

# Returning to a New Normal in U.S.-Japan Relations

Stephanie A. Weston\*

## Summary

It is an important time to examine what is the return to a new normal in U.S.-Japan relations including three catalysts which are helping to shape this dynamic. This paper further analyzes this return by looking at the impact of these catalysts on economic recovery and leadership, diplomacy and security dynamics. Specifically, the first catalyst is the Trump presidency, a disruptive force domestically and internationally for America First, trade protectionism and unilateralism. The second catalyst is COVID-19. Both nations are still struggling to end the virus, which continues to have tremendous impact on national and global economies. And the third catalyst is new leadership in both the U.S. and Japan. In the U.S., in 2020, Joseph Biden and Kamala Harris were elected as the next president and vice president respectively, bringing a close to the Trump Era. In Japan, Prime Minister Suga, who replaced the long serving Prime Minister Abe, will also contribute to the next chapter in U.S.-Japan relations. In conclusion, various catalysts are fostering

---

\*Professor, Faculty of Law

a new normal in U.S.-Japan relations for new collaborations, innovations and dynamics for and beyond this important partnership.

Key words: Trump Era, Biden Presidency, New Normal, U.S.-Japan Relations, Coronavirus

## Introduction

It is an important time to examine what is the return to a new normal in U.S.-Japan relations including three catalysts which are helping to shape this dynamic. This paper further analyzes this return by looking at the impact of the catalysts on economic recovery, leadership, diplomacy and security dynamics. Specifically, the first catalyst is the Trump presidency, a disruptive force domestically and internationally for America First, trade protectionism and unilateralism. Yet in spite of Trump's aggressive push against allies including Japan on economic and defense policies, Japan continued to work towards a stronger U.S.-Japan partnership, while further strengthening its global role.

The second catalyst is COVID-19. While the initial epicenter of the disease is allegedly Wuhan, China, COVID-19 later became a pandemic. On December 5, 2020, there were 84,377,385 cases worldwide and 1,835,234 corona related deaths.<sup>1</sup> The U.S. now has more than 19 million corona virus cases and close to 350,000 corona related deaths.<sup>2</sup> In Japan, there have been close to

---

<sup>1</sup> *Worldometer*, "Coronavirus Update (Live): 84,377,385 Cases and 1,835,234 Deaths from COVID-19 Virus Pandemic," January 2, 2021, <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/>

<sup>2</sup> Center for Disease Control, *CDC-COVID Data Tracker* (Atlanta, Georgia: DCD, 2020), 1, [https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#cases\\_casesper\\_100klast7days](https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#cases_casesper_100klast7days) (updated December 31, 2020.)

217,312 confirmed cases of COVID-19 with approximately 3,213 corona related deaths.<sup>3</sup> Beyond these statistics, both nations are still struggling to end the virus, which continues to have tremendous impact on national and global economies.

And the third catalyst is new leadership in both the U.S. and Japan. In the U.S., in 2020, Joseph Biden and Kamala Harris were elected as the next president and vice president respectively, bringing to a close to the Trump era. In Japan, Prime Minister Suga, who replaced the long serving Prime Minister Abe in September of 2020, is expected to build on his predecessor's legacy and contribute to the next chapter in U.S.-Japan relations, while combating the pandemic, rebuilding the economy and dealing with regional and international challenges.

In conclusion, these catalysts or disruptions which are fostering a return to a new normal in U.S. -Japan relations for new collaborations, innovations and dynamics for and beyond this important partnership.

## I. The New Normal

### The Trump Presidency, 2020 U.S. Elections, Domestic & Foreign Policies

In 2016, President Trump, the non-establishment ethnic populist, first competed against 16 traditional politicians to win the Republican nomination and then against Hillary Clinton for the White House. At that time, he lost the popular vote but won 306 electoral votes. Most polls did not predict his

---

<sup>3</sup> *Nippon.com*, "Coronavirus Cases by Country." December 25,2020, <https://www.nippon.com/en/japan-data/h00673/coronavirus-cases-by-country.html> (updated December 27, 2020)

overwhelming victory. As president, Trump became a divisive force domestically and internationally. Under the Trump administration, there was a dysfunctional national government in which the President did not rely on traditional decision-making processes, disrespected the lines separating the three branches of government and tried to undermine the voting processes for the U.S. presidential election in 2020. Whistleblowers, internal auditors of the executive branch as well as heads of agencies not in agreement with Trump were often dismissed.

While the Trump era was characterized by divisiveness domestically, his administration also contributed to disruption internationally. In the Trump era, we saw an increased emphasis on transactional diplomacy and negotiations, for example, that went around the State Department or Department of Defense when it could. Instead of working through a vision based on standard preparations for interactions with friendly nations, rivals or enemies, Trump promoted personal relations and spur of the moment decisions which took allies by surprise or antagonized rivals.

Trump's America First, trade protectionism and unilateralism led to a decline in U.S.' international leadership; the encouragement of more Chinese and North Korean military aggression; the build up by Iran of nuclear materials, a U.S.-China trade war; disagreements with the U.S.' Transatlantic partners and new trade groupings without U.S. participation. In many cases, Trump, while pushing back on allies about economic and defense policies including Japan, worked to foster closer relations with autocratic governments such as Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Russia and North Korea.

Trump's withdrawal from various multilateral organizations or mechanisms like TPP, the Paris Climate Accord and the Iran Nuclear Deal (JCPOA)

or his decision to withdraw U.S. funding from WHO made a statement about America First but “opened up vacuums for growing Chinese influence or other nations like Japan to show global leadership.” In addition, Trump’s aggressive approach to China—the U.S.’ number one strategic rival through increasing tariffs, abuse over COVID-19 and the strengthening of U.S.-Taiwan relations beyond his predecessors pushed China in ways not attempted by other Presidents. Many inside and outside of the U.S. see this aggressive approach positively, however, China at the same time is regaining ground after COVID-19, moving ahead with strategic advancement in the South and East China seas and continues to crack down on human rights.

In 2020, as the incumbent-President Trump-ran again for President with three major challengers and some minor ones from his party. At the same time, the Democrats had over 20 candidates competing for the Democratic Presidential nomination. Former Vice President Joseph Biden, now the 46th President, finally became the consensus candidate of the Democratic Party over his top challenger and very popular progressive – Bernie Sanders. Biden, in spite of the Trump administration’s claims to an alternative reality, won the election definitively with ‘306 electoral votes (Trump 232 electoral votes) and 51.3% of the popular vote (Trump 46.9%).’<sup>4</sup>

The fact that President Trump kept many of his campaign promises to his base including tax cuts, a tough stance on immigration, the pullout of TPP and the Paris Climate Accord, renegotiation of trade deals and the strengthening of the economy, contributed to the large percentage of votes he received in the 2020 Presidential election. Although the Republicans lost their

---

<sup>4</sup> “Presidential Results,” *CNN Politics*, November 23, 2020, <https://www.cnn.com/election/2020/results/president> (accessed December 5, 2020)

lead in the Senate, the President's party did well in the House of Representatives. The electoral turnout on behalf of the incumbent President and Republican Congressmen and Senators reflect how divided the American public is over key domestic issues in this election – the management of the corona virus, the economy, law and order, health, immigration and social justice. And in spite of the Homeland Security's certification of correct handling of electoral processes during the 2020 Presidential election, there are those in the U. S. including President Trump or even abroad who feel that the election was stolen from Trump. According to a Reuters/Ipsos poll, for example, 52% of Republicans said that Trump "rightfully won." while only 29% said that Biden had rightfully won."<sup>5</sup>

The Trump administration will officially come to a close with the inauguration of the Biden administration on January 20, 2021. The election of Joseph Biden, the oldest candidate to be elected President, and Kamala Harris, an African American of Jamaican and Indian roots, represents on many levels the transition to a new normal in the U.S. The old order still represented by older white men continues but the evolving new normal in the U.S. is reflected in the election of Senator Kamala Harris to the Vice Presidency, the six women – Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard (Hawaii), Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (New York), Senator Amy Klobuchar (Minnesota); Senator Elizabeth Warren (Massachusetts); Author Marianne Williamson, who ran for U.S. president including originally Senator Kamala Harris; former Mayor of South Bend, Indiana Pete Buttigieg, a gay candidate; businessman Andrew Yang,

