

# **Japan's Foreign Policy in the Middle East (Palestine-Israel Case Study)**

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# Certification

I, HAYAT Ghadda Abdelelah A (51115601) hereby declare that the contents of this Master's Thesis are original and have not been submitted at any other university or educational institution. Published and unpublished resources I have referred to in this thesis have been properly cited and acknowledged.

HAYAT, GHADDA ABDELELAH A

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# Abstract

For many years, the Middle East has been an economically important region for Japan. Japan is a resource scarce country and 80% of its total oil imports come from the Middle East. According to Wagner and Cafiero (2013), the stability of the region has always been a concern to Japan. After the 1973 oil shock, Japan began its movement toward a more proactive policy in the region. In its proactive approach, Japan made significant efforts toward the region's main concerns. The main concern this thesis focuses on is the Palestine-Israel conflict. In its Palestine-Israel relation, Japan's diplomatic initiatives toward solving the conflict included various approaches, such as mediating the peace talk and enhancing UN Security Council's resolutions for a non-violent solution.

This thesis will analyze the influences of three key policy factors: United States-Japan security alliance, Arabs relations and Japan's diplomatic and business groups' economic interests in making Japan's Middle East policy. This thesis hypothesizes that Japan's diplomatic interests and business groups' economic interests dominated –and even pushed– its Middle East policy. Hence, this thesis attempts to answer the following questions: “How did Japan's diplomatic interests and business groups' economic interests attempt to shape its Middle East's policy as a whole and its Palestine-Israel relations specifically? How, as a result, did Japan's Middle East policy change over time?” The examination of these questions will provide a comprehensive conclusion on the main policy drivers behind Japan's Middle East policy. Moreover, it presents Japan's “balancing” approach between its U.S. alliance and Japan's oil need while trying to satisfy its most important policy priority that is Japan's business groups' interests. It further demonstrates how Japan's identity in the region shifted over time.

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

Since the 1930s, pushed by an economic interest, Japan started building direct relationships with the Middle East countries (Hosaka 2011). Its early engagement was limited on economic and trade relations without actual participation in the region's political issues. Hence, Japan's 1930s engagement is described as a limited low-risk policy behavior that focuses on economic relations while avoiding taking sides in the region's political conflicts. However, the Oil Shock of 1973 caused Japan's policy to majorly shift. Through the Oil Shock, Japan's reliance on the Arab's oil resources became clear. Hence, Japan decided to consider the Arabs' presence more in its policy. As a way to show its consideration, Japan started showing interest in the Palestine-Israel conflict<sup>1</sup> and made efforts to facilitate the settlement of the conflict. For example, Japan worked as a mediator to facilitate the peace process and has also relied on UN Security Council resolutions to emphasize that permanent peace must be achieved promptly. Moreover, Japan has been offering financial assistance to show its commitment, such as the "Peace and Prosperity Valley" aid project to the Palestinian Authority (PA). Notwithstanding its efforts, Japan's role has been somehow restricted. Japan's commitment to its U.S. security alliance, which is influenced by the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), obliges it to follow a cautious policy when approaching the region as a whole and the Palestine-Israel conflict specifically. Aside from its U.S. alliance and the Arab concerns, Japan's policy making has been influenced by the shifting interests of its business groups between building good relations with

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<sup>1</sup> In 1947, the UN announced the emergence of two states Palestine and Israel. Arabs disapproved the partition and wars broke out from then onward. After winning the war in 1967, the Jews had 70% of the whole land. In 1993, The Oslo Accords agreement was brokered by the United States in which Gaza and the West bank were given to the Palestinian Authority. Jews consider Palestine as their promised land. Palestinians, on the other hand, base their land claim on their continuous status as residents from the Ottoman period. The unwillingness of both sides to accept the validity of the other's claims has led to decades of instability and violence. For detailed explanation on the conflict see Israeli-Palestinian conflict. (2014, July 23). *Thomson Reuters foundation*. Retrieved June 1, 2016, from [goo.gl/gTAeur](http://goo.gl/gTAeur)

the oil producing states and maintaining a strong U.S. alliance. Consider the external and internal pressure placed on it: Japan's sensitive "middle" position between these fluctuating factors urged it to take a "balanced" stance between the three key policy priorities through careful examination of the relative importance of each factor during different periods of history. Through its analysis, this thesis intends to investigate Japan's "balancing" approach between the three pressures on Japan in order to discover the patterns in Japan's Middle East policy.

### **Problem statement:**

This thesis aims to analyze the motivations and factors that influenced Japan's Middle East policy. It intends to examine the development in Japan's approach towards the region by observing the changes in its policy from 1973 onward. In order to test the hypothesis that Japan's domestic interests were the main influencer in Japan's Middle East policy formulation, the thesis will inquire the following questions: How did Japan's diplomatic and economic interests attempt to shape its "Middle East" policy as a whole and its Palestine-Israel relations specifically? How, as a result, did Japan's Middle East policy change over time?

### **Methodology:**

In this thesis, I will follow a methodology of qualitative analysis. The methods of analysis will include literature review, interviews and case study. First, I will conduct a historical analysis of the established literature from secondary materials (books, journals, newspapers articles). Due to language barriers, this thesis will not extend its analysis to materials written in Japanese such as



archived newspaper. In the literature review, I will investigate the Japanese policymaking process in terms of its general view, its Middle East policy and Japan's relations with Palestine-Israel. Moreover, I will focus on the intersection between the independent variables of Japan-U.S. security alliance, Arabs energy relations and domestic interests of Japanese diplomatic interest and business communities' energy and economic relations on the dependent variable of Japan's Middle East policy. The focus on these factors is the result of the following reasons. First, the two factors of Japan-U.S. security alliance and Arabs pressure and energy relations are drawn from literature review on Japan's general policy in the Middle East. As I went through previous studies, I have found that most, if not all, past researches attributes Japan's policy in the region to these two factors. Being listed as the two indispensable factors in shaping Japan's policy, I saw the necessity of including them as key factors in analyzing Japan's Middle East policy. Second, I listed Japanese diplomatic interests and business groups' economic interests as the third key factor in an attempt to shed light on a vital yet not fairly discussed factor. Though literature review, I have discovered the importance of these two Japan-centered interests in shaping Japan's policy in the Middle East region. However, they have been rarely given consideration in research on Japan's policy in the Middle East. Hence, I have decided to touch upon them and demonstrate their importance in Japan's policymaking as a whole and the Middle East, specifically as I go through my analysis. I have also included this factor to present a different angle in viewing Japan's Middle East policy and expand the scope in which Japan's policy is viewed.

The analysis of these factors will be conducted through critical examination of Japan's "balancing" approach between the three key policy factors at a certain period of time and explaining the impact it had on Japan's foreign policy making process. This is conducted as a

means to understand the process in which Japan's policy is formed. Second, I have also conducted interviews to provide primary data on the topic. The interview method is intended to provide in-depth information as well as the opinions and experience of the involved party in the case. The personal interview method followed a semi-structured approach to allow further explanations and views on the issue. On April 18, 2017, I conducted interview with Palestine Ambassador in Japan, Mr. Waleed Siam. During the interview, questions were asked regarding the following: Palestine's unofficial visits to Japan, Japan's undocumented speeches and support to the case and the detailed history of Japan's Palestine-Israel relations. Moreover, through the discussion, I managed to obtain in depth information regarding the role of Japanese political and business groups' interests in Japan's Palestine-Israel relations. These findings were later incorporated in the third research method, which is the case study on Japan's relations with Palestine-Israel. This method is used to analyze the region as a whole and focus in on more specific perspectives. This method also serves to test the previously stated hypothesis that "Japan's domestic interests dominated –and even pushed- its Middle East policy making".

Based on literature review on Japanese foreign policy, I have discovered three steps of inquiry. The three steps will be applied to both Japan's foreign policy in the Middle East and Japan's Palestine-Israel relations to analyze the Japanese policymaking process. The first step of inquiry includes general examination on Japan's foreign policymaking. This will consist of literature review and generation of hypothesis on the Japanese policymaking process. It will examine the way Japan forms and implements its overall policy. The role domestic business interests have on policy formulation will be given close attention in the examination process. By doing so, a better understanding on the how and who is involved in the Japanese policymaking process will be reached. Moreover, it will analyze theories on Japan's policymaking process to build models in

which the policymaking process can be categorized with. These models will work as a guideline when examining Japan's Middle East policy as well as its relations with Palestine-Israel. The second step will examine the generated hypothesis through the examination of Japan's foreign policy in the Middle East. By examining the general image of policymaking against Japan's policy in the Middle East region, I aim to discover if Japan's general policymaking process matches its Middle East policymaking process. Moreover, my examination of Japan's policy in the region will be within a time frame format that shows the change it had over the years along with the factors behind the change. The third step will examine the hypothesis through Japan's Palestine-Israel relations case study. The case study is examined for consistency with Japan's overall regional approach. The examination process will go through Japan's policy making process to discover the way in which Japan shapes its policy and the key drivers influencing it in order to approve or disapprove the stated hypothesis. Hence, it will start with determining the factors influencing Japan's policymaking. "The United States-Japan security alliance influence", "Arabs' energy relations" and "Japan's diplomatic interests and business groups' economic interests" are three key policy priorities that influence Japan's policymakers during a stated period of time, the case study examination will analyze this. After determining the existence of the external or internal factors at the specified period, it will compare the importance of these existing factors against each other. The result of such comparison is a clear understanding of the dominant factor(s) at the time of examining. Moreover, it will specify the pressure cast on Japan's policymakers and the impact of such pressure on Japan's policymakers. The policy outcome of such pressure and the corresponding level of Japanese engagement (high or low) in the region at that time will be the end result of the analysis process.

In summary, this thesis intends to examine the making of Japan's Middle East foreign policy. In order to do so, this thesis will move from the general policy view to the more detailed and specific case study analysis. The following figure represents a summary to the analytical framework:

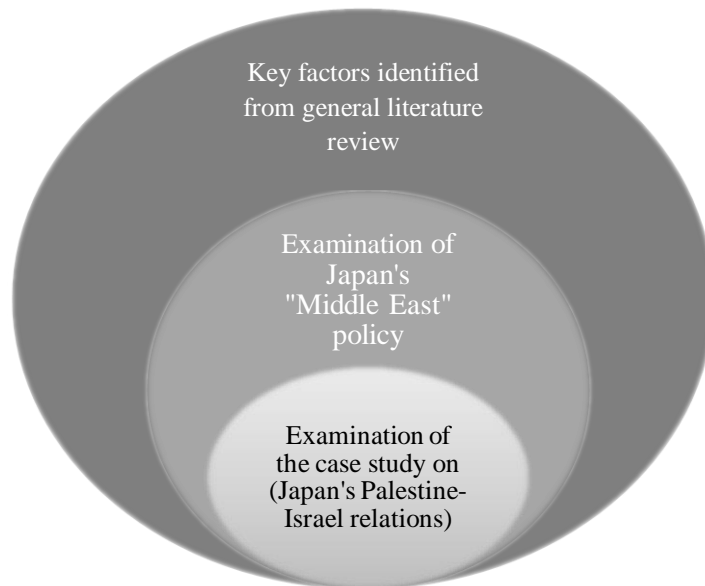


Figure 1.1: Analytical Framework

## **Chapter 2: Japanese Foreign Policy**

This chapter will examine theories on the general Japanese policymaking process. The examined theories deal with various concepts such as the Japanese identity of “pacifist state” and “merchant nation”. Also, they include other theories on Japanese foreign policy such as the role of external pressure (*gaiatsu*) and “normal state”. In addition, it intends to explain the general Japanese policy structure as well as the decision making process. Moreover, it will examine and compare the degree of influence each domestic group of politicians, bureaucrats and business groups have on the policymaking process. Identifying the effect these groups have on Japan’s domestic policy specifically and the Japanese policymaking process as a whole is an essential step toward studying Japan’s policymaking on the international level.

### **Japanese Foreign Policy Models:**

#### *Japan as a “Pacifist State”:*

The constitutional restrictions (particularly Article 9) imposed on Japan enforce it to pursue a limited policy behavior on the international level (Hook, Glison, Hughes, & Dobson 2012, p. 21). Japan’s post-war constitution prohibits renunciation of war and military building, as Article 9 states. The restriction makes Japan a pacifist identity. This long embedded identity has been the major reason behind the emergence of Japanese anti-militarism, anti-war and anti-nuclear identity (Keddell as cited in Akimoto 1993). Berger as cited in Akimoto (1993) mentions that these norms are deeply rooted in the society to the extent that makes the excessive use of military

very difficult on political level. Japan's adaptation of arms export ban, three non-nuclear principles and the ceiling on the defense budget at 1% of GNP are all results of these norms.

*Japan as a "Merchant Nation":*

This model explains Japan's "Merchant Nation" (*shonin kokka*) identity, which was introduced by Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru. The identity explains how Japan has been relying on wealth and economic means to pursue its interest, rather than military power. Faced by military restrictions, Japan relies on trade relations and investment to exist within the complex international capitalist economy. According to Green (2003 p. 193), following the cold war, Japan has been relying on economic means and the participation of active international institutions to attain power and influence. Japan has managed, through its economic expansion, to build an image for itself as a powerful economy by participating in many multilateral organizations, such as the UN, G7 and G8 (Miyagi 2008, p. 11). This multilateral stance was a product of the internationalism appeal in post-war Japan (Akimoto 2013). Japan's economic growth within a multilateral perspective helped create its own model for economic development in which its financial contribution and humanitarian activities all account for its greater proactive behavior. Hence, through this identity, Japan has been labeled as a 'non-military great power' and 'new kind of super power' (Miyagi 2008, p. 9). Green (2003, p. 193) describes how this identity continued to present Japan with a distinctiveness, until the Gulf war of 1990-91. However, Boer (2004) suggests this characterization extends even beyond the Gulf War. He explains how, since 1990s, Japan's response to international crisis has usually been through the financial means of aids and direct investment. For example, it has been a regular financial contributor in the Palestine-Israel conflict. Large amount of Japan's contribution are in

infrastructure and social services building. Moreover, Japan has been supporting the Palestinians through different UN projects as well as direct aid. It has also offered the following aid: a grant to the Palestinian Authority in 1998, a 10 million USD donation to the World Bank to support to Palestinians and a 700 million USD donation to social-services and infrastructure building in 2004 (Boer 2004). Also, it gave aid to UNICEF's Palestinian children diseases and nutrition control project in 2006. Japan's "aid policy" is still present today. For example, Japan offered the World Bank 10 million USD to support to the Palestinians in 2013.

*UN-centered activism:*

Japan's "aid policy" and financial response to crisis was further practiced on the international level through UN participation. After becoming an economic superpower, Japan used economic aid as tool in its international prestige seeking. For example, it was entitled as a "top donor" for its development assistance contribution that is aimed at helping developing countries around the globe, including countries in the Middle East (Akimoto 2013).

Being a Merchant state with pacifist identity, Japan used the UN's policies and regulations as a frame for policy formulation. For example, Japan has based most of its Palestine-Israeli conflict policies on UN's resolutions. Moreover, Japan has centered its activities on the UN stage to enhance its international prestige. By presenting itself as a nation that promotes peace, Japan wishes to be recognized as a peace leader on the international level.

