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Japanese Foreign Policy and Human Security
in the Context of an Emerging New Global Order

By Rui Faro Saraiva*

Abstract

The formulation of Japanese foreign policy is facing new challenges that result from the current geopolitical dynamics within the international system. While observing the reemergence of ideological competition in international politics, between a new type of authoritarianism and liberal democracies, Japan is re-engaging with the concept of Human Security as a source of influence and attractiveness to others. Indeed, Japan has been a crucial actor in the development of the intellectual concept and the implementation of human security through the UN Trust Fund for Human Security, the Commission on Human Security, and the revision of its Official Development Assistance (ODA) charter to meet human security guidelines. This paper aims to explain the links between the concept of Human Security and Japanese Foreign Policy in the context of an emerging new global order and provides evidence of how incorporating human security into Japanese foreign policy seems to underline the differences between the political values of Japan and other countries in East Asia.

Keywords: *East Asia, Human Rights, Human Security, International Norms, Japanese Foreign Policy, Political Values, Soft Power*

Minoh-Shi Nishishoji 1-7-22
562-0003 Osaka, Japan

E-mail: s-faro@osipp.osaka-u.ac.jp

* Rui Faro Saraiva, born in Lisbon, Portugal, is a PhD candidate at Osaka University (Japan) and a Japanese Government Scholar (MEXT Scholarship). Rui graduated cum laude in International Relations (Lusíada University of Lisbon, Portugal) and is M.A. in Political Science and International Relations (Nova University of Lisbon, Portugal). Currently he is also a Researcher with the Southern African Centre for Collaboration on Peace and Security (SACCPS) and the co-founding author of the Japan Foreign Policy Observatory (JFPO) website.

Japanese Foreign Policy and Human Security in the Context of an Emerging New Global Order

Introduction

After two periods of transition in the distribution of power in the international system - bipolarity after 1945 and unipolarity after the Cold War - today we are facing a new period of power transition and diffusion into an increasing multipolar order. Differences in values and in the political regimes of actors are becoming more relevant. Asia, as a region, has seen growing economic, political or military power. In East Asia, Chinese economic growth is fuelling an increasing international acceptance or legitimization of authoritarian political regimes and conventionalist views about human rights.

Japan can be seen to have conducted domestic and foreign policy both in consideration of its national interest and also through incorporating human-centred and peace-related principles as an important guiding concept to its foreign policy and development aid. Against this background this paper will consider contemporary structural changes and human security theory within foreign policy by using Japan as a case study. Specifically, the paper will focus on the links and interdependence between current global changes and challenges and how human security can be not only a tool to protect human dignity, but also acts as a guiding principle in Japanese foreign policy.

The 21st century is witnessing the reformulation of state foreign policy agendas, underlining the centrality of Asia as the new geostrategic epicentre of international politics. The rebalancing of these agenda's towards Asia, the "Asia pivot", argues that many states believe that the centre of gravity for foreign policy - national security and economic interest - is shifting towards Asia, and therefore the strategies and priorities of states' need to be adjusted accordingly. Asia is the most populous region, fastest growing economic area, and is expected to become the most vital region for the world economy in the future. Greater trade flows through the Asia-Pacific have reinforced security interests in the region, as have the major expansions of other regional military forces, the most evident case being China.¹ Given this, a priority for the rest of the world is to focus on its policies in the Asia-Pacific region. A failure to do so could invite regional powers, particularly China, to shape the region in its own way. Nevertheless greater instability is rising as the region adjusts to a shifting distribution of power with the potential for regional conflicts. The Senkaku/ Diaoyu islands disputes, North Korea's provocative behaviour, the rising military budgets in Asia, particularly China, along with other issues, are a reflection of the power shifts and tensions occurring in the region.

1. Mark E. Manyin (coord.), "Pivot to the Pacific? The Obama Administration's Rebalancing Toward Asia", CRS Report for the Congress, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/R42448.pdf> (Accessed 10 July 2012)



History argues that the rise of a new power can destabilize the international system and even lead to conflict. The emergence of new powers like China, India and Russia, along with the US pivot to Asia, underlines the rising importance of the Asia-Pacific region as the new geostrategic centre of international politics. Recently, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) anticipated that China will soon have the world's largest economy, surpassing the US.² These systemic changes are posing new challenges to the formulation and implementation of Japan's foreign and security policies and may affect external perceptions of Japan's role in contemporary international politics.

Against this external environment, Japan's position in the world today is also a result of challenging domestic conditions. Significant issues such as an aging population, declining birth rate, a debt-to-GDP ratio over 200 per cent, a political leadership issue and the development of the "*sakoku syndrome*" - a growing inward focus among many young Japanese. At the same time Japan is still widely respected as an influential regional and global power. However whilst Tokyo faces many challenges, there appears to be under-utilised dimensions of Japan's national power and influence. Japan is still the world's third-largest economy, and continues to have large economic potential that could be unleashed by reforms, innovation and competition. More gender equality and openness to immigration could add significantly to Japan's gross domestic product (GDP) growth. Moreover, Japan still has considerable soft power resources. Armitage argues that "...the country is rated among the top three countries in international respect and first in the world in terms of 'national brand'. Therefore Japan seems not to be an insignificant country positioned in a quiet part of the world."³ In a time when scholars and policymakers have the tendency to undervalue Japan's role within the international society in favour of other Asian actors it is both important and timely to make an assessment of the country's role and influence in today's world through its engagement with the Human Security concept.

Human Security and Democracy

Whilst the 21st century has witnessed the emergence and rising influence of authoritarian powers like China or Russia, offering a new alternative political model, many nations still live in an age rooted in the advancement of democracy. Since its birth in Ancient Greece more than 2500 years ago, democracy is now no longer an exclusivity of the developed Western countries. Rather it has become a global political trend, leading to the development of political ideals as well as political practices that have influenced the formulation of domestic and international public policies towards a more human-centred paradigm.

Following World War II, since 1945, many institutions, regimes and treaties envisaged the protection of human rights as a priority leading to Universal Human Rights' values and human-centred policies being integrated in domestic and foreign policies. However the contemporary emergence of new powers that have acquired normative capabilities - the ability to participate in the creation or change of international norms - and the rising importance of Asia, some of the regions actors have emphasized cultural and value

2. Bush III, "As Number One, China to Face Hour of Choice", http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2011/0630_china_bush.aspx (Accessed 12 June 2011).