---

<sup>5</sup> Chris Kahn, "Half of Republicans say Biden won because of a 'rigged election: Reuters/Ipsos Poll/Reuters," *Reuters*, November 18, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-election-Poll-idUSKBN27Y1AJ>

an Asian American; former HUD secretary Juan Castro, a Hispanic American as well as Miramar, Florida Mayor Wayne Messam, former Governor of Massachusetts Patrick Deval and former Mayor of Newark Cory Booker, all African American men. Prior to this Presidential campaign, the largest number of women were elected to U.S. Congress in 2018. Now “a record number of women, racial minorities and members of the LGBTQ community make the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress the most diverse in history.”<sup>6</sup>

Vice President Kamala Harris has broken the White House glass ceiling for women in one of the top positions. She has built on the bricks that past female candidates for President or Vice President have put in place. An African American with both immigrant parents – one from India– a burgeoning country in Asia and an important U.S. ally and the other from Jamaica, West Indies. Hopefully, she can serve as a bridge among different ethnicities as well as between the U.S. and the Indo Pacific. Most importantly, she and Biden need to unite Americans whether they voted for the Biden-Harris ticket or not.

The Biden-Harris ticket was an evolution of processes that had already been set in motion. America saw the debut of the first African American president, so why not an African American woman in the White House. As Vice President-elect Kamala Harris stated in her victory speech on November 7<sup>th</sup>, Biden “had the audacity to select a woman of color as his running mate.” It is significant that Biden served with the first African American president and now has an African American woman as his vice president.

---

<sup>6</sup> Barbara Sprunt, “Here’s a Look at Congress’ Incoming Freshman Class,” NPR, January 3, 2021, <https://www.npr.org/2021/01/03/951481488/heres-a-look-at-congress-incoming-freshman-class>

Moreover, “91% of Black Women,”<sup>7</sup> voted for Biden.

Is this diversity of candidates for U.S. Congress and U.S. President as well as a woman of color as U.S. Vice President, the passing of the torch from an old political framework to a new one which goes beyond color, gender, religion and sexual orientation? Indeed, Biden has already nominated Pete Buttigieg for U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary. If his nomination is approved by the U.S. Senate, he will become the first openly gay cabinet member. Biden also made other cabinet level nomination firsts, such as an African American for U.S. Department of Defense Secretary ; a Native American for U.S. Department of Interior Secretary and a Hispanic American for Department of Education Secretary. ‘At the end of the nomination process, Biden’s cabinet promises to be the most diverse in history.’<sup>8</sup>

In the new normal, division inside of ethnic groups have grown and political party identities have shifted. How will the two major parties transform themselves to the new normal post Trump? How will movements like Black Lives Matter, Me# Too and other social movements as well as fringe groups impact on America going ahead? We have already seen one impact as various supporters outside of Black Americans have joined their voices to the Black Lives Matter, demonstrating globally. And the Me#Too movement has also influenced similar groups in other countries. Beyond these questions, protection of civil rights, individual liberties, maintaining law order and clos-

---

<sup>7</sup> Courtney Connley, “Black Women Continue to be the Democratic Party’s most powerful weapon,” *CNBC Make It*, November 6, 2020, <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/11/06/black-women-continue-to-be-the-democratic-partys-most-powerful-weapon.html>

<sup>8</sup> Ritu Prasad, “Biden cabinet: Does this new team better reflect America?”, BBC, December 17, 2020.

ing social and economic disparities will remain important issues in the new normal. How the Biden-Harris administration handles these challenges will also inform their foreign policy choices including the return to a new normal with Japan.

## COVID-19

Amidst the division, there are many factors that contributed to the Biden-Harris final victory in the 2020 U.S. presidential race. However, one very important catalyst for this victory was COVID-19, a major contributor to the new normal not only in the U.S. but also worldwide. This corona virus or COVID-19 allegedly started in Wuhan, China in 2019 but China did not openly disclose this information until later. One source of this coronavirus was through people who returned from Wuhan, China directly to the U.S. or via Europe. Other sources are attributed to “unknown origins or community spread, where there is no known nexus to travel.”<sup>9</sup> Later the virus spread to all fifty U.S. states.

The Trump administration knew about the seriousness of the new pandemic at an early stage but underplayed it to the public.<sup>10</sup> In addition, the president did not actively foster simple protocol like the wearing of masks to prevent the virus from spreading or strongly back the scientists who spoke out about the pandemic’s seriousness. The national government’s less than speedy responses concerning testing and tracing as well as the supply of PPE

---

<sup>9</sup> Erin Schumaker, “Coronavirus map: Tracking the spread in the U.S. and around the world,” *ABC News*, August 7, 2020, <https://abcnews.go.com/Health/coronavirus-map-tracking-spread-us-world/story?id=69415591>

<sup>10</sup> Bob Woodward, *Rage* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2020), p. 286.

(Personal Protective Equipment) also did not help to slow the spread of the virus. And now the U.S. not only has the largest number of COVID-19 cases in the world but also the largest number of coronavirus related deaths. Although the President himself, his family and key staff later became sick with the virus, the President did not show great concern about the worsening of the pandemic situation in the U.S., even during the waning days of his lame duck presidency.

Living in the era of COVID-19, has created a new and difficult normal, stressful for families, students, educators, businesses and international relations. In this era of COVID-19, more people in the U.S., for example, have died than the in the combined wars of World War I, the Korean War and the Vietnam War,<sup>11</sup> national borders are closed, supply chain operations are disrupted, unemployment increased dramatically, businesses ended, discrimination against first responders increased, travel was impeded and schools educated students remotely. On the other hand, telework increased, innovative ways to adapt to new business demand due to coronavirus have grown and reinventing one's lifestyle has become a part of the new normal in both the U. S. and Japan.

## Japan in the Trump Era

With these dynamics in mind, Japan, during the Trump era, was principally under the leadership of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who stepped down due to chronic illness in September of 2020. Prime Minister Abe proactively

---

<sup>11</sup> Nina Strohlic, Kelsey Nowakowski and Katie Armstrong, "U.S. coronavirus deaths now surpass fatalities in the Vietnam War," *National Geographic* (2020); par. 1, <https://www.national-geographic.com/history/2020/04/coronavirus-death-toll-vietnam-war-cvd/>

met with President elect Trump at Trump Towers to ensure that U.S.-Japan relations under the new administration got off to the right start. Although the two leaders met many times over Trump's four years in office including one state visit to Japan and a special visit to meet the new Japanese emperor in the Reiwa era, the U.S. policy choices concerning TPP, Iran, China, North Korea, the alliance, bilateral trade and transnational issues such as globalization and climate change did not always line up with Japanese policy positions. Subsequently, this caused economic or political fallout for Japan. Or in some cases, these dynamics encouraged Japan to move on without the U.S. when it was in the former's national interests.

Given, however, the nature of the U.S.-Japan partnership and the level of threats in the Indo-Pacific, importantly, President Trump and Prime Minister Abe worked to make the "U.S.-Japan alliance even greater." Before the Trump administration, Japan had already started to make contributions to the global community an integral part of Self Defense Forces' responsibilities. This was emphasized Post 9/11 but has expanded even further post 3.11. The Abe administration, as will be discussed in the latter part of this paper, brought about many changes in Japan's burden sharing capabilities and support of the alliance. The Prime Minister also promoted proactive contribution to peace by Japan and reinterpretation of Article 9 to allow collective self-defense due arising security concerns, such as 'technological developments and the changing nature of threats, an international power shift, the deepening and enlarging of U.S.-Japan relations, operation of multilateral security frameworks and the need to handle international contingencies and Self Defense Force activities.'<sup>12</sup>

Beyond the alliance, the U.S. and Japan concluded two trade agreements

and strengthened the nexus between Japan's Free and Open Indo Pacific vision and the U.S.' Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) strategy. Concurrently, Trump's America First, making America Great Again, unilateralism, ethnic nationalism and trade protectionism contributed to the disruption of the liberal international order. Alternatively, Japanese leadership stayed invested in the liberal international order, strengthening the alliance, balancing between the U.S. and China and promoting economy recovery. Moreover, Japan's role on the global stage continued to flourish in the U.S.' absence in multilateral mechanisms.

