

# 2018

## H-Diplo

 [@HDiplo](https://twitter.com/HDiplo)

Article Review  
No. 734  
4 January 2018

Article Review Editors: Thomas Maddux and Diane Labrosse  
Web and Production Editor: George Fujii

**H-Diplo Article Review of Nick Kapur. "Mending the 'Broken Dialogue': U.S.-Japan Alliance Diplomacy in the Aftermath of the 1960 Security Treaty Crisis." *Diplomatic History* 41:3 (June 2017): 489-517. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/dh/dhw053>.**

URL: <http://tiny.cc/AR734>

Review by **Dayna Barnes**, City University of London

---

These are challenging times for the U.S.-Japan security relationship. In the first months of Donald Trump's presidency, the new administration upset the underpinnings of regional stability by publicly questioning the value of America's traditional alliances. Tensions with North Korea have been rising, demonstrated by North Korea's launch of missiles over Japan in August and September 2017. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is calling for Japan, a country technically without a military since 1945, to revise its constitution and allow remilitarization. Such a move would give Japan more control over its own national security, limit reliance on a perhaps unreliable partner, and reduce the broadly unpopular American military presence in the country. Both countries seek to maintain a strong and stable relationship in the face of change.

Events of 2017 recall a previous reevaluation which surrounded a revision of the U.S.-Japan security treaty. In 1960, an updated treaty was ratified despite vocal and sometimes violent protest from the public and political opposition in Japan. This chaotic moment, known as the Anpo crisis, is often seen as the nadir of postwar U.S.-Japanese relations. The unrest damaged relations, forced U.S. president Dwight Eisenhower to cancel what was to have been the first visit of a sitting president to Japan, and forced the resignation of Prime Minister Kishi Nobusuke.

In "Mending the 'Broken Dialogue'," Nick Kapur looks at the 1960 crisis from a new perspective. He asks not why the crisis happened, but how the relationship was mended in the quiet and consequently understudied years between 1961 and 1963. Histories of bilateral relationships generally focus on moments of crisis. In the case of recent U.S.-Japan relations, these have been the Second World War and subsequent military occupation, the Anpo crisis, the 'Nixon shocks' during which the U.S. established relations with the People's Republic of China without first consulting the Japanese, and the reversion of Okinawa to Japanese control in the early 1970s. The 1960s, marked by more stable bilateral relations and especially Japanese

economic growth, have drawn little attention compared to these flashpoints.<sup>1</sup> But, as Kapur's article ably demonstrates, we have as much to learn from periods of repair as from more dramatic moments of destruction.

This article will be of interest to scholars of alliance management, Japanese and U.S. foreign policy, and international security in the Asia Pacific. The research draws on existing scholarship in English and Japanese, press articles, government documents in archives, and recently published *Foreign Relations of the United States* volumes. Kapur's ability to examine and connect internal bureaucratic correspondence to larger trends in foreign policy makes for particularly interesting reading.

Kapur argues that relations underwent a "significant readjustment" in the period of his study. Alliance diplomacy and a sense of a fresh start between the new administrations of President John F. Kennedy and Prime Minister Ikeda Hayato created a "new cooperative attitude" on both sides which mended the fissure between the U.S. and Japan (491, 503). At the heart of that readjustment was a greater willingness to compromise on both sides, and the work done by both governments to recast the U.S.-Japan alliance into terms more palatable to the Japanese public.

It is widely understood that on taking over after Kishi's resignation, Prime Minister Ikeda effectively refocused public attention toward less controversial economic issues as a method of unifying public support.<sup>2</sup> Japanese public opinion toward national security in this period has also been effectively evaluated elsewhere.<sup>3</sup> Kapur adds to our understanding of Ikeda's policies, arguing that because anti-American sentiment had spiraled out of control in 1960, Japan's leaders "realized that they had to tone down inflammatory anti-American rhetoric" which they had previously used as a method of gaining leverage in bilateral relations (503). With this new approach "Ikeda was employing a new kind of strategy for Japanese relations with the United States based on compromise rather than pressure," which in turn made bilateral consultation easier (505).