3. Armitage et al., Joseph, *The US-Japan Alliance - Anchoring Stability in Asia*, 1.



differences between Asia and the West. Some Asian countries emphasize Asian values that are less supportive of freedom and more concerned with order and discipline than Western values. Claims of human rights in the areas of political and civil liberties are, therefore, less relevant in Asia than in the West. Countries like China, Singapore or Cambodia, benefit from the 'Asian values' paradigm which serve as a tool to accomplish their political objectives and justify their authoritarian regimes. Human Rights are often disregarded in these countries, as well as in other politically aligned Asian powers, e.g. North Korea and Russia.

On the opposite ideological edge, it can be argued that liberal democracies are in tune with the idea of human rights and human-centred policies. Moreover, since the end of the Cold War, security studies have developed to a more human-centred approach, taking into account a wide range of non-military threats, whether environmental or health related, as well as other fields like poverty, nationalism, terrorism, failed states and cyber-security. The development of the concept of human security focuses on the welfare of individuals facing this broad new range of threats. Current security policies still focus on threats to states and on traditional military capabilities. By contrast Human Security is about the security of individuals and communities rather than the security of states, and combines both human rights and human development. Human Security as a concept attached to international human rights law has become part of the foreign policy agenda of some influential actors', as seen in the case of Japan, Canada and Norway. In fact, in a crescent multipolar world, where power is not concentrated in only one or two actors, foreign policy agendas are the subject of much theoretical and academic discussion. Therefore it seems crucial to analyse the development of the intellectual concept and the implementation of human security in the foreign policy agenda, taking Japan as a case study.

Human Security as a concept attached to international human rights law has become part of the Japanese foreign policy agenda. Japan has been a crucial actor in the development of the intellectual concept and the implementation of human security through its financial support to the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security, the establishment of the Commission on Human Security, and revision of its Official Development Assistance charter to meet human security guidelines. In addition, Tokyo is strengthening Japan-US ties and security alliance agreements as the cornerstone of its engagement in regional and global issues. This strategy is aimed at ensuring security through the reformulation of Japanese defence strategy by building new defence cooperation networks and planning new developments in areas such as space and cyber security. Tokyo is underlining this cooperation through multilateral *fora* in regional institutions like the ASEAN, ASEAN+3, ASEAN+6, East Asian Summit, ASEAN Regional Forum, and APEC,⁴ and in global institutions like the United Nations, whilst continuing to address global issues through Official Development Assistance (ODA), Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding efforts.⁵

However this strategy faces a spectrum of obstacles. The rise of China and the economic success of its political regime are posing new regional and global challenges, not only for the

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4. Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), ASEAN + China, Japan and Republic of Korea (ASEAN+3), ASEAN + Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand and Republic of Korea (ASEAN+6), Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)
 5. Japan (MOFA), *Diplomatic Bluebook 2012*



states like Japan but also for the survival of democracy. Indeed the international protection of human rights and human dignity may be threatened by the export of Beijing's political regime into other regions. More broadly it can be argued that there has been a loss of democratic momentum, with the failure of the post orange revolution in Ukraine, the "authoritarianization" of Russia and Venezuela with Putin and Chávez, the dynamics of the Arab Spring, the breakdown in Mali and the relative loss of credibility of Europe and the US as global models. This along with the growing appeal in some parts of the world of China's and Russia's versions of "authoritarian capitalism" offers an alternative to the liberal democratic model for developing or transitional countries. Indeed, China, Russia, and other authoritarian powers are asserting international political influence in a way that works against the spread of democracy.⁶

Given this, Japanese foreign policy can be seen as going through a process of reformulation and adaptation to external and domestic challenges. Japan is now refocusing its public diplomacy strategy in Asia, minimizing security risks and maximizing economic growth opportunities within the region. The re-election of Shinzo Abe as Prime Minister in December 2012, confirmed the impetus for Japanese foreign and security policy reforms. Abe demonstrated a more proactive rhetoric and engagement with challenges currently facing the country. Following Japan's economic downturn, Abe developed a bold economic agenda centred on fiscal stimulus and monetary easing to combat deflation. Another important issue on Abe's agenda has been to secure the inflow of raw materials and energy to feed manufacturing and consumer sectors. Abe plans to scrap the previous DPJ zero nuclear policy and reconsider the role of nuclear power in Japan's future energy mix, whilst working at the same time to promote nuclear safety and non-proliferation. Furthermore bilateral cooperation with the United States on infrastructure development such as high-speed rail and LNG exports from both shale and Alaska's North Slope were part of the 2013 Abe's US visit.⁷

Reinforcing Japan's political values seems to be a priority in Abe's foreign policy. The newly elected Prime Minister referred in the 2013 New Year's reflection speech to "looking down broadly over the world, we will boldly develop a strategic diplomacy rooted in the fundamental values of freedom, democracy, fundamental human rights, and the rule of law."⁸ The context for this view comes in part through with the rising perception of China as a threat, partly as a result of the escalation of the Senkaku dispute and an increasing Chinese military budget. These factors have triggered Abe to promote a review of Japanese defence policy and the reinterpretation or change of the Article 9 of the Japanese constitution. According to its current interpretation, the Article 9 renounces war and prohibits Japan from maintaining war potential, thereby constraining the projection of Japan's hard power resources.

During the current period of reformulation of Japanese foreign and security policy, the concept of human security is set to play an important role in the affirmation of Japan's

6. Carothers, "Reenergizing Democracy Promotion", November 29, 2012, <http://carnegieendowment.org/globalten/?fa=50142> (Accessed 10 December 2012).

7. Green et al., "Shinzo Abe comes to Washington", <http://csis.org/publication/shinzo-abe-comes-washington> (Accessed 27 February 2013).



political values in the international arena, contributing to the country's image and prestige within the international society. At the same time, human security can be an important tool for the implementation of Japan's ODA strategy and may contribute to the definition of Japan's engagement in international peace cooperation missions.