Despite the widespread opinion that Japan is limiting itself by framing its policies within the UN's perspective, it can be said that Japan is also using the UN stage to acquire greater world recognition. For example, Japan's Self Defense Force (SDF) participation in UN-led peacekeeping operations (UNPKOs) serves Japanese politicians desire to build an international

prestige and acquire a notable position internationally. Gaining international recognition as a world leader for peace is a means for obtaining a UN Security Council permanent seat, as stated by both Drifte as cited in Akimoto (2000) and Curtin (2004).

By using the term ‘international contribution’ (*kokusai kōken*) to legalize Self Defense Forces (SDF) dispatch to UNPKOs, Japan aims to create a space that allows more realistic policies on domestic levels. Japan’s participation in the UNPKOs is practiced with the motive to allow more space for the deployment of Self Defense Force (SDF) in post-conflict peace operations. This can be seen in the fact that its participation has helped reduce the domestic opposition toward Japan’s militarization. According to analysis by Kamiya’s (2014) in 2014 over the course of two months, polls indicated public opinion of Japan’s right of collective self-defense had rapidly fluctuated. While 69.9% supported Japan’s right of collective self-defense (10.5% supported full scale exercise and 59.4 % supported the minimum necessity exercise of right), only 28.1% opposed, according to Sankei Shimbun and Fuji News poll on May 17-18. A few days later, the advocates rose to 71% (11% supported full scale exercise and 60% supported minimum necessity exercise of right) leaving only 24% against it, according to Yomiuri Shimbun’s poll from May 30 to June 1. Shortly afterwards, from June 6 to 9 on NHK, the number of citizens who voted in favor of the national right to self-defense dropped to 26%, nearly the same as number of objectors, while the rest remained were undecided.

#### *Reluctant to realism:*

Japan’s aim toward a bigger role internationally is limited to a “great power” aspiration, rather than “super power”. Despite having both the technological and economic potential to become a



superpower, Japan has refrained from seeking such a position. Japan has been reluctant to completely normalize its military capabilities or develop nuclear weapons, although it possesses the necessary capabilities. Moreover, Japan did not exhibit superpower characterization such as challenging the United States primacy in these international settings (Green 2003, p. 5). Until recently Japan did not pursue hegemonic goals in the region and continues to depend on the United States for its defense, rather than building its own active and independent military capability.

Akiomoto (2013) suggests although Japan's ambition toward militarization and state normalization is largely perceived as realism, Japan is also considered reluctant to act towards this realism. Green (1995) and Soeya (2012), who are cited by Akiomoto (2013), stated that the realism perspective does not fully support the Self Defense Force (SDF) element in Japan's foreign policy. Japan's move to build and dispatch military capabilities is pursued exclusively by post-war operations rather than by directly engaging war.

*The role of external pressure (gaiatsu):*

Japan's U.S. dependency is believed to be the biggest factor in framing Japan's foreign policymaking. Hook, Glison, Hughes, & Dobson (2012) mentioned how Japan-U.S. bilateral relation shapes Japan's foreign policy as a whole and its Middle East policy specifically. Curtin (2004) gives an example on Japan-U.S. alliance's impact on Japan's policy toward the Palestine-Israeli conflict. He states that Japan's policy toward the conflict has been within the United States' approved line of a low-level limited support in the forms of financial aid, UN resolutions, and "two-state solutions". Since the beginning of the conflict, Japan has not officially recognized

Palestine as a state, and all Japanese invitations to meet with PLO leaders were in a non-official status.

Japan's attempt to build and dispatch military capabilities is another element that effects the Japanese alliance with the United States and Japan's interests in the region. In the Middle East region, this element can be clearly seen through Self Defense Forces (SDF) participation in UN peacekeeping operations. Although Japan's participation in these operations is commonly interpreted as attempts by Japan to acquire higher prestige on the international level, it holds another interpretation, which is the attempt to provide support to the United States. Through military cooperation, Japan would be able to support the United States in its operations in the region. Moreover, it will enable Japan to reduce its "free-rider" image from the perspective of the United States.

*Japan as a "Normal State":*

Despite Japan's long-lasting pacifist identity, the wish for Japan to assume a greater role on the international level has been rising among Japanese policymakers. This aim has been triggered by the wish to escape Japan's U.S. dependency. The restricted policy behavior imposed on Japan by its constitution prevents it from pursuing hard power policies that other great power countries have a tendency to issue. Japan's officials have been gradually moving toward escaping these limitations by engaging in the international community to demonstrate their ability to execute a global leading role. Japan's identity has been progressively shifting from its cold war identity of a pure mercantile and pacifist state, as Sato, and Hirata (2008, p. 3) describe it, into a post-war identity of a normal state Miyagi (2008, p. 8) and Sato and Hirata (2008, p. 3). Faced by insecure and competitive international system, Japan is forced to pursue "self-help" through power

acquisition, especially military power. The insecurity is described by the impact its geo-political position and its neighbors' action have on its foreign policy and international behavior. The rise of China and North Korea's nuclear threat is the insecurity that explains Japan's militarization aim (Waltz as cited Akimoto 2001). Japan's intention to balance the power against such threats is demonstrated in its gradual building of military capabilities. In recent years, Japan has aimed at attaining larger independent military capabilities to seek its own protection and security within a "self-help" concept (Miyagi 2008, pp. 5-6). This move was advanced with the 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001. In 2001, Japan was fast in supporting the United States in its "War on Terror" military activities in both Afghanistan and Iraq (Akimoto 2013).

### **Japan's Policy Making:**

In order to analyze Japan's Middle East policy making, an understanding of Japan's general policy making process is needed. This thesis discusses both the "bottom-up" policy structure as well as the "top-down" structure in Japan's policy making process. In "bottom-up" policy, non-state actors' opinions, especially those of business groups, push the policy formulation process into satisfying their own interests. The "top down" policy discusses the internal pressure placed on the policy formulation by Japanese politicians. Moreover, it includes the external pressure placed on the system by factors such as the United States alliance.

Japan's policy making is a result of the interaction between political individuals, bureaucrats and business groups, known as the "Iron-Triangle". Since coming to power in 1955, Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) has stayed in power for almost all the time except for the period of Socialist Party of Japan's ruling and the period of Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) ruling (2009-

2012). During the long period in power, conflict escalated within the LDP when members tried to take over the office. The need to rely on interest groups funds and support for elections led to the absence of strong top-down decisions and allowed further space for bureaucrats and interest groups to influence policy decisions. Seeing this, the government continued to rely on the capabilities of ministries and influence groups rather than the Kantei<sup>2</sup> itself (Makihara 2013). In that sense, Japan's bottom-up policy making process falls under the pluralist concept of liberalism theory. Pluralism allows various political parties and different opinions in the policy making process in a state and considers state's international behavior as the fruit of these diverse interests. It also acknowledges that a conflict may appear among these political parties and that their decisions are not always based on consensus.

At a time of conflict, Japan's policy officials tend to prioritize business groups' opinion, in large part, with their policies. Shiozaki (2002) mentions how LDP's top politicians and Zaikai<sup>3</sup> leaders used to informally meet to discuss disputed issues and come up with the final decisions.

Zaikai opinion was also prioritized at times when Japan needed to respond to foreign pressure. Miyoka (1997) stressed that, even during the times when Japan was put under outside pressure in the 1980s and 1990s, Japan only issued policies that support domestic opinion on that matter.

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<sup>2</sup> Kantei is the Prime Minister's official residence, equivalent to the United States' White House. The official residence, finished in 2002, consists of relatively small number of government officials of: the Prime Minister, the Cabinet (the chief Cabinet secretary (CCS), deputy CCSs, assistant chief Cabinet secretaries, the Cabinet public relations secretary, the director of Cabinet Intelligence) and special advisers to the prime minister. Shinoda, T. (2007, pp. 9-10). *Koizumi diplomacy*. University of Washington press. Seattle.

<sup>3</sup> In Japan, business groups influence known as "Zaikai" refers to the businessmen and elder statesmen who represent the interests of the business community to the government through the provision of monetary funds and network of voters to influence policies. Zaikai has been influential in LDP and their opinion can raise the popularity of prime minister or cause his resignation. Shinoda (1995) mentions how business community request caused each of Shigeru Yoshida, Ichiro Hatoyama, Kakuei Tanaka, and Takeo Miki to leave office. Economic ministries, such as: the Ministry of Finance (MOF) and the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) as well as the Federation of Economic Organizations "Keizai Dantai Rengokai—Keidanren<sup>3</sup> are the main contact channels between Zaikai and politicians.

Miyoka (1997) stated that whenever a foreign pressure imposed Japan to take actions that are against the interests of business groups, the government tends to support business groups' interests and even push their –business groups- opinion against ministries who supports foreign pressure. This continued to dominate LDP's years in power even with the split in LDP that caused it to lose the elections in 1993. Even today, according to Makihara (2013), bureaucrats and business groups from the Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry are heavily dependent on for policymaking process.

The pluralist concept embedded in liberalism theory views a state as a coalition of interests of policy individuals and the public, rather than being a unitary actor. Pluralism classifies the interests of non-state actors of individuals and interest groups as the fundamental influencer in a state's foreign policies. In its definition, a state is a “representative structure of individual and groups who push their interests into the international system via a particular government” (Hermann 1990). Thus, a state shapes its international behavior based on the outcome of its national interest's mixture. As foreign policy's decisions are adjusted to match the domestic interests of state, a state may alter, or even restructure, its foreign policy approach when there is a change in political system or when the existing government decides to push in different foreign policy directions. Pluralism, and liberal-democratic policy, recognizes the significant influence the public has on foreign policy making. In a democratic state, like Japan, with an election-based representative government where the public can support, or punish, government through election votes, the government tends to take fewer decisions that contradict with the public opinion. Hence, the elected government tends to formulate public responsive policies (Waltz 1967).

## **Chapter 3: Japan's Foreign Policy in the Middle East**

This Chapter presents Japan's Middle East policy and the key factors behind its engagement. It aims toward examining whether Japan's Middle policy matches its general policy analysis presented in the previous chapter. It will examine the three key policy factors' that influence Japan's policy. The analysis will examine Japan's policy during times of high levels of engagement and define the main factor behind the rise in engagement. Through its analysis, this chapter intends to test the hypothesis that even during Japan's attempts to comply with the pressures from the Arabs and its U.S. alliance, Japan's Middle East behavior aimed at satisfying its own domestic business groups' economic interests. Moreover, it argues that Japan has been striving to maintain its "balanced" position between the three key policy factors as it goes through its high and low level of engagement in the Middle East. The chapter will touch upon Japan's behavior in the region, examine the real motive behind its regional approach and the way Japan deployed its behavior in the region to achieve those motives.

### **Japan's Policy debate:**

This section will discuss the debate among scholars on the importance level of the three key policy factors (Japan-U.S. alliance, Arabs energy relations and Japan's diplomatic interests and business groups' economic interests) on Japan's policy making process.

### **U.S. Alliance Pressure:**

Japan has been following the United States position in its overall policy and the Middle East is not an exception. Inbari (2014) has argued that Japan's Middle East policy is nothing but another form of Japan's commitment to its U.S. alliance. Scholars who support this factor take the stance that Japan has been carefully shaping its Middle East policy, even during the times of its pro-Arab policy, within the United States approval policy line of "economic assistance and multilateral participation" and not completely titling toward Arabs. Japanese officials have been forming their foreign policies in a way that demonstrates their support and wish for a robust U.S. alliance. When analyzing Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's Foreign Policy vision Przystup and Tatsumi (2015) have found three main pillars which define his vision and one of those three pillars was "an effective U.S. ally".

### **Arabs Energy relation:**

"As the World War II ended, Japan became highly dependent on crude oil as a main energy source. One of the most important goals of Japanese foreign policy is to ensure stable oil supply (The Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs 1999)".

Japan's position in the region has been taken for granted for its "oil interest" and has been mainly categorized as a result of that economic interest. Curtin (2004) and Wagner and Cafiero (2013) have pointed out how dependent Japan is on the Middle East's oil imports and how Japan has always shaped its policy in compliance with its oil need and the correspondence with Arabs' relations.

### **Japan's Business Groups' Interests:**

Japan has been placing large consideration to its business group's demands in its policies and this can be clearly seen in its Middle East policy making. In his opinion on Japan's policy making, Yasuhisa (2002) has stated that when there is a need for policy formulation, final decisions become a product of informal meetings and discussions between top Liberal Democratic Party's (LDP), Japan's ruling party, politicians and top business leaders. He further explicated that although top bureaucrats indeed had their influence over policy direction, the decision making itself was done by politicians and business leaders. In terms of Middle East policy, Japan has been mainly interested in bolstering and securing its position in the region to protect its share in the lucrative Middle East market. Japan has always been aiming at maintaining good relations with the oil producing countries to provide access to both its oil and the rich opportunity markets it has. This can be seen in Shinzo Abe's 2007 visit to the region while being accompanied by 180 business delegates to ensure their entry and acquisition of multiple energy related agreements, such as oil exploration exchange agreements. This has also been emphasized by the Ambassador of Palestine in Japan (April 18, 2017) when he stated that Japan has been interested in the Arabian market and has been willing to join the diverse market the region has. He states that Japan is aware of the risks oil dependency employ, and hence, Japan is looking at the region not only as imports source but also as an exports destination. Non-energy Japanese firms are keen on exporting Japanese products to the region in order to benefit from the region's diverse markets. For example, Japanese automobile companies like Toyota, Honda and Mitsubishi witnessed steady growth of car trades over years. Moreover, Japanese construction companies are offering expertise in engineering and technology to establish various infrastructure projects in the region. For example, Hamad Buamim, director general of the Dubai



Chamber of Commerce and Industry, has stated that Japan's architectural firm, Nikken Sekkei, was the one in charge of designing Dubai Chamber building. He further added that the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is home to over 300 Japanese companies that have long history of trading with the region in areas of telecommunications and cutting-edge technology, such as Panasonic, Sharp, Toshiba and more (An oasis for Japanese investment in the Gulf region, 2011). Also, TOYOBBO has been the leading fabric manufacturer in exporting Japanese thobe fabric to the Middle East. Other exporting goods include aluminum, iron and steel.

### **Japan's Political Interests:**

Aside from its oil interest, there has been a rising interest from within Japan's policy-makers for a greater Japanese role on the global stage. Japan's general policy as described by Miyagi (2008, p. 4) is a "reactive" policy, with "immobile" response to crisis, a low-risk strategy that follows a "non-militaristic" and "economic" centered approach while avoiding political involvement. Iokibe (2011, p. 123) had similar description when he stated that Japan's policy is a form of a rational reactive to crisis response policy that defends Japan's own vital interests. However, a noticeable change in Japan's general policy approach has been taking place due to changes in policy makers' ideologies and interests. There has been a rising interest from Japanese politicians to escape the limitations enforced on Japan by its pacifist constitution and its embedded Article 9 which renounce Japan from engaging in war as well as maintaining armed forces and military capabilities. As a result, till today, Japan has been upholding non-military forces known as Self-Defense Forces. However, Japan's recent policy has been moving gradually from its "peaceful" country image to a "normal" nation that can lead and have influence on the international stage

level. Curtin (2004) refers to Abe's administration as a clear example for this change. Shinzo Abe has showed interest in a "greater international role for Japan" in an area that extends beyond the boundaries of Asia-Pacific. Wagner and Cafiero (2013) and Yoshida (2012) have also described Abe's administration as an administration that is eager to recover a true independence of Japan by seeking gradual remilitarization of Japan and aims to shift Japan's reactive policy into a more proactive policy. Japan has been breaking new ground in its Middle East policy by serving its own interests, which are to be recognized globally as a peace leader power where Japan plays greater role, and to escape its "dual dependency" on both the unstable Japan-U.S. alliance and oil need (Morse 2003). The government decision to reinterpret the Japanese constitution in 2014 is an example of Japan's move toward "normality". The new interpretation provides self-defense forces with more freedom in practices by enabling them to defend Japan's allies. The reinterpretation was later formalized by the Japanese National Diet in 2016.

