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Japan-MENA Relations

Understanding Japan's Strategic Priorities in the Region

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Japan's MENA priorities are in line with Tokyo's broader strategic goals that aim to manage its relationships in the context of a more assertive China and growing uncertainty over the future US role in the Middle East. While Tokyo broadly promotes its Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategy, a strategic vision aimed at securing a free and open maritime order vital to Japan's trade ties, in the MENA region, Tokyo's focus includes building relationships to secure Japanese economic interests in the face of China's growing regional footprint. Japan also contributes to regional stability and development through multilateral institutions. The COVID-19 pandemic will likely serve to increase the pace of Japan's interest in order to counter inroads made by economic competitors through "vaccine diplomacy."

Background

Japan's relationships in the MENA region continue to deepen and become more complex. As Tokyo builds stronger ties across the MENA region, where Japan's diplomatic engagement has been historically modest, Japan's strategic priorities and interests in the region require a reappraisal. In the past, Japan's strategic priorities in MENA reflected a narrow focus on maintaining Japan's energy security, and also at times, the need to balance Japan's interests against those of the United States, Japan's most important security partner. With respect to energy security, Japan's access to Middle East oil was prioritized over entering into regional diplomatic and political entanglements². Second, with respect to the United States, Tokyo's MENA policies reflected a balancing of Japan's energy security and economic interests against U.S. foreign policy preferences³. However, over the last several years, Japan's engagement with the MENA region has taken on broader aims and significance. To be sure, Japan's relationships across the MENA countries of the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean, which are at the focus of this report, reflect shifting priorities in Tokyo. Japan has committed to reducing its own energy dependency on fossil fuels as part of global efforts to address climate change⁴, while also leveraging its industrial and technological know-how to secure access to new markets.

Although Japan's priorities are shifting, there remains a continued preference for working through multilateral organizations, such as the United Nations on issues of regional and global concern. Traditionally, Japan sought to avoid political and diplomatic entanglements in the MENA region, and for

¹ Christopher K. Lamont is an Associate Professor of International Relations at the Institute for International Strategy at Tokyo International University.

² Christopher Lamont, "Japan's Evolving Ties with the Middle East" Asia's New Pivot, Asia Society Policy Institute, June 28, 2020, <https://asiasociety.org/asias-new-pivot/japan>

³ An example of this would be Japan's reluctance to join US-led efforts to sanction Iran in the lead up to the negotiation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Japan eventually did join in US efforts to sanction Iran, but only after the application of significant pressure by Washington. Craig Kafura, "The Iran Deal and the US-Japan Alliance" The Diplomat, March 1, 2016. Available at: <https://thediplomat.com/2016/03/the-iran-deal-and-the-us-japan-alliance/> For Japan-US relations and the Middle East more broadly, see Yukiko Miyagi, Japan's Middle East Security Policy: Theory and Cases. Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2008, pp. 59-65.

⁴ Jada Nagumo, "Japan's Green Stocks Climb as Suga Vows to Fight Climate Change" Nikkei Asia, April 23, 2021, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Business/Markets/Japan-s-green-stocks-climb-as-Suga-vows-to-fight-climate-change>

much of the Cold War, Tokyo kept a low profile and privileged quietly building ties with the region's major oil exporters. This meant that Japan's diplomatic presence in the region was comparatively modest as Tokyo did not seek to play a major role in regional security, but rather sought to act as a facilitator for multilateral conflict resolution and humanitarian efforts. What were viewed in Tokyo as political entanglements surrounding Israel/Palestine, and post-1979 Iran, were seen mainly as potential sources of disruption to the flow of Middle East oil imports that Japan relied upon to fuel economic growth.⁵

