

[Morris on Vogel, 'U.S.-Japan Relations in a Changing World'](#)

Review published on Monday, May 1, 2006

Steven K. Vogel, ed. *U.S.-Japan Relations in a Changing World*. Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2002. x + 286 pp. \$49.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8157-0630-4; \$19.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8157-0629-8.

Reviewed by Narrelle Morris (Murdoch University) **Published on** H-US-Japan (May, 2006)

This edited volume represents the culmination of the U.S.-Japan 21st Century Project, a predominantly U.S.-based research project which was undertaken to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the San Francisco Peace Treaty and the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty on September 8, 1951. As the editor, Steven K. Vogel, points out in his introduction, the "San Francisco System" has been viewed as the defining arrangement for the U.S.-Japan relationship in the post-World War II period.

As highlighted in the title of the volume, and emphasized by every contributor, the world is "changing" in the twenty-first century. This seems a trite observation given that not only is the world always changing, but that scholarly notice has been drawn to periods of apparent change in U.S.-Japan relations on many occasions since 1951, including at the time of the revision of the security treaty in 1960, the Nixon "shocks" in the early 1970s, the rise of alleged "Japan-bashing" and "America-bashing" in the 1980s, and the beginning of the post-Cold War period in the 1990s. Nevertheless, this volume represents a timely survey and analysis of not only the enduring elements of the "San Francisco System," but also the efforts to understand how U.S.-Japan relations have developed over time since 1951 and how those relations are likely to develop in the early twenty-first century.

The volume includes an introduction, eight individual essays and a conclusion, each aiming to examine different dimensions of U.S.-Japan relations in the period since 1951, as well as to speculate upon the future of the relationship. As is appropriate given the establishing focus on the San Francisco Peace Treaty and the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty, the disciplinary area of most contributors is political science. However, each contributor assesses how different core factors have affected U.S.-Japan relations, including the balance of power (by Michael J. Green), economic performance (by William W. Grimes), foreign policy paradigms (by Keith A. Nitta), domestic politics (by Leonard J. Schoppa), the media (by Laurie A. Freeman), international organizations (by Amy E. Searight), finance (by Adam S. Posen), and technology (by Steven K. Vogel and John Zysman).

Demonstrating its centrality to U.S.-Japan relations, Michael J. Green's examination of the "balance of power" is the opening essay. Focusing on the periods of change mentioned above, Green concludes that shifts in the balance of power between the United States and Japan since 1951--particularly those shifts which have highlighted areas of power imbalance between the two nations--have affected the management of the bilateral security alliance. He points out that while modest adjustments to the alliance over time have generally resulted in closer security relations between the United States and Japan, this optimistic trend should not inspire complacency on the part of American and Japanese policy makers. Similar conclusions are reached by William W. Grimes in his examination of the reality

and perceptions of the "economic performance" of the United States and Japan. Grimes points out that economic performance has been one of the most significant areas of power imbalance between the United States and Japan to have affected the overall relationship.

Keith A. Nitta's "Paradigms" and Leonard J. Schoppa's "Domestic Politics" also dovetail. Nitta examines not military or economic power, but rather the power of ideas. He contends that the two dominant foreign policy paradigms that developed under the "San Francisco System"--namely, "containment" for the United States and the "Yoshida doctrine" for Japan--became embedded in the minds of American and Japanese policy makers, thereby locking the two nations into more or less fixed roles. By contrast, Schoppa points out that those same foreign policy paradigms have resulted in almost constant conflict within the domestic political scenes of the United States and Japan. Nevertheless, he suggests that contentious domestic politics have helped to raise the profile of the U.S.-Japan relationship, thereby greatly facilitating further bilateral cooperation.

In the context of claims by some American and Japanese observers that the changing world has caused the United States to "pass over" Japan in the early twenty-first century, Laurie A. Freeman's examination of the role of the media in not only affecting but also reflecting U.S.-Japan relations is of particular interest. Freeman demonstrates how American media coverage of Japan has both waxed and waned since 1951, with particular peaks of interest in the early 1950s, 1960, the early 1970s and the 1980s, all periods when there were perceptions of some "real or perceived changes in the relationship itself." Freeman tentatively speculates that "new media" technologies, such as the Internet, will reshape the flow of information about the U.S.-Japan relationship.