In spite of U.S.-Japan divergence in different areas during the Trump era, the partnership endured based on common aspirations for regional and global security and prosperity. One challenge for Japan going forward in the new normal in U.S.-Japan relations is to sustain its stronger Japanese leadership on the global stage post Prime Minister Abe while addressing old and new contingencies domestically and internationally. And the U.S., while reestablishing trust in its leadership, must also reconnect with Japan over past divergences and work together for a stronger bilateral relationship and the strengthening of the international liberal order. Key to all of these efforts is the economic recovery of both nations.

## II. Economic Recovery

### Economic Impact of COVID-19

---

<sup>12</sup> Office of the Prime Minister of Japan, 安全保障の法的基盤の再構築に関する懇談会、報告書（概要）(Tokyo, Japan, Kantei, 2014), 4, <https://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/singi/anzenhosyou/2/dai7/gaiyou.pdf>

Looking at the return to the new normal in U.S.-Japan relations concerning economic recovery, first let's look back to the President Obama administration. It kicked off with the Lehman Brothers Shock and two wars in the Middle East leftover from President George W. Bush's administration. Newly inaugurated President Barack Obama along with Vice President Biden worked with Congress to pass then the largest stimulus package in U.S. history. The government also continued President Bush's bailout of the auto industry. Over a span of 8 years, the unemployment rate in the U.S. fell from about a high of 10% in October 2009 to 4.7% in January 2017.<sup>13</sup> At the end of President Obama's second term, the U.S. GDP was at 1.8% (-4.4% in 2009; peaking at 5.1 in 2014) and 868,000 jobs had been created.<sup>14</sup> In addition, he promoted trade through multilateral and bilateral FTAs.

President Trump continued to build up the economy through the promotion of America First, corporate tax cuts, increased tariffs on China as well as on allies. Economic security became an important keyword for U.S. trade protectionism including its trade war with China. Moreover, the economy did move ahead under Trump initially: 'unemployment went down and mining, logging and manufacturing jobs grew'<sup>15</sup> He did manage to grow the economy slightly more than President George W. Bush or President Barack Obama

---

<sup>13</sup> Joseph Zeballos-Roig, "9 charts comparing economy under Trump to Obama, Bush presidential terms," *Business Insider*, October 23, 2020, <https://www.businessinsider.com/charts-contrasting-trump-economy-obama-bush-administrations-republicans-democrats-2020-10>

<sup>14</sup> Meg Kelly, "The 'Trump economy' vs. the 'Obama economy,'" *The Washington Post*, September 9, 2018, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2018/09/18/trump-economy-versus-obama-economy>

<sup>15</sup> James Politi and Brooke Fox, "The rise and fall of the Trump economy in charts," *Financial Times*, November 4, 2020, <https://www.ft.com/content/8126446c-4959-4e87-8c78-3546bbf2ebc2>

but not more than President Bill Clinton.<sup>16</sup> In addition, the Bureau of Economic Analysis did show at the end of October 2020 that “the U.S. economy grew 7.4% in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter and recovered 2/3 of losses that occurred in the first quarter,”<sup>17</sup> even as a U.S. recession continues. However, the President’s trade war with China did not bring all the benefits anticipated. The U.S. government had to subsidize farmers due to retaliatory trade measures from China, ‘supply chains were disrupted and prices increased for producers and consumers.’<sup>18</sup> Also, the benefits from the Phase 1 trade agreement later negotiated with China were slowed by the corona virus pandemic.

Undeniably, ‘the corona virus has impacted heavily on the U.S. economy. For example, the 3.5% unemployment rate in February of 2020, which was lower than the rate at the end of the Obama administration, later peaked at 15% in April due to the pandemic. Presently, the rate sits at 7.5%.<sup>19</sup> Although Trump declared a national emergency related to the corona virus, he undermined the importance of fighting the pandemic with failure to promote earlier the seriousness of the pandemic to the American public and comprehensive measures to slow the spread. His attitude about not wearing masks, the questioning of the science behind the disease, the holding of super spreader

---

<sup>16</sup> Joseph Zeballos-Roig, “9 charts comparing economy under Trump to Obama, Bush presidential terms,” *Business Insider*, October 23, 2020, <https://www.businessinsider.com/charts-contrasting-trump-economy-obama-bush-administrations-republicans-democrats-2020-10>

<sup>17</sup> Rachel Siegel and Andrew Van Dam, “GDP grew at record 7.4 pace in the third quarter from July to September,” *The Washington Post*, October 29, 2020, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2020/10/29/third-quarter-gdp-economy/>

<sup>18</sup> Yukon Huang and Jeremy Smith, “In U.S.-China Trade War, New Supply Chains Rattle Markets,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace,” June 24, 2020, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/06/24/in-u.s.-china-trade-war-new-supply-chains-rattle-markets-pub-82145>

<sup>19</sup> Same as footnote 16.

rallies and lack of empathy for those families who lost members to COVID-19 did not help.

To address the damage to the economy by the corona virus, the U.S. Congress passed different corona relief related bills including the \$2.2 trillion CARES Act in March of 2020 but were still fighting over the costs to extend that Act. Although they failed to pass it before the U.S. Presidential elections in November of 2020, they finally agreed on a “\$900 billion coronavirus relief bill as part of a larger bill to fund the U.S. government for fiscal year 2021.”<sup>20</sup> Specifically the Democrats had wanted a “2.2 trillion package, which includes money for schools, small businesses, state and local governments and unemployment insurance.”<sup>21</sup> The Republicans were aiming for a “\$500 billion bill, narrowly targeted at schools, at healthcare providers, at PPP and of course, liability reform.”<sup>22</sup> Subsequently, President Trump just before Christmas threatened to veto the overall bill—Consolidated Appropriations Act (H.R. 133), while pushing for a larger individual check payout from \$600 to \$2,000. President Trump finally signed the Act on December 27, 2020 into law.

While battling the corona virus, the new administration will have to sustain economy recovery. Both the U.S. and Japan will hopefully be coming out of the corona virus pandemic at some point next year. We have already heard that Pfizer, an American multinational pharmaceutical company, along

---

<sup>20</sup> Garrett Watson and Erica York, “Congress Passes \$900 Billion Coronavirus Relief Bill,” Tax Foundation, December 21, 2020, <https://taxfoundation.org/coronavirus-relief-bill-stimulus-check>

<sup>21</sup> Jacob Pramuk, “Coronavirus stimulus update: McConnell, Schumer, Pelosi have not held talks,” *CNBC*, November 18, 2020, <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/11/17/coronavirus-stimulus-bill-mcconnell-schumer-pelosi-have-not-held-talks.html>

<sup>22</sup> Ditto.

with its German partner BioNTech, has developed a vaccine that has proved more than 90% effective.<sup>23</sup> And Moderna, a U.S. biotechnology company, has created another vaccine.. effective<sup>24</sup>These and other vaccines, as introduced into the market, will help stem the tide of the virus. This represents a key milestone. Just as important as this milestone is how both the U.S. and Japan have been transformed in terms of productivity, resiliency and awareness of needed preparedness for global crises.

COVID-19 further deepened our comprehension of the world's interconnectivity, for example, not only by supply chains, environmental degradation, disease and social media but also by shared technology, common concern for humanity and innovation to come. How the U.S. and Japan tackle the new normal including overcoming the coronavirus can contribute to a ground-work for a deeper partnership.