However, the 1991 Gulf War marked a watershed moment, not just for Japan in the MENA region, but also, more broadly, for Japan's foreign and security policies. Tokyo's "checkbook" diplomacy left Japan on the sidelines of a United Nations sanctioned war effort, and left many Japanese diplomats dismayed that Japan was not acknowledged as having played a role in Kuwait's liberation from Iraq.⁶ In the aftermath of 9/11, Japan actively participated in the US-led conflict in Afghanistan, in a non-combat role, and Japan also deployed its Self-Defense Forces (SDF) to Iraq. At the time, it appeared that Japan was beginning to align itself more closely with Washington's security preferences in the region.⁷

Although Japan's only overseas military base is located in Djibouti, Tokyo remains reluctant to assume significant security commitments in the greater MENA region. Japan's historic missions in the greater MENA region, and also the ongoing Gulf of Aden mission, are modest. Constitutional limitations on the use of force, and a general reluctance to deploy hard power resources far from home, will act to limit Tokyo's engagement in regional security missions in the future to a largely intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) or logistical support role. As a result, any future deployments will likely only take place within robust multilateral frameworks with either European Union member states, or the United States, acting as key partners.

Indeed, when the Gulf of Aden ISR mission was launched in 2020, Tokyo emphasized that the maintenance of access to energy supplies was in the national security interest of Japan.⁸ Furthermore, domestic demographic trends have meant that defense planners in Tokyo are confronted with the task of making the most of fewer strategic resources.

Tokyo is therefore unlikely to take on any major security commitments beyond its more immediate neighborhood. Instead, Japan's strategic priorities in MENA will continue to be advanced through augmenting its diplomatic outreach and people-to-people ties in the region, alongside building economic ties with regional capitals that go beyond Japan's traditional "oil for land cruisers" trade relationship.⁹ Indeed, this growing outreach is aimed at achieving two major goals. Managing economic competition in MENA from other East Asian powers, such as China and South Korea, and also maintaining a global rules-based order in face of geopolitical turbulence.

Japan's Priorities in the MENA Region

Tokyo's priorities for the MENA region are consistent with Japan's more immediate global priorities which are set out by Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi in the 2021 Diplomatic Bluebook. Motegi identifies three critical challenges for Japanese diplomacy: 1) overcoming the COVID-19 pandemic, 2) maintaining the international rules-based order, 3) addressing common challenges such as climate change,

⁵ William Nester and Kweku Ampiah, "Japan's Oil Diplomacy: Tatemaie and Honne." *Third World Quarterly*. Vol. 11, No. 1 (1989), pp. 72-88.

⁶ Mieczysław P. Boduszynski, Christopher K. Lamont, and Philip Streich, "Japan and the Middle East: Navigating U.S. Priorities and Energy Security" *The Middle East Institute*, March 5, 2019, <https://www.mei.edu/publications/japan-and-middle-east-navigating-us-priorities-and-energy-security>

⁷ Christopher Hughes, "Japan's Security Policy, the US-Japan Alliance, and the 'War on Terror': Incrementalism Confirmed or Radical Leap?" *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 58, issue 4, (2004), pp. 427-445.

⁸ "Japan says Middle East Mission in Self-Interest as Crude Importer" *Reuters*, January 15, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-japan-defense-usa-idUSKBN1ZD2W2>

⁹ "Saudi and Japan Must Move Beyond Oil-for-Land Cruisers" *Arab News*, January 13, 2020, <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1612196>

globalization, and digitalization.¹⁰ All three of these challenges are reflected in Japan's MENA policies, which will be explored in greater detail in the following sections.

Recalibrating Japan-MENA Relations

In 2013, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe initiated a reset of Japan-MENA relations following a period where Tokyo displayed a growing willingness to participate in US-led military missions in the region despite constitutional limitations on Japan's use of force, which Prime Minister Abe also sought to loosen. Prime Minister Koizumi's (2001 - 2006) tenure in office witnessed Koizumi cultivate a close personal relationship with US President George W. Bush. In the aftermath of 9/11, Tokyo deployed Self Defense Forces (SDF) in support of US missions in Afghanistan and Iraq. However, beyond these commitments aimed at strengthening the US-Japan alliance, Japan's footprint in the MENA region remained limited primarily to energy interests.

