterized as pragmatic and country-specific. Dialog and cooperation that take into account cultural and historical matters, have been leading the Japanese Government's efforts in their policies. Japan has set out on a country-specific journey specifically tailored for each and every circumstance, though promoting universal values such as human rights and democracy in a global and regional manner (e.g. Statement to the UN 2003b, 2005c,f, and 2009d).

A General Approach

Since the admission to the organization in 1956, Japan has continuously placed a great amount of importance on the UN as a facilitator of peace and prosperity in the world. Previous research has pointed out a steady increase in the Japanese focus on the UN during the later part of the 20th century. The new millennium is no exception to Japan's UN-centered approach. Japan continues to place a large responsibility to the UN at the onset of the 21st century and states that the UN is responsible for constructing a healthy relationship among nations in the international community and to rise above cultural, ethnic or religious differences. Japan suggests that the healthy relationship referred to should be founded upon "universal values common to all humankind, such as democracy, human rights, and freedom" (Statement to the UN 2000).

The Japanese government has continuously claimed that the success of the UN to provide and sustain peace and prosperity depends on the reformation of the organization. Japan has stressed the need for a stronger UN with a Security Council that includes Japan as a permanent member, and a UN that adheres to a more equal economic burden-sharing for the major economic contributors to the UN budget (Statement to the UN 2002, 2003a, 2004a, 2005a,b, 2006a,b, 2007a, 2008a, and 2009a) Japan has constantly throughout the 21st century contributed in average more than all permanent members, excluding the U.S., to the regular budget of the UN. Although, not being a permanent member of the Security Council, Japan's economic assessment to the UN never fell short of 19 per cent of the total budget between 2000 and 2006²¹²²²³²⁴ (United Nations Secretariat: UN Budget 2000-2009).

²¹ By comparison, The UN regular budget 2009: the U.S. 22 %, Japan 16.6 %, Germany 8.5 %, United Kingdom of Great Britain 6.6 %, France 6.3 %, and China 2.6 %. The UN regular budget 2000: the U.S. 22 %, Japan

Japan has stipulated its position and policy regarding international human rights in numerous statements to the UN throughout the 21st century. Human rights, according to Japan, are fundamental and universal, and need to be protected and promoted in all parts of the world (e.g. Statement to the UN 2003b,c, 2004b-d, 2005c, 2006b-c, 2007b-d, 2008b-d, and 2009b-d). However, the Japanese government has also continuously been pointing out the importance of no one solution to all problems by emphasizing the need to take history, culture and tradition into consideration when promoting human rights to specific countries. The Japanese government states the below:

We do not believe that a single across-the-board approach ignoring these specific situations facing a country will in any way be conducive to the improvement of actual human rights situations (Statement to the UN 2003b).

Japan has therefore come to create its own policy on promoting human rights and democracy. After taking above-mentioned factors into consideration, Japan's policy gives precedence to dialogue and cooperation over critique and sanctions when promoting and protecting human rights. Japanese policies regarding the promotion of international human rights and democracy have since 2003 consisted of firstly, promoting mutual understanding through dialogue; secondly, engaging in cooperation; and lastly, expressing disapproval of human rights violations if needed (e.g. Statement to the UN 2003b, 2005c-e, 2007c,d, 2008b, and 2009c,d). In addition, the Japanese government has stated that it is utilizing an approach based on not accusing a nation for how much it lacks but rather encourage the nation for how much it has achieved in terms of human rights and/or democratization. Thus, Japan tends to avoid voicing criticism to an as large extent as possible and rather focuses on praising a nation's alleged positive actions or steps (Statement to the UN 2003b).

Nevertheless, the universality of human rights and the importance of their protection and promotion to all parts of the world have been a continuous goal of the

19.6 %, Germany 9.8 %United Kingdome of Great Britain 5.5 %, France 6.5 %, and China 1.5 % (United Nations Secretariat: UN Budget 2000, 2009).

²² However, the economic contribution fell from 16.6 per cent in 2009 to 12 per cent in 2010 (ibid.)

²³ The runner up, behind Japan in the last ten years has been Germany, decreasing from 9.8 per cent in 2000, to 8 per cent in 2010 (ibid.).

²⁴ The United States, with its constant 22 per cent of the total UN assessment during the 21st century, is the only country contributing more to the UN budget than Japan (ibid.).

Japanese government during the 21st century. Compared to the pre-millennium era, the onset of the new millennium presented an outspoken Japanese emphasis on human rights as fundamental and universal values, and the importance of promotion and protection of democracy in developing countries. An international context that has increasingly focused on human rights and democracy, instigated partly by the Millennium Declaration and the MDGs, provided the leverage and necessity for Japan to increasingly emphasize universal values in its foreign policy. Additionally it paved the way for a Japanese hope for the creation of a ‘new’ millennium that should guarantee freedom for people all over the world, respect human rights and spread democracy. Thus, during the first years of the 21st century Japan utilized a foreign policy with liberal notions placing democratization and human rights as issues of high priority, compared to the pre-millennium era with realist priorities of security and prosperity for the Japanese people (Policy Speech to Diet 2000a-c, 2001a,b, and 2002a,b).