In the context of Shinzo Abe's recent election, the LDP manifesto firmly stated that Japan will "actively promote human security such as eradication of poverty and refugee relief."⁹ Therefore Human Security seems to be destined to be part of Japan's foreign policy agenda during the coming years and amid challenging domestic and external circumstances.

This paper aims at identifying the links between the concept of Human Security and the Japanese Foreign Policy in the context of an emerging new global order in the 21st century, providing evidence of how incorporating human security into Japanese foreign policy seems to underline the differences between the political values of Japan and other countries in the East Asian region. This paper will now analyse how human security can be a new important political tool not only to serve Japan's interests in this new international context but also to effectively protecting and promoting human dignity around the globe.

The interdependence between Human Rights and Human Security

Although many scholars detach human rights from human security, or criticize the relation between both, it is fundamental to recognize their interdependence in order to understand its use by Japan as a diplomatic tool in the current geopolitical context.

The concept of human rights is relatively new and gained a more profound meaning after the World War II. It was only after the experience of the holocaust that the world decided to engage in codifying rules to protect human rights. The United Nations charter was the first step in showing that the rights of human beings were a matter of international concern, since the purpose of the United Nations was "To achieve international cooperation...in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction to race, sex, language or religion."¹⁰

Published in 1948, the proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), is arguably the single most important document on international ethics and protection of Human Rights was set forward in the twentieth century. The moment of the adoption of the UDHR by the General Assembly of the United Nations may be remembered by future generations as the beginning of a new era in the history of mankind and in international law. However, this unprecedented development of human rights jurisprudence, continued through the second half of the 20th century. This favourable *momentum* must not fade and become an illusion for scholars or policymakers. While the humanization of international law has produced a movement of political significance, the positive realization of the most basic human rights has yet to be achieved. Despite the plethora of international conventions

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8. Abe, *New Year's Reflection by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe*, 1st January 2013, http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/96_abe/statement/201301/0101nentou_e.html (Accessed 08 January 2013).
 9. LDP, "Policy Brochure from the Liberal Democratic Party of Japan" (Original in Japanese Language), http://jimin.ncss.nifty.com/pdf/seisaku_ichiban24.pdf (Accessed 08 December 2012).
 10. UN, "United Nations Charter", <http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/> (Accessed 20 May 2012).

related to economic, social and cultural rights, there are still 1.2 billion people without access to clean water and 1.3 billion people living below the United Nations income poverty line. Moreover and notwithstanding the fact that there is an almost universal recognition of the rights of the child, millions of children remain illiterate, malnourished, and abused at a global level.¹¹

In the early 1990s, the term Human Security was first popularized by the United Nations Development Program, as a way to link various humanitarian, economic, and social issues in order to alleviate human suffering and assure security. The 1994 UNDP report urged for a transition from “nuclear security” to “human security”, advocating a revolutionary approach based on four essential characteristics:

“1) Human security is a universal concern. It is relevant to people everywhere, in rich nations and poor. (...) 2) The components of human security are interdependent. 3) Human security is easier to ensure through early prevention than later intervention. (...) 4) Human security is people centred. It is concerned with how people live and breathe in a society, how freely they exercise their many choices, how much access they have to market and social opportunities, and whether they live in conflict or in peace.”¹²

The 1994 UNDP report developed the human security concept in relation to seven dimensions: personal, environmental, economic, political, community, health, and food security. The 1999 UNDP Human Development Report on Globalization returned to the theme of human security in the aftermath of the 1998 Asian crisis, advocating for deliberate actions to provide human security during economic crises, as well as to reduce other causes of human insecurity such as global crime, environmental degradation, and communication that threatens cultural diversity. It also called for a strengthening of the United Nations System, “Giving it greater coherence to respond to broader needs of human security”.¹³

Human Security has attracted the interest, approval and critique of scholars and policymakers, while various disciplines have contributed to the debate around its concept and application. The former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan, during his address to world leaders at the General Assembly on 10 November 2001, stressed the strategic importance of human security and human rights to the fundamental objectives of the Organization:

“The United Nations must place people at the centre of everything it does, for the eradication of extreme poverty, the struggle against HIV/AIDS, the prevention of deadly conflict and tackling the root causes of political violence, issues that threaten human security around the world. The common thread connecting all these issues is the need to respect fundamental human rights”.¹⁴

11. Hagerty, *A Human Rights: An Agenda for the 21st century*, 4-11.

12. UNDP, *Human Development Report*, 22-23.

13. UNDP, *Human Development Report*, 102-104.

14. UN General Assembly, *56th Session Verbatim Record (A/56/PV44)*, 2-4.



A great influence in the evolution and understanding of the concept of human security came through the work published by the Commission on Human Security, chaired by Sadako Ogata and Amartya Sen, with financial support by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Bank of Japan. The 2005 “Human Security Now” report stressed the complementarity of state and human security, its interdependence with human rights and the need to focus on implementing human security in Africa. “Human security complements state security, enhances human rights and strengthens human development. It seeks to protect people against a broad range of threats to individuals and communities and, further, to empower them to act on their own behalf.”¹⁵

In the 2012 Secretary-General Report to the UN, a final definition about human security was set forward:

“First, human security aims at ensuring the survival, livelihood and dignity of people in response to current and emerging threats. (...) Second, human security underscores the universality and interdependence of a set of freedoms that are fundamental to human life: freedom from fear, freedom from want and freedom to live in dignity. (...) Third, human security is guided by the principles of the Charter and does not replace State security. (...) Fourth, since the causes and manifestations of human insecurity vary considerably across countries and communities, human security strengthens the development of solutions that are embedded in local realities and are based on national ownership. (...) Finally, human security provides a dynamic framework that links the three pillars of the United Nations system and promotes the establishment of synergies and partnerships that capitalize on the comparative advantages of a diverse network of stakeholders.”¹⁶

As it is evidenced in the second point of the report, the relationship between Human rights and Human Security seems to be complementary and indivisible. Indeed, security is the condition or feeling of safety, of being protected. International human rights norms define the meaning of human security. The UDHR and other human rights legal instruments are all meant to make human beings secure in freedom, in dignity, with equality, ensuring the protection of their basic human rights.¹⁷

Human security, as human rights, undertakes the same task in addressing a set of rights or freedoms that are unacceptable to ignore. One of the fundamental key characteristics of human security is that it speaks to the basic and universal set of human rights. Although both human security and human rights focus on violence and poverty, human rights includes a broader set of rights while human security serves more as a tool to liberate people from “fear” and from “want”.

