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Policy Guidance

From the U.S. - Japan Network for the Future Cohort IV
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Contents

Preface, Benjamin L. Self ........................................................................................................................................... 3

Op-eds

Koike Has Conquered Tokyo. What Next? ........................................................................................................... 5
Amy Catalinac
Making Robots Work .................................................................................................................................................. 7
Yulia Frumer
Japan-Taiwan Relations under Abe and Tsai in Historical Context ............................................................... 9
Robert Hoppen
Building the Strategy of Deterrence in Cyberspace: Proposals for Japan ................................................. 11
Nori Katagiri
The LDP-Komeito Ruling Coalition, and Why it Matters for Japan’s Defense Policy .............................. 13
Adam P. Liff
How Shinzo Abe’s Success Can Undermine His Party’s Dominance in Japanese Politics .............................. 15
Ko Maeda
Is It Time to Abandon State-Building? .................................................................................................................. 17
Reo Matsuzaki
Japan Needs to Improve Oversight of Systemic Financial Vulnerabilities .................................................. 19
Matthew Poggi
What Can the United States Learn from Japan’s Immigration Policy? ......................................................... 21
Michael Orlando Sharpe
This National Religious Freedom Day, Let’s Be a Little Less National ...................................................... 23
Jolyon Thomas
The United States Should Pursue Multilateralism in the Asia-Pacific ....................................................... 25
Kristin Vekasi
Japan’s Global Opportunity in 2018 ...................................................................................................................... 27
Joshua W. Walker

Author Biographies .................................................................................................................................................. 28
Preface

The U.S.-Japan Network for the Future was initiated in 2009 to identify and support American professionals who demonstrate an interest in and potential for becoming Japan specialists and policy experts. The program currently encompasses fifty-four exceptional academics and practitioners in U.S. relations with Asia.

The most recent group of scholars selected for the program -- Cohort IV -- is comprised of twelve Japan specialists from universities throughout the United States as well as in the U.S. government and the strategic communications field. Several are emerging experts on the U.S.-Japan alliance, and all are engaged in issues where it is increasingly important for the United States and Japan to cooperate, including security, state-building, and international migration.

An important objective of the Network for the Future program is to support the scholars in their effort to become policy experts by providing opportunities to strengthen their skills and their ability to contribute to the U.S.-Japan policymaking process. Throughout the two-year program these opportunities have included meetings with U.S. and Japanese politicians, briefings with policy and media experts, writing workshops, and a Japan study trip. The scholars have been encouraged to conduct independent research and to write op-ed pieces and other commentary on important U.S.-Japan policy issues. The op-eds in this volume are the result of these activities, as are the scholars’ companion policy papers, which the Mansfield Foundation has published separately. That publication, and more information about the U.S.-Japan Network for the Future program, is available on the Mansfield Foundation’s website:
An important theme in the Cohort IV scholars' op-eds is that the United States and Japan can learn from each other and that increased understanding can lead to better policies, closer cooperation on shared goals, and a stronger bilateral relationship. Some of the op-eds compare the two countries’ policies and approaches in areas of immediate concern – immigration, trade, financial regulation and labor challenges. Others look at what we can learn from the past and what we can expect from the future – for example how domestic political developments might impact Japan's defense and foreign policies. In these op-eds and in their engagement with the Network the scholars are bringing diverse expertise and perspectives to important issues in U.S.-Japan relations and fulfilling an important objective of the U.S.-Japan Network for the Future – positioning emerging scholars to contribute to the policy debates and to bilateral understanding.

Benjamin L. Self  
Vice President  
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May 2018
Koike Has Conquered Tokyo. What Next?
Amy Catalinac

The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) lost the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly election, capturing a mere 23 out of 127 seats. The loss was historic: the party has been knocked from its position as the largest party in the assembly twice before, in 2009 and 1965, but in both instances captured a more respectable 38 seats.

The winner in the election was a new party, Tokyoites First (TF), founded in 2016 and led to victory by Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike. TF significantly increased its seats in the election from six to 49 and, after bringing six independent winners into its fold, now forms the largest party in the assembly.

Local assembly members in Japan have traditionally been trailblazers on quality of life issues, whether advocating for anti-pollution and environmental measures, welfare entitlements or marriage rights for same-sex couples. In that sense, TF is no different.

