

Japan and the Liberal International Order

A SURVEY EXPERIMENT

ADAM P. LIFF | KENNETH MORI McELWAIN

As noted in the introduction and other chapters throughout this volume, there is a widely and increasingly held view among many policymakers and international relations scholars that the liberal international order faces a major crisis. Permeating this discourse are two widespread assertions: first, in light of recent domestic political developments, the United States is increasingly ambivalent about championing the liberal order it built. And second, that it is, therefore, incumbent upon Japan and other advanced liberal democracies to “step up” to do more to support it.

Yet much of this discourse occurs at a very “elite” level. To assess the feasibility of democratic Japan playing a significantly more proactive role in international affairs, it is important to gauge where the Japanese public stands on related policy questions. How realistic is it to expect Japan’s political leaders—who must, at the end of the day, answer to voters at the polls—to pursue a more proactive role championing international liberalism? Do they risk popular backlash if they do? These are particularly salient questions in the case of Japan, which has long been reluctant to adopt certain aspects of the more assertive posture in foreign affairs that many appear to now be asking it to—especially in the security domain.

This chapter contributes to the discussion by summarizing the results of an original survey experiment we put into the field across Japan in September 2018. The goal of this survey experiment is to assess the public's openness to Japan adopting a greater leadership role in the regional and global order particularly in domains that commentators have identified as being under threat—such as security affairs and free trade—but also with regard to international institutions and promotion of democracy. This survey experiment achieved this through two components. First, we assessed the static views of respondents through a straightforward opinion survey, analogous to those regularly deployed by Japanese newspapers. Second, we tested how preferences *change* when respondents are exposed to information highlighting threats to the sustainability of the liberal international order, particularly deepening ambivalence in the White House vis-à-vis U.S. security alliances, free trade, international institutions, and other key features of what many refer to as the “rules-based liberal international order.”

Taken collectively, the results suggest that Japanese citizens believe the liberal international order has been crucial to postwar national prosperity and peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region. There is also robust support for Japan adopting a relatively more proactive posture in international trade and security affairs—within limits. In the economic domain, survey respondents strongly support the idea that Japan has benefited greatly from international free trade and should play a leadership role in that domain *regardless of what the United States does*. This comports with Solís's argument that Japan is no longer a follower on free trade, as reflected in its effort to champion the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP, also known as TPP-11) after the Trump administration's withdrawal from the twelve-member Trans-Pacific Partnership in January 2017. With regard to security affairs, the survey reveals strong support for strengthening ties with the United States, for Japan deepening ties with other countries in the region as a counterweight to China, and for pursuing more robust defense capabilities to bolster deterrence, such as increased defense spending. These goals all appear congruent with U.S. policies. The survey also supports the notion that Japan is generally not falling victim to the sort of narrow, inward-looking populism that has affected many other developed democracies.

This chapter is organized as follows: We first explain our rationale for conducting a survey experiment and briefly describe our survey design. We then summarize key findings from the survey experiment's constituent parts: pretreatment questions, the control group responses to posttreatment questions, and an analysis of treatment effects for the three treatment groups. After noting a few important caveats, a final section concludes and discusses how our approach could be replicated (and improved upon) in future studies of Japan or other countries.

Why Conduct a Survey Experiment?

Though public opinion does not predetermine the foreign and domestic policy decisions of political leaders, it can certainly empower or constrain them. For example, concerns about the expected social costs of immigration can make leaders leery of opening national borders, while popular fears about perceived threats from a neighboring country can create political space for leaders to significantly increase defense spending or change force structure. Accordingly, any discussion of Japan's ability—to say nothing of its willingness—to sustain or actively champion the liberal international order would be incomplete without analyzing public opinion on related issues. While some prominent surveys—including from Japan's Cabinet Office, the Pew Research Center, or domestic media organizations—periodically poll the Japanese public about foreign policy, there are important questions directly applicable to this volume that are rarely or never asked. Furthermore, most of these widely read surveys provide *static* snapshots of public opinion: they typically do not attempt to measure how public opinion *changes* when respondents are presented with new information about Japan's external environment.