The identification, protection and promotion of this human-centred approach, based on the ‘freedom from fear’ and ‘freedom from want’, is the aim of human security, but simultaneously is also part of human rights. The Cold War period emphasized the division

15. Commission on Human Security, *Human Security Now*, 2.

16. UN General Assembly, *Report of the Secretary General (A/66/763)*, 6.

17. Ramcharan, “Human rights and human security”, 40.

between civil and political rights (identified with the US and its allies) and a second generation of economic social and cultural rights (which appealed to the USSR and its allies). Later there emerged a third and fourth generation of rights such as collective rights and the right to peace. The gaps and boundaries between these types of rights became deepened and reflected ideological priorities. In the post-Cold War period, an emerging urge to reunite different generations of rights can be observed. Human security consolidates this position because it re-introduces the “indivisibility” of different kinds of human rights, organically and holistically.

When the conceptual focus is on the human being, and when unburdened by Cold War historical issues, both first and second-generation rights are fundamentally important. Nevertheless, the language of human rights influenced by the Cold War politics, still preserves the heritage of ideological bias. Because of its importance within the legal community, the term human rights carry a considerable amount of legal obligations. Therefore, the language of human security is sometimes more appealing as it can be used in social contexts where the language of human rights would meet entrenched opposition.¹⁸

The key word for human security - ‘threat’ - is related to what human rights are not primarily concerned with, e.g. natural disasters, and it reaches towards threats from state and non-state actors, thus not dividing between private and public spheres. Human security is about the basic needs people share in every part of the world, like access to food, shelter, health and education. These basic needs have over the decades been re-formulated and re-framed as human rights.

Human rights are therefore part of human security, both concepts are interdependent and complementary: human rights provide the conceptual and normative foundation for human security; both are the basis for a life in dignity, wellbeing and security. A rights-based approach can also provide a useful framework for the promotion of human security. Human rights violations are often the root causes of conflict, insecurity and instability and in this sense is a central element of a threat-based approach to explain human security. The respect for human rights fosters harmonious social relations and thus inter-societal security, therefore indirectly promoting human security.¹⁹

Conciliating national interest with a human-centred paradigm

The concept of human security represents a major paradigm shift around the question of security, debunking its Westphalian approach – the traditional state-centred conception of security – to concentrate on the security of people and local communities. The application of this concept ranged from a narrow term for prevention of violence to a broad comprehensive view that proposes development, human rights and traditional security all together. The usefulness of human security as paradigm shift depends on how it is incorporated in and implemented by states’ foreign policy agenda.²⁰

18. Alkire, “A Conceptual Framework for Human Security”, 37-40.

19. Oberleitner, “Human Security and Human Rights”, 14-23.

20. Tadjbakash et al., *Human Security: Concepts and Implications*, 9-10.



No “realist” seems to be a pure practitioner of *Realpolitik* and utterly unconcerned with ethics or ideology, as no “idealist” statesman has been totally unconcerned with power.²¹ European diplomatic history and the contributions of individuals such as Niccolò Machiavelli and Immanuel Kant, argues it is possible to identify a long philosophical struggle between the idea of a universal monarchy and balance of power. More recent authors who have analysed power and how those in power are concerned, or not, with ethical values, it is possible to establish new causal links that may provide answers on how to conciliate national interest with universal values as is the case of the concept of soft power, a term coined by Joseph Nye in the late 1990’s. According to the author, the soft power of a country rests on three main resources: its culture, its foreign policy legitimacy and its political values. Nye also believes that the values a government champions in its behaviour at home, in international institutions, and in foreign policy, for example promoting peace and human rights strongly affects the preferences of others. Governments can attract or repel others by influence and their own example.²²

Indeed, soft power strategies in contemporary politics seem to be increasingly important. Countries that may be more attractive and gain soft power in the information age are those with multiple channels of communication that help to frame issues; whose dominant culture and ideas are closer to prevailing global norms, e.g. liberalism, pluralism, human rights and human security. If the official policies of countries’, whether domestic or foreign, are consistent with democracy, human rights, openness and respect for others’ opinions, they will benefit from the trends of this new global information age, enhancing their level of attractiveness, and ultimately maximizing their power.²³

Hans Tuch defined public diplomacy as the “process of communicating with foreign publics in an attempt to bring about understanding for its nation’s ideas and ideals, its institutions and culture, as well as its national goals and policies”.²⁴ Whist public diplomacy is often portrayed as a one-way information flow, there is a new emerging approach that underlines the coordination of relations with the press, the use of social media and other more interactive means. Therefore a constructive dialogue with foreign audiences is a precondition for a successful foreign policy.²⁵ This dialogue often addresses international norms and human-centred policies, like human rights and human security.

Another concept of relevance and scope for contemporary public diplomacy is ‘nation-branding’. Although underlining the Westphalian paradigm, this concept may be important in identifying why, from a strictly realist point of view, the idea of following a human-centred approach in international politics has its attractions. A nation’s ‘brand’ is defined as “the unique, multi-dimensional blend of elements that provide the nation with culturally grounded differentiation and relevance for all of its target audiences”.²⁶ Within the components of brand identity the ideas or values that each country advocates can be seen.

21. Pflanze in Cathan, *Ethics and Statescraft - The Moral Dimension of International Affairs*

22. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, 11-13.

23. *Ibid*, 31-32.

24. Tuvh, *Communicating With the World: US Public Diplomacy Overseas*, 3.

25. Melissen in Melissen (ed.), *The New Public Diplomacy, Soft Power in International Relations*, 13.

26. Dinnie, *Nation Branding – Concepts, Issues, Practice*, 15.



Therefore the nation-brand manifestation of a country may be in harmony, for example with human rights, sustainable development and human security.²⁷ Acknowledging the promotion of human-centred values as a tool to create a positive national image, while attempting to compete on the global stage, may give relative advantages to countries while communicating with foreign publics.