Abe's second term as Prime Minister (2012 - 2020).¹¹ coincided with a major overseas crisis in the first months of his tenure. In January 2013, the In Amenas refinery incident in Algeria highlighted worrying blind-spots in Japan's regional presence. Tokyo was left as a bystander in a major security incident that claimed the lives of 10 Japanese nationals. To be sure, Prime Minister Abe's government was embarrassed by reports that it was the UK Ambassador to Algeria who informed Japanese authorities of the Algerian military operation at the facility as Japan lacked its own interlocutors in Algeria.¹²

In Tokyo, it was widely acknowledged that a lack of strong ties on the ground left Japanese nationals and interests vulnerable. Another incident which made headlines in Japan was the hostage taking and executions of two Japanese nationals by ISIL in 2015.¹³ In response to these developments, Abe sought to address this vulnerability by broadening the scope of Japan's diplomacy in the region. One of the more immediate steps taken was to increase the number of uniformed military attachés to Japan's embassies in the region.¹⁴ Abe also used this as an opportunity to recalibrate relations in MENA and also to increase coordination on regional developmental and security challenges with European capitals.¹⁵

During Abe's term in office, Japan cultivated closer ties with Israel, in particular in relation to cooperation between the two countries' high-tech sectors. As of 2021, beyond the Gulf monarchies, Japan's key partners in the region include Egypt and Turkey. With multiple high-level visits and exchanges, Japan has slowly come to strengthen ties in a region where Japan's presence has historically been much more low key.

These relationships have at times been harnessed by Tokyo to contribute to regional security, such as when Tokyo attempted to act as a mediator between the US and Iran in 2019.¹⁶ and more recently in 2021, when Tokyo committed itself to assisting Libya's peace process and elections planned for December.¹⁷ While the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted Japan's growing connectivities in the region, Japan's diplomatic activity and trade relations with the region, beyond the energy sector, will likely continue to diversify in the coming years.

¹⁰ 令和3年版外交青書(外交青書2021), <https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/files/100181433.pdf>

¹¹ Shinzo Abe briefly served as Prime Minister from 2006-2007.

¹² Justin McCurry, "In Japan, Sadness and Frustration over Algeria Hostage Crisis" Global Post, January 28, 2013, <https://www.minnpost.com/global-post/2013/01/japan-sadness-and-frustration-over-algeria-hostage-crisis/>

¹³ Mieczysław P. Boduszynski and Christopher K. Lamont, "Islamic State and Japan: What Next?" The Diplomat, February 6, 2015, <https://thediplomat.com/2015/02/islamic-state-and-japan-what-next/>

¹⁴ "Japan plans to increase information gathering capabilities" Nikkei Asia, February 3, 2015,

<https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics-Economy/Policy-Politics/Japan-plans-to-increase-information-gathering-capabilities>

¹⁵ Plan franco-japonais pour le développement durable, la santé et la sécurité en Afrique, October 5, 2015, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000103135.pdf>

¹⁶ Michael MacArthur Bosak, "Why Japanese Mediation of US-Iran Tensions Makes Sense" The Japan Times, June 4, 2019, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2019/06/04/commentary/japan-commentary/japanese-mediation-u-s-iran-tensions-makes-sense/>

¹⁷ https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press3e_000186.html, ナイリ駐日リビア臨時代理大使による宇都外務副大臣表敬, February 5, 2021, https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/me_a/me1/ly/page3_003014.html

The importance Japan continues to place on its relationships in the MENA region are highlighted by Tunisia's selection to host the 8th Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) in 2022.¹⁸ Tokyo has used TICAD forums to hold summit and foreign ministers' meetings with key North African partners including Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Egypt. At TICAD7, held in Yokohama in 2019, Japanese officials met with Libyan Foreign Minister Mohammed Siala to convey Tokyo's support for strengthening ties between the two countries and caution against a military solution to the then ongoing conflict.¹⁹

The Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategic Concept and Japan-MENA Relations

While in the Asia-Pacific region, Tokyo promotes the Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategic concept aimed at countering China's growing assertiveness, and has worked closely with Washington to bring regional powers together into an informal security grouping known as "the Quad".²⁰ In the MENA region Tokyo is much less ambitious in terms of the scope of its strategic engagement. Instead, as noted earlier, Japan works through multilateral frameworks to contribute to the maintenance of a rules-based order. Tokyo also pursues the building of bilateral relationships to secure Japan's economic interests in the face of China's growing regional influence.

Over the course of the last decade, China's One Belt One Road Initiative (BRI) acted as a catalyst for Tokyo to articulate Japan's own strategic vision for its MENA relationships. China has now replaced Japan as the largest single export market in Asia for Middle East oil,²¹ and China's state-supported firms have secured a number of lucrative energy and trade deals across the region, in some cases displacing Japanese firms. In 2017, Japan initiated the first Japan-Arab Political Dialogue hosted by the League of Arab States. At this event, Japan's Foreign Minister Kono Taro outlined what he referred to as the four "Kono Principles" to guide Japan's policy towards the Middle East. The first of these principles was "intellectual and human contribution." This referred to strengthening people to people ties. At its center was an emphasis on the over 12,000 Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) experts who had been dispatched to the region along with another 3,500 Japan Overseas Cooperation volunteers. The second principle was "investment in people". Despite its name, this principle focused on the promotion of development assistance and human capital. Here, Kono emphasized that Japan's own development experience highlights the importance of education and committed Japan to providing greater assistance to promote education across the region. In fact, education has figured prominently in Japan-Egypt relations as Egypt hosts an overseas Japanese university, the Egypt-Japan University of Science and Technology.²² The third principle, "enduring efforts", was meant to signal that Japan's commitment to the region was a long-term one and not one that reflected short-term interests. This principle is one that is aimed at drawing a line between Japan's commitment to the region, and other actors that are seen as more self-interested, such as Beijing. The fourth principle, "enhancing political efforts", sought to convey that Japan aspires to play a greater political role in the region. In terms of implementation, the fourth principle is perhaps the most ambitious as it aims to see Tokyo assume a greater role in regional diplomacy.²³

In promoting Japan's strategic priorities in the MENA region, Japan's Prime Minister Suga Yoshihide, who assumed office in 2020, will likely continue to build on the Abe government's efforts to strengthen ties in the region, while also working with the US, and EU partners, to promote a global rules-based order that

¹⁸ The TICAD forum was first launched in 2013 to highlight Japan's growing role in promoting development on the African continent, and has also played a role in facilitating diplomacy, as was the case in 2019, when Libya's Foreign Minister met with Japanese officials on the sidelines of TICAD7.

¹⁹ The TICAD forum was first launched in 2013 to highlight Japan's growing role in promoting development on the African continent, and has also played a role in facilitating diplomacy, as was the case in 2019, when Libya's Foreign Minister met with Japanese officials on the sidelines of TICAD7.

²⁰ The Quad is an informal grouping of countries that includes Japan, Australia, India, and the United States.

²¹ "Factbox: Asia region is most dependent on Middle East crude oil, LNG supplies" Reuters, January 8, 2020, <https://jp.reuters.com/article/asia-mideast-oil-factbox-idINKBN1Z71VW>

²² Egypt-Japan University of Science and Technology, <https://ejust.edu.eg/>

²³ "Speech by Foreign Minister Kono at the first-ever Japan-Arab Political Dialogue" September 12, 2017, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000288921.pdf>

will allow for the free flow of trade and regional stability. This continuity is already visible in relation to the issue areas of maritime security and development. However, in order to explore Japan's interests in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean in greater detail, the next section will turn to the three key aspects of Japan's strategic relations in the region: energy, trade, and technology.