Concerning the coronavirus, one positive step is already occurring. As President-elect, Biden already established a Corona Virus Task Force and appointed three co-chairs. Bringing an end to the pandemic in the U.S. is a huge challenge with the present decentralized approach under the Trump administration. In addition, the Trump administration's failure to quickly recognize its loss of the 2020 elections impeded a smooth transition to the President elect Biden transition team's grasp of upcoming contingencies including containment of the coronavirus. Although outgoing President Trump did not

---

<sup>23</sup> Pfizer, "Pfizer and BioNTech Announce Vaccine Candidate Against COVID-19 Achieved Success in First Interim Analysis From Phase 3 Study/Pfizer Press Release," November 9, 2020, <https://www.pfizer.com/news/press-release/press-release-detail/pfizer-and-biotech-announce-vaccine-candidate-against>

<sup>24</sup> James Gallagher, "Moderna: Covid Vaccine shows nearly 95% protection," *BBC News*, November 2020.

conceded publicly to his loss, the General Services Administration, as of November 23, 2020, confirmed Biden's status as president-elect. Subsequently, the Biden transition team accelerated processes to continue the fight against the virus, once the Biden-Harris administration begins.

Another important step for U.S. economic recovery will be additional bipartisan measures passed by Congress after Biden takes office. However, just as important is Democratic control of both houses of Congress. Democrats already reconfirmed their majority in the U.S. House of Representatives based on the November 2020 election results but needed to cinch two additional U.S. Senate seats in run-off elections at the beginning of January 2021 to also achieve the majority there as well. Subsequently, they achieved this goal. Now these seats along with Vice President Harris' vote to break any voting tie in the U.S. Senate will be key to a Biden administration moving ahead more positively for future economic initiatives.

Biden's promise as well to 'strengthen U.S. economic security through fair trade, innovation and investment in research and development'<sup>25</sup> will be vital for the U.S. economy. As will the new administration's efforts to work through bilateral to multilateral mechanisms to strengthen the international liberal order for global prosperity as well as for the national economic interest.

"Building Back Better" the U.S. Economy is also one of the top priorities of a Biden-Harris administration. They have already stated clearly what is the Biden-Harris Jobs and Economic Recovery Plan for Working Families un-

---

<sup>25</sup> Joseph R. Biden, "Why America Must Lead Again-Rescuing U.S. Foreign Policy After Trump," *Foreign Affairs* (2020); par. 16-17, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-01-23/why-america-must-lead-again>

der Biden-Harris Transition at [buildbackbetter.com](https://buildbackbetter.com). A Biden statement – “The truth is the economy wasn’t working for folks long before these crises hit. It’s why Kamala Harris and I won’t just build back to the way things were—we’ll build back better. We won’t be satisfied until the economy starts working for everyone.”<sup>26</sup>—

also underlines the fact that the U.S. will be returning to a new normal and that a Biden-Harris administration is an evolution of trends which have helped create new dynamics in the U.S.

“The Biden Harris plan then outlines four great national challenges:

- 1) mobilize American manufacturing and innovation to ensure that the future is made in America, and in all of America
- 2) mobilize American ingenuity to build a modern infrastructure and an equitable, clean energy future
- 3) mobilize American talent and heart to build a 21<sup>st</sup> century caregiving and education workforce
- 4) mobilize across the board to advance racial equity in America.”<sup>27</sup>

## Post Abenomics

This economic direction by a Biden-Harris administration also lines up with what Japan is trying to achieve as well post-Abenomics. Abenomics did not achieve all of its goals but worked towards the continual economic recovery of an aging Japan with a still large national debt. Further investment in ‘infrastructure, increased wages, deregulation and womenomics among other

---

<sup>26</sup> Biden-Harris Transition, “Economic Recovery-The Biden-Harris Jobs and Economic Recovery Plan for Working Families,” <https://buildbackbetter.gov/priorities/economic-recovery/>

<sup>27</sup> Ditto.

reforms are still needed.<sup>28</sup> Abenomics created a vision to move the Japanese economy forward but also encountered resistance due higher consumer taxes, corporate lack of willingness to institute structural change as well as fallout from the pandemic including the cancellation of the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo and damage to large as well as small and medium businesses.

Japan's new Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga has picked up Prime Minister Abe's mantle and has made Japan's recovery from the pandemic and economic growth including protection of employment and economic stimulus important policy priorities. In addition, the "Go To Campaign,"<sup>29</sup> which originally kicked off under the Abe administration, started the "Go To Eat" phase of the campaign under the Suga administration. The "Go To Campaign" is giving a boost to businesses in Japan. However, there is concern at the same time over the increase in corona cases tied to the movement of people across prefectures linked to this campaign. Already travel to certain prefectures, prior to December 28, 2020, had been temporarily suspended to stem the rise in infections. In response to further increase in coronavirus cases, the overall campaign was then temporarily suspended from December 28, 2020-January 11, 2021.

---

<sup>28</sup> International Monetary Fund, *Japan Staff Report for the 2018 Article IV Consultation-Press Release; Staff Report; and Statement by the Executive Director for Japan* (Washington D.C.: IMF, 2018), 5, [https://www.imf.org/-/media/Files/Publications/CR/2018/cr\\_18333.ashx](https://www.imf.org/-/media/Files/Publications/CR/2018/cr_18333.ashx)

<sup>29</sup> "The "Go To Campaign," a 1.7 trillion initiative, is a four part campaign including "Go To Travel," "Go To Eat," "Go To Event" and "Go To Shotengai." The campaign is helping the service and entertainment industries in Japan through a coupon and reduced pricing systems for travel, restaurants, theaters, shopping malls etc.' Office of Prime Minister of Japan, 第百段階国会における菅内閣総理大臣所信表明演説 (Tokyo, Japan: 総理大臣官邸、2020), [https://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/99\\_suga/statement/2020/1026shoshinhyomei.html](https://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/99_suga/statement/2020/1026shoshinhyomei.html); Rachel E.T. Davies, "Breaking down Japan's Go to Travel Campaign, *Japan Times*, October 18, 2020, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/life/2020/10/18/travel/breaking-down-go-to-travel-campaign>

Prime Minister Suga is also promoting innovation while working towards a carbon neutral Japan in 2050. And like incoming Biden-Harris administration, the Japanese administration supports less dependence on fossil fuels and more development of alternative energy. And both Biden-Harris talk about fostering new talent as does Prime Minister Suga through small and medium businesses as well as ventures.<sup>30</sup>

The need for further digitalization of the economy was underscored during the pandemic and has become an important goal of the Suga government. In addition, as described in one article, the Suga administration needs to ‘upgrade Prime Minister’s Abe’s proposed reforms: loosening labor markets; reducing bureaucracy; tweaking tax and regulatory measures to catalyze a startup boom; taking steps to increase productivity; empowering women; and importing more talent from abroad.’<sup>31</sup>

Although Japan does not talk about racial equity, it still needs to embrace more diversity of people in the globalization of its national economy. The coronavirus is an important test of such a challenge. As Japan went on lockdown as a measure to slow the spread of the pandemic and then lifted certain restrictions, foreign students and foreign residents experienced many obstacles to returning to Japan if they departed before the coronavirus spiked in Japan. And although Japanese could come and go more freely with less restrictions than resident foreigners, questions were raised about why this unequal treatment was occurring.

---

<sup>30</sup> Office of Prime Minister of Japan, 第百三回国会における菅内閣総理大臣所信表明演説 (Tokyo, Japan: 総理大臣官邸、2020), [https://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/99\\_suga/statement/2020/1026\\_shoshinhyomei.html](https://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/99_suga/statement/2020/1026_shoshinhyomei.html)

<sup>31</sup> William Pesek, “Japan’s Suga crawls but needs to Sprint,” *Asia Times*, October 29, 2020, <https://asiatimes.com/2020/10/japans-suga-crawls-but-needs-to-sprint/>

Important as well to economic recovery are trade relations. Trump as a presidential candidate accused Japan of being an unfair trader. As president, he then withdrew from TPP and imposed high steel tariffs on exporters of steel to the U.S. including its good ally Japan. After Japan concluded CPTPP, the U.S. and Japan signed the U.S. Japan Trade Agreement and the U.S.-Japan Digital Trade Agreement on October 7, 2019. In the former case, the agreement “will eliminate or reduce tariffs on certain agricultural and industrial products,”<sup>32</sup> and in the latter case, ‘high standards and comprehensive set of provisions concerning priority areas of digital trade are addressed.’<sup>33</sup> With the conclusion of these agreements, no additional tariffs were levied on Japan’s automobiles but high tariffs on steel remain. Perhaps, under the Biden-Harris administration, the U.S. could join the CPTPP which replaced the defunct TPP after U.S. withdrawal from the pact.