The greater emphasis on human rights and democracy and the spirit of the ‘new’ millennium took a serious blow in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11. For a period of some four consecutive years, mainly during the Koizumi administration, Japan seemed to re-establish a more realist approach to foreign policies, again prioritizing security, fighting terrorism, economic development, and reforming the Security Council (Statement to the UN 2002, 2004a, 2005a, and 2006a; Policy Speech to Diet 2002b,c, 2003b, 2004a-c, and 2005a,b). Returning to a realist approach, suggests a Japan who is influenced by and compliant with western policies. Nevertheless, the striking punch to the spirit of the ‘new’ millennium did not change the foreign policy approach permanently. A growing importance to the promotion of democracy started to take form in 2005-2006, as Japan began taking a more liberal approach in dealing with foreign policy. The Japanese government, focusing more on the spread of democracy, stated that the notion of democracy is universally shared and that the legitimacy of democracy is derived by protecting the rights and freedoms of a nation’s citizens through the rule of law (Statement to the UN 2005c, and 2006d). Japan has also been committed to strengthening the rule of law in Cambodia during the 21st century as will be presented in the next chapter.

The importance of democratization has become more solidified since the Japanese government towards the end of the decade started to ascribe the success of human rights improvements to the advancement of democracy. Furthermore, the spread of democracy became one of the most important foreign policy objectives for the Japanese Government in 2009. The linkage between democratization and human rights has caused the protection and promotion of human rights to gain status as a main pillar of Japanese foreign

policy, following the traits of the Millennium Declaration and the MDGs (Statement to the UN 2009b,c).

Thus a growing notion of the importance of international human rights and democracy is clearly discerned in Japanese foreign policy. However, the Japanese policy of *how* and to *whom* to promote human rights and democracy is not self-evident. Even though Japan has repeatedly stated the importance of spreading such values to all parts of the world, Japan has adopted a policy of only assisting nations that actively take initiative to improve domestic human rights and democracy (Statement to the UN 2007c,d). The main channel through which Japan has come to utilize its assistance has been through the ODA program, which emphasizes good governance and democracy. Also, since democracy has come to be seen as a basis for the strengthening of human rights, the Japanese government states that it will steadfastly provide assistance to states that actively engage in protecting and promoting democracy as a lead in securing human rights (Statement to the UN 2006d, 2007d-e, 2009c).

However, nations, not showing signs of instigating any democratization processes or strengthening the human rights situation become matters for the international community to deal with. Thus, Japan holds the UN responsible for the spread of human rights and democracy to non-conforming countries that not actively engage in strengthening such values. Additionally, Japan believes that it is up to the UN to address specific nations that systematically violate human rights (Statement to the UN 2003b, 2005c,e, 2007c,d, 2009b). The greater part of nations that systematically violates human rights and denies its citizens democracy are not presumably the nations actively seeking help for democratization processes or improved human rights standards. Thus, Japan rids itself from dealing with seemingly more rectory nations, avoiding criticism and the possibility of worsened relations with countries of great importance for Japan.

Thus, Japan has increasingly emphasized the importance of human rights and democracy in its foreign policies during the 21st century. Generally, liberal notions have come to supersede realist ones in Japan's approach. When compared to previous research and data from the 20th century this study suggests a change to Japan's overall policy of protecting and promoting human rights and democracy. The increasing emphasis on such values can be understood as a result of a more active Japan in the international community and the international communities growing focus on human rights and democracy in the 21st century. Although, being an 'eastern' nation Japan has come to absorb a more western style proactive approach to such values as the nation has become increasingly active in the international forum. It would also suggest that the importance of spreading democracy in the US-led 'war

on terror' in e.g. Afghanistan and Iraq provided leverage for (or pressure on) Japan to assume a position of prioritizing the spread of democracy in its foreign policies. As a result of Japan linking the success of human rights improvements with the level of democratization, human rights has also gained priority and the policies have become liberal, at least in general. Japan has thus utilized a much more liberal and outspoken approach to human rights and democracy in the 21st century than ever before.