This chapter addresses these gaps with a customized survey experiment tailored to deepen our understanding of what factors shape Japanese perceptions of global affairs. In particular, to what extent does the Japanese public believe it is important to sustain and strengthen the liberal order (and its constituent parts) and for Japan to play a leadership role in doing so? Do they share the concerns of many of the scholars and other observers noted throughout this volume? Are Japanese citizens more concerned

about threats to the economic or security aspects of the order? Are they more willing to commit to the liberal order when an ally appears increasingly unreliable or uncommitted, or when political or opinion leaders shape the narrative about real world events in particular ways?

To begin answering these questions, we need to know how public opinion can be shaped by political leaders or by new geopolitical developments. In addition to gathering valuable information on static opinions relevant to Japan's role in the liberal order, the survey experiment's "treatment" section tests whether different informational cues change respondents' willingness to support policies directly related to the liberal rules-based order. Specifically, our experiment presents respondents with three real-world scenarios designed to stimulate concerns about Japan's external environment, ranging from direct threats to national security to vaguer concerns about global insecurity and free trade. Consistent with the premise of this volume, these treatments focus on what many observers perceive to be declining U.S. commitment to security and/or economic dimensions of the order. They are based on real-world developments or specific statements made by political leaders (for example, U.S. president Donald Trump). Comparing the responses of those "treatment groups" to the "control group" allows us to measure the causal effect of the associated cues. Simply put, our approach is designed to measure each scenario's relative impact on the Japanese public's preferences concerning Japan adopting a more (or less) active role in global affairs, which, in turn, helps us draw broader conclusions about Japanese citizens' support for measures aimed at sustaining and championing the liberal international order.

Survey Design

Our survey experiment was conducted across Japan from September 3 to September 6, 2018, with 3,380 respondents sampled nationally by NTTCom Online Market Solutions.¹ The survey was divided into three blocks. Block 1 (pretreatment) posed questions relating to general attitudes about foreign countries, the Japanese government and political parties, and the historical importance of the liberal international order.² Block 2 provided the experimental component, namely the information treatment, which is described

in greater detail below. Block 3 (the posttreatment block) inquired about respondents' opinions concerning various liberal international order-relevant policy options that Japanese leaders may consider.

The most innovative component of this study is the "information treatment." Respondents were randomly assigned to four experimental groups, each of which was exposed to different information about the position of Japan and emerging threats to the liberal order.³ In aggregate, these treatments, which were developed based on real-world rhetoric and events, were designed to measure the Japanese public's reaction when presented with the same sort of information that has in recent years caused many foreign policy elites to express concern about a "crisis" of liberal internationalism. After exposure to their randomly assigned treatment, all respondents answered common questions in block 3. Since treatment assignment was completely randomized, any differences in the answers given between groups can be understood as the causal effect of the information treatment.

The complete text of the information treatments is available at the end of this chapter. To summarize: The control group (C; n=811) was shown a short factual statement containing information about a few key features of Japan's status quo most relevant to this study. They were told that the U.S.-Japan security treaty was asymmetric, with the United States committed to defending Japan but Japan not offering a commensurate commitment to the security of the United States; that Japan's defense budget as a percentage of GDP was lower than that of other major U.S. treaty allies, such as South Korea and most major NATO members, as well as China's; that international trade accounted for a significant fraction of Japan's GDP, and that China was Japan's largest trading partner.⁴

The three "treatment" groups were shown the above "control" statement, followed by other additional information of the sort that has contributed to deepening concerns among foreign policy elites about the liberal order's sustainability. The basic goal was to see whether and how such information might cause respondents to become more or less supportive of Japan adopting a more proactive leadership role in foreign affairs. U.S. policies and rhetoric were a major component of the treatments. However, the U.S. president was never referred to by name, in order to keep the focus on specific trends, rhetoric, institutions, and policies rather than on any particular leader that might evoke stronger or weaker reactions for reasons unrelated to the liberal

order itself. All information provided was factually accurate and focused on real-world developments between January 2017 and August 2018.

The first treatment group was given the “security treatment,” which was designed to elevate concerns about U.S. security commitments to treaty allies. It noted that the U.S. president had effectively agreed to North Korean and Chinese requests to halt a bilateral military exercise with its South Korean ally, due to—in the president’s words—its alleged high costs and “provocative” nature. In addition, it stated that Washington has been demanding more equitable burden-sharing from U.S. allies, noting that the U.S. president had recently referred to the U.S. security commitments as “unfair,” even demanding that NATO members increase their defense budget targets from the current 2 to 4 percent of GDP. (By comparison, Japan has for decades spent less than 1 percent of GDP on defense.)