Amy E. Searight examines the role and rising influence of international organizations in shaping U.S.-Japan relations in the postwar period, such as the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and its successor the World Trade Organization (WTO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the United Nations. She argues that such organizations not only "empowered" Japan by laying the foundations for Japan's economic rise, but also gave form and direction for Japan's growing international assertiveness, particularly its desire to "engage" and "entrap" the United States into reiterating its allegiance to multilateral forums. She concludes that international organizations have thus provided a valuable mechanism for promoting cooperation, not conflict, between the United States and Japan.

For Adam S. Posen, the core factor affecting U.S.-Japan relations is finance. He asserts that the slow trend towards financial liberalization in Japan is promoting the convergence of Japanese corporate governance and investment behavior towards the increasingly deregulated American system. He argues that while the impact of this convergence has been limited to date, it may well result in closer relations between the United States and Japan as two-way financial flows increase. He points out, however, that convergence is not a foregone conclusion, as there is resistance in some Japanese quarters to further financial liberalization.

Given that Japan's rise in the post-war period has typically been predicated on its technology, and that there have been various disputes with the United States over the control and dispersal of high-technology in the last several decades, it is most appropriate that this volume concludes with Steven K. Vogel and John Zysman's essay on technology. Vogel and Zysman examine the shifts in technological leadership between the United States and Japan, from Japan's rise during the

1960-1980s and the United States' resurgence in the 1990s. They point out that different national governance systems, and particularly production paradigms, have shaped and promoted different technological trajectories in the United States and Japan--at present favoring the United States. They voice some doubt, however, that Japan will be able to regain the technological advantage over the United States in the near future. However, even if Japan does mount another technological challenge to the United States, they suggest that the bilateral disputes that so marred the 1980s and early 1990s would be unlikely to return with equal vehemence, as such a challenge would not have the same psychological impact on the United States.

Winding up the analysis of U.S.-Japan relations in a "changing world," Vogel points out that inevitably there will be both continuities and changes in the coming years. He argues that the United State and Japan will have to work much harder to preserve the stability of their relationship, although he is not particularly optimistic given recent trends. He does not suggest that relations will necessarily be more prone to conflict, but simply that they will be more open to redefinition. He argues that security relations will be more contentious; while economic relations will not be; in either case, Japanese policy will become more independent from the United States, or, at least, relatively less dependent. He also argues that while bilateral channels will remain important, multilateral forums, particularly in the Asia-Pacific Region, will become a more powerful influence on U.S.-Japan relations, as will non-traditional actors, such as the new media. Above all, Vogel suggests that the defining feature of the U.S.-Japan relationship in the near future will be the expansion of its "agenda" from the cornerstone issues of trade and security to highly important but frequently overlooked issues such as energy, the environment, human rights and immigration. This expansion will bring great cooperation and collaboration between the United States and Japan, but, at the same time, more scope for conflict.

The major strength of this volume lies in its deliberate construction as a collaborative project among the contributors named above as well as many commentators, first during the major conference of the U.S.-Japan 21st Century Project in San Francisco on September 6-7, 2001, and later during the writing and editing for the volume. The intention was to cohesively incorporate the views and perspectives of many scholars working in the field of U.S.-Japan relations, a goal at which it succeeds admirably. While, as the acknowledgements points out, all the contributors are American, most make extensive use of both English and Japanese sources, thereby mitigating the danger of an entirely one-sided approach.

One niggling complaint would be the minimalist titles of each essay, literally "Balance of Power," "Economic Performance," "Paradigms," "Media" and so on. While this was obviously done in order to emphasize the discursive structure of the volume, it merely serves to obscure the detailed and exacting analysis contained in each essay. Nevertheless, this is an excellent volume detailing U.S.-Japan relations in the post-World War II period, particularly in its focus on the 1990s and early 2000s, and is thus a worthy addition to the field.

Printable Version: <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showpdf.php?id=11716>

Citation: Narrelle Morris. Review of Vogel, Steven K., ed., *U.S.-Japan Relations in a Changing World*. H-US-Japan, H-Net Reviews. May, 2006. **URL:** <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=11716>

Copyright © 2006 by H-Net, all rights reserved. H-Net permits the redistribution and reprinting of

this work for nonprofit, educational purposes, with full and accurate attribution to the author, web location, date of publication, originating list, and H-Net: Humanities & Social Sciences Online. For any other proposed use, contact the Reviews editorial staff at hbooks@mail.h-net.org.