Additionally, ownership of values such as democracy and human rights has come to be solidified in Japan. Democracy and human rights have become thought of as truly Japanese values rather than 'western' values coerced on Japan (e.g. Policy Speech to Diet 2000a, 2001a, 2006a, and 2007a; Statement to the UN 2004b,c 2005c, 2007b-d, 2008d, and 2009b). The ownership can be seen in the fact that Japan has come to create its own way of promoting human rights and democracy. The characteristics of such an approach have come to constitute dialogue and cooperation over criticism and sanctions. However, within this approach, Japan has also adopted a policy of only assisting nations that are actively engaged in enhancing their human rights situations and levels of democracy. Nations that do not conform to the universal values of human rights and democracy, and do not engage in strengthening such values are regarded as matters for the UN to deal with. Japan is thus adhering to policies that prevent loss of political capital, and sustain economic relations with nations violating human rights or nations with poor levels of democracy. The non-interventionist and state-sovereignty based approach that has become a trademark for ASEAN nations and called *ASEAN Diplomacy* are visible in Japan's policies, specifically in the reluctance to voice criticism over, or sanctioning, non-conforming nations. Japan has thus limited itself to ASEAN diplomacy particularly when dealing with Asian nations, and arguably in order to mark its Asian identity and not become subject of ASEAN contempt. Thus, Japan is still trying to balance between the two chairs of identity.²⁵ The following sections aim at delineating how Japan, with the general approach in mind, has approached Asia on a regional level and certain Asian nations on a county-specific level.

Towards Regionalism

Japan's approach to promoting and protecting human rights and democracy in Asia during the 21st century follows in the footsteps of its general approach. The onset of the 21st century marks a high point of priority given to human rights and democracy in Japanese policies. In

²⁵ For further readings on Japan and ASEAN diplomacy and identity see e.g. Katsumata 2006 or Drifte 1996.

the same period, Japan is increasingly prioritizing the spread of such values in Asia. A wish to create a world with freedom and rights for all in the new millennium is mirrored in Japan's approach towards the Asian region as well (Policy Speech to Diet 2000a-c, 2001a-b, and 2002a,b). The means by which Japan has targeted Asia constitutes mainly multilateral cooperation in the region. It is through multi-tiered cooperation, such as Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and the ASEAN+3 that Japan believes an Asia-Pacific region based on democracy is possible. Furthermore, universal values of human rights, democracy and market economy in Asia are stated as priority issues in Japan's diplomacy in the 21st century (Policy Speech to Diet 2001b).

In a seemingly liberal approach Japan has come to conceive human rights and democracy as normative in the 21st century. Japan furthermore, points out that the nation could work as a bridge, and by the policy of dialogue, facilitate mutual trust and understanding between diverse cultures when promoting democracy, freedom and human rights (Policy Speech to Diet 2001a). Thus, integration and cooperation between Asian nations has become apparent traits of Japanese foreign policy during the onset of the new millennium. Within Asian multilateralism, Japan emphasizes the importance of human rights and democracy. Additionally, the Japanese government proclaims that a stable Asian region premised on the respect for human rights and democracy, alongside market economy and free trade, is vital for peace and prosperity in the international community (Policy Speech to Diet 2002a).

With the Koizumi administration, in the aftermath of September 11, the Japanese focus shifts back to security, similar to the pre-millennium era (cf. Policy Speech to Diet 1995a, 1996, 1997, 1999, and 2002b,c). Similarly to the international (read 'western') community's security oriented policies after the terrorist attacks on the US, realist notions of security in relation to neighboring Asian countries again sets the agenda in Japanese foreign policies. (Policy Speech to Diet 2003b, 2004a-c, and 2005a,b). However, Asia is once again targeted as a region that should be based on universal values as the importance to human rights and democracy in Japanese foreign policies hit another high-mark from 2006 and on. In the Asian context, just as in the general approach, the spread of democracy becomes a rising matter of concern for Japan. The Japanese government emphasizes the importance of the spread of such values in Asia by claiming the wish to create an East Asian community that adheres to democracy and conforms to universal and global norms and values (Policy Speech to Diet 2006a).

Japan has continuously during the 21st century stated the importance to strengthening relations and cooperation with Asian neighbors. However, the new millennium also presents an outspoken and liberal Japanese policy on democracy and human rights in Asia, not seen in the 20th century. The Japanese government has demonstrated that Asia should not be exempted from the spread of universal values. Where previous research concludes that Japan has been reluctant to promote human rights and democracy in its own backyard due to the unfortunate history in Asia, the 21st century might present a turning point to such considerations. Japan has become outspoken in regard of the need for such values in Asia. Thus, Japan is seemingly willing to champion universal values in Asia as compared to earlier. However the real effect of such considerations is still dubious since Japan only assists the nations that actively seek help for democratization and/or human rights issues, and sustain from criticizing nations that do not conform to such values. Thus, nations that might need democratization processes most, such as e.g. North Korea, Myanmar, or China, are not really addressed due to the fact that they are not actively seeking help for their respective situations.