The second treatment group received the “economic treatment,” also based on actual events but focused on highlighting concerns about U.S. commitments to free trade, its willingness to impose tariffs on allies to reduce the U.S. trade deficit, and its criticism of global organizations responsible for supporting free trade. Specifically, it noted the U.S. administration’s unilateral withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) of twelve nations, among which the United States and Japan had been far and away the largest economies, as well as threats from the U.S. president to impose tariffs on steel and aluminum and his criticism of the alleged unfairness of the WTO dispute settlement mechanism.

The third and final treatment group was exposed to *both* of the aforementioned prompts. We introduced this combined treatment with an expectation that it would exert the strongest influence on respondents’ opinions, due to its focus on stimulating concerns about security *and* economic aspects of the liberal international order simultaneously.

Summary of Results

In this section, we turn to the results of our survey experiment, broken down by question category. Some care must be taken when analyzing responses to the survey. The “pretreatment” questions can be analyzed directly, that

is, we can calculate average responses or categorical breakdowns, such as by gender or age, across the full 3,380-person sample. However, answers to the “posttreatment” questions must be analyzed separately by treatment group, since respondents in each respective group are answering the same questions after having been exposed to different informational cues.

Accordingly, we divide the analysis into three parts: a pretreatment section (A), which examines responses of all respondents before they were randomly assigned to one of four treatment groups; a posttreatment control-group-only section (B), in order to assess baseline attitudes about the posttreatment questions; a posttreatment experimental section (C), which examines the differential effects of the three treatments (T1 security only; T2 economics only; T3 security and economics combined). Because space constraints prevent a full assessment of responses to dozens of questions, we highlight only the results we judge to be most relevant to the core objective of this volume: assessing the likelihood that Japan’s leaders will be able and willing to proactively champion the liberal international order.

ANALYSIS OF ALL RESPONSES TO PRETREATMENT QUESTIONS (N=3,380)

One of the most noteworthy recent shifts in Japan’s approach to regional politics and security affairs is more active outreach to perceived “like-minded” countries beyond the United States, due in significant part to deepening threat perceptions vis-à-vis China and North Korea. Expanding security links with U.S. allies and partners across the Asia-Pacific and in Europe is a major feature of Japan’s 2013 National Security Strategy (see chapter 1 by Adam Liff). The survey results are striking for the consistency with which Japanese survey respondents rate these security partners of the United States (and, increasingly, also of Japan) positively. Respondents expressed the strongest affinity toward the United States (51 favorable, 14 percent unfavorable), despite the unpopularity of President Donald Trump (13 percent favorable, 59 percent unfavorable). While affinity scores between leaders and their countries generally correlate, our finding is consistent with other surveys of Japanese and many other foreign publics revealing that the United States is far more popular (and trusted) than its current president.

Positive sentiment toward other long-standing democratic allies follows

closely behind, with +40 percentage points net favorability (positive minus negative affinity) for Australia, +37 for United Kingdom, +36 toward Germany, and +32 toward France. India (+13) and the Philippines (+15) also fare relatively well, as does Vietnam (+20). Perhaps not coincidentally, these countries are widely seen in U.S. and Japanese foreign policy circles as key security partners in the region and their leaders have also publicly expressed concerns about China's military development and certain controversial policies, including in the South China Sea. The glaring exception among U.S. democratic allies is South Korea (-40). This low affinity probably reflects persistent political frictions between Seoul and Tokyo over the legacy of the colonial period and how contemporary political leaders in both countries approach it, as discussed in chapter 8 by Thomas Berger. It is also worth noting that Russia (-43), China (-57), and North Korea (-78)—three countries regularly identified in Japanese and U.S. foreign policy circles as threats to the liberal order—score quite poorly.

Other results suggest that respondents identify connections between the security and economic components of the liberal international order, with key constitutive elements generally viewed positively. In the security domain, the average respondent believes that free trade (+32 percentage points), the UN (+25), the liberal international order (+31), and U.S. leadership (+22) all contributed to post-Cold War peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific. The exception is nuclear deterrence, which is viewed negatively (-3). This is not particularly surprising, given widespread antinuclear sentiment in Japan—the only country to have ever suffered a nuclear attack. Respondents also generally identify the postwar system supporting international trade and free economic competition as having contributed positively to the spread of democracy around the world (+38), Japan's economy (+48), their daily life (+23), and international peace (+28).