On the other hand, President Trump’s trade war with China, which involved mounting tariffs on Chinese goods as well as restrictions on the import of Huawei products to the U.S. and similar requests of U.S. allies for these restrictions, has also caused problems for Japan’s technology. Although the U.S.-China trade war under Trump ended in January of 2020 with a phase I agreement, U.S. aggressive trade actions against China caused economic damage for Japanese companies doing business with China. Subsequently, the Abe administration came up with ‘a \$2.2 billion stimulus for Japanese

---

<sup>32</sup> USTR, *U.S.-Japan Trade Agreement Text* (Washington, D.C.: USTR, 2019), 1, September 2019, <https://ustr.gov/countries-regions/japan-korea-apec/japan/us-japan-trade-agreement-negotiations/us-japan-trade-agreement-text>

<sup>33</sup> USTR, *Fact Sheet on U.S. Japan Agreement* (Washington D.C.: USTR, 2019), 9, <https://ustr.gov/about-us/policy-offices/press-office/fact-sheets/2019/september/fact-sheet-us-japan-trade-agreement>

businesses in China to help them move their supply chain from China back to Japan or elsewhere.<sup>34</sup>

Beyond trade frictions, the Abe administration proactively led efforts to create the CPTPP in lieu of TPP. Also Japan has signed the Japan-EU Economic Partnership agreement. And now under Prime Minister Suga administration, Japan is one of 15 nations who signed the RCEP on November 16, 2020. At the same time, Japan, China and Korea, while working towards a trilateral FTA, have already signed the Trilateral Agreement for the Promotion, Facilitation and Protection of Investment. These are all important efforts for Japan to adjust to the new normal.

Both U.S. and Japan, with new leadership at the helm, see economic recovery as one of their most important priorities. And of course, both nations' investment in infrastructure and innovation as well as key business sectors will be vital. The expansion of trade relations between the two nations through the present bilateral agreement and or multilateral agreements will be another way forward for economic recovery and security. Just as important as economic recovery in the return to a new normal in U.S.-Japan relations are leadership, diplomacy and security dynamics.

### III. Leadership, Diplomacy and Security Dynamics in the New Normal Leadership

In the new normal, U.S.-Japan relations will continue to be an important pillar of both nations' foreign policies. It is the national interest of both coun-

---

<sup>34</sup> Isabel Reynolds and Emi Urabe, "Japan to Fund Firms to Shift Production out of China," *Bloomberg*, April 8, 2020, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-04-08/japan-to-fund-firms-to-shift-production-out-of-china>

tries to continue strong and constructive relations in an atmosphere of mutual trust to maximize economic opportunity, strengthen respective national security and unite a global community invested in a liberal international order for peace and prosperity.

For strong and constructive U.S.-Japanese relations in the return to a new normal, restoration of confidence in U.S.' leadership and overall image overseas is imperative. Perceptions about U.S. leadership impact on its influence and power in the global community. In a recent Pew Research poll, it showed that people 'had the least confidence in Trump compared to leaders from Germany, France, UK, Russia and China to do the right thing regarding world affairs.'<sup>35</sup> At the same time, "those on the ideological right and European supporters of right-wing populist parties tended to have more favorable views of the U.S. than other people surveyed."<sup>36</sup> Concurrently, the same poll showed that '68% of the Japanese people had no confidence in Trump to do the right thing regarding world affairs.'<sup>37</sup> Consequently, the Biden-Harris administration will need to work quickly to restore this confidence in U.S. leadership concerning world affairs.

Part of this restoration will entail rebuilding Americans' as well as the world's confidence in the U.S. democracy. President Trump has often blurred the line between the three branches of government. And after the

---

<sup>35</sup> Jacob Poushter and J.J. Moncus, "How people in 14 countries view the state of the world in 2026," *Pew Research*, September 23, 2020, 9, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/09/23/how-people-in-14-countries-view-the-state-of-the-world-in-2026/>

<sup>36</sup> Ditto.

<sup>37</sup> Richard Wike, Janell Fetterolf and Maria Mordecai, "U.S. Image Plummets Internationally as Most say Country has Handled Coronavirus Badly." *Global Attitudes and Trends*, September 15, 2020, <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2020/09/15/us-image-plummets-internationally-as-most-say-country-has-handled-coronavirus-badly/>

2020 U.S. Presidential election, the Trump administration refusal over an extended period of time to concede the election to President Elect Biden furthered damaged U.S. democracy and standing overseas.

Restored U.S. democratic processes including a functional Congress will be key to returning to a new normal. In addition, it will help a Biden administration move ahead on policies regarding comprehensive immigration reform, climate change, civil rights and closing the economic disparity gap. Along with this shift, one of the biggest challenges for the new administration will be to integrate President Trump's base and the progressive wing of the Democratic Party into the new normal in the U.S. America needs that kind of transformation in order to evolve into a better nation than it has been. The handling of these domestic challenges will also inform many of the decisions the U.S. makes concerning international problems.

The election of Yoshihide Suga –Prime Minister Abe's cabinet secretary – to Prime Minister was a signal that the new government would continue building on Prime Minister Abe's legacies. As already discussed in the section under economic policies, Mr. Suga has already outlined his economic priorities for Japan in his 1<sup>st</sup> speech before the Japanese Parliament. Mr. Suga's leadership is important not only for Japan's economic recovery including the upcoming Olympics and containing the coronavirus but also for further building an inclusive society which adequately addresses the needs of a dwindling as well as aging-super aging populations. Besides managing the U.S.-Japan partnership in a return to a new normal, his upcoming visit to the United States will be good to connect with the new administration. Regional problems including ongoing tensions with South Korea over "compensation for wartime labor," North Korea's dispatch of short range missiles and buildup of

nuclear capacity as well as China's incursions into the Taiwan Straits inside Taiwan's side of the median line and into the East China Sea close to the Senkakus and its military installations in the South China Sea are also important concerns for Prime Minister Suga's administration.

## Diplomacy

Restoring trust and belief in U.S. leadership is not only important for U.S.-Japan relations but also U.S.' overall foreign policy. Japan and as well as other allies need to know that the U.S. can be relied on not to shift course abruptly in regional and global matters without keeping its allies in the loop. Importantly, President elect Biden, an "institutionalist," will engage in traditional diplomacy versus the transactional approach of President Trump. This will help Japan and other nations collaborate easier with the U.S.' to return to a new normal for shared goals and interests.

In Japan, local citizens hear through mass media more about Trump's foreign policies and are often unaware of the deepness of the divide in the U.S. and how Trump's leadership tendencies impact on the U.S. domestic situation. At the same time, others in Japan worry about Biden's age, his possible stance regarding China, his mental capacities and whether Biden's policies will somehow allow China to advance technologically to other nations' disadvantage. Some other people, although Biden served for eight years as Vice President during the Obama administration, are not sure for what Biden stands for. Others in Asia including Japan hoped that Trump would win because he was aggressive towards China<sup>38</sup>. In addition, in Japan after the 2020

---

<sup>38</sup> Andreas Illmer, "U.S. election 2020: The Asians who are rooting for Trump to win," *BBC News*, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-54097609>

U.S. presidential election, some Japanese protested Biden's win over Trump. So the new administration will have to work towards a new understanding about who they are and how they will approach the U.S.-Japan relationship as well as other key partnerships around the world.