TF promises to resolve Tokyo’s day care crunch, realise a smoke-free environment, improve earthquake resistance and rectify the problem of overwork. Many of its promises overlap with ones the national government has struggled to advance against opposition from interest groups, which wield disproportionate influence over policy in Japan’s upper house.

While TF has big plans to improve the everyday lives of Tokyoites, the significance of the party’s victory lies in its implications for government at the national level.

The election affirmed an appetite among voters for a rival to the LDP. Since 2013, the LDP has utterly dominated national politics. It has maintained majorities in both houses of the Diet and enjoyed support ratings vastly in excess of all other parties.

Given that the LDP has won pluralities in 19 of the last 20 lower house elections, one could be forgiven for thinking, as an LDP Diet member asserted in a recent interview, that the ‘Japanese people just like the idea of one dominant party’. On the contrary, this election suggests that LDP dominance rests upon the absence of a credible alternative. When one appears, large numbers of voters will consider voting for it.

It’s tempting to dismiss the result on the grounds that local assembly elections bear little resemblance to and carry few implications for National Diet elections, or that the election simply caught the LDP at a ‘bad time’. Both conclusions are unwarranted.

If anything, candidates for local assemblies have even more incentive to affiliate with the ruling party than candidates for the Diet.

Because local assembly members compete in multi-member electoral districts with large numbers of seats up for grabs, they face lots of competitors and need smaller vote shares to win. This gives them incentives to campaign on promises targeted to residents who live in certain areas of their district. And because a portion of the financial resources needed to match these promises are concentrated in the hands of the central government in Japan, it makes sense to ally with the party controlling the purse strings. In return for money, local assembly members campaign on behalf of the party’s Diet members in national elections.

While cities like Tokyo have considerable financial resources of their own, it is still remarkable that so many candidates and voters chose to cast their fate with TF, a party that lacks representation at the national level. It could even be read as a lack of confidence that the LDP will retain power, which could become a self-fulfilling prophecy as fewer LDP-affiliated assembly members means fewer people to staff the campaigns of LDP Diet members.

As for it being a ‘bad time’ for the LDP, it is true that the election came on the heels of two major scandals involving school operators friendly with Prime Minister Abe and his wife, gaffes by Minister of Defense Tomomi Inada, and a much publicised video of a second-term LDP Diet member abusing her secretary. But the fact is that Koike saw the opportunity to challenge the LDP a little over a year ago, at the same time as the LDP–Komeito coalition was cruising to victory in an upper house election.

The coup in Tokyo politics over the past year — beginning with the LDP-affiliated Koike resigning from the Diet, campaigning for governor against the
wishes of the party’s Tokyo branch, and then creating a party capable of wresting control of the assembly from the LDP — reads as a genius, albeit risky, means of building the name recognition and popularity necessary to become prime minister. While the LDP needs a post-Abe leader, the power it concentrates in the hands of its current leadership reduces the incentive for anyone aspiring to the position to do anything other than curry favour.

Koike may have alighted on a safer way to build the name recognition required to be seen as a potential leader by Diet members. But does she want to run?

In a 13 June meeting with the U.S.–Japan Network for the Future, Koike assured us her sights were set on representing Tokyoites. But over the past year, she has demonstrated an extraordinary capacity to maintain a high approval rating as governor while forging a relationship with the Komeito and recruiting, nurturing and convincing voters to support talented candidates. She has kept herself in the headlines with her platform of challenging entrenched interests and has carved out policies that could hold appeal beyond Tokyo.

If Koike can make Tokyo’s 2020 hosting of the Olympics a success and parlay that into even higher visibility, she may well find herself the most attractive candidate for prime minister, whether for the LDP or another centrist party.

“While TF has big plans to improve the everyday lives of Tokyoites, the significance of the party’s victory lies in its implications for government at the national level.”
Economists and policy makers in the United States and in Japan have the same thing on their minds: robots. More precisely—robots that take over human jobs. Their reasons are diametrically opposed—while Americans dread the loss of jobs due to automation, the Japanese hope that robots will fill the vacancies created by a declining population. What both sides have in common, despite their radically different sentiments, is the tendency to underestimate the amount of effort and human labor required to actually make robots work.

To get a realistic sense of what it might take to make robots work, it is worth listening to a veteran roboticist. Mori Masahiro (born 1927) is best known in the West for his formulation of the ‘uncanny valley’ in 1970. Yet Mori has contributed much more to the field of robotics—he has been a central figure in the modern establishment of the field of robotic engineering in Japan. Fifty years ago he began developing technologies that are now considered groundbreaking—“smart” robots that can sense and respond to their environments and exhibit social behavior.