Nevertheless, Asia has increasingly become targeted, as a region that Japan believes should share the fundamental values of human rights and democracy. Japan has progressively stated the importance of respecting such values in Asia while further strengthening the cooperation among Asian nations. Thus, policies towards Asia as a region have become more liberal than realist, much in the same way as Japan's general approaches have changed, and by the same tokens. Nonetheless, this study suggests that Japan avoids criticism by adhering to a policy of only assisting nations that actively engage in improving its human rights and democracy. Thus, by proclaiming the importance of human rights and democracy on a regional basis in Asia, but not actively criticizing specific nations, Japan does not run the risk of itself being criticized for its unfortunate history. Japan has therefore been able to speak up on behalf of human rights and democracy in a general and regional matter in Asia, to a degree not seen before.

However, Japan's unfortunate history with its Asian neighbors is still a matter of concern for Japan in its relations to countries such as China and North Korea (e.g. Statement to the UN 2007a, 2008a, and 2009a). The creation of mutual trust and understanding between Japan and Asian nations has consistently been a prevailing part of Japan's foreign policy in the 21st century. Still, when addressing China, the focus on well-established relations and economic cooperation has gained precedence over promotion of values (cf. Policy Speech to Diet 2000a,b, 2001a-2006a). It suggests that history has not as big of an impact when regarding regional security and economic cooperation, when compared

to issues of human rights and/or democracy. Japan has long been reluctant to speak up for such values but continuously been able to promote regional cooperation in other fields. However, Japan seems more and more willing to overcome that particular impediment. Newly elected Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama addresses Japan's previous reluctance towards Asia and stipulates a wish to become a 'bridge' between Asian nations by stating the below:

Given the historical circumstances arising from its mistaken actions in the past, Japan has hesitated to play a proactive role in this region. It is my hope that the new Japan can overcome this history and become a "bridge" among the countries of Asia (Statement to the UN 2009a).

It is apparent that the policies towards Asia as a region have become much more outspoken in the given context during the 21st century as compared to earlier. A seemingly liberal approach with normative notions of human rights and democracy can well be discerned throughout the new millennium. In addition, Japan has surely become a more outspoken in its defense and promotion of human rights and democracy in Asia than ever before. However, the increasing outspokenness is first and foremost delivered in general terms targeting Asia as a region, not being country specific. As mentioned in the general approach, Japan has definitely shown proof of not being refractory to the international community and trends in world politics. The terrorist attacks of September 11 as well as the current financial crisis have brought on greater priority for security in Japanese foreign policy. Additionally, history has played an important part in the formation of an approach to human rights and democracy in Asia. To a certain extent, history still qualifies as a determining factor in Japanese foreign policy, particularly in regard of promoting human rights and democracy in the Asian context. Additionally, history will most likely continue to play a part in the process of policy-making for quite some time, due to the fact that it is a convenient tool for reactionary states to use against Japan if ever feeling cornered or pressured. However, a growing will to overcome differences derived from the unfortunate past, can be discerned in Japanese foreign policies of the 21st century. Still influential, the history is becoming a smaller impediment than before for Japanese approach to promoting human rights and democracy in Asia. Partly due to the fact that Japan is becoming more secure in its role as a nation with a deeply consolidated democracy and respect for human rights. As mentioned earlier, democracy and human rights have become understood as truly Japanese values in the 21st century, independent of the incumbent

government's approach to such values in Asian nations (e.g. Freedom House 2009e; Policy Speech to Diet 2000a, 2001a, 2006a, and 2007a; Statement to the UN 2004b,c 2005c, 2007b-d, 2008d, and 2009b).

Japan has to a larger extent than ever before utilized liberal notions of human rights and democracy in the Asian region, although still compliant with ASEAN diplomacy by not criticizing or sanctioning reactionary states. The following section will delineate how Japan has approached Asia on a country-specific level and see if the generally liberal approach to human rights and democracy applies for some of the Asian countries approached in Japanese foreign policies.

Japan Being Country Specific

The Japanese government has in the 21st century increasingly come to perceive world-wide promotion and protection of human rights and democracy as crucial. Nevertheless, Japanese foreign policies concerning such values can still be characterized as pragmatic and country-specific, and Japan has promoted human rights and democracy where seen fit (e.g. Statement to the UN 2003b, 2005c,e, 2009d). Cambodia, Myanmar and North Korea have come to stand out in Japan's approach to human rights and democracy in Asia. China on the other hand has been conspicuous by its absence in Japanese policies on human rights and democracy.