Japan's MENA Policies: Energy, Trade, and Assistance

As Japan faces growing economic competition from China and South Korea in MENA markets, Tokyo has been confronted with the task of reasserting itself as a major trade partner for the region. Numerous visits to regional capitals by former Prime Minister Abe, and other senior government officials, during the last decade attest to the importance Tokyo places on these relationships. On the other hand, increasingly frequent and high-level visits to Japan by senior officials from the MENA region attest the importance Japan continues to hold for the region. Through these visits, Japan seeks to leverage its technological know-how, and largely positive public attitudes in the region towards Japan, to compete with its neighbors in East Asia. Of course, Japan's diplomacy is not solely mercantilist. It is also aimed at promoting Japan's grand strategy, which is centered on the maintenance of a rules-based order. In this regard, Japan remains a significant contributor to humanitarian and developmental efforts in the MENA region, from supporting reconstruction and development in Iraq to providing humanitarian assistance for Syrian refugees.

Energy

Japan's relationships in the MENA region have historically been dominated by an overriding focus on the maintenance of Japan's energy security. Japan is the world's fourth largest importer of oil,²⁴ and is acutely vulnerable to disruptions in global energy supply chains. Despite Prime Minister Suga's commitment to achieve carbon neutrality for Japan by 2050, within the framework of the Paris Agreement on climate change,²⁵ Japan will remain heavily dependent on Middle East energy resources in the near-term. Nevertheless, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) has published a Green Growth Strategy, which places an emphasis on the decarbonization of the nation's power sector through a mix of renewables (50–60 per cent), nuclear and thermal plus carbon capture (30–40 per cent) and hydrogen (10 per cent).²⁶

Despite commitments to decarbonize, Japan remains highly dependent on oil and gas imports. Indeed, the Japanese Petroleum Export Company (JAPEX) remains actively engaged in oil exploration in the MENA region. Japanese energy firms have a significant presence in Iraq, and JAPEX is involved in oil exploration in Libya's Sirte Basin. In 2020, JAPEX representatives visited Tripoli to meet with counterparts from Libya's National Oil Corporation (NOC).²⁷

Trade

Japan's economic relations in the MENA region go far beyond being a major export market for oil and gas. Japan actively promotes business investment in the region and maintains Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) offices in regional capitals to facilitate economic and investment ties. In recent years, Japan has faced growing competition in the MENA region from East Asian competitors, **Chart 1.1** highlights how Japan has been eclipsed by South Korea and China as an exporter to key markets in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean. In terms of trade with Southern Mediterranean countries, Turkey and Israel constitute Japan's largest export markets.

²⁴ "Crude Oil Imports by Country," World's Top Exports, <https://www.worldstopexports.com/crude-oil-imports-by-country/>

²⁵ "Suga to Declare Japan will go Carbon Neutral by 2050 in Policy Speech" The Japan Times, October 22, 2020, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2020/10/22/national/suga-carbon-neutral-2050/>