That said, the pretreatment responses also reveal clear concerns about major issues relevant to the regional order's sustainability in the Asia-Pacific. In particular, respondents say that they worry regularly about the North Korean nuclear threat (70 percent of respondents) and economic inequality (63 percent). Though not a trend directly linkable to the liberal order itself, it is also worth noting that China's economic development also elicits concern (54 percent). Perhaps most significantly, only 12 percent

of respondents stated they were not worried about U.S. "withdrawal from Asia," with 51 percent expressing concern.

ANALYSIS OF CONTROL GROUP RESPONSES TO POSTTREATMENT QUESTIONS (N=811)

After reading a brief, neutral factual statement describing Japan's current military and economic status within the liberal international order, the control group respondents shared their views on various issues relevant to the order affecting Japan.

As it concerns decades-old international institutions seen as core components of the liberal order (for example, UN, G7, World Bank, IMF, WTO, Asian Development Bank (ADB), Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), and NATO), it appears that the baseline ("untreated") feeling among the Japanese public is positive, with net favorability ranging between +24 and +31 percentage points. In contrast, international initiatives generally seen as China-led initiatives—the Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank (AIIB; -2) and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI; -24)—are viewed negatively.

Control group responses also demonstrate relatively strong support for two other ideational features of the liberal international order: that free economic competition and international trade have been good for Asia-Pacific peace and stability (+38 percentage points) and world peace (+32). Asked about the most appropriate means for dealing with trade frictions and threats of tariffs from countries violating WTO regulations and rules, the respondents show strong support for working in a manner consistent with existing liberal international principles. The most favored responses are pursuing free trade agreements with other countries (+50) and relying on WTO dispute mechanisms (+46). The least favored response is retaliatory tariffs (+16). Significantly, when asked whether Japan should play a role as a leader of the liberal trading system and actively promote TPP and other free trade agreements, the response is unambiguous, with net support of +57.

As for whether Japan should proactively address major global challenges, respondents openly support tackling climate change (+74 percentage points favor action over inaction), nuclear nonproliferation (+68),

terrorism (+66), economic inequality (+58), and promoting democracy (+57). The one area (of the six offered) where respondents express greater ambivalence is whether Japan should accept refugees (-1).

In response to questions about Japan's security, China's military power (+74 percentage points) and activities in the South China Sea (+75) and East China Sea (including the Senkaku Islands; +75) were all identified as *more severe* threats than even North Korea's nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles (+69)—though all are clearly identified as major concerns. Fears of Chinese economic influence (+66), tightening relations between China and Russia (+61), and American withdrawal from multilateral trade agreements (+52) and international organizations (+56) were significant as well. It is also clear why many security experts highlight severe abandonment concerns: there is remarkable ambivalence among respondents about the credibility of U.S. commitments to come to Japan's aid in a military crisis affecting Japanese territory (+4 believe the U.S. commitment is more credible than not), other Asian countries (+3), or the peace and stability of the Asia-Pacific region more generally (+10).

As it applies to measures to strengthen deterrence, 36 percent of respondents expressed a view that Japan should pursue a more "equal alliance" by committing more fully to defending U.S. forces even if Japan itself is not threatened directly; 20 percent back the status quo. Support also appears strong (+41 percentage points) for Japan's policy of developing deeper SDF and coast guard ties with Southeast Asian countries involved in territorial disputes with China. There was net-positive support for deploying the SDF to participate in freedom of navigation operations in opposition to China's claims in the South China Sea (+22) and in UN-led counter-proliferation operations (+25).

Finally, we asked respondents about their views concerning whether Japan should revise the so-called peace clause (Article 9) of its constitution, which renounces the threat of force to settle international disputes and the development of war potential. Views are quite evenly matched: 35 percent of respondents are in favor of amendment, while 38 percent are opposed. Among the subset of respondents who are pro-amendment, the most popular rationale (65 percent) was the importance of stipulating the constitutionality of the Self-Defense Forces—basically identical to a proposal Abe put forward in 2017. By contrast, among the subset of

respondents who oppose amendment, 67 percent stated it was because they were proud of the pacifist constitution (for further details, see chapter 9 by Kenneth Mori McElwain).