Despite his enthusiasm, Mori was realistic about what robots could and could not do. During the late 1960s, robots that Mori built were quickly put into a media spotlight and hailed as precursors of technologies to come. His 1968 robotic arm, for example, was said to demonstrate that fully automated “robotic Mom” caretakers would be built “in the near future.” Mori himself, however, was far more cautious. Speaking from his experience designing machines capable of human-like functions, Mori said: “Every time [you think] you get one step closer you discover there are another ten further steps; you get ten steps closer, and there are yet another hundred steps that separate you. This is how it feels.”

Mori’s work as a roboticist allowed him to see “steps” in design processes policy makers unfortunately tend to ignore. When we see a robot bend its finger we tend to attribute to the robot other abilities associated with normal human finger bending, such as caressing a child’s head, for instance. But, unlike humans, who learn how to bend fingers in a holistic environment and then infer how to apply their abilities to a variety of situations, robots can only perform the specific functions their designers intended. A robot that can bend a finger is programmed to do just that—to bend a finger. In order for it to hold an object or turn a switch, let alone spoon-feed a patient, additional steps in design and programming are required. And at every step of this process roboticists discover dozens or hundreds of additional steps. In several articles discussing his work, Mori described how struck he was by the fact that even the most ordinary and simple-looking functions of human fingers were intricately connected not only to other parts of the human body but also to the human mind. He concluded that in order to design an artificial finger, one needed to understand humans—and not just their anatomy and functionality, but also their social behavior, their norms of conduct, their aesthetic preferences, or—as he summarized—“their humanity and motivation.”

“..while Americans dread the loss of jobs due to automation, the Japanese hope that robots will fill the vacancies created by a declining population.”

Furthermore, Mori understood that every robot is inherently a part of a broader socio-technological system. We tend to think of robots as self-contained units that emerge from the factory ready to enter and revolutionize human society. Mori, however, pointed out that every single step in designing an artificial finger is dependent on the cost of production, the availability of materials, logistics, reliability, maintenance, etc. Consequently, in order for a robot to lift a finger, humans would not only need to provide the components for the construction of the robotic limb, but also forge the very environment in which robotic labor would be meaningful. Thus, the very process of making robots actually entails integrating these machines into human society and existing labor structures.

Those who foresee robots replacing human labor ignore Mori’s insights. They succumb to anthropocentric bias and assume that if a human who
can perform function X can also perform functions Y and Z, then a robot that does X must be able to do Y and Z as well. They are also biased towards the concrete and the visible—the material object and its ability to visibly “do something”—while ignoring the invisible systems of supporting labor necessary to make robots work.

Today, many raise concerns about the development of robots that may become “too smart” and too independent. I am not worried about machines being “too smart.” Rather, I am worried about humans treating machines as the pinnacle of intelligence, and delegating to them decision-making duties for which they are not, in fact, smart enough.
After initial uncertainty regarding the policy priorities of the new Trump administration, the United States has set about strengthening its relations with Taiwan as evidenced by the recent signing of the Taiwan Travel Act. In President Tsai and Prime Minister Shinzō Abe, Taiwan and Japan also have leaders working to strengthen their relations in ways that could reinforce U.S. policy. The close Tsai-Abe relationship is the result of historical changes in the relationship between Japan and Taiwan that present both opportunities and challenges for the United States.

The cold war relationship between Japan and Taiwan was an uneasy marriage of convenience between the conservative leaders of Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist Party (KMT). Shared opposition to the Chinese Communists brought them together, but the two sides had very different views of both Taiwan's past and its future. Where KMT leaders saw themselves as liberators of the Taiwanese from Japanese colonialism who would one day reunite the island with China, Japanese conservatives were often nostalgic for the colonial period, proud of Japan's contributions to Taiwan's modernization and quietly hoped for eventual Taiwanese independence.

Taiwan's democratization transformed this interparty relationship into one between vibrant democracies characterized by widespread mutual affinity. Both sides have an interest in protecting Taiwanese democracy and there is little support for Taiwan's unification with the mainland. Democratization has also freed local Taiwanese to express their own historical narratives and national identity opposed to those enforced under KMT rule. These often stress Taiwan's separation from China and promote generally positive views of the colonial period in a way that gratifies the revisionist tendencies of Japan's conservative rulers.