The significance of Kennedy-era public diplomacy toward Japan which Kapur uncovers will surprise even specialists of U.S.-Japan relations. "Mending the 'Broken Dialogue'" builds a convincing case that the Kennedy administration, which is not remembered for its Japan policy, recognized the need to "deal with Japan in a more genuinely consultative manner" and engaged in an effective campaign of public diplomacy to sway Japanese opinion in favor of a strong continued alliance with the U.S. (503). Kapur astutely links these hallmarks of a new Japan policy to "Kennedy's campaign promises to win the hearts and minds of the nonwestern world" (500).

---

<sup>1</sup> An exception to this is Fintan Hoey, *Satō, America and the Cold War: US-Japanese Relations, 1964–72* (London: Palgrave, 2015).

<sup>2</sup> Marius Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 719-720; Bai Gao, "The Search for National Identity and Japanese Industrial Policy, 1950–1969," *Nations and Nationalism* 4:2 (April 1998).

<sup>3</sup> For example, Paul Midford, *Rethinking Japanese Public Opinion and Security: From Pacifism to Realism?* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011).

The new President signaled his commitment to the Japan partnership by giving interviews to Japanese newspapers, and by planning a presidential visit to Japan and instituting a scholarship for Japanese students in the United States (501). At a summit with Ikeda, Kennedy gave a public pledge to consult in advance with the Prime Minister before taking actions which would affect the interests of both countries (507). The president also nominated as ambassador a well-known scholar of Japan and advocate for an “equal partnership.” Edwin O. Reischauer made public appearances throughout the country, gave interviews and wrote articles on U.S. policy in his efforts to “repair the ‘broken dialogue’ with disaffected Japanese intellectuals” (502). In 1961, the U.S. acquiesced to Japan’s long-standing request to create cooperative committees, including a Committee on Trade and Economic Affairs, as forums for regular high-level official bilateral discussions. The meetings of these committees were covered in the Japanese press, and created an expectation of collaboration in both governments.

These innovations went a long way toward creating the impression of a more equal dynamic in what remained an inherently unequal relationship between a superpower and a middle power dependent on the U.S. for military security. The changes had a lasting impact, creating new patterns of behavior which continued beyond 1964. Although we can see President Richard Nixon’s failure to inform Japan in advance of his visit to China in 1971 as a sign that this Kennedy-era norm had eroded, the fact that the administration’s failure to consult was a ‘shock’ at all shows how entrenched this expectation had become (511).

Kapur acknowledges that the developments in the Kennedy-Ikeda years did not represent “a radical break with the past” (516). The basic pattern of the U.S.-Japan alliance, marked by U.S. influence and Japanese trade-based economic growth, predates 1961. As other historians have pointed out, the administration of Dwight Eisenhower emphasized supporting Japan’s post-occupation economy to keep the country in the western camp of the Cold War.<sup>4</sup> The 1955 creation of a dominant conservative political party in Japan marginalized leftist and hard right views, paving the way for stability and continued partnership with the United States. Many scholars see the midpoint of the 1945-1952 occupation as a moment of ‘reverse course,’ during which plans to punish and restrain an enemy gave way to Cold-War calculations and building up a potential new ally.<sup>5</sup> I myself have argued that this dynamic was conceived during the Second World War by postwar planners as a means of stabilizing and assuring the cooperation of Japan after its defeat. Although the years between 1961 and 1963 did not alter the fundamental elements of U.S.-Japan relations, Kapur’s research demonstrates that they were indeed significant. The new administrations on both sides of the Pacific used the fresh start of forward-thinking new leadership to bring a “greater feeling of partnership” to the existing economic and security relationship (516). This effectively shifted norms toward greater cooperation, allowing the relationship to continue along a smoother path through the next crisis and beyond.

---

<sup>4</sup> Sayuri Shimizu, *Creating People of Plenty: The United States and Japan's Economic Alternatives, 1950-1960* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 2001), and Aaron Forsberg, *America and the Japanese Miracle: The Cold War Context of Japan's Postwar Economic Revival, 1950-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

<sup>5</sup> Michael Schaller, *The American Occupation of Japan: The Origins of the Cold War in Asia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), chapter seven.

## H-Diplo Article Review

**Dayna Barnes** is an assistant professor in modern history at City University of London and author of *Architects of Occupation: American Experts and Planning for Postwar Japan* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017). She is currently working on a comparative study of American military occupations.

© 2018 The Authors | [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 United States License](#)