TREATMENT EFFECTS

Given these baseline attitudes among the control group, how do respondents' positions change when they are exposed to new informational cues designed to prompt concerns about America's weakening commitment to the liberal international order? Under such circumstances, does the Japanese public believe it is important for Japan to provide more proactive leadership in efforts to sustain and strengthen the liberal order?

To answer these questions in the context of the larger project, we randomly sorted our full sample of 3,380 respondents into one control group (discussed above) and three treatment groups.⁵ Each treatment group was presented with different informational cues that raise doubts about America's commitment to the security and economic dimensions of the liberal order. All groups were then asked the same "posttreatment" questions to gauge their beliefs about the appropriate policy response. This framework allows us to compare each treatment scenario's impact on public preferences to participate in or withdraw from global affairs.⁶

Space constraints prevent a full discussion of every post-treatment question, so below we focus on results which we found to be particularly noteworthy/counterintuitive, in relation to Japan's ability and willingness to contribute to sustaining the liberal international order. Our first finding is that inducing concerns about the liberal international order makes respondents less trustful of international, multilateral institutions. For example, respondents generally have a fairly neutral view of international institutions, with the UN, G7, WTO, and NATO receiving positive ratings from 44 percent to 62 percent of respondents. However, when presented with the combined treatment—that is, cues to prime both security and economic threats to the liberal international order (T3)—support fell significantly for the UN (-5 percentage points), the G7 (-5), and the IMF (-4), as well as for the ADB (-5).

That said, this negative turn does not necessarily produce a desire to go it alone, at least in the economic sphere (T2). When asked how Japan

should respond to a country that violates WTO rules, the treatment does not reveal any statistically significant effects on preferences about enacting retaliatory tariffs, and support for negotiating a bilateral free trade agreement with a third country declines (-5 percentage points). Instead, we observe an increase in support for forging stronger diplomatic relations with Japan's partners in South and Southeast Asia. Exposure to the security treatment (T1) increases the probability of backing improved ties with Australia (+4), the Philippines (+5), and Singapore (+4), while economic threats (T3) do so for India (+5).

On the security front more generally, however, we observe some significant effects of the treatments as it concerns attitudes about Japan's security vulnerabilities and desirable policy responses. On the one hand, the combined military and economic treatment (T3) increases the perception that the liberal international order has been critical to Asian peace and stability after the Cold War (+6). On the other hand, the treatment increases threat perceptions vis-à-vis the economic rise of China (+4), although there is no notable difference in concerns about North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile capabilities or declining U.S. commitment to the liberal international order.

Uncertainty about the future of the liberal order also increased enthusiasm for deepening Japan's defense cooperation with existing partners. The economic threat treatment causes a +5 percentage point increase in support for Japan changing its defense policy to lean closer to the United States rather than China. Treatments also produced stronger support for improving cooperation with other American allies (+6; T2); with Southeast Asian countries involved in territorial issues with China in the South China Sea (+5; T3); and participation in Freedom of Navigation Operations-type (FONOPS) exercises to counter China's controversial claims in the South China Sea (+6; T3). Support for international cooperation is even stronger when the potential partner is a democracy (+7; T3).

Exposure to different threats to the liberal international order also increased net support for amending Article 9 by +12 (T1) and +9 (T2) percentage points, a remarkable shift given that most contemporary surveys show a public that is evenly divided on its merits (see chapter 9 by Kenneth Mori McElwain).

Overall, the combined security + economic threat treatment (T3) had

a stronger effect on preferences than the pure security (T1) or economic (T2) threat. This is consistent with the simple expectation that anxiety or worry in *more* policy domains should stimulate greater changes in people's preferences. However, it is equally important to note which attitudes were not affected by the information treatments. This lack of a statistically significant effect suggests relatively stable beliefs. For example, the treatments had no statistically significant effect on respondents' views about defense spending, whether Japan should pursue a "more equal" alliance with the United States, the credibility of U.S. security commitments to Japan or the wider region, or the advisability of new policies to enhance Japan's defense posture and deterrence against external threats.