In the aforementioned considerations it is possible to identify a clear relationship between pursuing national interest and implementing human-centred policies. The interplay between both can be mutually beneficial considering the interest of a particular political unit, and the broader interest of human beings regardless of their nationality. These links may also show the relevance of human-centred policies in a growing multipolar world, where the division, parcelling and segregation among people is underlined in favour of the Westphalian paradigm and the rule of sovereignty, but in which human rights and human security policies are fundamental to ensure or at least promote individual dignity and peace. Ultimately promoting human rights and the human security paradigm can be a win-win situation for policymakers. Japan, as country located in the geostrategic centre of international politics that has been incorporating human-centred values in its foreign policy identity and relations with external actors can be seen as an important case study of this phenomenon.

Japanese foreign policy and human security in the context of an emerging new global order

Many Japanese scholars and policymakers have found the soft power concept attractive and have started to apply it to Japan. In recent years this has resulted in a wide range of publications, conferences, and symposia on soft power and Japan. But there appear to be basically two schools of thought among those who have researched this issue. The first group believe that Japan needs to develop its soft power capabilities their argument is that Japan's soft power needs to be strengthened in part to compensate for its modest hard power capabilities. The second group argue that Japan already possesses a substantial amount of soft power through both its traditional and modern based culture. Some adherents of this second view assert that the world is fascinated with "Cool Japan", an expression that defines Japan's fashion, anime, games, food, and various cultures that the Japanese take for granted and are being accepted as cool and trendy by foreigners.²⁸ As a result of the 'Cool Japan' strategy, the country is in many respects an example of what it means to exercise soft power. Each side of the debate makes plausible arguments. However, adherents of the second view are often at risk of overemphasising the depth of the soft power concept. Even though *anime* movies are seen all over the world and *manga* is being read by youth in Asia and the West, this doesn't necessarily mean that Japan is therefore more respected, trusted, or admired by others. Yet the fact remains that promoting human-centred values is one of the strategies available to Japan in order to give a universal character to its political values, leveraging a unique culture, which is often greatly admired internationally.

Japan's recent past and the rise of militarism during the Meiji era both impacted on Tokyo's international prestige. Soft power resources were deeply affected, particularly in Asia, as a result of the Japanese colonization in the region. Since the post World War II period, Japan

27. Ibid, 44.

28. Vide "Cool Japan", <http://www.nhk.or.jp/cooljapan/en/> (Accessed 10 March 2013)



has struggled to restore its image and reputation among neighbours. However history has often been politicized in the region, China and South Korea often criticize Japan initiatives based on historical issues, therefore affecting Japan's soft power capabilities in East Asia. Human Security can serve as a tool to detach nationalism from the Japanese foreign policy rhetoric, potentially building a new perception about Japan in the region and paradoxically benefitting the Japanese national interest. The perception of Japan in a democratic, humanist and universal context, seems to be an important foreign policy strategy in a new regional and global context.

The new emerging global order underlines the ideological competition between two political models - authoritarian capitalism *versus* democracy. In this new scenario, which finds its geopolitical centre in the Asia-Pacific region, Japan is stimulated to find new diplomatic tools to address the challenges it is facing today. Other concern of the international society and the 'status quo' powers, like Japan, is the growing normative power of China and other authoritarian Asian states. China's preferred view of international relations is based on the view of a declining legitimacy of the 'Western' liberal global order.²⁹ In terms of values, China underlines the importance of the principle of sovereignty and non-interference in the state's internal affairs, as well as a conventionalist or cultural relativist approach concerning human rights related values. The resurgence of the 1990s acclaimed "Asian values" is re-emerging as a result of Asia's rising.

The most likely source for the 'Asian values' concept, a conventionalist view about human rights, is Singapore. The notion of Asian values underlines, among other principles, that only a strong and steady leadership can keep communal peace, and that an authoritarian government, providing firm policy direction and social stability, is a necessary condition for continued economic growth. Therefore, under the banner of Confucianism, this notion of authoritarian rule was brought into collision with modern human rights and practices.³⁰ This model of development has recently been promoted in Africa through the 'Beijing Consensus' and the so-called 'China Aid Strategy', giving priority to the strengthening of state authority, central control, and social discipline, rather than to the development of democratic institutions.

The 'Asian values' concept has already been challenged by Amartya Sen. The author underlined the impossibility of seeing Asia as a single unit, as it fosters diverse cultures, ethnic backgrounds and nationalities. Confucianism is misinterpreted and is not the single influence in the value-system of Asian countries. Buddhism and Hinduism have exerted a key role in this matter and cannot be ignored when analysing which value-systems influence Asian cultures and countries. Amartya Sen concluded:

"The so-called Asian values that are invoked to justify authoritarianism are not especially Asian in any significant sense. Nor is it easy to see how they could be made into an Asian cause against the West, by the mere force of rhetoric. (...) The case for liberty and political rights turns ultimately on their basic importance and on their

29. Breslin, "The Soft Notion of China's Soft Power", February 2011, http://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/public/Research/Asia/0211pp_breslin.pdf (Accessed 20 July 2012), 11-13.

30. De Bary, *Asian Values and Human Rights: A Confucian Communitarian Perspective*, 2-3.

instrumental role. This case is as strong in Asia as it is elsewhere. (...) Authoritarian readings of Asian values that are increasingly being championed in some quarters do not survive scrutiny. The thesis of a grand dichotomy between Asian values and European values adds little to our comprehension, and much to the confusion about the normative basis of freedom and democracy.”³¹

Given this, for those who may still claim a strong influence of Confucianism in Japanese society, it would be important to acknowledge the strong influence of Buddhism, Shinto and Taoist spiritual traditions in this country.³² Spiritual traditions like Buddhism are human-centred and promote critical thinking, in tune with democratic values.

Against this background Japan is an important case study in enabling consideration of the problem of Asian values *versus* human rights in the context of an emerging new global order. Conceptual frameworks for understanding human rights in the contemporary Japanese lexicon are free from cultural relativism underlining its universal character. As has been seen, human security as a concept attached to international human rights legal framework has emerged as a clear part of the Japanese foreign policy agenda, and Japan has also been a crucial actor promoting the concept and its application internationally.