Cambodia

Japan has continuously throughout the 21st century assisted in the democratization process in Cambodia. The human rights situation in Cambodia has, according to the Japanese Government, been fortified after the Cambodian elections in 2003. The elections were sponsored by the Japanese Government, which chose to continue assisting Cambodia due to the nation's sincere efforts in the area of human rights (Statement to the UN 2003b, and 2005e). Japan has been encouraged by what it regards as sincere efforts and real progress in human rights improvements and democratization by the Government of Cambodia and has therefore extended support both in terms of financial contributions as well as human resources to the commencement of the Khmer Rouge trials. The substantial assistance towards the realization of the Khmer Rouge trials has been seen as a vital step in strengthening rule of law in Cambodia and thus contributing to strengthening the level of democracy (Statement to the UN 2003a, 2005a, and 2009d). Japan has therefore contributed with over US \$ 20 million to the Khmer Rouge trials (Statement to UN 2005b).

Thus, Cambodia is a clear example of a nation that receives Japanese assistance in its democratization and human rights processes. Since Cambodia, according to Japan, is sincerely and actively seeking to strengthen its level of human rights and democracy, Japan provides not only financial support but also “assistance for the purpose of reinforcing legal systems and training legal experts” (Statement to the UN 2009b) to strengthen the rule of law. By praising Cambodia for its commitments rather than criticizing its apparent shortcomings in democracy and human rights processes²⁶, Japan does not risk itself being criticized. Additionally, by adhering to the aforementioned policy (aiming at only assisting the achievements of democracy in nations that actively engaged in such activities), Cambodia has become thought of as a successful mission of Japanese government.

Myanmar

The official Japanese approach to the democratization process and human rights situation in Myanmar has during the 21st century been characterized by strengthening the dialogue with the government of Myanmar and to speed up its alleged democratization process. Japan has continuously stated the importance for the Myanmar government to engage in genuine dialogue to achieve national reconciliation. Japan has furthermore, encouraged Myanmar to accelerate its democratization process and to take further positive steps to promote a fully inclusive democracy through general elections. Additionally, Japan has asked Myanmar to improve the human rights situation for its people (Statement to the UN 2003b, 2005e, 2007c, 2009d). However, Japan does not actively assist Myanmar in any democratization process. Arguably, since Japan does not believe Myanmar is truly engaged in strengthening its level of democracy or human rights situation.

Japan has nevertheless raised concerns over the situation in Myanmar following the government’s crackdown on demonstrations resulting in casualties – one of whom was a Japanese citizen. After the death of the Japanese citizen in Myanmar, Japan called for the Myanmar government’s utmost restraint in regard to cracking down the demonstrations, and emphasized the importance of resolving the situation through dialogue (Statement to the UN 2007a).

Where Cambodia stands out as a clear example of a nation receiving active help for its democratization process, Myanmar is an example of a nation that does not. However, Myanmar, like Cambodia, is an example of how Japan utilizes its ‘praising’ policy rather than

²⁶ For information on the level of democracy and human rights in Cambodia see Freedom House 2009a.

criticizing, although some brief critique-like comments have been made. Generally, Japan seeks to encourage the Myanmar government to accelerate and take further positive steps in what it sees as a democratization process, rather than criticizing the nation. Additionally, the most direct criticism came only after a Japanese national was killed in Myanmar.

Since the government in Myanmar does not actively seek help for its democratization process or shows an apparent engagement in strengthening the human rights situation, Japan seems reluctant to assist in the process. However, Japan can afford to slightly raise its voice from time to time since Myanmar does not constitute an imminent security threat to Japan. Additionally, a growing international focus on the situation in Myanmar has put pressure on Japan to conform to a hard-line stance towards the nation (e.g. Kuppuswamy 2006). However, Japan has abstained from utilizing the sanction-based policy of the ‘west’, resorting instead to a more ASEAN-based diplomacy of non-interference.

North Korea

North Korea has frequently appeared in Japan’s foreign policies throughout the 21st century. The instigating source of Japanese concern over North Korea has been the military threat from the North. A human rights concern regarding North Korea did not become an issue in the Japanese foreign policy until 2005 (e.g. Policy Speech to Diet 2003b, 2004b,c, 2006b,c, and 2007b). Yet, the main concern for the Japanese government in regard of human rights in North Korea was (and still is) the abducted Japanese nationals and the challenge to human dignity, that North Korea by abducting Japanese nationals poses. Human dignity is according to Japan, the primary pillar of fundamental values such as freedom, human rights, democracy, and the rule of law (Statement to the UN 2007a). Japan therefore, stresses the importance of the international community to cooperate and address international challenges to fundamental principles like freedom, human rights and democracy.

Japan has every year, starting in 2005, raised concern over systematic and serious violations of human rights in North Korea, however mainly referring to the abducted Japanese nationals in North Korea. The human rights violations in North Korea have usually not been specified or deliberated over. The violation of the abducted Japanese’ rights on the other hand, has always surfaced as one of the main concerns for the Japanese government (Statement to the UN 2005c-e,g-i, 2006b-d, 2007c, 2008b, 2009d). To settle the differences with North Korea, Japan has repeatedly turned to the UN for assistance, and together with the European Union drafted the “Resolution on the Situation of Human Rights in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea”, firstly calling on securing the rights of the abducted Japanese

and secondly mentioning the human rights situation in North Korea (Statement to the UN 2005h).