Prime Minister Abe and President Tsai symbolize this coming together of the Japanese conservatives and Taiwan's independence-leaning pan-green coalition. Abe's maternal grandfather, and political icon, Nobusuke Kishi was the first sitting prime minister to visit Taipei in 1957 and a primary political benefactor of the LDP's pro-Taiwan faction. President Tsai, from the pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), got her start in politics as a protégé of Lee Teng-hui, the principal architect of Taiwan's democratization and a forceful advocate for Taiwanese independence, whose pro-Japan views make him popular in Japanese conservative circles.

Abe and Tsai have cultivated close relations and after Tsai's election in January 2016, the two sides quickly made a series of moves to upgrade the relationship. The two sides changed the ambiguous titles of the offices that handle their unofficial relations to include the names of both Japan and Taiwan. In March 2017, Jiro Akama, senior vice minister of internal affairs and communications, travelled to Taipei, becoming the highest-ranking Japanese government official to visit Taiwan since 1972. The two sides also created a Taiwan-Japan Maritime Affairs Cooperation Dialogue to deal with outstanding territorial disputes.

In the face of a growing and increasingly assertive Chinese military, defense is a primary area of interest for future cooperation. The Tsai administration has committed to increase defense spending and there is strong sentiment among Taiwanese leaders in favor of greater indigenous defense production capabilities, especially in an indigenously produced submarine. Japanese technological assistance and advice could be instrumental in pursuit of these goals. The return to power of the DPP has also revived interest in a Japanese version of the American Taiwan Relations Act (JTRA).

In economic relations, the Japanese government had championed the inclusion of Taiwan in the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). Despite the American abandonment of TPP, the inclusion of Taiwan in any agreement that replaces TPP could enhance the Tsai administration's “southbound” strategy of fostering economic ties with South and Southeast Asian nations to diversify the Taiwanese economy and counter perceived economic dependence on China.

The United States and Japan have common interests in Taiwanese security, the protection of Taiwanese democracy, and stable cross-strait relations. The main
challenge to these interests comes from the PRC, which since the election of Tsai has taken much more assertive policies toward Taiwan. There is, however, another, latent challenge in nationalist domestic politics in Taiwan and Japan. Democratization encourages the expression of nationalist sentiment in Taiwan that can put pressure on leaders to be more assertive in advocating independence. Among Japanese conservatives, there has long been sympathy for Taiwanese independence as a way to stand up to China and recover a more positive interpretation of Japan's modern history. While there is little support for outright independence, there is a danger of nationalist forces in Taiwan and Japan reinforcing each other to provoke the PRC and upset stability in the Taiwan Strait to the detriment of U.S. interests.

The United States needs to strike a balance, therefore, between reassuring its partners in Japan and Taiwan while at the same time not encouraging forces that might upset stability. To date, Abe and Tsai have done a commendable job in managing these domestic pressures. Abe has proven himself a pragmatic and flexible leader despite international misgivings about his nationalist and revisionist proclivities. Tsai has committed her administration to maintenance of the status quo and has resisted pressure pushing her to adopt public positions in favor of independence. The United States should support and encourage Abe and Tsai in this pragmatic direction by encouraging substantive improvements in relations that would preserve the status quo and reinforce American deterrence of PRC military action over symbolic assertions of independence meant to gratify nationalist sentiment in Taiwan and Japan.

“The United States needs to strike a balance...between reassuring its partners in Japan and Taiwan while at the same time not encouraging forces that might upset stability.”
Building the Strategy of Deterrence in Cyberspace: Proposals for Japan
Nori Katagiri

Like many other nations, Japan fell victim to cyber attacks before it came up with effective responses. While it has taken a number of approaches to reduce its vulnerability in cyber space, many people point to Japan as an inept victim of malicious activities. There have been many reports of government agencies hacked and information stolen. The private sector has similarly been targeted by foreign hacktivists. What explains Japan's inability to defend against cyber attacks, arguably one of the most important national security issues today?

The main cause of Japan's inability to effectively address its cyber vulnerability is its inadequate defense and lack of effective response. The first problem is that Japan's response has been inadequate to stop foreign attacks. Even as Japan seeks to augment its defense, it does not have instruments to deter adversaries effectively. Japan’s response has been lopsided, favoring strengthening defense over offense.