Japan’s key political values are originally expressed in its present constitution:

“We, the Japanese people, desire peace for all time and are deeply conscious of the high ideals controlling human relationship, and we have determined to preserve our security and existence, trusting in the justice and faith of the peace-loving peoples of the world. We desire to occupy an honoured place in an international society striving for the preservation of peace, and the banishment of tyranny and slavery, oppression and intolerance for all time from the earth. We recognize that all peoples of the world have the right to live in peace, free from fear and want.”³³

The preamble of the constitution clearly states the importance of human rights and human security for Japan. The main pillars of human security, freedom from fear and from want, are also enshrined in the Japanese constitution, and therefore must not be ignored in the formulation of domestic and international policies.

Article 9 of the constitution underlines the country’s commitment to pacifism, unique to Japan in the context of the international society: “Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes. In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained”.³⁴

31. Sen, *Human Rights and Asian Values*, 30-31.

32. Shin, *Confucianism and Democratization in East Asia*

33. Japan, “Constitution”, http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/constitution_and_government_of_japan/constitution_e.html (Accessed 28 July 2012).

34. Ibid.



Article 11 also underlines the importance of Human Rights within the Japanese legal framework: “The people shall not be prevented from enjoying any of the fundamental human rights. These fundamental human rights guaranteed to the people by this Constitution shall be conferred upon the people of this and future generations as eternal and inviolate rights”.³⁵

Japan’s constitution clearly underlines the country’s commitment to a human-centred security paradigm that is reflected in its domestic and international policies. It is clear that Japan’s pursuit of the Human Security agenda is in part a consequence of the political values expressed in its constitution, not excluding its role as a useful tool to engage more effectively with the international community. It is also a consequence of the limitations presented by the Article 9 and related policies, which place restrictions on hard power assets and compel a commitment to pacifism, triggering Japan to focus on a strong and proactive ODA policy and increase its participation in international peace cooperation activities (peacekeeping and peacebuilding), particularly since 1992.

After the 1994 UNDP³⁶ report shifted the international discourse on security issues, Japan was one of the countries to support the new conceptual framework around human security. In 1995, Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama triggered Japan’s engagement with the Human Security concept by referring to “human-centred social development”, in his speech at the UN World Summit for Social Development, in Copenhagen.³⁷ But the key figure for the pursuit of human security was Obuchi Keizo, appointed Prime Minister of Japan in 1998. The first expression of adopting human security as a key concept took place after the 1997 Asian economic crisis. Several countries in Asia, including Japan, were severely hit by the negative impact of the crisis.

Obuchi’s initial effort related to human security came when the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction was signed in December 1997, in Ottawa. Obuchi’s decision for Japan to join the international campaign against landmines became the starting point for his endeavour to promote human security.³⁸ Speaking in Tokyo in December 1998 at the “Intellectual Dialogue on Building Asia’s Tomorrow”, Obuchi used a new term *ningen anzenhoshō* which in Japanese means human security.³⁹ Later in a speech entitled “Toward the Creation of a Bright Future for Asia” given on the occasion of the December 1998 Summit Meeting of ASEAN Plus Three, Obuchi stated his vision for Asia in the 21st century: “a century of peace and prosperity built on human dignity” and he also proposed the creation of a Human Security Fund at the United Nations.⁴⁰ From this moment on, human security was incorporated in Japan’s foreign policy agenda and the Japanese government implemented numerous initiatives related to this concept. Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori, Obuchi’s successor, saw human security as “the pillar

35. Ibid.

36. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

37. Murayama, “UN Speech at the UN World Summit for Social Development”, March 1995, <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/conf166/gov/950311074922.htm> (Accessed 15 July 2012)

38. Edström, “Japan and Human Security – The Derailing of a Foreign Policy Vision”, 9-10.

39. Obuchi, “Speech at Intellectual Dialogue on Building Asia’s Tomorrow”, December 1998, <http://www.jcie.or.jp/thinknet/tomorrow/1obuchi.html> (Accessed 10 July 2012).

40. Obuchi, “Speech entitled ‘Toward the Creation of a Bright Future for Asia’ at the Institute for International Relations in Hanoi, Vietnam”, December 1998, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/asean/pmv9812/policyspeech.html> (Accessed 15 July 2012).

of Japanese diplomacy” and made a commitment to enhance the Trust Fund for Human Security by an additional contribution of 10 billion yen. Mori also announced the Japanese intention “to establish an international committee on human security with the participation of world renowned leaders of opinion”, which later became the Commission on Human Security.⁴¹

In January 2003, a shift in Japan’s human security policy was announced when Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi declared in his policy speech in the Diet⁴² that ODA will be implemented strategically in human security areas. The shift was implemented in August 2003 with a reform of Japan’s ODA policy. It made human security a matter of international development assistance, downgrading the concept from its previous central status as a Japanese foreign policy pillar. This new strategy was also intended to reform Japan’s ODA policy, based on the human security concept.⁴³

More recently Japan has reinforced its commitment to human rights and human security, as a result of new regional and global challenges and the need for Japan to underline its political values. The academic community in Japan and policymakers in Tokyo are also reengaging with the concept of Human Security and promoting it globally. In the 2011 Diplomatic Bluebook⁴⁴, that commitment is clear:

“Fully guaranteeing human rights and fundamental freedoms, which are universal values, contributes to the establishment of a peaceful and prosperous society in each country, and therefore to the peace and stability of the international community. (...) Japan has served as a member of the Human Rights Council since it was founded and has positively contributed to its activities. (...) Japan will strengthen its foreign policy in order to promote human rights in a comprehensive manner (...) To handle the global issues explained above, (...) Japan stresses the concept of human security (...) to resolve such issues, focusing on the lives and livelihoods of every human.”⁴⁵

In 2011, the Japanese Government also underlined the focus on the “freedom from want” through the ODA strategy: “Japan has actively contributed to a variety of efforts by the international community based on the understanding that ensuring peace and prosperity of the international community upholds security and prosperity of Japan, and that ODA and other forms of international cooperation are important means to such ends. In working towards the achievement of the MDGs, Japan is advancing efforts particularly centred on the fields of health and education, based on the concept of human security.”⁴⁶

In 2012, the Diplomatic Bluebook stressed the importance of the human security concept as a guideline for the implementation of Japanese international development and cooperation strategies:

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41. Mori, “Statement at the Millennium Summit of the United Nations”, September 2000, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/un/summit2000/pmstate.html> (Accessed 20 July 2012)
 42. Diet is the conventional English name for the Japanese Parliament. In Japanese it is usually called “Kokkai” (National Assembly).
 43. Edström, *Ibid*, p. 14.
 44. Diplomatic Bluebook is an annual report on Japan's Foreign Policy and Activities published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan.
 45. Japan (MOFA), *Diplomatic Bluebook 2011*, 20.
 46. *Ibid*, 21.