The Japanese approach to North Korea has first and foremost been characterized by providing security for Japanese nationals, domestically and also for those abducted by North Korea. Even though Japan has voiced concern over the human rights situation in North Korea, it has become shadowed by realist claims of security, driven by the safety of the Japanese, at home and abroad. North Korea in Japan's policy on human rights and democracy differs from above mentioned countries in the fact that the need for democracy is not at all voiced. In addition, it is suggested that the concern for human rights in North Korea is mainly a concern for the Japanese government as long as it could help attract support for the cause of abducted Japanese.

China

China is one of Japan's most important bilateral partners. The importance given to China in Japanese foreign policies is only superseded by the importance placed on partnership with the United States. China has continuously, before and during the 21st century, been mentioned as a vital partner for Japan, and it is according to the government imperative for Japan to strengthen the relationship with China. Nevertheless, China has been conspicuous by its absence in Japanese policies on human rights and democracy in the 21st century (e.g. Policy Speech to Diet 1995a,b 1996-97, 1998a, and 2001a-d, 2002a-2009a).

Still, the focus on Japan-China relations has grown more intense than ever before. From 2007 and forth, Japan seeks to tighten the economic and political connection with China and develop relationship that is mutual and based on common strategic interests (Policy Speech to Diet 2007a-d 2008a-c, 2009a-c). Additionally, the recent economic crisis has further lifted the importance of good relations with the growing giant that is China, in order to secure stability and economic cooperation in the Asian region (Statement to the UN 2008a, and 2009a).

The relations with China, similarly to relations with North Korea, have been and still are, characterized by realist traits of security. The Japanese approach to China should not necessarily be characterized by traditional claims of security but rather nontraditional security claims of the domestic economy. The liberal notion of the universality and spread of human rights and democracy as a goal in itself has been superseded by the importance of establishing

and further enhancing economic and strategic cooperation with the growing economic giant of China, the largest trading partner for Japan in the 21st century.²⁷

The Liberal Approach Revised

The 21st century presents a change to the Japanese policies on human rights and democracy, as compared to the earlier period. Japan has come to emphasize human rights and democracy at a level not seen before. However, while utilizing a liberal approach to human rights and democracy both in general and towards Asia as a region, the same does not hold true at a country-specific level. Japan has continuously proclaimed the universality of human rights and democracy and the importance of the spread of such values to all parts of the world. However, a country-specific analysis shows discrepancies when compared to the general approach. Previous research has established that Japan, until the 21st century, has been pragmatic and country-specific in its policies on human rights and democracy. This study suggests a continuum of such policies when dealing with specific nations in Asia. Japan is still in the 21st century reluctant to promote human rights and/or democracy in nations that pose potential security threats to Japan (traditional or nontraditional).

While assisting Cambodia and addressing Myanmar with issues of democratization, and implementation of human rights, Japan has been reluctant to officially do the same with China and North Korea. In the case of China, issues of democratization and implementation of human rights have clearly become subjects subordinated to matters of national security. The Japanese economy and its dependence on trade with China have become securitized. Hence, liberal notions of democracy and human rights have not fit the official foreign policy towards China. All focus on China has instead concerned building mutual trust and enhance strategic cooperation.

Likewise, liberal notions of human rights and democracy towards North Korea have had to stand aside for another security matter, namely: the military threat from the northern part of the Korean peninsula. The fact that the human rights issue in North Korea on occasions has been voiced as a concern might not necessarily have much to do with the actual situation of human rights in the country, but has rather been a way for Japan to attract

²⁷ According to some observers China overtook the United States as Japan's largest trading partner already in 2004 with some 20% of Japan's total trade (Washington Post 2005). Other observers claim that China became Japan's largest trade partner in 2009, at least when combining figures of import and export (e.g. Global Times 2009).

attention to the North Korea issue – firstly in order to ease the military threat and secondly to solve the abduction case. Former head of ‘Japan-North Korea normalization talks’, Tetsuya Endo further crystallizes this approach, when stating that the three areas of concern for Japan in relation to North Korea are: firstly, the nuclear and missile issue; secondly, the abduction issue; and thirdly, the level and modality of economic cooperation (Endo 2010). A humanitarian aspect of the situation is not being voiced, let alone the issue of human rights and/or democracy in North Korea.