The other problem lies with the absence of Japan's international media strategy. Mass media tend to depict Japan in a negative light when it comes to its lack of cyber defense, which generates a snowball effect. That is, the more news describes Japan to be passive and reactive, the more attacks it is likely to get. Japan is likely to get additional attacks unless it makes a more effective response.

In this piece, I offer the following recommendations to improve the situation. First, Japan needs an effective deterrence strategy in cyber space. To deter enemies, Japan has to develop not only a robust defensive capability to deny adversarial attacks but also an offensive cyber capability to impose tremendous costs on adversaries before it gets attacked.

Second, Japan needs a public affairs strategy to generate a global taboo against cyber preemption. There are two parts to such a strategy. The first part is the establishment of a national advertising structure where the Japanese government will widely report incidents of successful defense against cyber attacks. Each time the government defends against major cyber attacks, it adds the information to the national database and reports to the international community the details of attacks, including origin, time, frequency, and type of such attacks.

This effort must be followed by the establishment of a multilateral public affairs community where such reports will be shared with other countries. In addition to building a national advertising program, I believe that multilateral methods with similar minded nations will make it far more effective. Of course, this part must follow the first part of building the advertising structure, because without an adequate national PR foundation, Japan would not be able to lead other states to join it.

In so doing, Japan must be discreet with what information to announce and share. On the one hand, Japan should announce cases of successful defensive operations as they arise to the global audience using government webpages, social media, and other media channels. To do so would help Tokyo convey to a global audience that it has increased its ability to defend its cyber space and persuade potential attackers that their aggressiveness will not work as well as before.

On the other hand, Japan should consider refraining from announcing three types of incidents because the net effects of such announcement would be negative: (1) those of failed defense, (2) those of successful offensive operations, and (3) those of failed offensive operations.

The first kind (incidents of failed defense) should not be announced widely because information about failed defense efforts would reinforce Japan's image of having weak defense and invite more attacks. The second kind (incidents of successful offensive operations) should not be announced widely, either, because that would put Japan in an aggressive light
and convey a bad image when it is actually trying to discourage offensive attacks. Finally, the third kind (incidents of failed offensive operations) should also be withheld because that would show the limits of Japan's cyber offensive capability.

These recommendations will not bring about a perfect shield against cyber attacks, but they should be construed as a step toward making Japan's defense more robust. It is one thing to focus on defense, but in today's strategic environment, Tokyo needs to be more creative in generating ideas to build a more effective strategy.
The LDP-Komeito Ruling Coalition, and Why It Matters for Japan’s Defense Policy

Adam P. Liff

Throughout his tenure and repeatedly this spring, Japan’s Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has called revision of Japan’s never-amended 1947 Constitution an “historic task” necessary for “national rebirth” and an end to the post-war “regime” he sees as shackling Japan. On this and other long-term policy priorities, Mr. Abe has deemed 2018 “a year of action.”

Yet if he wants to revise Japan’s Article 9 peace clause, Mr. Abe—now in his sixth year—is running out of time, even if he survives his current political difficulties and is elected to a third term as LDP president in September. In deciding whether to move forward, he faces one of the most significant political dilemmas of his career.

Central to his calculations is Komeito, the junior coalition partner of Mr. Abe’s Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the most important political party you’ve (probably) never thought much about.

The LDP and Komeito: Strange Bedfellows

In a surprising, fateful, and opportunistic step aimed at ending a divided Diet in 1999, the conservative LDP controversially invited Komeito, its erstwhile ideological, political, and pacificist nemesis, to rule in coalition. Excluding three years both were in the wilderness (2009-2012), this political odd couple has governed Japan ever since—in a remarkably stable coalition. They have also cooperated closely in every national election campaign.

Remarkably, despite Mr. Abe’s much larger LDP consistently accounting for over 85 percent of the coalition’s Diet strength, on key issues it has repeatedly made hugely consequential concessions to its small junior partner. Still more puzzling: this continues despite five consecutive and decisive national election victories under Mr. Abe’s leadership and the LDP’s single party Lower House majority.

The Puzzle

What gives? How can Komeito, a political party recently averaging less than 7 percent of Lower House Diet seats and 3 percent popular support, enjoy so much influence over Japan’s ostensibly dominant LDP? More to the point: why does Mr. Abe’s revisionist LDP continue to tolerate a costly coalition with the pacificist, status-quo-oriented Komeito—a relatively small minority party that repeatedly frustrates its policy ambitions—especially concerning constitutional revision and defense policy?