“ODA can also be used to address security issues, for example by using it to improve the capability to maintain security of recipient countries. (...) Underlying all of these endeavors is the philosophy of ‘human security.’ The basic idea of human security is to focus on the individual human beings who face various problems, to strengthen their abilities so that they can solve their problems on their own. (...) It is based on the idea that all actors should take part in nation building (...) this concept of “all on board” is an idea shared by the concept of open and multilayered networks (...), and it can be said to be a fundamental concept in Japan’s foreign policy”.⁴⁷

One of the main agencies in Tokyo responsible for applying the concept of human security through ODA is the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). Since March 2004 and the implementation of the “First Phase of JICA’s Reform Plan” many projects have focused on the transition from reconstruction towards development through conflict-prevention in conflict-affected countries and areas, and/or the transition from reconstruction to development, with a risk-management perspective in disaster affected countries and areas. Both of these dimensions have human security as a main guiding concept, and since the March 2011 Earthquake, Japan has focused on sharing its experience in the areas of nuclear safety and disaster prevention. The JICA’s project implemented in Vietnam between September 2006 and August 2009 is a good example of using human security as a guiding concept for disaster prevention. The project “Enhancing Community Resilience and Livelihood Security to Cope with Natural Disasters in Central Vietnam” targeted people in the region who were exposed to chronic natural disasters, incorporated mechanisms for disaster prevention and risk management through a network of partnerships with NGOs, local and national governments, and education institutions, and followed a bottom-up approach to fostering participation and a sense of ownership among community member.⁴⁸

Another of the main concerns of Japan has been to promote a common understanding of the Human Security concept through the United Nations. In 2005, the World Summit Outcome document endorsed the discussion about a final definition for Human Security:

“We stress the right of people to live in freedom and dignity, free from poverty and despair. We recognize that all individuals, in particular vulnerable people, are entitled to freedom from fear and freedom from want, with an equal opportunity to enjoy all their rights and fully develop their human potential. To this end, we commit ourselves to discussing and defining the notion of human security in the General Assembly”.⁴⁹

The Responsibility to Protect (R2P) addressed in another section of the document, sets a clear line between Human Security and the R2P, and is in harmony with the Japanese vision of Human Security (in contrast with Canada and Norway that have an opposite view that underlines the inclusion of R2P). In April 2012, a common understanding on Human Security was stated in the UN Report of the Secretary-General, partially as a result of the Japanese diplomatic efforts at the United Nations.

47. Japan (MOFA), *Diplomatic Bluebook 2012*, 9.

48. JICA, *JICA’s “Human Security” Approach*, 5

49. UN General Assembly, *2005 World Summit Outcome (A/RES/60/1)*, 31.

The promotion and implementation of the Human Security concept in the Japanese foreign policy agenda is the result of Japan's demand for a guiding concept that represents universal principles. It has become part of Japanese political values, to be promoted internationally, and is one dimension of Japan's Soft Power. Secondly, Human Security also serves as the basis for the implementation of Japanese ODA.

Japan's international engagement with human security, whether through ODA, public diplomacy, peacekeeping and peacebuilding activities, seems not to have been followed by a similar commitment at a domestic level. Nevertheless after the triple catastrophe of March 2011, an earthquake, tsunami and nuclear meltdown, there is an increasing changing of perceptions about the meaning of human security. Whilst the initial trigger for human security came after the Asian economic crisis of 1997, disaster relief and reconstruction efforts are now on top of the agenda. Several non-governmental initiatives are taking place in order to deepen the domestic engagement with the concept. The University of Tokyo created the 'Human Security Forum' in 2011, while the Mainichi Newspaper created the 'Human Security for 15-year olds'. Simultaneously the Japanese government has decided to include Human Security in the textbooks of Junior and High School students. Therefore the international promotion of human security doesn't exclude a domestic dimension, however to analyse this concept as a diplomatic tool its international dimension must be emphasized.

Japan's engagement with the international promotion and protection of human rights has also been part of the country's strategy to improve its image and its level of global attractiveness. Japan ratified all the main conventions that regulate the protection of international human rights. Namely, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966), the International Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Racial Discrimination (1965), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979), and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). In addition to the individual rights protected by the Japanese Constitution, these international human rights, if directly applicable, can be invoked before the courts in Japan.⁵⁰

Japan has also actively participated in the UN Commission on Human Rights since 1982. Moreover it has also increased its contribution to the Voluntary Fund for Advisory Services and Technical Assistance, while providing about US\$ 1 million every year to the UN Funds on human rights. This shows the strong commitment of Japan in the area of Human Rights which is also expressed through its ODA conditionality clause:

"Guided by the belief that human rights are universal, Japan has expressed its concern for human rights violations, calling on countries of concern to improve their human rights situations. Japan pays full attention to the human rights situations and efforts for promoting democratization as proclaimed in the ODA Charter. When any improvement in human rights situations or any trace of democratization is recognized, Japan helps

50. Hayashi, *Political Economy of Japan – Growth, Challenges and Prospects for a Well-Being Nation*, 258-259



these changes through aid. On the contrary, when the situation is clearly accusable, Japan reviews its ODA projects to the country concerned.”⁵¹