Our summary of the qualitative significance of these effects is as follows. When respondents are concerned about the U.S. commitment to the liberal international order, they tend to evaluate international institutions more negatively, be more worried about North Korean military threats, and decrease affinity toward China. They are more likely to support bilateral or multilateral military exercises with other countries, particularly when those countries are democracies. In other words, perceived declining U.S. commitment to the liberal international order does not seem to make Japanese people turn more toward existing multilateral institutions. Rather, it appears they wish for Japan to seek greater autonomy and, on specific topics of concern, conditional partnerships with other democracies.

Caveats

While our survey experiment sheds light on Japanese preferences concerning the liberal international order, there are some important caveats we should also highlight. First, because this survey experiment has only been conducted once (in September 2018), we do not have a baseline against which to compare our conclusions. As a result, we cannot ascertain changes in attitudes over time, such as the effect of the Trump administration on Japanese views, relative to the Obama administration. As several chapters in this volume point out, foreign policy experts' concerns about "international order" significantly predate January 2017.

Second, we did not require respondents to confront the inevitable trade-offs and make the kinds of “tough” choices that a (responsible) political leader would factor into decisions about foreign policy. For example, though it was remarkable that so many respondents supported increasing Japan’s defense spending by 50 percent—an amount equivalent to 2.5 trillion yen (US\$22.5 billion) per year—or more, they answered this question without any prompting to consider the opportunity costs for Japan’s public deficit or other policy priorities. These are, obviously, factors that political leaders—and especially the Ministry of Finance—regularly take into account, and which almost inevitably will present practical headwinds to funding a more ambitious international role.

Conclusions

Taken in aggregate, the results of our survey experiment of over three thousand Japanese respondents in September 2018 suggest that Japanese citizens seem to believe the liberal international order has been crucial to postwar national prosperity and peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region. There also appears to be strong support for Japan continuing to tie its future to the advanced democracies of the world, as well as adopting a relatively more proactive posture in international trade and security affairs. Survey respondents generally agree with the idea that Japan has benefited significantly from free trade and should champion it *regardless of what the United States does*. In the security domain, there is robust support for Japan bolstering ties with the United States and other countries in the region to balance China and deter North Korea—both overwhelmingly seen as threats to Japan’s security—as it invests more in its own defense capabilities, such as increased defense spending. In both cases, these goals appear congruent with U.S. policies.

In addition, the results strongly suggest openness to Japan adopting a relatively more proactive leadership role in regional economic and security affairs, as well as contributing to solving global problems such as climate change, global economic inequality, and international terrorism. This helps explain why over the past seven years the Abe administration’s ambitious, forward-leaning posture in regional and global economic and

security issues—from championing CPTPP to deepening security ties with various U.S. allies and partners—has not resulted in a major popular backlash in terms of cabinet support rates or at the polls—at least so far. It also comports with the idea that, unlike some other democracies, Japan’s domestic politics do not appear to be shifting in the direction of a sharply more narrow, inward-looking populism.

This survey experiment was designed to establish an empirical baseline and replicable framework for future studies—both of Japan and other countries. For example, Japanese citizens’ concerns about threats to the liberal international order may vary in response to the vicissitudes of Sino-Japanese or U.S.-Japan relations, especially changes in government leadership or foreign policy strategy. Our results can serve as a reference point against which future Japanese survey experiments can be measured, allowing for a deeper understanding of Japanese beliefs about the importance of the postwar liberal order, as well as how these change over time in response to new external (or domestic) circumstances. Relatedly, our approach may also be of interest to scholars exploring similar questions with regard to other major democratic powers, such as Australia, the United Kingdom, France, and Germany—countries that have also been called upon to adopt (and, in some cases, whose own leaders have themselves called for adopting) a more proactive role in sustaining the liberal international order. With some changes in the text of the information treatments and in the wording of policy responses to adapt to the circumstances of the specific country, this study’s framework can yield new cross-national insights about how publics view the costs and benefits of the liberal international order in other countries. This, in turn, can help policymakers and scholars better assess the feasibility of other advanced democracies playing a more proactive role championing the liberal order in an era of more questionable U.S. leadership and gauge where their publics stand on related issues.

Information Treatment (*translation of original Japanese-language survey)

Information [treated groups] **Instruction:** Please read the following passage about Japan and international society. (Fix the screen for 30 seconds)

CONTROL

[all respondents]

Japan has a defense alliance only with the United States, but the United States also has alliances with South Korea and NATO (the North Atlantic Treaty Organization). Moreover, the United States promises to defend Japan, yet Japan makes no promise to intervene in response to the use of military force against the United States.