Thus, Cambodia and Myanmar stand in contrast to China and North Korea in the sense that the democratization processes are either actively supported or at least encouraged by the Japanese government. The financial and legal support to Cambodia originates from what Japan sees as an active Cambodian engagement in a democratization process and thus legitimizes Japanese support. Japan does not risk any substantial critique for promoting democracy and human rights in Cambodia since Japan is helping Cambodia in its own democratization process. Myanmar on the other hand merely receives mild critique from time to time in reference to the on-and-off house arrest of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi (e.g. Statement to the UN 2003a). The mild critique is arguably derived from western pressure and made possible due to the fact that Myanmar does not pose a security threat to Japan. However, encouraging words of speeding up the alleged democratization process usually follows the critique, and Japan continues to comply with ASEAN diplomacy. The Japanese policy of positive encouragement rather than critique is thus visible within the Myanmar context. The apparent difference between Cambodia and Myanmar is the weak utilization of democratization processes in Myanmar, which, by Japan’s own policies, hinders active support to the nation.

Thus, the increasingly liberal approach to human rights and democracy in general and on a regional basis in Asia during the 21st century does not apply for countries that pose potential security threats to Japan. Approaching China or North Korea with liberal claims of human rights and democracy can thus be understood as a matter superseded by realist claims of stability and national security. Japan is thus utilizing an elective and adaptive policy on human rights and democracy, adhering to a liberal approach where possible and a realist where needed.

Relevance of Past Determinants

An increasingly liberal approach to human rights and democracy in general and also in Asia on a regional level suggests a Japan that has become more secure in its ownership of values such as human rights and democracy. However, it also suggests a Japan that is sensitive to the international community's progressive focus on such values around the world. This study argues that Japan is starting to grasp a larger responsibility and assertiveness of human rights and democracy in the Asian region. The earlier reluctance to play a proactive role in Asia is slowly fading and Japan is becoming an outspoken actor in the region. Nevertheless, Japan is still not fully able to publicly speak up for human rights and democracy on a country-specific level in Asia. The direct reason for Japan's reluctance to do so is fear of being criticized, and more importantly, that the criticism will lead to worsening Japanese national security. Indirectly, fear of worsening relations and threats to Japanese security could be triggered by the unfortunate history. Thus, it seems as the unfortunate history still indirectly affects Japan in its policy-making.

In the case of North Korea, where Japan is more or less obliged to raise concerns for its national security (due to a military threat and abducted Japanese), North Korea has at numerous times brought up Japan's conduct during its unfortunate history (Endo 2010). Japan has thus mainly turned to multilateral options when dealing with North Korea. In relation to China, the Japanese dependence on Chinese trade has become an issue of national security. It might therefore prove detrimental to Japan's economy, should Japan publicly criticize China. China and North Korea are still in the 21st century the first and foremost mentioned nations with whom Japan wants to mend its unfortunate past. The focus on China and North Korea in that respect suggests that the past indirectly works as an impediment for Japan in its relations to the two nations, and that it is still a thorn in Japan's side. However it can be argued to what extent it still sets the agenda for the Japanese government's foreign policies. Traditional and nontraditional threats to Japanese national security in the case of China and North Korea would rather constitute the determining factor setting the agenda of policies on human rights and democracy towards the two countries respectively.

Additionally, by drawing on previous research and in combination with this study's findings, Japan's method for promoting human rights and democracy, (dialogue and cooperation over criticism) seems to be a product of the unfortunate history and a wish not to upset Asian neighbors. Additionally, Japan seeks to increase multilateral cooperation with

ASEAN and thus has to balance between its 'western' and 'eastern' identity. Japan therefore continues to conform to ASEAN diplomacy. Thus, policies towards Asian nations would imply that the history continues to, implicitly, matter through the way Japan is commencing the promotion of human rights and democracy by emphasize dialogue and cooperation rather than critique.

As for the bureaucracy, in the past dampened with economic development and security, China and North Korea could (but need not) be seen as a continuum of old bureaucratic structures. The security focus today does not necessarily have to be the result of a bureaucracy occupied mainly with economic matters as it has in the past and as stated in previous research. It would rather suggest a bureaucracy seeing China becoming too important as a trading partner for Japan. It would also suggest that the policymakers see a North Korea that poses a little to big of a security threat for Japan. Thus, it could prove detrimental to Japan's security to be on bad terms with the two nations. Japan is therefore being pragmatic and concentrates on what seems most important in respect of China and North Korea, namely security. Japan has repeatedly emphasized the importance of establishing and enhancing mutual understanding and cooperation with Asian neighbors – particularly strategic and economic cooperation in relations with China. However, that does not prove a bureaucracy dampened with economic interest. It rather suggests a bureaucracy that is pragmatic and realizes that in diplomacy with China and North Korea, Japan stands to lose too much by not prioritizing security first. Nevertheless, where previous research (e.g. Cooney 2007) suggested a loosening of the bureaucracy in Japan, this study has not found proof supporting such arguments. At least not during the first ten years of the new millennium.