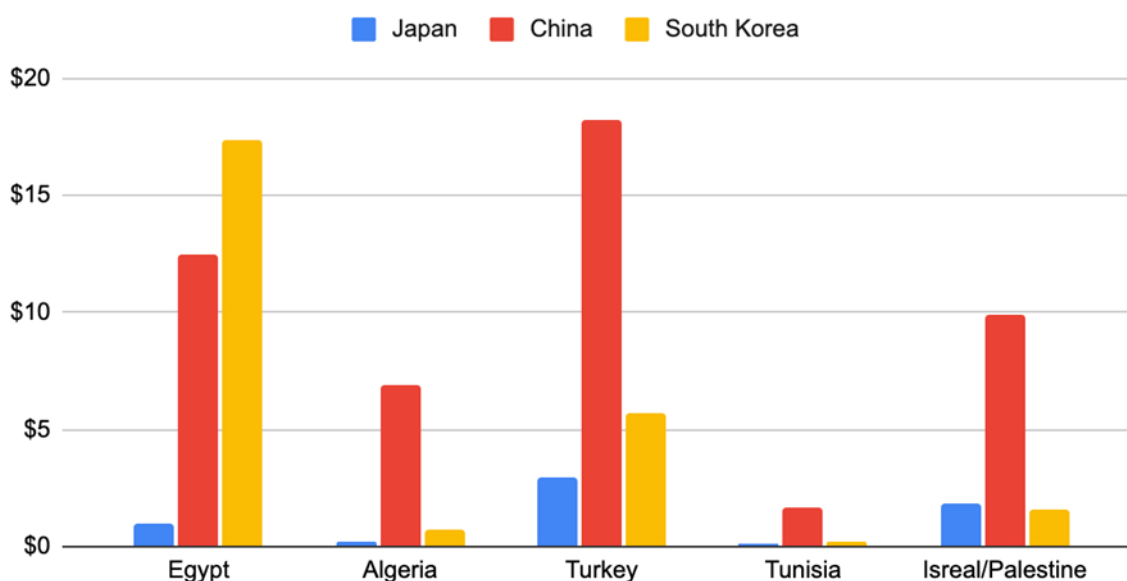
²⁶ Green Growth Strategy, METI, 2021, https://www.meti.go.jp/english/press/2020/1225_001.html

²⁷ Carla Sertin, "Japanese consortium completes study to develop Libya's Sirte Basin concession 47," Oil and Gas, February 2, 2020, <https://www.oilandgasmiddleeast.com/drilling-production/35951-japanese-consortium-completes-study-to-develop-libyas-sirte-basin-concession-47>.

In a sign of Japan's renewed focus on the region, in 2014, Tokyo opened its first Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) Office in the Maghreb. This office, located in Rabat, aims to promote bilateral business opportunities between the two countries. The Rabat office also aims to serve as a bridge to the wider Maghreb.²⁸ JETRO's only other North African office was established in 1955 and is located in Cairo. JETRO's Cairo office is tasked with the promotion of trade between Japan and Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Libya and Sudan.²⁹ Elsewhere in the region, JETRO also maintains offices in Tel Aviv and Istanbul.

Chart 1.1

Imports from East Asia to Key MENA Partners (2019) - in billions USD



Source: The Observatory of Economic Complexity

Humanitarian Assistance and Development

Japan is a major source of humanitarian and developmental assistance to the MENA region. Since 2011, Japan's assistance to Syria and war-affected neighboring countries totaled US\$2.7 billion.³⁰ In 2018, Iraq alone received more than US\$474 million in assistance from Japan.³¹ Japan is also a leading contributor to the global COVAX facility that provides COVID-19 vaccines to much of the developing world. Japan's contributions to COVAX total around US\$200 million, with Prime Minister Suga having pledged an US\$800 million, to bring Japan's total contribution to US\$1 billion.³²

As noted earlier, Japan's preference for acting through multilateral frameworks in support of broader multilateral goals, such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, gives Japan significant visibility when it comes to humanitarian and development assistance, and in the context of the COVID-19 crisis, global pandemic response efforts. Foreign Minister Motegi recently stressed how Japan's

²⁸ "Opening of JETRO's 76th Overseas Office in Rabat" JETRO, December 2014, https://www.jetro.go.jp/en/jetro/topics/1412_topics2.html

²⁹ JETRO Egypt, <https://www.jetro.go.jp/egypt/about.html>

³⁰ White Paper on Development Cooperation / Japan's ODA White Paper 2019, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/oda/white/2019/html/main/03/03-07.html>

³¹ White Paper on Development Cooperation / Japan's ODA White Paper 2019, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/oda/white/2019/html/main/03/03-07.html>

³² "Pledging Statement by Prime Minister Suga at COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC) Summit" Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, June 3, 2021, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/100197164.pdf>

contributions to COVAX highlight Japan's commitment to support universal access to healthcare.³³ A number of countries in the MENA region, in particular Libya³⁴, and Tunisia³⁵, have received significant shipments of COVID vaccines through this facility.