### **Japan's Middle East Policy:**

*(1973-Early 1980s):*

Japan's active policy in the Middle East began with the emergence of the oil crisis in 1973. Japan's oil interest has been a huge contributor toward its active policy. The region's Hormuz passage has been a life line supplying Japan with its oil and natural gas resources throughout history. Nester and Ampiah (1989) have mentioned that at any recorded history, and especially in the 1970s, there were at least five or more tankers owned or operated by a Japanese company in the Gulf region passing through those straits every day. Due to its constant interest, Japan's Middle East policy scored high level of engagement during the times when there was a rising oil

need within Japan. The increased level of oil importance during the oil shock made Japan intensify its engagement in the region by forming what was known later as Japan's "resource diplomacy." This diplomacy marks Japan's active yet "limited" pro-Arab titling. Miyagi (2011) describes this diplomacy as the shifting point in Japan's Middle East policy, compared to its low-level steady oil-based relations policy prior to the crisis.

In 1973, when the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) decided to cut oil supply on what was known as "unfriendly" nations, a split among Japanese policy makers occurred. Japanese politicians were divided into two, with one side taking a pro-U.S. (Foreign Minister Masayoshi Ohira and Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA)) and the other with Pro-Arab stand (Yasuhiro Nakasone, the business community and Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI)). The split was triggered by pro-Arabs politicians who, directed by their desire to prioritize energy market needs, recognized the obligation to comply with Saudi Arabia's King Faisal's demand for Japan to side with Arabs (Cohen, 2005). However, on the other hand, the opposing opinion in Japan's pro-U.S. politicians insisted on maintaining Japan's ultimate position for following United States' demands. The result of the conflict was driven by the business groups' economic interest to provide Japan with its oil necessity along with the politicians' will to demonstrate their capability to ease the general panic the oil crisis cast on the public. Hence, the final decision was to pursue a pro-Arab policy according to Iokibe (2011, p. 123).

Since then, Japan's started to increase its Arab support. With the rising Arab demand for Japan to do more, from 10 to 28 December, Vice Prime Minister Takeo Miki visited eight countries including Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Egypt, Kuwait, Qatar, Syria, Iran and Iraq. Also, during his visit, he offered Egypt 38 billion JPY in aid and a loan of 20 billion JPY to

Syria pledging a re-evaluation of Japan's policy regarding Israel. Japanese political and economic institutions furthered their efforts by initiating and funding a pro-Arab lobby that, among other activities, funded anti-Israeli activities. Also, multiple politicians appointed themselves as friends to the Arab countries and the Palestine case. For example, Former Foreign Minister Toshio Kimura held the position of Japan-PLO Friendship League chairman; Yasuhiro Nakasone was chairman for the Arab countries Friendship League and, inconsistent with ideal diplomatic practice, maintained this position even during his prime minister period; and Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu was the chairman for Jordan Friendship League (Cohen 2005). Moreover, another six Middle East countries (Algeria, Jordan, Morocco, Sudan, Iran and Iraq) were visited by Former Foreign Minister Zentaro Kosaka. During his visit, he offered 30 billion JPY in aid for telecommunications projects and 12 billion JPY in aid to Algeria. Iran and Iraq were revisited by Yasuhiro Nakasone. Nakasone supported Iraq's construction projects with an aid of 74.5 billion JPY. He also provided Iran with a 1 billion USD loan. As a result of Japan's continuous support to the Palestinian case during this period, OAPEC leaders overlooked Japan-Iran relations and they praised Japan for its Palestine support by labeling it as a "friendly" country and promised to ensure its oil supply (Iokibe, 2011, p. 123). Hence, business was enhanced between Japan and Arab countries during this period. Japan Oil Development Company (JODCO) was established to strengthen relationships between Japan and Arab countries (Cohen 2005). Moreover, the "Middle East Cooperation Centre" and the "Middle East Economic Research Institute" were established in Japan to enhance government-business relations (Nester and Ampiah, 1989). The center was used to enhance technical cooperation through technical training programs in Japan. Japan's private companies also contributed to these efforts by

developing joint ventures with Gulf countries, such as Kuwait, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) (Togo 2005, p. 301).

As the oil importance continued to maintain high levels during the 1970s and early 1980s, notwithstanding its U.S. alliance demands, Japan's active engagement in the Middle East continued to soar. For example, the start of the Iranian revolution caused a shift in United States position in the region. Following the United States' embassy hostage incident in Tehran in 1979, a tension emerged in the U.S.-Iranian relations. As a result, the United States' imposed sanctions on Iran and urged other countries not to trade with Iran. However, despite these sanctions, Japan maintained good relations with Iran. This can be attributed to Japan's economic interests presented in its large economic stakes in Iran. Japan imports of Iranian oil accounted for 20 percent of its overall imports. Moreover, a large number of Japanese firms and banks, such as Mitsui, took part in an Iran-Japan Petrochemical (IJPC) project with a value of over 2 billion USD. In order to compromise with the pressure rising from those business firms, Japan chose to protect its economic interests and comply with its pluralist liberal policy identity by going against its alliance's isolation and sanctions imposing pressure. Arab countries did not complain much about Japan's oil trade with Iran due to Japan's "friendly nation" categorization after its support to the Palestinian case. Iokibe (2011, p. 135) describes how Japan-Iran relations caused tension between Japan-U.S. relations throughout the 1980s. In their response, United States' Secretary of State Cyrus Vance labeled Japan's action as insensitive.

During the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s, Japan's continuous refusal to cut diplomatic and economic ties with Iran was criticized not only by the United States but by Arab states as well. Like the United States, Arab states siding with Iraq during the Iran-Iraq war led them to hold an opposition position toward Iran. Seeing the disapproval from both sides, Japan started to lead

series of attempts to mediate a ceasefire talk between Iran and Iraq in order to have more free space to trade with Iran and lift the imposed sanctions. In 1983, Japan actively took part in peace and ceasefire negotiations to end war between Iran and Iraq. Also, in the same year, Foreign Minister Shintaro Abe visited Teheran and Baghdad in a peace mission (Miyagi 2008, p. 38).

Despite Japan's pro-Arab position during this period (1973-early 1980s), its support was still in a "limited" form. Along with the business groups' interests to satisfy their oil need, they still had to follow a cautious approach that pleases and balances the demands of both United States and the Arab. In order to keep a firm posture not to hurt the alliance, Japan's pro-Arab policy was actually "limited" within the acceptable line of Japan-U.S. alliance of financial support and political dialogue. Hence, it can be said that Japan switched sides only rhetorically (Nester and Ampiah 1989). Japan's support to the Arab in their war against Israel took the form of low risk policies of economic assistance and multilateral groups, such as the UN, which did not change much from the pre-1973 period. Although not successful, Japan tried to diversify its oil sources during and after the 1973 crisis rather than showing complete loyalty to the Arab leaders and increase oil trade ties solely with them. Moreover, despite not cutting relations with Iran, Japan maintained its sanctions obligations and did not establish high level businesses with Iran.

*(Mid-1980s-1991):*

This period marked the decrease in Japan's pro-Arab policy. During this period, the relative importance of oil started to gradually decrease as Japan managed to reduce its Middle East's oil vulnerability, although it was still highly dependable (Dowty, 2000). According to Vivoda (2016, p. 67), Japan was able to reduce its Middle East oil imports from 76.1% to 63.4% of its total

imports. The figure below shows how Japan's oil imports from the Middle East underwent a short drop in the mid-1980s:

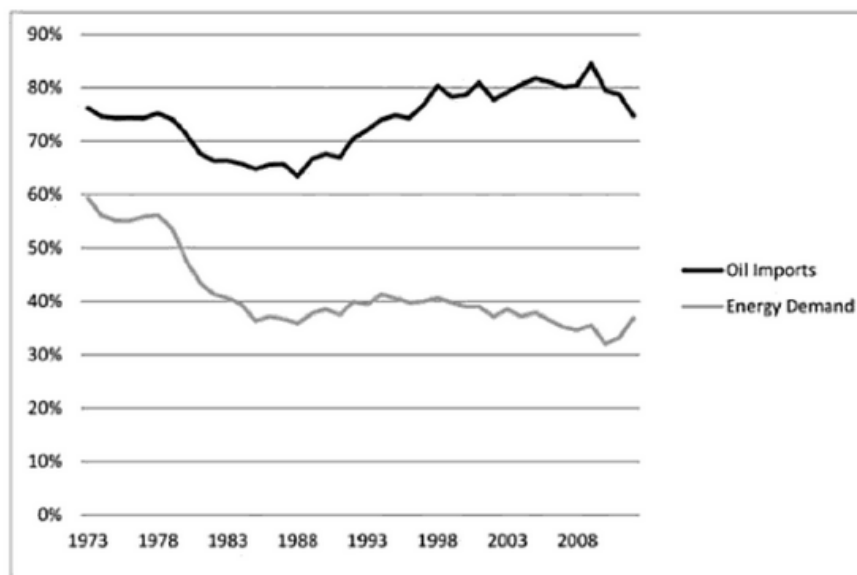


Figure 3.1: Japan's Reliance on Middle Eastern Oil and Overall Energy Demand<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, OAPEC leaders fading demands gave Japan more freedom to practice its own policy in the region without facing an oil-based pressure. However, Japan's continuous oil trade with Iran continued to displease Arabs leaders. This has caused Japan to carry on its efforts toward the ongoing Iraq-Iran war end through UN Security Council negotiations. The negotiations resulted in Resolution 598 that called for immediate ceasefire between Iran and Iraq in 1987 (Miyagi 2008, p. 38).

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<sup>4</sup> Source: Vivoda, V. (2016, p. 67). Energy Security in Japan: Challenges after Fukushima. Oxon, OX: Routledge.

*(1991-Mid-1990s):*

While the importance of oil decreased, the start of the Gulf War in 1991 caused another shift in the region's political situation. Both Arabs and U.S. support of Iraq during the Iraq-Iran war ended when Iraq invaded Kuwait and threatened Saudi Arabia's security. Notwithstanding the shift in U.S. and its Arabs allies' position toward Iraq, their hostility with Iran remained present. During the Gulf War, the United States pressured Japan to support its military and to quickly join the war, which caused another split among Japanese policymakers. Politicians who were in favor of Japan's move toward a normal nation before the war took advantage of the United States pressure to support their demands. They urged Japan to pursue self-help and engage in the international system multilaterally rather than limiting itself with its U.S. alliance. They argued that a continuing dependency on an U.S. alliance may put Japan under the danger of the unstable U.S. political system. Also, they argued that by relying on the United States, Japan is eliminating its own independent identity and is put under another system's control (Susumu as quoted in Green, 2003, p. 23). In addition, the United States neglected Japan's oil need during the first oil crisis. In Green (2003, p. 23), an Asahi Shimbun writer, Saeki Keishi's, argues that "America could end up being interested only in its own national interests." Green (2003, p. 23) explains that despite the importance of the United States-Japan bilateral relations and despite the similarity in objectives between the two, there is a need for Japan to seek an identity that is not necessarily tied to the United States interests, since both of them may differ in individual interests. While, on the other hand, the business groups stated their wish to protect Japan's economic interests. During the Gulf War period, Japan's wish to end its trade deficit with the United States was high and, thus, business groups tried to push the government to co-operate



with the United States in its war. Eventually, Japan chose to support the United States and support the will of its business groups (Miyagi 2008, p. 75).

Japan's final response to the United States did not only come late, due to the split in its policymakers' opinion, but also short due to its constitutional limitation. Restricted by its pacifist constitution, Japan could not pursue a full realist approach of depending on hard power to demonstrate its loyalty to the alliance. Thus, Japan had to follow a neorealist behavior of using economic assistance as a tool for policy, later known as Japan's "checkbook diplomacy". When Kaifu government failed to issue legislation that allows for the Japanese Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) to be dispatched, Japan's U.S. support was limited to a financial support of 13 billion USD. Japan's financial support continued even after the war ended (Miyagi 2011).

The "Checkbook Diplomacy" Japan has practiced received negative views from both outside and inside Japan. From inside Japan, realist-oriented voices from inside Japan, like Ichiro Ozawa (LDP secretary-general), were calling for Japan to act as a "normal nation" that has political and military power, rather than just economic one (Shinoda 2007, p. 7). From outside Japan, the United States saw the diplomacy as a lack of commitment from the Japanese side. Seeing this, a more active contribution took place. In 1992 Japan was able to enact the "Act on Cooperation for United Nations Peacekeeping Operations and Other Operations," which made its participation in the UN's peacekeeping missions possible. Through this law, Japan's participation in post-war was restricted to self-defense forces sent for peacekeeping missions. Thus, although this achieved one element in policymakers aim toward a stronger "normal" Japan through military building, this achievement had limited effects. Japan's military ambition and the wish for Japan to escape its pacifist constitution and build military troops were achieved in semi-realist form only. In the Middle East, Japan participated in each of "UN Iraq-Kuwait Observer Mission

(UNKOM)" in 1992, "UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA)" from October 1996 to June 1998 and "Iran–Iraq Military Observer Group (UNIMOG)" from August 1988 - February 1991 (Miyagi 2008, p. 208). Through this law Japan was given the space to -limitedly- escape its long-held merchant pacifist identity and have a space for more neorealist participation in multilateral international systems that aimed to achieve a greater international role for Japan.

In general, the Gulf War provided Japan with multiple opportunities to prove itself on the international level, expand as a military power, as well as, an economic giant, and pursue more semi-realist goals that benefit both Japan and the United States alliance. Japan's attempt to use economic contributions demonstrates how Japan was a rising economic power (Miyagi, 2008, pp. 6-7, 11). Also, Japan boosted its profile as a peace leader in the world and among the Arab, in particular, by showing commitment to peacefully resolving the region's sensitive issues along with huge amounts of financial aid and peacekeeping efforts. This motive to protect Japan's own interests during the periods of its changing policy forms the "balance between the three key policy priorities" in Japan's Middle East policy. In its Middle East approach, Japan tried to support Japan-U.S. alliance's demands, maintain good Arabs relation through economic aids and satisfy policymakers' interests for Japan to rise as an international power that possesses military power as well as business groups' economic interests (Miyagi 2011; Shinoda 2007).