Japan's defense budget is 0.9 percent to 1 percent of its GDP, but the corresponding figure is 3 percent to 5 percent for the United States and 2.6 percent for South Korea. The average defense budget of the 29 members of NATO is currently 1 percent to 2 percent (of GDP), but all of them have promised to increase it to 2 percent by 2024. China's defense spending is over three times the amount of Japan's, and it has increased over the past 20 years at an average annual rate of over 10 percent.

Furthermore, it is said that the U.S.-led liberal (literally, free and open) international trading system has been indispensable to Japan's postwar recovery and economic development, and the total value of Japan's trade accounts for 30 percent to 40 percent of its GDP. Until recently, the United States was Japan's largest trading partner, but China has held that position since 2007.

SECURITY TREATMENT

[treatment groups 1 and 3]

Recently, it has been said that the United States is in the process of withdrawing its engagement in and commitment to peace and order in East Asia. In June 2018, the United States announced the suspension of U.S.–South Korean bilateral military exercises in exchange for North Korea stopping its missile tests—a proposal suggested by North Korea and China. At the time of the announcement, the U.S. president claimed that U.S.–South Korean bilateral military exercises were “expensive” and “provocative.”

Moreover, the U.S. president has criticized U.S. allies for taking advantage of the United States, insisting that the American people are demanding more equal burden-sharing. For example, the U.S. president has claimed that the U.S. military burden in NATO is “unfair” and has pressed NATO members to raise their defense budgets to 4 percent of their GDP, up from the 2 percent target mutually agreed upon in 2014.

ECONOMIC TREATMENT

[treatment groups 2 and 3]

Recently, it has been said that the United States is in the process of withdrawing its economic participation in and commitment to East Asia. In January 2017, the United States withdrew from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), the largest free trade agreement in history signed by 12 Asia-Pacific countries (representing 40 percent of global GDP).

Moreover, along with criticizing trading partners for taking advantage of it, the United States has also demanded that they reduce trade deficits. For example, the U.S. president has claimed that tariffs imposed on American products are “ridiculous and unacceptable,” and notified EU members that the United States would raise tariffs on steel and aluminum imports. Additionally, the U.S. president has criticized the dispute settlement process of the World Trade Organization (WTO) as unfair toward the United States.

NOTES

1. Respondents were sampled nationally by gender, age (deciles, restricted to 20–79), and geography (8 regions) to match census distributions. Respondents who answered too quickly or gave identical responses to all questions were excluded and resampled. The survey instrument was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Institute of Social Science, University of Tokyo.

2. Prior to the main survey, respondents were first asked questions about their demographic profile, for sampling purposes. The question ordering was randomized within section 1, but not for section 3, the latter in order to preserve thematic consistency and reduce the cognitive burden for respondents.

3. The treatment page was frozen for thirty seconds to better ensure that respondents read the provided information carefully.

4. It should be noted that there is no “null” category, wherein respondents are shown no information about the liberal international order. This was a conscious design choice by the authors to ensure that all respondents had a minimal baseline knowledge of the liberal international order, so that their responses would reflect how they might respond to real events that may emerge in the future.

5. C: N=811; T1 (security): N=843; T2 (economy): N=869; T3 (security + economy): N=856. In the regression analyses, we exclude don't know / no answer (DKNA) responses.

6. We use a regression framework to estimate the causal effect of treatment assignment to one of the four groups on responses to the posttreatment questions. More specifically, we use a logistic regression with robust standard errors. Responses to the posttreatment questions were rescaled to a binary measure, where 1 = scores larger than the middle option and 0 = middle scores or smaller. Recall that the treatments are designed to induce concerns about American commitment to the security (T1), economic (T2), and security + economic (T3) dimensions of the liberal international order. The coefficients for the treatment groups, which we discuss below, denote the *average treatment effect* (ATE), or the causal effect of being exposed to each information treatment relative to the control group. We have rerun the regressions using ordinary least squares (OLS), but differences in results were minimal in terms of substantive or statistical significance. Control variables in our regression include: party identification (strong or weak identifiers); gender; marriage status; age (deciles); income (deciles); educational attainment (more than high school or not); occupation; region of residence (8-part) and its urban-rural score (3-part).