Japan as a Peace and Security Actor

In the previous section, it was pointed out that Japan aspires to play a more significant diplomatic role in the MENA region. However, it should be noted that Japan's preference for engagement on peace and security issues is within the framework of multilateral institutions such as the UN. While at times Japan has proven willing to act as a backchannel for the United States in the region, Japan's preference for working through multilateral frameworks reflects a longstanding consensus that Japan's interests are best served through the strengthening of a multilateral rules-based order.

Japan does maintain a modest, but permanent, security presence in Djibouti where Japan has deployed various air and naval assets since 2011. However, successive Japanese governments have had to keep a close eye on the fact that SDF deployments to the region are unpopular at home. In order to convince a reluctant domestic audience to support Japan's continued security commitments in the region, Japanese leaders routinely emphasize national self-interest in justifying far flung SDF missions.³⁶ For example, Japanese leaders have stressed in public remarks that Tokyo's SDF deployments in the Middle East are necessary to protect freedom of navigation in places like the Gulf of Aden and the Strait of Hormuz.³⁷ In sum, given the significant barriers to undertaking security commitments in the region, Japan's limited peace and security role in the MENA region is greatest when working through multilateral frameworks, and weakest when traditional hard power levers are at play.

Conclusions: The Future of Japan-MENA Relations

Japan has cultivated strong relationships across the MENA region over the course of the last decade. Tokyo's political and economic outreach will continue to grow as Japan faces stiff competition from other East Asian powers. Indeed, former Foreign Minister Kono, emphasized the need for Tokyo to leverage its strong ties in MENA to assume a larger political role in the region. Of course, this should be understood in the context of Tokyo working through multilateral frameworks and is consistent with Tokyo's larger grand strategy to strengthen a rules-based global order. Over the last decade, Japan has also played an important role in contributing to humanitarian and refugee assistance in the region.

While Japan remains dependent on Middle Eastern oil and gas, Japan's outreach in the MENA region aims to cultivate deeper economic ties that put an emphasis on high tech know-how. Through the continued promotion of people-to-people ties, contributions to humanitarian assistance missions, and contributions to the maintenance of a global rules-based order, Japan's diplomacy reflects multiple aims that go far beyond the narrow balancing of energy security and the US alliance which was once a hallmark of Japan's diplomacy in the region. To be sure, the US-Japan alliance remains a bedrock of Japan's national security strategy, and Japan will remain sensitive to Washington's preferences, particularly in the event of a major crisis. However, in 2021, Japan's interests and priorities in the region reflect changing dynamics and preferences which are reflected in Japan's diplomacy toward the region.

³³ "Video Message by the Minister of Foreign Affairs Motegi at the Gavi COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC) One World Protected Event" Ministry of Foreign Affairs, April 15, 2021, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/100177014.pdf>

³⁴ "57,600 Covid-19 Vaccine Doses Received Today in Tripoli" WHO Media Center, April 8, 2021, <http://www.emro.who.int/media/news/57600-covid-19-vaccine-doses-received-today-in-tripoli.html>

³⁵ "Tunisia Receives First Batch of COVID-19 Vaccines through COVAX Facility" ReliefWeb, March 17, 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/report/tunisia/tunisia-receives-first-batch-covid-19-vaccines-through-covax-facility>

³⁶ Tomomi Inada, "Sending more SDF assets to Mideast will protect Japan's interests and raise its diplomatic profile" The Japan Times, November 28, 2019, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2019/11/28/national/politics-diplomacy/sdf-mideast-japan-interests/>

³⁷ "Japan says Middle East Mission in Self-Interest as Crude Importer" Reuters, January 15, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-japan-defense-usa-idUSKBN1ZD2W2>

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