*(Mid-1990s- 2001)*

This "balancing between the three key policy priorities" approach continued during post-war periods. The stabilization in oil imports along with the decreasing United States presence in the region led Japan to pursue a low-level yet stable engagement in the region. Japan's low-level

policy insured continuous U.S. support while maintaining a robust economic relationship with the region's leaders.

In its U.S. support, in 1998, Japan co-sponsored UN Security Council resolutions that forced the Iraqi government to cooperate with UN's Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) inspections. For its Arab support, Togo (2005, p. 314) refers to Foreign Minister Yohei Kono's speech in 2001 that emphasizes the importance of developing multilayered relations with the Gulf countries and sustaining relations with the oil producing countries.

*(2001-Mid 2000s)*

The attacks the United States witnessed in 11 September, 2001 caused a new context to emerge in the Middle East region. The United States fast reaction to the attack was directed toward the Middle East as a whole and both Iraq and Afghanistan specifically. The U.S.-led "war on terror" operations, accompanied by no-objection from the Arab leaders, was supported by Japan, which increased its engagement through a fast, firm, and more militarized form. Shinoda (2007, p. 90) describes how Prime Minister Koizumi established an Emergency Anti-Terrorism Headquarters at the Cabinet's Situation Center with himself in charge just forty-five minutes after the attack happened. After setting plans for actively supporting the American reprisals for the terrorist attacks, Koizumi visited the United States on September 25 to share the plans with President George W. Bush. His plans included dispatching Self Defense Force (SDF) troops to support the United States forces and provide them humanitarian and medical assistance. Also, when the United States began its war against Afghanistan On October 7, Prime Minister Koizumi managed to pass the Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law 2001 (a law that allowed Japan to participate in the United States' responsive war to the 9/11 attacks). Through this law, Japan was

able to join the U.S.-led ‘coalition of the willing’ operation as well as “War on Terror”. When the United States began its war against Iraq in 2003, a further law was passed on Iraq Special Measures Law (a special measures law on Iraq’s humanitarian and reconstruction assistance) to allow for Japan’s still semi-realist participation in the war.

While this fast and clear support was met by praise from the United States side, it was criticized by the opposition parties in Japan. Both leftists and rightists groups had opposing opinions regarding the new law. The leftist Socialist Democratic Party and the Japan Communist Party interpreted Koizumi’s plan as a step toward abandoning Japan’s pacifist identity as well as anti-militarist constructive norm to adoption of a semi-realist remilitarization approach. As for the rightist front, the Liberal Party’s Ichiro Ozawa’s opposition paper stated that Koizumi’s detached plan lacked the formal Japanese decision making process of parties’ discussion and formal meetings. Despite the opposition from policymakers, Koizumi’s actions were strongly supported by the public, especially after his policy speech on September 27, which demonstrated his wish to raise his popularity through the legislation. A poll on 13-14 October conducted by Asahi Shimbun showed that 51 percent responded that they support the anti-terrorism legislation (29 percent were against) and Koizumi’s cabinet approval rate recorded 79 percent. Another poll on 21-22 September conducted by Nihon Keizai Shimbun revealed 70 percent of the respondents approved Koizumi’s support for the United States military actions. The media also showed favorably responses with four major newspapers of Nihon Keizai, Mainichi, Sankei, and Yomiuri supporting the new law on SDF dispatching. However, the public stance changed after the United States invaded Iraq. A poll by Asahi Shimbun concluded that only 39 percent of the respondents approved Koizumi’s support for the United States’ actions in Iraq, while 50% disapproved. In addition, a poll by Nihon Keizai Shimbun following the United States’ invasion

showed that 49 percent of the respondents disapproved Koizumi's stand (40% approved) (Shinoda 2007, p. 115).

Japan's support for the U.S.-led military operations had a financial aspect as well. Miyagi (2011), states how Japan tolerated about 16 percent of the overall of United States' war expenses as a form of U.S. support during the war. Moreover, Japan aided regional U.S. allies. For example, Japan provided the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) countries with a 10 million USD navigation system that is set to guide and guarantee the safety of Gulf navigation through peace and war times. Also war affected other countries, such as Turkey, Jordan and Egypt, which were given aids assistance amounting to 2 billion USD. In general, Japan's 2001 policy showed continuity with its Gulf War policy of satisfying the three policy pillars. In its 2001 policy, Japan managed to demonstrate its support to the United States, maintain good relations with Arab leaders through economic aids and support its business groups' economic demands.

However, despite Japan's support to both the United States and Arabs policy, the continuous Japan-Iran oil trade remained an area in which Japan's business groups' interest tops its compliance with its U.S.-alliance and Arab leaders' interests. Koizumi's administration's oil consideration policy diverged from U.S. alliance stance to not trade with Iran. This can be seen in the 2004's Japan-Iran's 2 billion USD deal in which Japan supported the development of oil fields in Azadegan, Iran 2004 (Cohen, 2005). Also, Iran remained an important oil supplier to Japan even during the United States' economic sanctions on Iran and at the times when Iran was still considered as threat by the Arab leaders due to its nuclear development.

*(Mid 2000s-2011)*

With the Iraq war coming to an end in 2006, the Middle East witnessed a gradual reduction in the United States' presence in the region. Seeing this, Japan attempted to follow the United States and reduce its presence as well. Thus, Japan turned to follow a merchant neorealist approach to maintain its presence in the region. By enhancing economic growth and multilateral groups' participation, Japan aimed to advance its international level position and strengthen its economic relations with the Middle East leaders. Abe's 2007 speech referred to this as a "New Era of Japan and Middle East Relations" (Abe, 2007). He further stated: "Japan will engage actively in the Middle East, deepen mutual understanding...beyond a relationship focused on petroleum by building multi-layered relations" (Abe, 2007). As a result, there was an increase in trade between Japan and the region's major countries. The following table reflects how Japan's economic influence has widened in the region during this period:

Country	1990	2000	2005	2008	2009
China	1.3	11.8	44.9	121.4	93.4
India	4.4	6.6	21.4	119.3	87.9
Japan	33.5	52.0	103.8	176.1	103.7
South Korea	6.1	25.6	53.4	109.7	71.9
U.S.	19.1	33.9	66.0	124.8	71.2

Table 3.1: 1990-2009 Gulf-Trade<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Source: Malik, M. & Niblock, T. (2013, p. 28). *Asia-Gulf Economic Relations in the 21st Century: The Local to Global Transformation*. Gerlach Press

*(2011 and on)*

After the slow decline in Japan's active Middle East policy between 2006 and 2010, in line with the decline in the United States' presence in the region, the importance for a deep engagement mounted once again in 2011. The 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster increased the importance of oil for Japan and made the region important again for the Japanese economy. Thus, a refocus was given to the region. The disaster left an unfavorable opinion among the public about nuclear power and a need to comply with that opinion rose among the Japanese policy-makers. In 2011 and on, Japan's consumption of oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG) increased remarkably. The imports scored an increase from 2010's 70 million tons to 89 million tons by the end of 2015 (Abdullah & al-Tamimi 2015). Since the disaster, Middle Eastern oil supply has fluctuated more or less around 87% of Japan's overall oil imports. Tōgō (2005) mentioned the document produced by MOFA in August 2011 entitled "Tasks of Energy Diplomacy". The document highlights the importance of establishing a strategic partnership with the Middle East countries. Wagner and Cafiero (2013) list the diplomatic efforts of the Japanese officials to assure their energy requirements are met. The head of Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry (METI), Yukio Edano, made a visit in 2011. Through this visit, both United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia promised to provide Japan with a firm oil supply. Moreover, Japan managed to resume free trade agreement negotiation with countries of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). An eight-day trip in January 2012 by the Foreign Minister Koichiro Gamba to Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) was made to discuss regional and energy issues; and Japan was offered five million barrels of crude oil donated from Kuwait, two relief cargoes of LNG donated by Oman, and additional cargoes of LNG from Qatar (Calabrese 2012). As a result, Japan LNG demand accounted for 37% of the overall global demand where

28.6% of its natural gas imports were provided by four Middle Eastern countries during the fiscal year of 2012 (U.S. Energy Information Administration 2007). Today, Japan ranks as the third highest oil consuming country in the world after the United States and China. Also, it is considered one of the world's largest LNG importers (Johnston 2015).

Increase in diplomatic presence was another area of deepening relations with Middle East countries. For example, Japan signed a joint security pact with Saudi Arabia. The pact was regarded as a “paradigm shift” for Japanese-Saudi relations (Wagner and Cafiero 2013). Shinzo Abe's 2007 economic policy was re-enforced through his six-day trip to the Middle East in 2012. In his trip to Qatar, Hamad bin Jassim bin Jaber Al Thani Qatar Prime Minister issued a joint statement restating the importance of Japan-Qatar relations. The trip had another important objective and that was to satisfy the Japanese business groups' interests to promote and ensure the establishment of bilateral agreements and economic-based relations with the oil producing countries. Also, it intended to secure the highly profitable projects in the region. Qatar's 2022 World Cup Soccer Game project is an example of such a project. In general, the trip managed to secure multiple large infrastructure projects, such as the agreement to cooperate on stadiums building, railways and sewage systems. In his Bahrain trip, a total of four memoranda of understanding were signed in the areas of agriculture, healthcare and medical research (Wagner and Cafiero 2013). However, the number of Japanese officials visits to the Middle East to strengthen economic ties as well as signing joint agreements, especially oil exploitation exchange agreements, are not limited to these mentioned. Japanese officials have been visiting the region since the 1990s, although the scope of these visits were smaller focusing on certain countries at a time, resulting in a steady growing interdependence between Japan and the region's countries. According to a white paper issued by the Agency of Natural Resources and



Energy in 2014, seven Middle Eastern countries handled more than 80 percent of Japan’s total crude oil imports (with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) imports accounting for half of that amount) (Wagner and Cafiero 2013). According to the Trading Economics’ 2016 September report (figure included below) Japan’s imports and exports from the Middle East reached an all-time high of JPY47 million in October 2015.

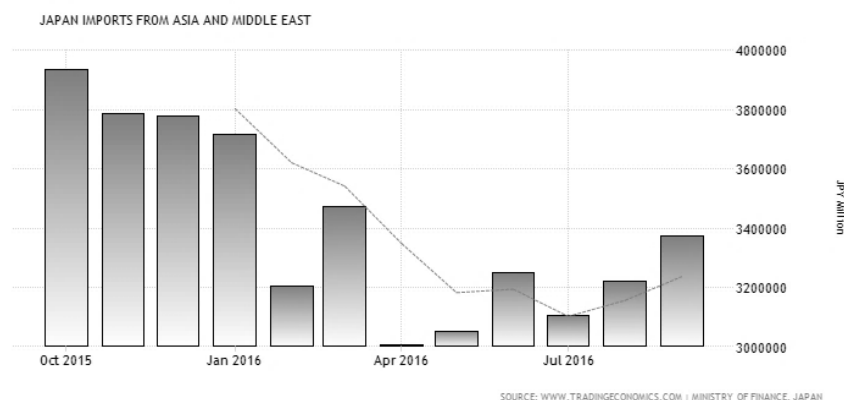


Figure 3.2: Japan imports from Asia and Middle East<sup>6</sup>

Along with economic integration, Japan pursued a neorealist military approach in which it continued to conduct peacekeeping operations in the region. Soeya (2012) argues that Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda’s 2011 notion on ‘middle-power internationalism’ is what sets the line for the current neorealist Japanese security policy. The notion pushes Japan to reexamine its collective self-defense right. The Prime Minister’s argues that, although limited by constitution, Japan has the right to pursue the essential self-defense trait that all sovereign states enjoy. This can be seen in Abe’s attempt to shift the public perception on troop sending and self-defense exercising to allow more space for military practices. Lamont and Pannwitz (2015) pointed this

<sup>6</sup> Source: Japan imports from Asia and the Middle East. (2017). *Trading Economics*. Retrieved June 01, 2016 from [goo.gl/vXXZn5](http://goo.gl/vXXZn5)

will in Abe's policy that aims toward advancing legislations and constitution amending to weaken Japan's military imposed restrictions.

Another benefit this trait provides Japan is a strong U.S.-Japan alliance. As Japan moves gradually toward practicing a natural right all nations enjoy, it moves closely to being a loyal ally that supports the United States even in military aspects. Exercising this right will allow Japan to participate in wars which the United States is joining (Soeya 2012). This view was asserted by Przystup and Tatsumi (2015) when they described Abe's administration "toward militarization" approach as an attempt to please the United States by playing a role to "proactively contribute to peace". This can be seen in Japan-U.S. joint statement titled "Toward a More Robust Alliance and Greater Shared Responsibilities" issued in 2013. The statement extends the 1997's Defense Cooperation Guidelines allowing more space in defense collaboration through joint training (Przystup & Tatsumi 2015). Two months after this statement, in December, Abe's Cabinet reduced military restrictions by adopting a new national security strategy that allows Japan to engage in arms exports (Johnston 2015). This was further expanded by the government's decision to reinterpret Japan's Constitution in 2014. The decision aimed at lowering barriers on the ability to exercise collective self-defense. In accordance with that decision, Abe's administration increased defense budget up to 48.7 billion USD in 2014. This was later increased by 1.5 percent in 2016 (Pollock 2016).

Based on the three steps of inquiry method that utilize the three key policy factors to examine Japan's policy, this chapter demonstrated how Japan's Middle East policy is dominated by measuring and "balancing" the relative importance of its three-pillar of oil necessity, U.S. pressure and presence in the region and its own domestic and big business interests at a certain period of time. The chapter has explained how Japan's Middle East policy slowly shifted from a

pure mercantile and pacifist state (Sato and Hirata 2008, p. 3) to a semi-realist normal state (Miyagi 2008, p. 11; Sato and Hirata 2008, p. 3). Japan's Middle East policy has been shaped by a neorealist approach that focuses on maintaining a U.S.-Japan alliance while, at the same time, seeking more "normal" proactive policy with which Japan participates economically and militarily in multilateral international systems. LDP's dominance has resulted in the supremacy of business groups' influence over Middle East policy-making. Hence, when faced by an external pressure, Japan tends to take decisions that are in accordance with domestic interests, mainly big businesses. This business group compliance has also supported Japan's politicians' sub-interests of pursuing international recognition and military expansion in the region as well as rising popularity through demonstrating public opinion support from time to time.

## **Chapter 4: Japan's Relations with Palestine-Israel (Case Study)**

This chapter will employ the three steps of inquiry testing method that was conducted in the previous chapter. It will test the three key policy factors' influence on Japan's policy making. The testing method is guided by the analysis on Japan's Middle East policy conducted in the previous chapter in order to observe the pattern of change in Japan's policy. Japan's relations with both Palestine and Israel will be examined through its high level of commitment, with emphasis on how Japan's diplomatic interests and business groups' economic interests were reflected in Japan's foreign policy in regards to its Palestine-Israel relations. This chapter intends to provide a narrowed view on Japan's overall Middle East's policy. In an aim to shift the thesis from its general regional perspective, this chapter intends to provide a single case study to examine the thesis's hypothesis. It intends to examine in details if the same pattern followed in Japan's overall Middle East policy of focusing on satisfying Japan's-centered needs while maintaining a fine balance between the three key policy priorities can explain its Palestine-Israel relations.