Although the Biden administration could be seen as a partial revival of President Obama's policies domestically and internationally, the 46<sup>th</sup> President will have a chance to "build back" even "better," some of those legacies. In the new normal, the Biden administration must reexamine what policies failed during the Obama-Biden administration, those Obama policies overturned by the Trump administration and chart a new course for the return to a new normal. Already Biden "is reportedly planning to issue executive orders to quickly reverse some Trump measures, such as the U.S. exit from the Paris climate accord and the World Health Organization."<sup>39</sup>

At the same time, Japan as does the rest of the world needs to see how the U.S. under the Biden administration will handle China. President Trump was very aggressive with China and China responded in turn. Some desired results by the U.S. were achieved by 'creating more Chinese imports of U.S. goods.' At the same time, U.S. businesses experienced fallout from the trade war. China in turn pushed back over U.S.' backlash over the coronavirus, warming up of relations with Taiwan and withdrawal of special trade status for Hong Kong.

The Trump administration's handling of China created a new normal for U.S.-China relations which also impacts on Japan and other key players in the Indo Pacific. China's aggressiveness in the East and South China Seas, to-

---

<sup>39</sup> Flora Drury, "U.S. Election 2020: Biden seeks to quickly reverse: Trump policies," *BBC News*.

wards Hong Kong and Taiwan as well as its technological competition with the U.S. will require new countermeasures to show that the U.S. is not withdrawing from the regional or the global stage. It will also be important for the U.S. to take a balanced approach that allows China to protect its core interests while participating in the international liberal order.

This approach is needed, for example, as China still engages in unfair trade practices while aggressively competing with the U.S. for dominance in the Indo-Pacific. Contrary to the image of a Biden administration soft on China, presidential candidate Biden emphasized, “the need to be tough on China.” At the same time, he espoused meeting this challenge by building a united “front of U.S. allies and partners to confront China’s abusive behaviors and human rights violations.”<sup>40</sup>

Japan under Prime Minister Suga’s administration, while understanding the new U.S.-China normal, will also continue to keep a balance between the U.S. one hand and China on the other. Japan may see the first official state visit by President Xi to Japan in 2021 and is considering how to become involved in China’s One Belt One Road initiative. At the same time, Japan is now part of various multilateral trade agreements without U.S. participation which also contributes to Japan’s balance regionally and globally including between the U.S. and China.

## Security Dynamics

Looking at future U.S.-Japan partnership in the new normal, the alliance

---

<sup>40</sup> *The Japan Times*, “China unlikely to find Biden a Soft Touch,” November 8, 2020, par. 9, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2020/11/08/asia-pacific/politics-diplomacy-asia-pacific/china-joe-biden//>

will continue to be an important part of the bilateral relationship. Prime Minister Suga in a courtesy call to President elect Biden on November 12, 2020—‘signaled Japan’s recognition of the new administration, emphasizing the indispensability of the alliance in these times, the realization of a Free and Open Indo Pacific.’ Biden in turn reconfirmed ‘the U.S.’ commitment to the protection of the Senkaku island, strengthening of the alliance and working towards the stability of the Indo Pacific region. Both nations committed as well to close collaboration on coronavirus as well as climate change counter-measures.”<sup>41</sup>

Since the 1990s, Japan has continued to strengthen its defense and expand its capacity to support U.S.-Japan relations including the almost 70 year old alliance. In 2000, the U.S. and Japan added the concept of a global partnership to cover cooperation by the then number 1 and number 2 economies on a wide range of transnational issues. In 2001, Prime Minister Koizumi charted a new course of collaboration with the U.S. post 9/11 to support the George W. Bush’s administration War on Terror. The Japanese Self Defense Forces were dispatched to the Indian Ocean to support logistically multilateral forces fighting in Afghanistan. Legislation was also passed during Prime Minister Koizumi’s administrations to strengthen homeland security including smooth collaboration with U.S. forces stationed in Japan. Prime Minister Koizumi was succeeded by Shinzo Abe, his Chief Cabinet Secretary.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s two administrations (Sept. 20, 2006-Sept. 26, 2007; Sept. 26, 2012-Sept. 14, 2020) spanned three U.S. administrations – the

---

<sup>41</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan、菅総理大臣とバイデン次期米国大統領との電話会談 (Tokyo, Japan: MOFA, 2020), 1, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/na/na1/us/page3-002922.html>

latter half of the George W. Bush administration, the second Obama administration and almost all of the Trump administration. Prime Minister Abe followed Prime Minister Koizumi and realized the changing of the JDA to the Ministry of Japanese Defense. However, it was not until Prime Minister Abe's second term that we saw the reinterpretation of the Article 9 to allow limited collective self-defense, the formation of the NSC, the creation of the National Security Strategy, the 2<sup>nd</sup> revision of the U.S.-Japan Guidelines for Defense Cooperation, Legislation for Peace and Security and the adaption of Proactive Pacifism as well as the Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy.

In between Abe's first and second terms there was a rapid turnover in Prime Ministers – Yasuo Fukuda, Yukio Hatoyama, Naoto Kan, and Yoshihiko Noda. During that turnover period, we saw increasing friction over the planned transfer of the Futenma base, U.S. reaffirmation of its protection of the Senkaku islands in the event of a contingency and U.S.-Japan collaboration through Operation Tomodachi after the calamitous triple disaster 3.11 in Northeast Japan.

Although the U.S.-Japan partnership goes beyond the alliance to cooperate bilaterally and multilaterally on global and regional problems and related foreign policy initiatives, some Japanese harbor fears of U.S. abandonment or favoring of China over Japan. Other Japanese fear the entanglement of trade issues with the U.S.-Japan alliance issues. During the second Abe administration, even though we saw a close relationship growing between Prime Minister Abe and President Trump, President Trump's words and actions impacted at times negatively on the U.S.-Japan partnership including the alliance.

In the case of President Trump, there were threats about the pullout of

U.S. troops in the event Japan did not further increase its host nation support. In addition, during the G-20 Summit hosted by Japan in 2019, Trump stated to FOX News “If Japan is attacked, we will fight World War III. But if we are attacked, Japan does not have to help us at all. Then can watch it on Sony television, the attack.”<sup>42</sup> During the same summit, Trump also called on “Japan and China to protect their own tankers travelling through the Strait of Hormuz an important waterway between Iran and the Arabian Peninsula through which much of the world’s oil supply traverses.”<sup>43</sup>

At the same time, Japan is the ally that pays the most host nation support of U.S.’ allies—presently close to \$ 4 billion including ‘approximately \$ 2 billion per a special measure agreement about to expire in March 2021.’<sup>44</sup>

President Trump allegedly asked Japan to increase this support to an additional \$8 billion. Although Japan has not agreed to such an increase, it had already promised in 2017 to purchase “105 F-35 Joint Strike Fighter aircraft and related equipment for an estimated price of \$23.1 billion dollars.”<sup>45</sup> And another promise in 2018 was made by the Japanese government to purchase the Aegis Ashore, “an American air defense option to strengthen Japan’s naval strike capabilities. This was later cancelled in 2020 because of potential

---

<sup>42</sup> Katsuhiko Hara, “G-20 Summit Osaka Japan’s Abe reaffirms U.S. Security Ties after Trump’s verbal swipe,” *Asia Nikkei*, June 28, 2019, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/G-20-summit-Osaka/Japan-s-Abe-reaffirms-U.S.-security-ties-after-Trump-s-verbal-swipe>

<sup>43</sup> Ditto.