The Japanese foreign policy agenda demonstrates a clear commitment to the universality of Human Rights, therefore challenging the “Asian values” theory: “Japan has strongly supported UN activities in the human rights field, believing that all human rights are universal.”⁵² This belief was also reinforced with Japan’s candidature for the UN Human Rights Council: “The Human Rights Council is expected to play an important international role in the area of human rights. During its tenure as a Council member, Japan continued to attach importance in the conduct of diplomacy to universal values such as human rights and democracy. It has made positive contributions to the protection and promotion of human rights through such means as nation-building support and technical assistance.”⁵³ Japan was also elected to serve again on the Council from 2013, with the aim of contributing further to improving human rights situations around the world. Furthermore commitments to human rights and human security have been in numerous references in the Joint Statements with the US, Japan’s key alliance: “Japan and the United States share a commitment to democracy, the rule of law, open societies, human rights, human security, and free and open markets, these values guide us in our joint efforts to address the challenges of our time.”⁵⁴

This case study provides evidence of how incorporating human rights and human security into Japanese foreign policy illustrates the differences between the political values of Japan and other countries in Asia, namely China and North Korea, as well as Singapore (although a benign authoritarian regime), Cambodia, Myanmar, and other non-democratic countries. If there is the need for a division on the debate about human rights and human security, it could be based on the “Democracy *versus* Authoritarian Regimes” dichotomy.

Conclusion

In summary, Human Security has become part of Japan’s soft power strategy. It clarifies Japanese political values in the international society and it contributes to enhance the country’s sympathetic support and reputation.⁵⁵

Japan’s political values are clearly aligned with the liberal democracies, despite the country having its own Asian cultural background. The formulation of Japanese foreign policy is clearly influenced by these values. The triangulation between human rights, human security and pacifism, gives Japanese foreign policy a unique character and an hybrid structure, mixing realist elements connected with the country’s national interest, and idealist elements related with human-centred principles. This not only benefits Japan’s reputation, image and level of attractiveness, but also, eventually, the international protection of human rights and promotion of liberal democratic values within the international society.

51. Japan (MOFA), “Human Rights”, http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/un/pamph2000_archive/human.html (Accessed 20 June 2012).

52. Japan (MOFA), “Human Rights”, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/human/index.html> (Accessed 20 June 2012).

53. Yamane, “Statement by Mr. Ryuji Yamane Parliamentary Senior Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan High-level Segment of the Human Rights Council”, February 2012, http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/svm/statement120228_2.html (Accessed 20 June 2012)

54. Japan et al., *United States-Japan Joint Statement: A Shared Vision for the Future*

55. Japanese Diplomat, Osaka, 27 July 2012, personal interview.



Today's global order is evolving into an "asymmetric multipolar" world. The United States' hegemonic power still prevails, while other rising powers increasingly assume a fundamental role within the international system, therefore participating in the definition of norms and rules that may guide the relation between states in international politics. Among these emerging powers, non-democratic or authoritarian countries like China underline a set of values that far from considering a human-centred point of view actually relegate the international protection of human rights to a place of lesser relevance. At the same time, Asia is becoming the geostrategic centre of international politics, making it increasingly important to properly appreciate the role of middle powers like Japan in terms of defending the liberal and universal human-centred political values.

Since the 1990's, a new security paradigm, based on the notion of ensuring 'freedom from fear' and 'freedom from want' for all human beings has attracted the interest, approval, and critique from scholars and policymakers. Human security became an important tool for both states and international organizations in developing and implementing more human-centred policies. The relationship between human rights and human security seems to be complementary and indivisible, and both concepts are fundamental to ensure the protection of human dignity in a changing world with a rapid global power shift, which will probably trigger increasing security challenges and threats.

As the 21st century continues to witness the reformulation of states' foreign policy agendas in a way that underlines the centrality of Asia in international politics, Japan's early adoption of human security principles, and ongoing contribution to the global agenda in this area, assumes particular relevance. This is even more the case when considering the rising ideological tensions within the Asia region and beyond between democratic and authoritarian values in the context of an emerging new global order.

Japanese political values, expressed in its fundamental legal text, the constitution, are clearly aligned with the international protection of universal human rights and with the promotion of human security. Indeed, Japan has been a crucial actor on the development of the intellectual concept and the implementation of human security through its financial support to the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security, the establishment of the Commission on Human Security, and the revision of its Official Development Assistance charter to meet human security guidelines.

Since the renewal of its ODA charter in 2003, JICA has been one of the main agencies responsible for the practical application of the human security concept. Japan's international cooperation targets poverty (freedom from want) and conflicts or disasters (freedom from fear). Simultaneously human security has been an important concept while engaging in peacekeeping and peacebuilding activities, in line with the Article 9 and Japan's commitment to pacifism.

Japan's political values are in harmony with the liberal democratic values. The formulation of Japanese foreign policy is therefore clearly influenced by a triangulation between human rights, human security and peace-related values, giving Japanese foreign policy a unique character and an hybrid structure and mixing realist elements connected with the country's



national interest and idealist elements related with human-centred principles. This not only benefits Japan's reputation, image and level of attractiveness, but also, eventually, the international protection of human rights and promotion of liberal democratic values within the international society.

The Japanese case study also provides evidence of a possible match and interrelation between national interest, human rights and human security policies. This interdependence can be mutually beneficial, from both a human-centred and westphalian perspective. Human-centred policies are still fundamental to ensure or at least promote, individual dignity and peace, whilst simultaneously satisfying the realist or nation-centred impulse through soft power or nation-branding strategies. Ultimately promoting human rights and the human security paradigm can be a win-win situation for nation-state policymakers, as human-centred policies may mutually protect individuals and benefit the national interest of states.

Japan is rediscovering the potential of promoting the human security agenda using this as a public diplomacy tool to simultaneously maximize its international prestige and reputation. Through promoting the human security concept, Japan continues to address and prioritize respect for human dignity. At the same time, the country advances this aspect of its foreign policy agenda within a context of some fairly unique constitutional constraints and historical issues, consolidating its position as a global and regional power while respecting its post-WWII tradition of pacifism. This Underlines Japan's democratic and human-centred values vis-à-vis a rising authoritarian China, bestows on Tokyo a fundamental role to play in the emerging new global order.



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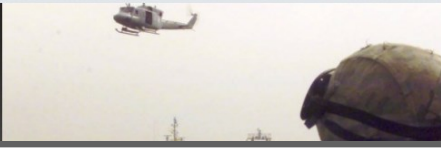
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