### **The Conflict:**

The emergence of the Jews immigration movement in 1882 and following WWII marked the beginning of The Palestine-Israeli conflict. In 1882, the Jews started their immigration to what was known as "Palestine," an Ottoman Empire ruled land with a 403,795 (along with other unaccounted) Muslim population. Jews chose Palestine as their destination due to its religious importance stated in the biblical promise that entitled the land to Abraham and his descendants.

By 1914, according to Ottoman records, there were 683,000 Muslims and 60,000 Jews in Palestine clashing over their right of residence (Primer on Palestine, Israel and the Arab-Israeli Conflict n.d.). The tension took a further religious aspect when Muslims and Jews began to claim their religious rights over distinguished holy places, such as the Western (or Wailing) Wall.

In 1917, with the weakening of the Ottoman Empire, Britain took control over much of the Ottoman Empire, including Palestine. In its support to the Jews, Britain issued “the Balfour Declaration” that entitles Jews “a national home in Palestine.” The declaration resulted in anger from the Arab world and a war broke out in 1920 as well as 1921 between the Arabs and the Jews (Primer on Palestine, Israel and the Arab-Israeli Conflict n.d.). After that, wars between the Arabs and the Jews continued to break until Britain finally decided to hand the situation to the UN in 1945.

On November 29, 1947, the UN General Assembly presented a partition plan for Palestine. The plan divides Palestine into two states: Palestine (Arabs state) and Jews state. The two states were unequally divided with larger territory given to the Jews than Arabs (56 percent and 43 percent, respectively) (Primer on Palestine, Israel and the Arab-Israeli Conflict n.d.). Not accepting the partition plan, the Arabs began their fight with the Jews days after the adoption of the vote. In 1948, following Zionist leaders’ proclamation of the State of Israel, Britain started its Palestine evacuation movement causing many Palestinians to lose their homes. As a reaction, Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Iraq and Lebanon launched a war against Israel. The end of the war in 1949 reshaped Palestine into three territories: The State of Israel (over 77 percent of Palestine), East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip (in conjunction with the West Bank). More than 700,000 Palestinians became refugees (Israeli-Palestinian Conflict 2014).

The 1950s and early 1960s witnessed several wars between Israel and Arab states of Egypt, Syria and Jordan. These wars came to an end with Israel's victory in the Six Days War in 1967 allowing Israel to capture all Palestine. The UN Security Council has condemned this action in its 242 resolutions which call for Israel to return all the territories it occupied after 1967, later known as the "1967 line". While Israel, supported by the United States, refused to comply with the resolution, the land witnessed more conflicts between the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), formed in 1964, and the Israeli government. Since its 1967 victory, the Israeli government started its "Israeli settlement building policy" on the newly occupied land overtaking many Palestinian towns and villages. Israel's continuous rejection to comply with UN Security Council's 242 resolution as well as its continued settlements building led to a further escalation of the conflict during the 1970s and 1980s. In 1974, UN Security Council called for a "two states" solution, in which the Israelis and the Palestinians were to live side by side within the 1967 recognized borders. Till now, this solution continues to be the most possible option with both governments calling for it frequently; however, it is yet to be fulfilled.

With the rising fear of radical Islam, Israel started its secret negotiations with the PLO in Oslo, Norway in 1993. The talk resulted in what was known later as the "Oslo Accord" signed in Washington the same year between Yasser Arafat, PLO chairman, and Yitzhak Rabin, Israeli Prime Minister. The Accord recognized the leadership of both Israel and the PLO over their respective territories. It further imposed Israel to withdraw from Gaza Strip and the West Bank areas within a five-year period. However, as Israel continued to pursue the "settlement policy" while tightening restrictions on Palestinians, the Accord came to a failed end.

In 2000, Palestinians began their uprising movement as a reaction to the Al Aqsa Holy Mosque visit by the Israeli's leader, Ariel Sharon. As a conciliatory reaction, Israel announced its decision to dismantle Jewish settlements in both Gaza Strip and the West Bank and evicted Israeli settlers to alternative Israeli government established accommodations. This led Gaza Strip to fall under the Palestinian control. It also led to the "Roadmap" peace proposal. The plan was initiated by the United States, European Union, Russia and United Nations in 2003. It sets aside the conflict's main claims and calls for an end to violence, political reform by the Palestinian Authority and a freeze on building of new settlement as well as withdrawal from Palestinian cities by Israel. However, violence on both sides escalated soon after the agreement and ended the newly established peace plan.

In 2007, when Hamas, an Islamic resistance movement, won the Palestinian national government election, an intensive war between Palestinians and Israelis begun due to Israel's opposition to Hamas. An example of these ongoing wars is the blockade of the Gaza Strip.

The continuous violence was met by protests from different parts of the world and ceasefire calls were issued by the UN, the United States, the Arab League and other countries. Moreover, diplomatic efforts took place to realize the "two state" solution. Examples of these initiatives are the Madrid Conference (1991), the Oslo Accords (1993), Camp David Summit (2000), Taba negotiations (2001), the Arab Peace Initiative (2002) and the 2013–14 peace talks.

Palestinians' "Palestine" (Holy Place in Qur'an's interpretation) and Jews' "Land of Return" (biblical naming) remains a land of an endless crucial fight over each party's rights and claims, in which the future and safety of many are uncertain (Israeli-Palestinian Conflict 2014; Primer on Palestine, Israel and the Arab-Israeli Conflict n.d.).

## **Debates on Japan's Relations with Palestine-Israel:**

Japan's relation with Palestine-Israel is assumed to be influenced with the same factors Japan's Middle East policy is influenced with. However, the importance of each factor's influence is still debated between scholars. This section will present scholars' opinions on each factor:

### **U.S. Alliance Pressure:**

Japan's relation with Palestine-Israeli is an example of the previously stated factor of Japan-U.S. alliance pressure. Curtin (2004) has stated that Japan has been forming its Palestine-Israel conflict policy within the acceptable frame of the United States alliance demands. Japan's policy has been limited to low risk policies through economic aid and contributions to multilateral groups. These low risk policies fall within the three U.S.-acceptable pillars of "political dialogues, promoting multilateral peace groups and supporting Palestinians through economic assistance" (Curtin 2004). All the multilateral peace initiative groups Japan joined were U.S.-led. Also, all the largest receivers of Japan's Official Development Assistance (ODA) offerings in the Middle East were countries that supported the U.S. policy in the Palestine-Israel conflict. For example, Egypt and Jordan received large funds after signing peace treaties with Israel (U.S. ally). Moreover, despite its Arab support, Japan has not been able to unilaterally recognize Palestine as a Palestinian state; due to its inability to completely defy the U.S. policy in the conflict, which is pro-Israel. Miyagi (2008, p. 39) mentions how, when the Arabs asked Japan to call for a Palestinian state, Japan stated that it can only support the Arabs through multilateral organizations, such as the UN. In addition, Japan's neutral position in the conflict comes in compliance with the U.S. government's demands under President Ronald Reagan for Japan to do



so in the 1980s (Miyagi 2008, p. 36). Inbari (2014) also points out how Japan has been following the U.S. approach in calling for the same “two-state solution” that the United States is calling for.

### **Arabs Energy relation:**

This opinion states that Japan’s general Middle East policy is oil-oriented and Palestine-Israel conflict follows the same orientation. Boer (2004) supported this claim by basing his argument on the noticeable fact that Japan's position toward the Palestine-Israel conflict, in specific, and the region, in general, tended to grow bigger whenever there was a rising oil need.

### **Japan’s Business Groups’ Interests:**

Business groups have been supporting the government engagement in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict as enhancing the peace-process will provide them with a free-from-barriers Israeli market. Nye (2014) and Schulze (2015) emphasized Japan’s economic interest in Israel’s high-tech defense industry and cybersecurity because of Japan’s interest in Israel’s technology and defense industry, which could will provide Japan with more cutting-edge defense capabilities against North Korea’s nuclear threat.

### **Japan’s Political Interests:**

An example of Japan’s new proactive approach is its Palestine-Israel relations. Since 2014, Japan started engaging in economic relations with Israel, a thing its Arab consideration restricted it from in the past. Schulze (2015) also stated that Japan’s economic ambition of improving ties

with Israel and building strong relationship is an act beyond its Arab relations in the Middle East. Japan's proactive act in the Palestine-Israel conflict has also averted it from siding with its U.S. alliance. Just like Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's firm policy approaches in the conflict, Abe has been displaying a strong and distinguishable position in approaching the conflict. Morse (2003) emphasized how Japan supported the Palestinian authority even when George W. Bush's administration opposed it. For example, when President Bush dismissed the Palestinians' right of return, Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi stated that "the United States has its own stand. We cannot approve". Curtin (2004) related Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's commitment to the Palestine-Israel conflict to three important Japan-centered agendas. First, an active support for peace settlement will enhance Abe's proactive pacifist policy. Second, it will present Japan as a peace leader in the world; which may serve Japan's third agenda and that is a hope for a United Nations Security Council's permanent seat. Ambassador of Palestine in Japan (April 18, 2017) has reaffirmed this factor as an important factor in shaping Japan's, especially Abe's administration, relations with Palestine-Israel. He stated that, to present itself as a peace leader, Japan has been continuously calling for a peaceful settlement in the conflict. Since 2007, Japan has been proposing to hold a joint meeting between the Palestinian Authority and Israeli Prime Minister in Japan. Moreover, he explains how this factor was the reason behind the increase in Japan's participation in the peace talks in 2007 and 2012 (the years marked the start of Abe's administration).

## Japan's Relations with Palestine-Israel:

*(1973-Early 1980s):*

Since 1973, a shift was recorded in Japan's policy-orientation toward Palestine and Israel. With the start of Japan's active Middle East policy and as a reaction to the oil dilemma that emerged from the 1973 oil shock, Japan started showing an active commitment toward the Palestine-Israel conflict. As a way to show its support for the Arabs during the crisis and as a way to serve its business groups' wish of ensuring oil supply, Japan realized that stability and peace in the region should be achieved and the way to achieve it was through solving the Palestine-Israel conflict. Thus, Japan started to show interest in the Palestine-Israeli conflict and started to make contributions to facilitating peace talks between the two in hope for them to arrive at a non-violent solution. Japan has showed its commitment by voting in favor of the Palestinian authority for different UN Security Council resolutions. For example, on 22 November, the secretary general of the Japanese cabinet announced Japan's support for the UN Security Council's Resolution (242). The resolution calls for Israel's withdrawal from all territories it is occupying. Also, it recognizes Palestinians' right of self-determination. Japan pursued its pro-Arab policy despite its contradiction to the United States' position toward the conflict sometimes. For example, Japan's pro-Arab position during 1973's oil crisis had an opposed direction to United States' financial support to Israel. During the Arab-Israeli conflict, and especially during the oil crisis in 1973, the United States pursued a pro-Israel policy. Moved by the Israel lobby, such as the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), pressure to provide protection for Israel, United States followed a pro-Israel policy. United States' pro-Israel policy took the forms of ensuring Israel's protection from its neighbor countries. Also, providing military, diplomatic, financial assistance and endorsing Israel's right to exist internationally. One of its international

efforts was the pressure United States' Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, casted on Japan when he requested it to not side with the Arabs. As a condition for their support, Japanese officials asked the United States to provide Japan with its oil need and guarantee its oil supply during the crisis. However, the United States did not fulfill this condition. Also, despite partially praising the United States' peace efforts, Japan sided with the Arabs by following them in their disapproval of the U.S.-initiated Camp David Accord<sup>7</sup> in 1978; since it did not support the Palestinian territory rights in East Jerusalem. In addition, in 1979, Japan invited the PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat to visit Tokyo and establish an office there. Moreover, Japan was the first country to have prime ministerial level talks with the PLO in 1981. Since then, despite the United States government as well as the Congress's disapproval, Japan has been calling for a worldwide recognition of the PLO as the legitimate authority for Palestine (Boer 2005; Miyagi 2011).

Moreover, as a way to show its support to the Arabs, Japanese companies as well as the government made the Arab boycott a diplomatic priority. The boycott stated that any company that trades with Israel cannot sell to an Arab company and this caused Japan to refrain from doing business with Israel (Globes 2014; Herman 2015). Japan's boycott participation had two types. First, a voluntary compliance in which large firms refused to trade with Israel. Examples on these firms are: Toyota, Nissan, Mazda, Mitsui, Mochida, C. Itoh, Toshiba, Nippon Steel, Hitachi and Sumitomo. Second, the governmental-led boycott in which the Japanese government obliged companies to comply with the boycott. In the voluntary boycott, no large commercial

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<sup>7</sup> Camp David Accords is a peace treaty between United States President Jimmy Carter, Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Egyptian President Anwar Sadat signed in Washington, DC in 1978. The treaty called for the establishment of Egypt-Israeli relationship, end of Israeli settlement in West Bank and for Israel to withdraw from Sinai Peninsula within three years period and the West Bank and Gaza within five years period. However, the treaty did not discuss the Palestinian-Israeli dispute over East Jerusalem. Hence, it did not get Arab leaders' recognition. CNN Library. Camp David Accords Fast Facts. (2016, September 10). Retrieved January 24, 2017, from [goo.gl/nYs6LN](http://goo.gl/nYs6LN)

firms established open business with Israel, Japan's airline companies did not fly to Israel and ships avoided Israel's ports. Moreover, many Japanese banks refused to do any financial trade with Israel (Stern 1978). For example, although not receiving orders from the government, MITI, the Keidanren (Japan Federation of Economic Organizations) or Tokyo's Chamber of Commerce, Japanese companies refrained from selling cars and finished products to Israel. Companies like Matsushita (Pharmaceuticals Company) refused to export pharmaceutical products and hospital equipment to Israel. Also, Toshiba refrained from trading with Israel's Communications Ministry (Burton 1990). The head of the foreign trade administration at the Israeli Ministry of Economy and Industry, Ohad Cohen, described this as the major obstacle in Japan-Israel economic dialogue. He mentioned how Japan's trade level with Israel was relatively limited due to Japanese firms' sensitivity to the Arab boycott. As for the government-led boycott, Cohen (2005) explains how the government pushed automobiles, semiconductors and information technology companies to cut trade with Israel. For example, Zenno's (agricultural cooperative) decision to terminate its trade with Israel was a result of letters sent from Japan's Arab friendship leagues forcing it to participate in the boycott. In addition, the stop in Japanese companies' visits to Israel was a result of an advisory by MOFA (Cohen 2005). Program Manager for the Asia Pacific Desk at MATIMOP (Israeli center for research and development), Hadas Kroitoru, further explicated how Japan-Israel joint research and development (R&D) agreements as well as trade agreements were not reached due to the lack of appropriate agreement from the Government of Japan to support Israeli joint activity (The Rising Sun of Japan – Israel Cooperation n.d.).