<sup>44</sup> Lara Seligman and Robbie Gramer, “Trump asks Tokyo to Quadruple payment for US Troops in Japan,” *Foreign Policy*, November 15, 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/11/15/trump-asks-tokyo-quadruple-payments-us-troops-japan/>; 防衛省自衛隊、在日米軍関係経費 (Tokyo, Japan: MOD, 2020), 1, [https://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/zainbeigun/us\\_keihi/](https://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/zainbeigun/us_keihi/)

<sup>45</sup> The Japan Times, “U.S. State Department approves \$23.1 billion F-35 sale to Japan,” July 10, 2020, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2020/07/10/national/u-s-state-department-f35-sale/>

cost related to redesigning the missile booster so it would not fall in residential areas.”<sup>46</sup>

On another note, Trump “unilaterally” called for the suspension of U.S.-South Korean military training exercises in to appease North Korea after the first U.S.-North Korean leaders’ summit in Singapore. This sudden decision had implications for regional security including South Korea and Japan, both allies, who were not informed in advance of this decision. President Trump also expressed concern about North Korea’s launching of long range ballistic missiles which could reach the U.S. but did not appear to be worried about the short range missiles that often fall in Japanese waters. In spite of Trump’s rhetoric, established mechanisms for U.S.-Japan cooperation, for example, Japan-U.S. Security Consultative Committee (2 + 2) and top level visits by administration officials continued to reinforce the importance of the U.S.-Japan partnership. In fact, a joint statement by the Japan–U.S. Security Consultative Committee (2 + 2) on the Sixtieth Anniversary of the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between Japan and the United States of America stated:

“Rooted in our unwavering commitment to values such as democracy, respect for human rights and a rules-based international order, our alliance has played and will continue to play an integral role in ensuring the peace or security of our two countries while realizing our shared vision of a free and open Indo Pacific including through regional security cooperation. Our Alliance is stronger, broader and more essential today than ever. While honoring the achievements of the past 60 years, we reiter

---

<sup>46</sup> Thomas Lattanzio, “Aegis Ashore Cancellation-Impulsive Blunder or Strategic Opportunity,” *Stimson*, July 29, 2020, <https://www.stimson.org/2020/aegis-ashore-cancelation-impulsive-blunder-or-strategic-opportunity/>

ate our unshakeable commitment to strengthen the alliance to uphold our common values and principles towards the future.”<sup>47</sup>

At the same time, Japan is involved in various defense cooperation agreements outside of the U.S.-Japan alliance, for example with England, Australia, India and Malaysia. Japan is also involved in capacity building assistance in Southeast Asia including “humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR), maritime security and UN mandated peace keeping operations (PKO).”<sup>48</sup> Whether in mini-lateral or larger multilaterals, Japan is fostering its own foreign policy interests as well as contributing to the larger international liberal order.

Prime Minister Suga is continuing Japan’s regional and global roles as a key member of G-7, G-20, the East Asia Summit, ASEAN +3, ASEAN-3, quasi alliances and the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue. For example, Prime Minister Suga showed Japanese commitment to Southeast Asia by making his first trip overseas as Prime Minister to Vietnam and Indonesia. As Japan continues to expand its capacity building as well as other activities in this region, it will also continue to balance its relationship between the U.S. and China.

While the Biden administration is “building back better” the new normal in the U.S., how much will Japan continue to build on Abe’s legacy and reinforce its ties to the U.S. yet strengthen its identity beyond its U.S.-Japan part-

---

<sup>47</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, *Joint Statement on the Sixtieth Anniversary of the Signing of the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between Japan and the United States of America* (Tokyo, Japan: MOFA,2020), 1, [https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press\\_4\\_e\\_002758.html](https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press_4_e_002758.html)

<sup>48</sup> “Capacity building assistance is assisting other nations to build their defense capacities through using the resources of Japan.” Ministry of Defense, *Japan’s Defense Capacity Building Assistance*, April 2016, [https://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/pamphlets/pdf/cap\\_build/pamphlet.pdf](https://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/pamphlets/pdf/cap_build/pamphlet.pdf)

nership will be important to watch. Presently, both nations continue to share common economic goals, democratic values and security concerns in the return to a new normal in U.S. Japan relations under new leadership.

## Conclusion

The disruption of the international order by different events, movements and or leaders has happened throughout history and it will occur again. Whether the disruption leads to positive or negative change and the way the change is perceived shifts according to the era we are in. We see, for example, the disruption of the way of doing business by GAFAM (Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon and Microsoft) or FAANG (Same as GAFAM except Microsoft and with the addition of Netflix). This in turn has pluses and minuses for the global market. At the same time, this kind of disruption can be a catalyst for a new order or rather a new normal in which to set new parameters. In a similar way, certain catalysts are helping to create the return to a new normal in U.S.-Japan relations.

One such catalyst was the Trump era. The Trump administration, a disruptive force, contributed to a new normal: a more divisive America, retreating U.S. global leadership, an emboldened and more influential China, key global networks without U.S. participation, more burden sharing by allies, closer relations with autocrats and increased frictions with partner nations, growing transnational threats as well as stronger global leadership by Japan. President Trump's disruptions woke up the U.S. electorate in both positive and negative ways, depending on which lenses you viewed those dynamics. Concurrently, the disruptions serve as a catalyst for the return to a new nor-

mal in U.S. Japan relations for a stronger partnership.

COVID-19 is another disruptor, which in turn is serving as a catalyst for a new normal enveloping both U.S.-Japan relations and the global order. It has exposed gaps in health care, government infrastructure and the fragility of our borders. Both the U.S. and Japan separately and together can work to eliminate the virus and create new opportunity to foster economic recovery post COVID-19.

Besides the previous disruptions which are also serving as catalysts to the return for a new normal in U.S.-Japan relations, new leadership in both countries is another for a change in this bilateral relationship. In the not so distant past, President Obama was accused of leading from behind while promoting multilateralism. President Trump promoted America First while practicing transactional diplomacy and unilateralism. President Biden in the return to a new normal will need to revitalize U.S. leadership, return to multi-lateral initiatives in which partners have moved on without the U.S. and reassure America's allies including Japan of his future directions. President Biden will also have to show that the U.S. once again stands for democratic values and processes while moving forward on his domestic and international agendas. Concurrently, Japan, under Prime Minister Suga, welcomes a chance to chart the return to a new normal in this very important bilateral relationship as well as work together for the strengthening of the international liberal order including multilateral mechanisms.

Maximizing the potential for new collaborations, innovations and parameters for a stronger U.S.-Japan partnership in the return to a new normal benefits not only two of the top world economies' national interests but also contributes positively to a more stable and prosperous regional as well as in-

ternational liberal order.

## Bibliography

- Biden-Harris Transition. “Economic Recovery-The Biden-Harris Jobs and Economic Recovery Plan for Working Families.” <https://buildbackbetter.gov/priorities/economic-recovery/>
- Biden, Joseph R. “Why America Must Lead Again Rescuing U.S. Foreign Policy After Trump-Rescuing U.S. Foreign Policy After Trump.” *Foreign Affairs* (2020). <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-01-23/why-america-must-lead-again> 防衛省自衛隊. 在日米軍関係経費. Tokyo, Japan: MOD, 2020. [https://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/zainbeigun/us\\_keihi/](https://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/zainbeigun/us_keihi/)
- Bolton, John. *The Room Where it Happened A White House Memoir*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2020.
- Center for Disease Control. *CDC-COVID Data Tracker*. Atlanta, Georgia: CDC, 2020. [https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#cases\\_casesper100klast7days](https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#cases_casesper100klast7days)
- Connley, Courtney. “Black Women continue to be the Democratic Party’s Most Powerful Weapon.” *CNBC Make It*, November 6, 2020. <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/11/06/black-women-continue-to-be-the-democratic-partys-most-powerful-weapon.html>
- Davies, Rachel E.T. “Breaking down Japan’s Go to Travel Campaign,” *The Japan Times*, October 18, 2020. <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/life/2020/10/18/travel/breaking-down-go-to-travel-campaign>
- Drury, Flora. “U.S. Election 2020: Biden seeks to quickly reverse: Trump policies.” *BBC News*.
- Gallagher, James. “Moderna: Covid Vaccine shows nearly 95% protection.” *BBC News*, November 2020.
- Hara, Katsuhiko. “G-20 Summit Osaka Japan’s Abe reaffirms U.S. Security Ties after Trump’s verbal swipe.” *Asia Nikkei*, June 28, 2019. <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/G-20-summit-Osaka/Japan-s-Abe-reaffirms-U.S.-security-ties-after-Trump-s-verbal-swipe>
- Huang, Yukon and Jeremy Smith. “In U.S.–China Trade War, New Supply Chains Rattle Markets.” *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, June 24, 2020. <https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/06/24/in-U.S.-china-trade-war-new-supply-chains-rattle-markets-pub-82145>
- Illmer, Andreas, “U.S. election 2020: The Asians who are rooting for Trump to win.” *BBC News*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-54097609>
- International Monetary Fund. *Japan Staff Report for the 2018 Article IV Consultation-Press Re-*