The Secret of Komeito’s Success

As University of North Texas Professor Ko Maeda and I argue in a recent academic paper, the secret to Komeito’s disproportionate influence over the LDP lies in a strange codependence induced by Japan’s electoral system. The inconvenient truth for Mr. Abe and his ambitions is this: he and the LDP are far weaker politically than is widely believed outside Japan, and than their Diet seat totals would otherwise suggest.

Over the past two decades, these strange political bedfellows have become so reliant on mutual stand-down agreements to get elected that a critical mass of each party’s Diet members would probably be out of a job without the other’s help.

Case in point: our analysis suggests that in the critical 2014 general election, votes from Komeito supporters in single-member districts where it agreed not to run a candidate put as many as fifty-nine LDP candidates over the top. One implication: the LDP’s single-party majority is something of a mirage.

Its ability to help LDP candidates get elected affords the much smaller Komeito disproportionate leverage on important issues for Komeito’s supporters.

Why This Matters for Constitutional Revision and Defense Policy

The LDP’s electoral dependence on Komeito is particularly costly to Mr. Abe and the LDP on issues highly salient to Komeito’s pacificist support base: especially the constitution’s Article 9 ‘peace clause’ and other aspects of Japan’s defense policy—still a relatively controversial topic in domestic politics. Remarkably, Komeito’s ability to punch significantly above its weight in Diet seats manifests even on
issues Mr. Abe has repeatedly identified as his top policy priorities.

Without Komeito support in 2014, for example, the LDP would not have had the single party-majority that granted it crucial leverage over summer 2015’s historic, controversial security legislation. Less conspicuously, concessions to Komeito behind-the-scenes significantly watered down the historic 2014 Cabinet Resolution “reinterpreting” Japan’s constitution to allow limited exercise of collective self-defense, as well as Abe’s 2017 proposal for revising Article 9. What’s especially remarkable is that these concessions are not on marginal side issues; rather, on both scores, Komeito has frustrated, and continues to frustrate, the LDP’s ability to achieve foundational party objectives literally written into the LDP’s 1955 establishing charter.

On the former, Komeito pressured Mr. Abe’s cabinet to agree to three internationally exceptional, strict conditions on Japan’s freedom to exercise Japan’s U.N. Charter-sanctioned right to use force to aid another country suffering an armed attack. With the latter, Mr. Abe’s May 2017 constitution revision proposal can be traced to a 2004 Komeito proposal. Abandoning (at least for now) a sixty-year old LDP plan to fundamentally revise Article 9 itself, Mr. Abe called only for the addition of a new clause merely recognizing the constitutionality of Japan’s sixty-four-year-old Self-Defense Forces. Shigeru Ishiba, a multi-time cabinet minister and—one of Abe’s leading challengers for the LDP presidency this September, has openly opposed the plan, judging it a major departure from the party’s own past proposals.

Even despite this major concession, recent reports suggest Komeito is slow-walking the revision effort.

“Despite the oft-commented-upon fractiousness of Japan’s formal opposition, Mr. Abe’s ambitions are powerfully constrained by a junior coalition partner yielding a virtual veto on the inside.”

Komeito: “The Opposition within the Ruling Coalition”

For Japanese and overseas advocates of ambitious constitutional revision or a more fundamental transformation of Japan’s defense posture, the analysis herein should be sobering. Despite the oft-commented-upon fractiousness of Japan’s formal opposition, Mr. Abe’s ambitions are powerfully constrained by a junior coalition partner yielding a virtual veto on the inside. No wonder Komeito’s own publications herald its status as the “opposition within the ruling coalition.” Self-congratulatory rhetoric aside, its role within the coalition is one of the most significant, yet oft-overlooked factors in contemporary Japanese politics.

Widespread claims of Mr. Abe’s domestic political strength to the contrary, it is largely because of, not despite, Komeito that the LDP maintains the Diet seat totals and policy influence it has today. Barring an unexpected collapse of the ruling coalition or major structural change, Komeito is likely to continue to function as a powerful “brake” on Abe and LDP ambitions on issues where the parties’ support bases are in clear tension—especially concerning constitutional revision and defense reforms.