*(Mid-1980s-1991):*

Despite the high level of Arabs' commitment, Japan's pro-Arab policy witnessed a low-level of engagement in mid 1980s and early 1990s. The low-level of Arabs' support was associated with an increase in Japan's will to strengthen its U.S. alliance. This low-level of engagement can be attributed to the same factors that caused a general low engagement in Japan's Middle East policy. First, the end of the oil crisis stabilized Japan's oil imports from the Middle East countries and, hence, reduced the oil threat. As a result, Japan's need to either comply with the Arab demands or the United States' was reduced. This factor was strengthened by Japan's ability to reduce its oil consumption, hence, reducing the importance of Middle East's oil supply. Second, Japan wanted to end its trade conflict with the United States that was dominating its relations throughout the 1980s (Soeya, Tadokoro, & Welch 2011). For a long time, the Arab boycott caused a negative impact in Japan's market. It took place when Japan had trade deficit with the United States and when the United States demanded Japan to open its market to the American products. Moreover, most of the companies operating in the United States were owned by Jews who regularly protested against Japanese cooperation with the Arab boycott. Jewish Telegraphic Agency (1991) mentioned how nine key pro-Japan senators in the United States congress, led by Sen. Jay Rockefeller, urged the Japanese Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu, to end Japan's boycott compliance. These factors caused Keidanren's wish to end trade dispute with the United States to increase. Third, the United States pressure through Ronald Regan administration for Japan to shift its position in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Miyagi (2008, p. 36) mentions how Ronald Regan administration demonstrated a strong pro-Israel policy that tightened pressure on Japan to soften its pro-Arab stance without neglecting it. Fourth, Japan intended to satisfy its business groups who were always interested to engage in Israel's advanced technology market

but were restricted due to Japan's pro-Arab policy and its corresponding Arab boycott. Cohen (2005) also stated that Japan's business ambition to build long solid relations with Israel that is based on mutually beneficial economic interests raised Japan's interests to end its Arab compliance and move into its own direction, through closer economic ties with Israel.

As a result, during the mid-1980s, Japan decided to soften its Arab boycott. This decision allowed visits by Japanese officials to Israel and vice versa. For example, Foreign Minister Shamir along with the Israeli finance and communications ministers visited Japan in 1985. In 1985-6, an exchange of visits by parliamentary delegations took place. In addition, in 1987 and 1988, delegations of the Israeli Industrialists' Association visited Japan in response to the Keidanren delegation's visit to Israel in 1987. In 1988, Japanese Prime Minister Sosuke Uno visited Israel. Also, in the same year, the Japanese Foreign Ministry, MITI, the Keidanren conducted the first seminar on the Israeli economy. As a result, in 1988, direct and indirect Israeli exports to Japan reached USD850 million while Israeli imports from Japan reached USD650 million. Moreover, automobile exports to Israel started to soar and previously restricted companies like Mitsubishi were able to trade regularly. Japan continued its trade engagement with Israel even when Arab ambassadors in Tokyo protested against Japan's policy change. Aiming for continuous trade with Israel without risking Arabs displeasure, Japan signed the London Economic Summit declaration in 1991. The declaration calls for the termination of the Arab boycott. Masamichi Hanabusa, Foreign Ministry spokesman, publically expressed that "it is the position of the government of Japan that the Arab should reciprocally suspend their boycott" (Helm 1992).

*(1991-Mid-1990s):*

The end of the Arab boycott in 1991 marked a significant improvement in the Japanese-Israeli bilateral relations and allowed the long suspended Israel-Japan economic dialogue to proceed. Also, the improvement in relations was facilitated by U.S.–led peace attempts between Israel and Arabs such as President Bill Clinton’s support to the signing of interim Palestinian self-government declaration in 1993 and the Jordan-Israeli peace treaty in 1994 (Lewis 2010). As a result, exchange of officials’ visits took place between 1993 and 1995. In 1993, the National Agency for Science and Technology of MITI as well as the Keidanren delegation visited Israel to strengthen economic cooperation. In addition, in return to Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama visit to Israel in 1995, Prime Ministers Yitzhak Rabin and Benjamin Netanyahu, and Foreign Ministers Shimon Peres and David Levy visited Japan as well.

The end of the boycott during this period enabled the large Japanese vehicle manufacturers, such as Toyota, Nissan, Honda, Mazda, and others to export their products to Israel. The Israeli Stock market was opened for Japanese companies to invest in. Several Japanese companies took the chance and started direct deals with Israel. Mitsubishi Motors started direct sales of automobiles to Israel. Honda supplied cars via its U.S. division, and decided to ship spare parts directly. Japan also signed agreements on avoiding double taxation in 1993 and promoting scientific and technical cooperation in 1994. The year 1995 witnessed more intensified economic trade between the two. Israeli high-tech exports to Japan increased by 33 percent reaching an amount of USD1.2 billion, machinery and tools exports increased by 42 percent to reach USD172 million, and electronic equipment exports reached USD67 million. This cooperation was further strengthened with Prime Minister Murayama’s visit to Israel in the same year to open Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) office in Israel.



However, due to Japan's "balancing between three key policy priorities" approach and due to its will to maintain business relations with the oil rich countries, Japan did not neglect the Arab side in its policy. Japan chose to "restrictedly" support the Arabs on the Palestine issue within the United States' acceptable lines. This can be seen in the fact that Japan shaped its role in the conflict based on the three U.S.-acceptable policy lines of: "political dialogues with the parties concerned, promoting confidence-building between the Israelis and the Palestinians, and extending economic assistance to the Palestinians" as well as calling for the same "two-state solution" that the United States had been calling for (Curtin 2004; Inbari 2014). An example for that is Japan's joining the U.S.-led multilateral Madrid Middle East peace initiative. Within that multilateral group, bilateral meetings between Japan's diplomats and regional leaders were conducted on the side to facilitate the peace process under U.S.-sponsorship. Moreover, Japan offered ODA to countries that are signatories to a peace treaty with Israel, such as Egypt and Jordan, for an utter motive of demonstrating a support to the United States (Miyagi 2011). Japan also continued its limited Palestinian support through financial aid. It was the single largest donor to the Oslo framework through the period of 1993-2000 and the second largest to the UN agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA) in 1994 (Miyagi 2011).

*(Mid-1990s- 2001)*

This period showed continuity in Japan's "balancing between three key policy priorities" policy. While it continued to trade with Israel, Japan continued its support to the Palestinians within the three U.S.-acceptable policy lines of: "political dialogues with the parties concerned, promoting confidence-building between the Israelis and the Palestinians, and extending economic assistance to the Palestinians."

In 1997, Israel and Japan signed a foreign risk insurance cooperation and, in 1998, an air traffic agreement was signed (Cohen 2005; The Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs 1999).

In addition, Japan gave major aid to the Palestinian food production project in 1998, aids to upgrade the sewer system in Gaza, and to support the building the Jericho Hospital in the West Bank (Miyata 2012). Also, several Japanese companies readopted a moderate level of Arab boycott. For example, the Japanese banks and postal service refused to accept or send documents to and from Israel. Also, Japan's Foreign Risk Insurance Company removed Israeli goods from its ships, even though the goods were already loaded (Cohen 2005).

This went along with the United States continues peace talks initiatives as well as support for both Palestinians and Israelis. For example, Clinton has also hosted a summit meeting between Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in 1998. In the summit, Netanyahu agreed to hand more lands to the Palestinians in the West Bank (Lewis 2010).

*(2001-Mid 2000s)*

The following period of 2001-2005 was shaped by Prime Minister Koizumi's active policy that aimed at raising his popularity and Japan's international profile and moving toward Japan's normalization through possession of military capabilities. Japan's Palestine support took a diplomatic form to present itself as a peace leader in the international stage. In 2003, Japan announced its support to the "roadmap" plan<sup>8</sup> initiated by President George W. Bush. In 2004, Japan urged Israel not to attack the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat. Later, in March 2004,

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<sup>8</sup> Roadmap for peace was a plan outlined by United States President George W. Bush in 2002. It was later advanced by the European Union, Russia and the United Nations. The plan called for a peaceful side-by-side living between Palestine and Israel. However, the plan faced a deadlock and was terminated.

Prime Minister Koizumi publicly announced his displeasure regarding Israel's assassination of the Palestinian religious leader, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin. Sheikh Yassin's killing was a result of Israeli claim regarding Sheikh's involvement, and responsibility, for numerous terror attacks that killed Israeli civilians. Despite the support this action received from the pro-Israeli lobby groups around the world and especially in the United States, Japan continued to condemn the killing stating that it caused a further escalation in the Palestine-Israeli conflict (Parry 2004). Japan also continued its financial aid in order to show its commitment to humanitarian issues. In 2004, Japan offered a USD10 million donation to the World Bank as well as a USD700 million for social-services infrastructure building (Curtin 2004). In 2005, Japanese Prime Minister, Junichiro Koizumi, announced aid of USD100 million to the Palestinians during Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas's visit to Tokyo. Japan also donated USD5.5 million to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA). In addition, in 2005, Japan International Cooperation Agency's (JICA) launched technical project to Palestinians health, with a special focus on child health.

*(Mid 2000s-2011)*

Koizumi's image building policy in the Middle East was reflected in his approach toward the Palestine-Israel case. Hence, he continued his financial support to the Palestinians. In 2006, Koizumi visited the West Bank and announced a USD30 million aid to the Palestinians. Also, in 2006, Japan gave an aid to UNICEF for projects such as "Improving the Control of Infectious Diseases", "Nutritional Status of Palestinian Children" and "Preventing Inner-hospital Infection of Newborn Babies in the Palestinian Territories" project. It also gave an aid of USD5 million to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2016). Moreover, Japan became the founder of different projects,

such as the assistance for "Isolated and Disenfranchised Communities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory" Project in 2006. Japan has also introduced different peace initiatives, such as the "Conference on the Cooperation among East Asian countries for Palestinian Development (CEAPAD)" and the "Corridor for Peace and Prosperity" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2016). Japan's 2006 "Corridor for Peace and Prosperity" initiative includes the sending of Japanese teachers to work in Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2015). Japan is the founder and host of the "Palestinian-Israeli Youth Invitation Program". The over 20 year old program brings together Palestinian and Israeli students to talk in a neutral space far from the conflicted zone. Japanese municipalities have organized similar programs on a regular basis to promote mutual understanding and confidence building (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2016). Moreover, Japan has accepted Palestinian trainees to help them develop human resources and administrative skills in environmental and educational sectors (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2015). Japan is a founding member of the High-Level Committee (HLC). Within this committee, Japan and other members supported Palestinians through both economic aid and peace process support (Dowty 2000). Also, in 2007, Japan established the "Emergency Assistance" which aims toward improving Palestinians medical situation (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2016).

Koizumi's policy was also driven by the business groups will to profit from the infrastructure projects in Palestine. Keidanren and Japanese international companies have been urging the government to increase its peace process participation in order to enable their entry into more projects (The Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs 1999). As a result, they were able to secure multiple infrastructure rebuilding projects in Gaza. Koizumi's policy was maintained during the following administrations between 2007 and 2011. Along with the unwavering business groups' interests in Gaza's infrastructure projects and the politicians'

interests to present Japan as a leader for peace, support for the Palestinians was practiced more openly during the Obama administration due to his continuous aid to the Palestinians and displeasure over Israel's constant settlement building.

*(2011 and on)*

Japan's role in the Palestine-Israeli conflict has intensified with Japan's claiming itself a peace leader and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe appointing himself a genuine friend in the conflict in 2012 (Özçelik 2008). Abe's proactive policy to start an independent approach in the Palestine-Israel conflict without being distressed by the United States pressure or the Arab to do was based on reasons that serve Japan's interest. Reaching a solution for the Palestine-Israeli conflict will, first, support the proactive pacifist policy initiated by him as well as raise Japan's international profile. Second, this will comply with the business groups' pressure to provide free-of-barrier access to the Israeli high-tech market while trading with the region's major markets. Despite the high interest in the Israeli market, Japanese companies have been refraining from investing in it due to the instability of the region (The Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs 1999). Third, promoting peace settlement will help demonstrating Japan's role as a leader for peace, and thus, enhancing its chance to acquire a UN Security Council permanent seat. Fourth, Japan wants to counter the threat of a rising China by initiating good faith policies by building trust with the Arab states by working for the peace of the region. By pursuing such policies, Japan wishes to present its image that contrasts China's human rights violations as well as causing tensions with its surrounding countries, such as territorial dispute in the East China Sea and islands disputes with both Japan and Korea (Schulze 2015). Japan's attempt to counter China's rising influence in the region was triggered by the concerns that its position in the region will be replaced with China. The change in position is already taking place in the region. By

ranking as the second largest oil importer, China has taken over Japan's position Graham (2016). It is also the region's seventh biggest trading partner with its goods replacing Japanese companies in the region. China's engagement in the region has been widening in various areas ranging from oil imports, businesses and people to people engagement. Seeing this, Japan moved toward deeper approach in the region. Pollock (2016) has explained how Abe's administration attempts to tighten economic ties with the region is seen as a move from Japan to assure that, despite China's rising presence in the region, Japan's position in the Middle East is known and that its desires are met. Hence, the period following 2006 up to today can be determined as a period in which Japan managed to practice its own proactive identity of supporting both Palestinians and Israelis. The support for both can be seen as the following:

Ambassador of Palestine in Japan (April 18, 2017) has stated that "The year 2012 marks the first official step from the Japanese government to acknowledge the State of Palestine." In November 2012, Japan reinforced the United Nations General Assembly resolution 67/19. The resolution entitles Palestine the status of a "Non-member Observer State" in the United Nations. Japan has also condemned Israeli settlement activities in the West Bank and Gaza for breaching international law and demanded their immediate termination (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2015). Abe has expressed his dissatisfaction with Israel's continued settlement policies and has mentioned that these policies could trigger Israel's international isolation. He stated that "the matter of building in the settlements...is considered in the world as a violation of international law" (Opall-Rome 2015). Financially, in 2013, Japan offered an amount of USD10 million donations to the World Bank as support to the Palestinians. Moreover, an amount of USD100 million was pledged for Gaza Strip reconstructions projects in the same year (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2015). By March 2016, Japan's assistance to the Palestinians totaled

USD1.7 billion since 1993. Japan offered financial aid of USD25 million, USD10million in 2011 and 2012, USD8 million in 2013 and USD10 million in 2014 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2016). Japan has also launched many new initiatives under Abe's administration such as the "Corridor for Peace and Prosperity", "Peace and Prosperity Valley", and the "Conference on Cooperation among East Asian Countries for Palestinian Development" in 2013. As for the Israeli side, Abe has promised to help stopping the Palestinian Authority's intention of raising its Israeli conflict case in the International Criminal Court (Herman 2015).

This active participation has led the Arab states to favor Japan as their desired committed broker. Israel also view Japan as a peace-oriented friend. Israel's ambassador to the United Kingdom, Zvi Heifetz, commented the following on Japan's contribution to the peace process: "I think the Japanese contribution is completely sincere, they really want to help" (Curtin 2004). As for the Palestinian side, Abe's statement that "the day will come in the near future when we can recognize Palestine as a state" was highly praised by the Palestinians (Pollmann 2015).