- lease; Staff Report; and Statement by the Executive Director for Japan*. Washington, D.C.: IMF, 2018. <https://www.imf.org//media/Files/Publications/CR/2018/cr18333.ashx>
- Kahn, Chris. “Half of Republicans say Biden won because of a ‘rigged election Reuters/Ipsos Poll/Reuters.” *Reuters*, November 18, 2020. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usaelection-Poll-idUSKBN27Y1AJ>
- Kelly, Meg. “The ‘Trump economy’ vs. the ‘Obama economy.” *The Washington Post*, September 9, 2018. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2018/09/18/trump-economy-versus-obama-economy/>
- Lattanzio, Thomas. “Aegis Ashore Cancellation-Impulsive Blunder or Strategic Opportunity.” *Stimson*, July 29, 2020. <https://www.stimson.org/2020/aegis-ashore-cancelation-impulsive-blunder-or-strategic-opportunity/>
- Ministry of Defense. *Japan’s Defense Capacity Building Assistance*. Tokyo, Japan: MOD, 2016. [https://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/pamphlets/pdf/cap\\_build/pamphlet.pdf](https://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/pamphlets/pdf/cap_build/pamphlet.pdf)
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. *Joint Statement on the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Signing of the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between Japan and the United States of America*. Tokyo, Japan: MOFA, 2020. [https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press4e\\_002758.html](https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press4e_002758.html)
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. 菅総理大臣とバイデン次期米国大統領との電話会談, Tokyo, Japan: MOFA, 2020. [https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/na/na1/us/page3\\_002922.html](https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/na/na1/us/page3_002922.html)
- Nippon.com*. “Coronavirus Cases by the Country.” December 25, 2020. <https://www.nippon.com/en/japan-data/h00673/coronavirus-case-by-country.html/>
- Obama, Barack. *A Promised Land*. New York: Crown, 2020.
- Office of Prime Minister of Japan. 安全保障の法的基盤の再構築に関する懇談会、報告書（概要）. Tokyo, Japan: Kantei, 2014. <https://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/singi/anzenhosyou2/dai7/gaiyou.pdf>
- Office of Prime Minister of Japan. 第二百三回国会における菅内閣総理大臣所信表明演説. Tokyo, Japan: 総理大臣官邸, 2020. [https://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/99\\_suga/statement/2020/1026/shoshinhyomei.html](https://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/99_suga/statement/2020/1026/shoshinhyomei.html)
- Pesek, William. “Japan’s Suga crawls but needs to Sprint.” *Asia Times*, October 29, 2020. <https://asiatimes.com/2020/10/japans-suga-crawls-but-needs-to-sprint/>
- Pfizer. “Pfizer and BioNTech Announce Vaccine Candidate Against COVID-19 Achieved Success in First Interim Analysis from Phase 3 Study/Pfizer Press Release.” <https://www.pfizer.com/news/press-release/press-release-detail/pfizer-and-detail-and-biotech-announce-vaccine>

-candidate-against

- Politi, James and Brooke Fox. "The rise and fall of the Trump economy in charts." *Financial Times*, November 4, 2020. <https://www.ft.com/content/8126446c-4959-4-e87-8c78-3546bbf2ebc2>
- Pramuk, Jacob, "Coronavirus stimulus update: McConnell, Schumer, Pelosi have not held talks." CNBC, November 18, 2020, <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/11/17/coronavirus-stimulus-bill-mcconnell-schumer-pelosi-have-not-held-talks.html>
- Prasad, Ritu. "Biden cabinet: Does this new team better reflect America?" *BBC*, December 17, 2020.
- "Presidential Results." *CNN Politics*, November 23, 2020, <https://www.cnn.com/election/2020/results/president>
- Poushter, Jacob and J.J. Moncus, "How people in 14 countries view the state of the world in 2020." *Pew Research*, September 23, 2020. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/09/23/how-people-in-14-countries-view-the-state-of-the-world-in-2020/>
- Reynolds, Isabel and Emi Urabe. "Japan to Fund Firms to Shift Production out of China." *Bloomberg*, April 8, 2020. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-04-08/japan-to-fund-firms-to-shift-production-out-of-china>
- Schumaker, Erin. "Coronavirus map: Tracking the spread in the U.S. and around the world." *ABC News*, August 7, 2020. <https://abcnews.go.com/Health/coronavirus-map-tracking-spread-us-world/story?id=69415591>
- Sciutto, Jim. *The Madman Theory*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2020.
- Siegel, Rachel and Andrew Van Dam. "GDP grew at record 7.4 pace in the third quarter from July to September," *The Washington Post*, October 29, 2020. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2020/10/29/third-quarter-gdp-economy/>
- Seligman, Lara and Robbie Gramer. "Trump asks Tokyo to Quadruple payment for US. Troops in Japan." *Foreign Policy* (2019). <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/11/15/trump-asks-tokyo-quadruple-payments-US-troops-japan/>
- Sprunt, Barbara. "Here's a Look at Congress Incoming Freshman Class." *NPR*, January 3, 2021. <https://www.npr.org/2021/01/03195/481488/heres-a-look-at-congress-incoming-freshman-class>
- Strochlic, Nina, Kelsey Nowakowski and Katie Armstrong. "U.S. coronavirus deaths now surpass fatalities in the Vietnam War," *National Geographic* (2020). <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/2020/04/coronavirus-death-toll-vietnam-war-cvd/>

- 'The Go To Campaign, a 1.7 trillion initiative, is a four part campaign including Go to Travel, Go to Eat, Go to Event and Go to Shotengai. The campaign is helping the service and entertainment industries in Japan through a coupon and reduced pricing systems for travel, restaurants, theaters, shopping malls etc.' Office of Prime Minister of Japan. 第二百三回国会における菅内閣総理大臣所信表明演説. Tokyo, Japan: 総理大臣官邸, 2020. [https://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/99\\_suga/statement/2020/1026\\_shoshinhyomei.html](https://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/99_suga/statement/2020/1026_shoshinhyomei.html)
- The Japan Times*. "China unlikely to find Biden a Soft Touch." November 8, 2020, par. 9. <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2020/11/08/asia-pacific/politics-diplomacy-asia-pacific/china-joe-biden/>
- The Japan Times*. "U.S. State Department approves \$23.1 billion F-35 sale to Japan," July 10, 2020. <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2020/07/10/national/u-s-state-department-f35-sale/>
- The New York Times*. "Covid in the U.S.\* Latest Map and Case Count." November 9, 2020.
- USTR. *Fact Sheet on U.S. Japan Agreement*. Washington D.C.: USTR, 2019. <https://ustr.gov/about-us/policy-offices/press-office/fact-sheets/2019/september/fact-sheet-us-japan-trade-agreement>
- USTR. *U.S.-Japan Trade Agreement Text*. Washington D.C.: USTR, 2019. <https://ustr.gov/countries-regions/japan-korea-apec/japan/us-japan-trade-agreement-negotiations/us-japan-trade-agreement-text>
- Watson, Garrett and Erica York. "Congress Passes \$900 Billion Coronavirus Relief Bill." Tax Foundation, December 21, 2020. <https://taxfoundation.org/coronavirus-relief-bill-stimulus-check/>
- Wike, Richard, Janell Fetterolf and Maria Mordecai. "U.S. Image Plummets Internationally and most say Country has handled Coronavirus Badly." *Global Attitudes and Trends*. September 15, 2020. <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2020/09/15/us-image-plummets-internationally-as-most-say-country-has-handled-coronavirus-badly>
- Woodward, Bob. *Rage*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2020.
- Worldometer*. "Coronavirus Update (Live): 84,377,385 Cases and 1,835,234 Deaths from COVID-19 Virus Pandemic." December 25, 20, 2020. <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/>
- Zeballos-Roig, Joseph. "9 charts comparing economy under Trump to Obama, Bush presidential terms." *Business Insider*, Oct. 23, 2020. <https://www.businessinsider.com/charts-contrasting-trump-economy-obama-bush-administrations-republicans-democrats-2020-10>