The liberal notion of human rights and democracy, as well as the unfortunate past, is seemingly country-specific for Japan, which is demonstrated by Japan's policy of *how* and to *whom* to promote and protect such values. As mentioned earlier, Japan's selective and pragmatic policy protects the nation from receiving criticism for its past aggressive behavior in World War II. However, contemporary Japan seems more and more confident in its notion that human rights and democracy are universal values that need to be promoted and protected in all parts of the world. Additionally, the unfortunate past is likely to decrease as a hinder to the Japanese efforts of promoting such values since new generations with no direct memory of the unfortunate past are taking over and the old generation is being faded out. Nevertheless, the troublesome past will for some time continue to be a useful tool for nations in receiving ends to use against Japan as leverage in disputes, particularly for nations in Asia that are for one reason or another important for Japan security.

Conclusion

This study argues that Japan has increasingly emphasized the importance of human rights and democracy in its foreign policies during the 21st century at levels not seen earlier. Generally, liberal notions have come to supersede realist ones in Japan's approach in general and towards Asia as a region. When compared to previous research and data from the 20th century, this study suggests a change to Japan's overall policy of protecting and promoting human rights and democracy. The increasing emphasis on such values can be understood as a result of a growing international importance given to human rights and democracy in the 21st century, instigated partly by the Millennium Declaration and its MDGs. Also, the increasingly active international role of Japan and sensitivity to 'western' politics, stated in previous research, seems to have been a contributing factor. Additionally, ownership of values such as democracy and human rights has come to be solidified in Japan, finally thought of as Japanese values as opposed to 'western' values. Japan has thus, come to create its own way of promoting human rights and democracy, and the characteristics of such an approach have come to constitute dialogue and cooperation over criticism. However, within the approach, Japan has also adopted a policy of only actively assisting nations that Japan regards as truly committed to enhance domestic human rights situations and levels of democracy. The duality of Japan's identity is thus present, one the one hand focusing on human rights and democracy (to an extent not seen earlier), and on the other, adopting its own way of utilizing such an approach - adhering to ASEAN diplomacy.

Asia has increasingly become targeted, as a region that Japan believes should share the fundamental values of human rights and democracy. Japan has progressively stated the importance of respecting such values in Asia while further strengthening the cooperation among Asian nations. Thus, Asia as a region has been targeted more in lines with liberal policies than realist ones. The increasingly liberal approach to Asia bear the same traits as the general approach. However, this study also suggests that Japan avoids criticism by adhering to a policy of only assisting nations that actively engage in improving its human rights and democracy, and refrain from criticizing non-conforming states. Thus, by proclaiming the importance of human rights and democracy on a regional basis in Asia, but not actively criticizing specific nations, Japan does not run the risk of itself being criticized for its unfortunate history. Japan has therefore been able to speak up on behalf of human rights and democracy in a general and regional matter in Asia, to a degree not seen before.

Previous research has established that Japan, until the 21st century, has been pragmatic and country-specific in its approach to human rights and democracy. This study suggests a continuum of such policies. Japan is still reluctant to promote human rights and/or democracy in countries that pose potential security threats to Japan (traditional or nontraditional). Where North Korea with its nuclear and missile program constitutes an imminent traditional threat to Japan, the dependence on China for trade is considered to be a nontraditional threat. Worsening the relation to its largest trading partner would be detrimental to Japan. Approaching China or North Korea with liberal claims of human rights and democracy can thus be understood as matters superseded by realist claims of stability and security.

To sum up, Japan has responded to the growing focus on international human rights and democracy in the 21st century, and come to give such values much greater importance than ever before. Asia, the region where Japan has previously avoided mentioning human rights and democracy has in general been targeted as a region that Japan believes need to be based on such fundamental values. Japan's policy on helping nations committed to improve human rights and democracy and focusing on dialog rather than criticism has facilitated the growing focus on the Asian region. However, Japan is still pragmatic and country-specific in its policies, reluctant to speak up for human rights or democracy in specific Asian nations and especially where Japanese security concerns are at risk. Japan is therefore utilizing an eclectic and adaptive foreign policy, approaching Asia with liberal notions of human rights and democracy where possible and realist claims of security where needed.

This, study has contributed to filling the gap of knowledge on Japan's approach to human rights and democracy in Asia during the 21st century. A platform form where further research can take off has been established. Such research should address the level of actual implementations of Japanese policies on human rights and democracy in Asia. Additionally, further research should target Japan's new (DPJ) government in order to see how it will distinguish its approach to promoting such values in Asia. Will the new government succeed in its suggested plan of weakening the bureaucracy and what will be the implications to Japan's approach to international human rights and democracy in such an event?

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