The beginning of Japan-Israeli relations marked the change in Japan's Arab cautiousness. Japan's general neutral strategy of supporting both sides ended partially during Abe's second term. Due to the rising pressure from business groups to resume the paused relations with the Israel-market, Abe was forced to give space for Japan to halt this neutral identity. Starting from 2014, Japan has been publicly improving its ties with Israel, a thing that its Arab-stand did not allow in the past (Schulze 2015). Japan's business groups and private sector interests to engage with Israel's technology market to obtain the know-how techniques of the market has been moving to a deep engagement with Israel. This is due to the increasing global acknowledgement of Israel as a dominant tech power in Asia, a fast country in innovative ecosystem development, especially its defense industry and cybersecurity areas, and its support system for start-up

companies (China and Japan leading Asian charge toward Israeli high tech 2016; The Rising Sun of Japan – Israel Cooperation n.d.). Moreover, China-Israel closeness imposes threat on Japan as this closeness may lead to weapon deals and cybersecurity intelligence exchange. The combination of Israel's sophisticated technology and China's military capabilities inflicts risks on Japan's security. This identity has made Israeli market more attractive to Japan, especially with Abe's new stimulating innovation policy. Oshino (2016) attributed part of this interest to Japanese companies' desire to connect with the sophisticated Israeli security technology during their 2020 Tokyo Olympics preparation.

This change has been noticed and welcomed by many Israeli businessmen. For example, Avi Hasson, Israel's chief scientist, mentions how, compared to before, Japan's approach has changed through the last two years causing Japan-Israeli's investments opportunities to flourish. He explicated that he concluded joint multinational R&D programs with about seven large Japanese companies, such as Panasonic, NEC and Ricoh along with 12 projects with other Israeli companies (Reuters 2016). Hadas Kroitoru at MATIMOP has described this change in attitude of the Japanese government as strong evidence on how Japan's innovation interest is overriding its Arab sensitivity (The Rising Sun of Japan – Israel Cooperation n.d.). Golan (2016) and Reuters (2016) attributed the recent Israeli startups and Japanese markets' integration to the influence of the business community in Japan. They argued that business groups' interests to join and benefit from Israeli's high advanced market in areas of in internet, biotech, and automotive technologies are what driving Japan's recent policy. Hasson (2016) describes Abe's visit to Israel in 2015, accompanied by a delegation of over 100 Japanese officials and heads of Japanese companies, as a "significant milestone" that reflects an attitude shift. Prior to Abe's visit, Japanese Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry, Toshihiko Motegi, visited Israel in 2014 and signed Japan's first



R&D agreement with Israel. Israel's Minister of Economy, Naftali Bennett, described the agreement as a "breakthrough achievement in Japan's policy towards its economic relations with Israel" (Kliner n.d.). In his trip, Motegi was accompanied by delegation of Japanese industry top level representatives as well as senior representatives of Japan's Ministry of Economics, Trade and Industry. Following the visit, Minister Bennet stated that over 6,000 Japanese business people participated in Israeli organized events in areas of high-tech and cybersecurity. As a result, in 2014, Japan-Israel trade increased by 9.3% to USD1.75 billion. Also, after being interested in Israeli development of a medium-altitude long-endurance unmanned aerial vehicle (TP UAV) Heron, a group of Defense Ministry and Self Defense Force (SDF) officials were able to visit the drone sites in Israel and see the drone in action in 2015 (Guerra 2016). Moreover, in 2015, a plan was presented to further strengthen economic ties and cooperation between Israel and Japan in areas of high-tech defense industry and cybersecurity (Schulze 2015). As a result, net investment of Japanese firms reached JPY5.2 billion in 2015 (Reuters 2016). Later, in 2016, another delegation representing Japan's Kansai region visited Israel to further promote economic ties between the two (Weiss n.d.). The Israeli government has also initiated a comprehensive plan to realize the full potential of both, Israel and Japan, economic integration through the common interest of the two's market, increase Israel exports to Japan up to 50% by 2020 and integrate Israeli small and medium-size businesses into the Japanese market (Taylor 2015). Today, many business companies are declaring their interest and will to engage with the Israeli market. In his 2016 statement, All Nippon Airways' (ANA) senior vice president expressed his interest to increase passenger traffic between Israel and Japan. He stated that the growing potential of Israeli travel market is important for Japan (Japanese airline VP calls Israeli travel market 'important'. 2016). This declaration is also sensed by the Israeli companies. Following Israel's

CyberTech convention in 2016, in which 200 plus representative of Israel's Cybersecurity market visited Japanese External Trade Organization (JETRO), Japan's embassy, and a number of Japanese-Israeli business bodies, Dr. Nimrod Kozlovski, a partner at an Israeli firm named Herzog Fox & Neeman, described Japan as a country hungry for innovation that is willing to break its own security (in reference to Arab sensitivity) rules and shift its old trend of not sending its companies' personnel to the Israeli market. He stated that these obvious interests present Israeli companies with advantage over the needy newly starting Japanese innovation market (Avner 2016).

In general, based on the above analysis, this chapter has demonstrated how Japan's "balancing between three key policy priorities" approach in the Middle East was also reflected in its policy toward its Palestine-Israel relations. Japan has used its position toward the conflict as a tool to support its active regional stance. During the times of its pro-Arab policy, Japan intensified its efforts in the case to demonstrate its Arab support, even if it had to go against its alliance demands sometimes. Also, as demonstrated in the chapter, Japan's relations with Palestine-Israeli were a byproduct of its overall regional policy. For example, during the low-level of engagement, Japan's regional policy followed a low-risk steady policy that focuses on trade and economic assistance while avoiding taking sides in the region's conflicts. This policy took the form of a balance between the three pillars (Japan's business groups' interests, Arabs' relations and the United States). This regional policy was also followed in its policy toward the Palestine-Israeli conflict.

Hence, like its Middle East approach in general, Japan's approach to the Palestine-Israel conflict was based on measuring the relative importance of each policy pillars of ensuring a strong U.S.

alliance (first pillar), maintaining good Arab relations (second pillar) and prioritizing its diplomatic interests and business groups' economic interests (third pillar) at a time.

Moreover, as demonstrated in its Middle East policy shift, Japan's relations with Palestine-Israeli showed a similar shift. Japan's Palestine-Israel relations showed an identity shift from a pure mercantile and pacifist state (Sato and Hirata 2008, p. 3) to a semi-realist normal state (Miyagi 2008, p. 11; Sato and Hirata 2008, p. 3). Japan's Palestine-Israel relations demonstrated a gradual move from low-risk reactive policies to proactive policies that strengthen Japan's position in the region.

Despite its "balancing between three key policy priorities" approach, Japan's policy showed a shift toward supporting its Arab, United States demands or both in its Palestine-Israel relations as well. The importance of each pillar at a time, determined the shift in Japan's policy direction based on what serves Japan's own interests the most at that time. Japan's engagement in the Palestine-Israel conflict reached its peak when its business groups' economic interest urged it to comply with the Arab demand following the oil shock in 1973 at risk of diverging from the pro-Israel stance of the United States. Japan's Arab sensitivity blocked Japan from establishing economic ties with Israel throughout the 1980s. However, as the OAU pressure faded and the Arab moved toward closer relations with the United States, Japan has limited space to pause its boycott and trade with Israel. In late 1980s, Japan's business groups were interested in halting their boycott to engage in trade not only with companies in Israel but also with Jews-owned companies in the United States. Although this was practiced in a low format, due to the Arab cautions, it lasted till 1991. The year 1991, marked the official end of the Arab boycott to Israel and witness closer ties between the Arab and the U.S. As a result, Japan was able to continue its low level trade with Israel. After a cut in trade following mid-1990s, Japanese business groups'

interests to trade with Israel were high in 2014. Hence, Japan started its own proactive approach in the conflict by declaring itself a friend to both parties. Japan's previous reactive approach changed into a proactive one when Japan solely and willingly engaged in the conflict without being pressured by both the United States and the Arab to do so. This policy represents continuity to Japan's Middle East policy.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion**

This thesis was built with the intention of examining Japan's foreign policy in the Middle East. It examined the nature of its involvement in the region and the incentives behind it. Also, It examined Japan's policy toward the Palestine-Israel conflict in the contexts of broader Japanese foreign policy in the Middle East region and globally. The thesis had two questions to answer: 1) examine how Japan's diplomatic interests and business groups' economic interests shape its "Middle East" policy in general and its Palestine-Israel relations in specific, and 2) examine how Japan's Middle East policy has changed over time. This thesis has introduced an original argument, which is different from previous researches on Japan's Middle East policy. While previous researches base their argument on either Japan's oil interest or its alliance with the United States, this thesis argues that Japan's Middle East policy is highly attributed to the interests of Japanese politicians and business groups.

This thesis examined the influence of Japan's U.S. alliance and Arabs relations as well as Japan's economic and political interests on its Middle East policy and its Palestine-Israel relations (as case study) since 1973.

The analysis of thesis did not examine general IR theories (such as realism, liberalism, and their variants), but it focused on examining some "Japan-specific" generalizations of its foreign policy behavior (such as "pacifist state," "mercantile state," and "reactive state") as well as Japan's plural policy making structure. Japan's pluralist bottom-up policy making allows for different opinions, including those of the politicians and business community. This thesis has shed light on the role the interest of this business community took in directing Japan's Middle East policy in

either supporting Arabs (during the Oil Crisis in 1973), the United States (during the Gulf War) or its proactive approach in which Japan initiated its own policy in the region (building ties with Israel since 2014).

The analysis produced a timeline in which Japan's Middle policy can be framed with. Japan's Middle East policy had periods of both low and high levels of engagement. The periods of high engagement are marked by a distinguishable event. The high engagement periods are: 1973, 1991, 2001 and 2011. In 1973, Japan was faced by what was later known as the "oil crisis." During that period, Japan's policy makers faced the challenge of complying with the demands of oil-producing countries and supporting their position on their war against Israel. Japan was faced with the risk of going against its U.S. alliance by giving into the Arab demands. However, in 1973, the voices of oil companies and businessmen in the energy sector urged Japan to provide them with the energy supply they needed. Eventually, Japan chose to protect its own interests and follow pro-Arab policy that will guarantee its oil and business needs. Later in 1991, during the Gulf War, Japan faced the U.S. pressure to support it in the war. However, Japan, which is limited by its constitution's restriction (Article 9 in particular) to ever reengage in war, hesitated to abandon its pacifist identity and follow the United States demands. Japanese policy makers and the public opinion demanded Japan to maintain its post-war pacifist identity while other voices within Japanese politicians demanded for a stronger U.S.-Japan alliance. During this period, Japanese business groups' desires to end the trade conflicts Japan and the United States had in areas of automobile, semiconductors, steel, and beef were on the rise. After period of hesitation to participate in the war, Japan chose to support the United States through financial contributions. The financial contribution supported U.S. Arab allies as well. The end of the oil crisis and the official ending of Arab boycott to Israel caused a gradual closeness between the

United States and its Arab allies in the region. Moreover, the shift in the region's geo-political environment of the Middle East, which was caused by the Gulf War, generated a new regional context that brought U.S.-Arab allies even closer through their Saddam Hussein opposition. This closeness allowed Japan's U.S.-Arab dilemma to fade and enabled it to provide support for both at the same time. 2001 was marked by the 9/11 terror attack on the United States. In that period, Japan was once again faced by the pressure of the United States to side with it in its "War on Terror," though public opinion opposed supporting war. However, during that period, Japanese business groups' economic interests once again wished for a fine U.S. alliance that would guarantee trade continuity. Both Gulf War and War on Terror demands were accompanied by a strong "Top-down" policy approach by the Japanese Prime Minister in order to support the United States in its war. The result of these political and economic Japanese desires was continuous support by Japan to the United States, as well as its Arab allies. The final period, which continues till today, is marked by the Fukushima nuclear disaster in 2011. Guided by its rising energy needs, Japan led a proactive approach in the region that is not pushed by either Arab or U.S. demands. As a result, Japan increased its oil and energy trade with the Middle East region to provide oil, as well as non-oil, companies with their energy need. Moreover, China's increasing influence in the Middle East region has urged Japan to engage extensively and deeply in trade, infrastructure, energy as well as other areas. Japan's proactive approach extends to include its Palestine-Israel relations. During this period, unlike its previous boycott and Arab based cautious policy, Japan conducted wide-ranging trade with Israel. Japan's wish to trade with Israel was stimulated by China's possible weapons, technology and cybersecurity deals with Israel. However, this focus on self-interests does not imply neglect of its U.S. or Arab policy considerations.

This policy timeline is presented in the figure below. During the absence of crisis, Japan tended to follow a low-level engagement policy. The low-level and low-risk policy describes Japan’s “balancing” policy of taking a middle way between the demands of the Arabs and the United States. This can be seen in the attitude of political dialogues, promoting multilateral peace groups and economic assistance. This attitude can also be seen in Japan’s relations with Palestine-Israel.

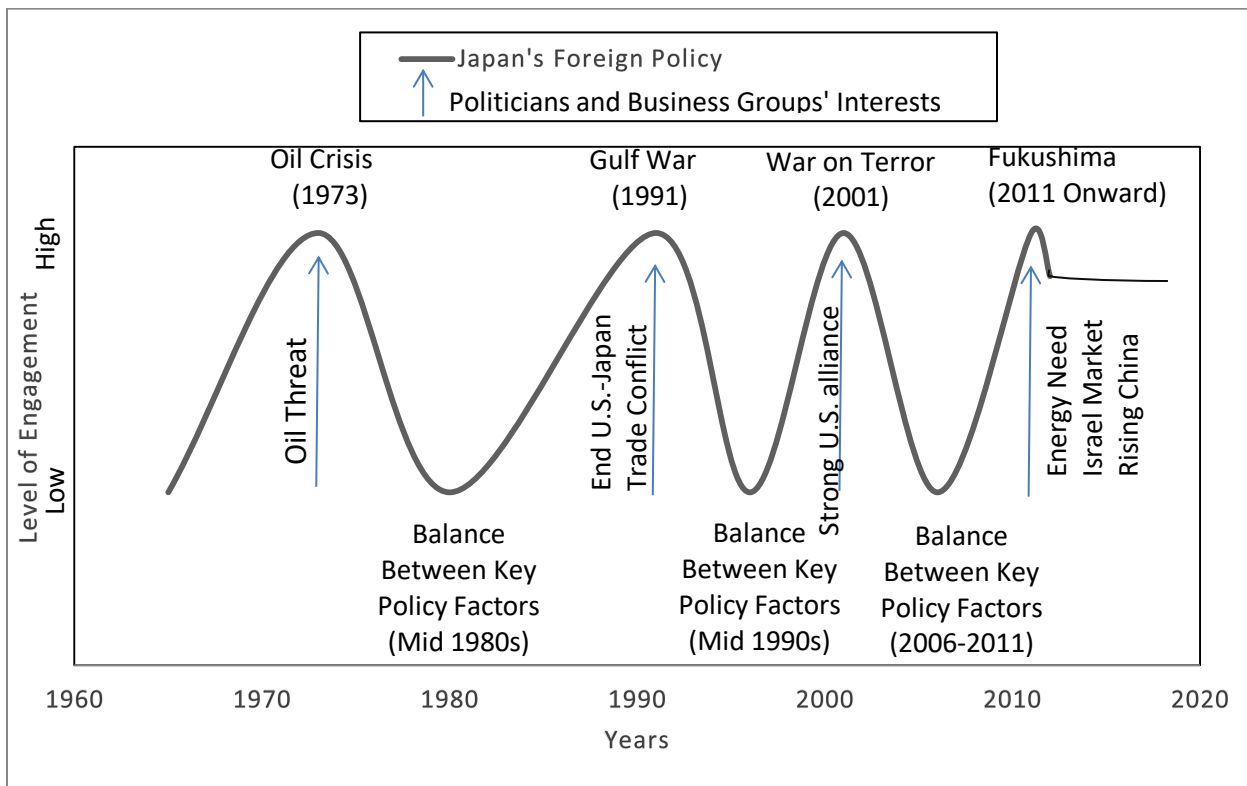


Figure 5.1: Japan’s Foreign Policy Timeline

The two figures listed (Figures 5.2 and 5.3) below demonstrate Japan’s Middle East engagement in further details. They highlight Japan’s policy behavior during the four crisis periods to show the implications the three key policy factors (the United States, the Arabs, and the Japanese



politicians and business groups) had on the policymaking. They demonstrate similar policy patterns between Japan's Palestine-Israel relations and its overall Middle East policy.

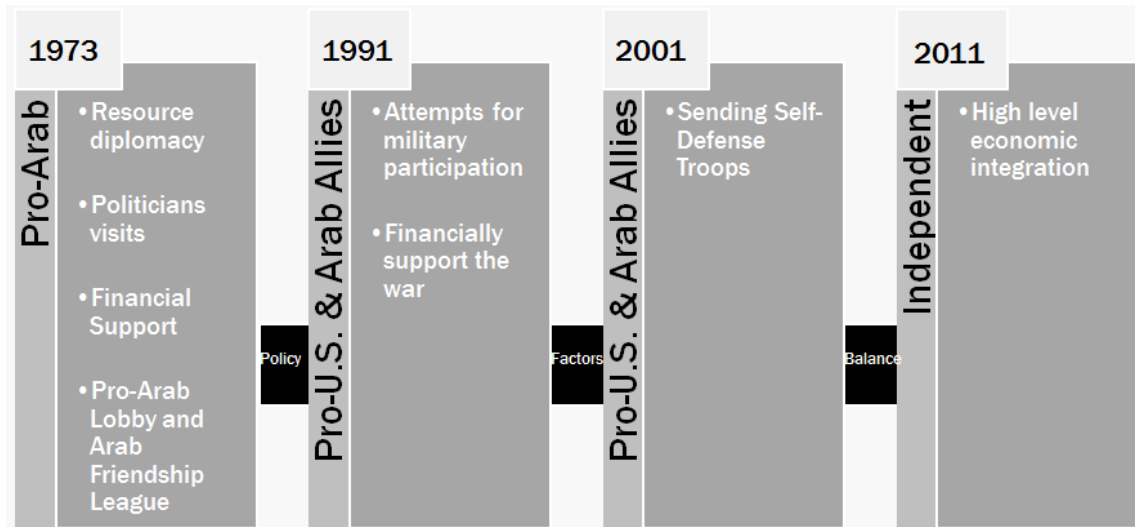


Figure 5.2: Japan Middle East Policy Outline

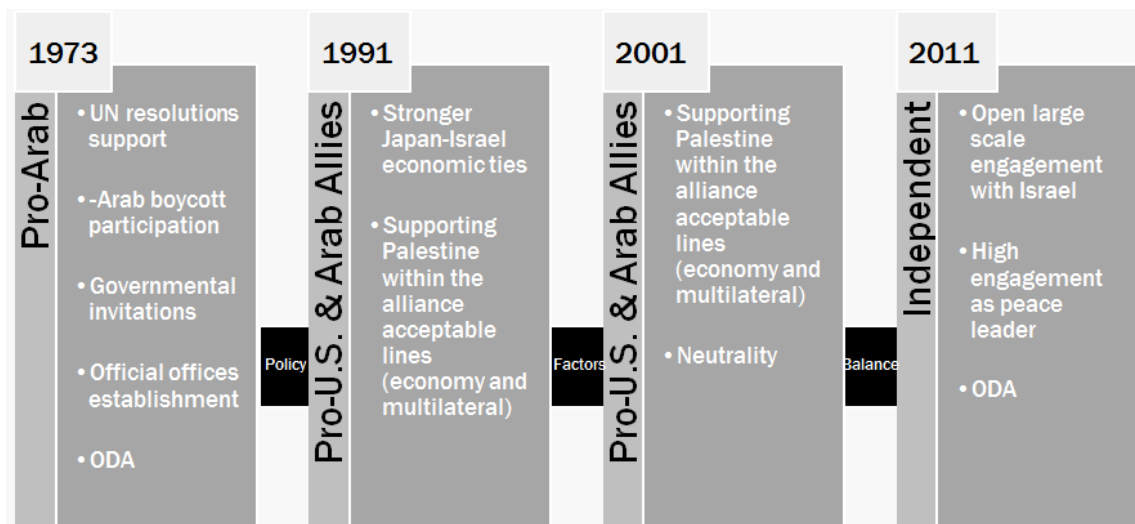


Figure 5.3: Japan Palestine-Israel Relations Outline

This thesis concludes that Japan's Middle East policy shows both continuity and change in different aspects as the following:

First, despite the fact that Japan switched between a U.S. and Arabs tilting over time, there has been no complete breakdown of a total siding with either of them. Japan's compliance to both U.S. and Arab demands is a careful balancing act that does not hurt either stance. Even at the time of tilting to one side, Japan maintained a firm policy to issue policies that are supportive to the other as well. Japan maintained a careful balancing between the three key policy factors (which includes Japan's politicians and business groups) throughout its Middle East general engagement. This was also observed in Japan's relations with Palestine-Israel. In his description on Japan's relations with Palestine-Israel, Ambassador of Palestine in Japan (April 18, 2017) described it as a "curve" that has its up and down and is driven by both political and economic aims (pushed by Japan's business groups). A curve that is well maintained and "balanced" politically in a way that satisfies demands from Japanese politicians, the United States and the Arabs. Economically, which is more influential, the fluctuations in the curve are driven by the Japanese business groups' economic interests in the Middle East, United States and Israeli markets.

Second, the continuous balancing between the three key policy factors (the United States, the Arabs, and the Japanese politicians and business groups) was associated with a gradual change in policy approach. Japan's identity in the region changed from a "pure mercantile" nation to a "semi-realist" proactive identity over time. Japan's early engagement in the Middle East was based on economic relations through oil trade without becoming politically involved in the region's conflicts. However, as it went through its engagement, influenced by both external and internal factors, Japan's regional stance gradually changed. Politicians within Japan, who aimed

for a greater role in the international stage, engaged in the region's political issues, such as the Palestine-Israeli conflict. In the beginning of their involvement, Japanese politicians limited their role on financial and international organizations legislations such as the United Nations' regulations. Restricted by constitution's prohibition to engage in war (as stated in Article 9 in particular), Japanese politicians were unable to pursue a military policy approach. However, as they moved further, they gradually managed to achieve a "proactive" approach in the region. Japan has used these crises to show its public support, allow new legislations or achieve a greater peace leader role in the international stage. This can be seen in the gradual movement toward normalizing Japan through military acquisition. Military building and rearming Japan is constitutionally prohibited and opposed against by both the politicians and the public. However, normalization-oriented politicians in Japan have benefited from the wars in the region as well as the United States pressure to join the war as a push that provides a space to shift the public opinion. The Gulf War and the War on Terror both enabled Japan to issue legislations that enable its troops sending in post-war operations.

This can also be seen in the constant efforts toward a peaceful solution in the Palestine-Israeli conflict. The case study demonstrated how Japan's general policy in the Middle East region was reflected in its role in the Palestine-Israeli conflict. Japan has formed bilateral relations and responses to specific policy issues in the region with unchanging Japan-centered interests. Japan commitment to the Palestine-Israeli issue was an attempt to prove support for the region's leaders following their oil threat in the 1973 crisis. However, as it moved further, Japan used this to support its stance in the region. Japan has constantly provided financial supports, multilateral votes, unique peace initiatives and political dialogues to gain respectful position in the region by being a committed supporter for Arabs countries. Moreover, at many times, the commitment

from Japan to the conflict is both a reflection of its general Middle East policy and a tool to practice its new regional policy. Japan's new proactive policy was practiced through its relations with Palestine-Israel. Japan's continuous commitment to the case can also be interpreted as attempts from Japan to acquire greater position in the international stage by presenting itself as a peace leader. Also, this can be attributed to Japan's aim toward obtaining a UN Security Council permanent seat. Moreover, Japan practiced its proactive policy through its high level trade with Israel, which was solely pushed by Japan's business groups' interests without pressure from any party. U.S.-Japan-Israel trade shows another side of Japan's proactivity that demonstrates Japan's capability of breaking its Arabs' cautious policy as well as its capability to carry on its individual policy that is not pushed by both the United States and the Arab demands when making policy decisions in the region.

Third, Japan's Middle East policy has followed a loop. The change in the loop is triggered by a regional crisis or a significant event that prompts both internal and external pressure on Japanese policymakers causing a debate about which policy direction to pursue. The policy debate results in a high level of Japanese engagement, based on Japanese-centered interests of both politicians and business communities. The active, high-level engagement policy is followed by a low-level of balancing policy aimed at maintaining steady relations with both the United States and the Arabs. After the period of low-risk policy of sustainable balancing between its three key policy factors of U.S. alliance demands and the Arab states' considerations and Japan's politicians and business groups. This low level policy will switch back into a high level policy when another event (crisis) occurs. This recurring shifting between high and low levels of engagement itself indicates the continuity in Japan's Middle East policy. The same loop has been observed in Japan's relations with Palestine-Israel.

This is demonstrated in the figure below:

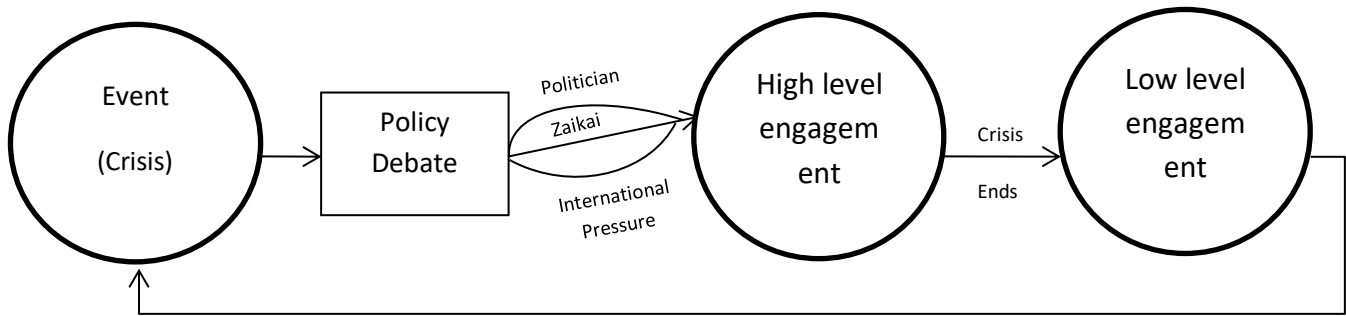


Figure 5.4: Japan's Middle East Policy Pattern

Fourth, although international factor did influence the policy making process, Japan's business groups' interests always stand out among the three policy drivers (the United States, the Arabs and the business groups). Some periods noted a gradual decrease in Arab demands –until eventually vanishing- especially after 1991. Other periods witnessed a low-profile in the U.S. influence in the region. For example, after both the Gulf War and the Iraq War ended, the region witnessed a low U.S. presence. This low presence was also seen during the Obama administration. Business groups were present throughout these periods pushing the policy direction. The business groups' predominant role in the policymaking process co-existed with other domestic actors in policy making. For example, strong prime ministers like Koizumi were quick to form a policy in their preferred images. This can be seen in Koizumi's fast reaction to the United States pressure to support it in the 2001's war, despite the public opinions' refusal and without following the usual pluralist Japanese policymaking process (Shinoda 2007, p. 96). Moreover, at the times the main policy factors' (the United States and Arabs) demands conflicted,

Japan's politicians and business groups' interests were given a fine and constant consideration within Japan's Palestine-Israel relations and its Middle East policy formulation.

Although the thesis managed to prove the continuous presence of business groups' interests in Japan's Middle East policy making, it does not entitle business groups the major player in Japan's Middle East policy making. In order to reach such conclusion, a further detailed analysis with proper "process-tracing" needs to be conducted in the future. Such analysis could include personal interviews with Japanese politicians and businessmen to obtain further in-depth information on business lobby's influence. Reaching such respected personnel was extremely difficult and out of reach in this work. Also, it could include a comprehensive tracing of business lobby's activities through the analysis of Japanese-based resources such as archived newspaper reporting. The absent of language proficiency made it impossible to conduct such analysis in this thesis.

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# Appendices:

Period	Engagement Level	Policy Debate	International factor (U.S. alliance)	Oil	Domestic Factor (Business Groups Interests)	Domestic Factor (Greater Japan)	Policy Direction	Middle East Policy	Palestine-Israel Policy
1973-1980s	High	-Support Israel (U.S.).  -Support Arab	U.S. pressure for Japan to not side with the Arabs	-Oil threat from the Arab  -High oil importance	Energy and business opportunities interest in the Middle East market	Achieve international prestige by engaging in the conflict	Pro-Arab	-Politicians visits -Financial Support -Pro-Arab Lobby and Arab Friendship League	-UN resolutions support -Arab boycott participation
Mid-1980s-1990	Low	-	-End Japan-U.S. trade deficit -Open Japanese market	-Success in lowering oil dependency  -Fading Arab threat	End Japan-U.S. trade deficit	-	Balance	Supporting Arab within the alliance acceptable lines (economy and multilateral)	-Supporting Palestine within the alliance acceptable lines (economy and multilateral) -softening Arab boycott
1991	High	-Military support  -Pacifist Identity	Participate in the Gulf War military	Low importance	-End Japan-U.S. trade deficit  - Economic engagement with Israel	Escape Japan's abnormality	U.S.-Arabs Allies Support	Financially support the war	Stronger Japan-Israel economic ties
1992-2000	Low	-	Low presence in the region	Low importance	Maintaining economic ties with Arab and the United States	-	Balance	Supporting Arab within the alliance acceptable lines (economy and multilateral)	-Supporting Palestine within the alliance acceptable lines (economy and multilateral) -softening Arab boycott



2001-2006	High	-Military support  -Pacifist Identity	Troops dispatch in post-war operations in War on Terror/ Iraq War	Low importance		-Increasing Japan's international profile  -Japan's normalization through military capabilities possession	U.S.- Arabs Allies Support	Sending Self-Defense Troops	-Supporting Palestine within the alliance acceptable lines (economy and multilateral) -softening Arab boycott
2007-2010	Low	-	Low presence in the region	Low importance			Balance	Supporting Arab within the alliance acceptable lines (economy and multilateral)	-Supporting Palestine within the alliance acceptable lines (economy and multilateral) -softening Arab boycott
2011-Now	High	-Maintain Arab support  -Build ties with Israel	Low presence in the region	High importance	-Interest in the Israel market  -Energy market interests  -Counter China's rising influence in the Middle East market	-Increasing Japan's international profile  -Japan's normalization through military capabilities possession	Proactive	High level of economic integration	-Open large scale engagement with Israel -High engagement as peace leader -ODA