

# Reemerging Political Geography in Japan

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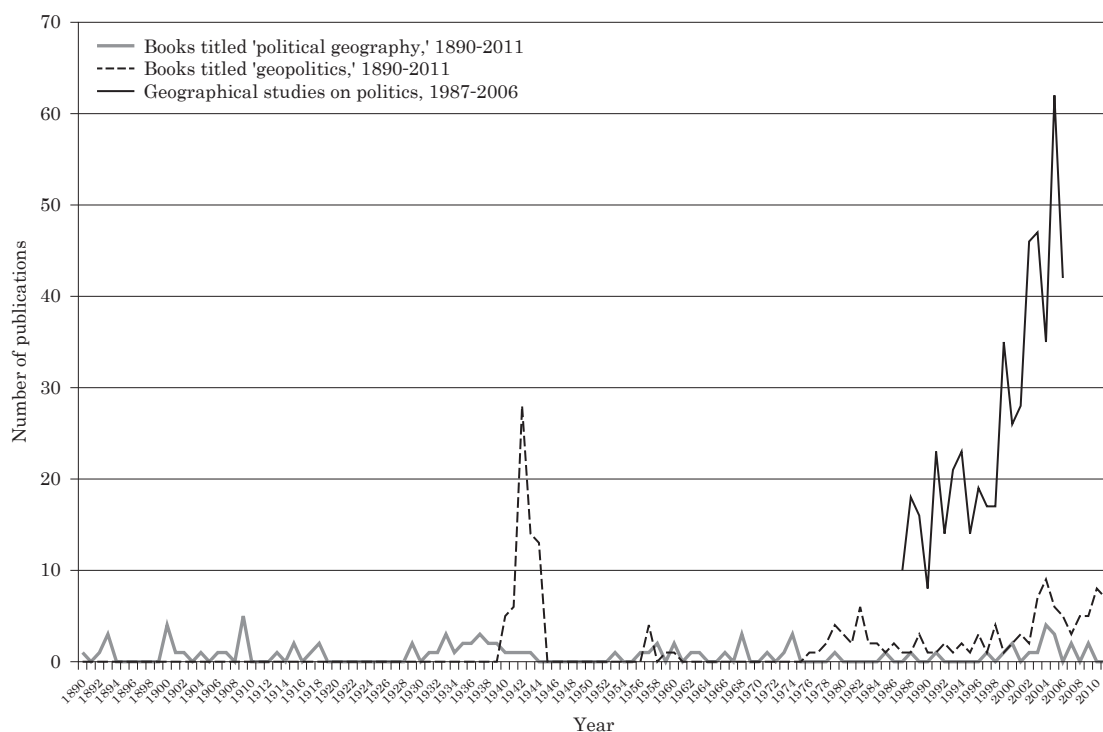
## Abstract

The Political Geography Research Group (PGRG) of the Human Geographical Society of Japan was established in 2011 to promote political geographic studies in Japan. The PGRG is the very first research unit on political geography in the Society which was established in 1948. Political geography was once one of the weakest sub-fields in Japanese geography with a very limited number of scholars and published works. This, however, is not at all the case now. Political geography is a *reemerging* field in Japan. In this review paper, four of the PGRG members contribute chapters on general trends in Japanese political geography, legacies of Japanese wartime geopolitics, the introduction of “new geopolitics” into Japan, and geographical studies on environmental movements. All of them have confirmed with confidence that Japanese political geography has been reemerging and making steady progress in terms of theory, methodology, and case study since the 1980s. Although the current stage of Japanese political geography is still in the regenerative phase, they strongly believe that political geography should be firmly embedded in Japanese geography.

**Key words:** political geography, Japanese geopolitics, new geopolitics, environmental movements, Japan

## I Introduction

The Political Geography Research Group (PGRG) of the Human Geographical Society of Japan was established in 2011 to promote political geographic studies in Japan. The PGRG is the very first research unit on political geography in the Society which was established in 1948. Political geography was once one of the weakest sub-fields in Japanese geography with a very limited number of scholars and published works. This, however, is not at all the case now. Political geography is a *reemerging* field in Japan. The establishment of PGRG is a part of this trend. Four of the PGRG members contribute chapters to this paper. Since the PGRG was just recently established, the contributors mainly review postwar research trends in Japanese political geography: Chapter II overviews the postwar history of Japanese political geography and its



**Figure 1.** Changes in publications on political geography and geopolitics, 1890–2011.

Sources: Webcat Plus <http://webcatplus.nii.ac.jp/> (data downloaded August 4, 2012)  
Human Geographical Society of Japan (2009)

research trends particularly since the 1980s; Chapter III explores the legacy of Japanese geopolitics and its contemporary assessments; Chapter IV illustrates the development of studies on new/critical geopolitics in Japan; and Chapter V makes a review of studies on Japanese environmental movements. Taken together, this paper attempts to illustrate how Japanese political geography has developed and demonstrate how it will evolve in the future. Readers will be able to obtain a good overview of Japanese political geography and hopefully find it worthwhile studying.

## II Political Geography in Japan: Trends since the 1980s

### Chronology of Political Geography in Japan

The geographies of politics, or political geography and geopolitics, have experienced rises and falls in Japan since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. As Ratzel (1897) implies, the chronology of political geography is inseparable from that of state-centric geopolitics. The same can be said with Japan. As Figure 1 shows, books with a word “*seiji-chiri* (political geography)” in their titles first appeared from the late 1890s to the early 1900s, which was followed by the sudden skyrocket of those with a word “*chiseigaku* (geopolitics)” in the 1940s. This abrupt shift can easily be explained by Japan’s involvement in the Asia-Pacific War and the mobilization of Japanese geographers towards geopolitics (see Chapter III).

After the War, while books on geopolitics almost disappeared, political geographic studies gradually increased until the 1960s. Such an increase can be ascribed to the activities of the

Japanese Association of Political Geographers (*Nihon seiji-chiri gakkai*, hereafter JAPG) during the 1950s and 60s (Yamazaki 1997). After reaching the first postwar peak, political geographic studies decreased in number from the late 1970s to the early 1980s. During the same period, political geography was revitalized in Anglophone countries, which was driven by growing interests in social and political issues such as the Vietnam War, urban riots, and other social problems since the 1960s (Taylor 2000). Japanese universities were also thrown into political commotions over academic authoritarianism and the Japan–U.S. security arrangements. It seems, however, that Japanese geography began to de-politicize itself in such a politicized era.

### A ‘Political Turn’ in Japanese Geography

As Yamazaki (2001a) argues, the significant breakthrough of the de-politicized trend appeared in the 1990s. Figure 1 shows that geographic studies on politics (books and journal articles classified as such) have been drastically increasing in number since the end of the 1990s. The data source for Figure 1 (Human Geographical Society of Japan 2009) include political studies in neighboring disciplines such as sociology, history, area studies, economics, and political science. Thus, this trend is in parallel with the time academic interests in the political began to be heightened in the human and social sciences as a whole. What have stimulated such interests are new academic trends (i.e. postmodernism, post-structuralism, post-colonialism, deconstruction, etc.) that question taken-for-granted power relations such as class, gender, racial, ethnic, and colonial ones. These trends represent radical critiques of the existing epistemological modes as philosophical reflection on modernity in the late modern era. Responding to these trends, Japanese geographical studies are paying more attention to the political. Such new trends are now spreading over sub-disciplines such as social, cultural, and political geographies in Japan.

This rather theoretical shift toward the political has been promoted by the fact that critical social theories have been actively introduced to Japanese geography. As for Japanese political geography, the introduction of Anglo–American theoretical perspectives into Japan had already been made by Yokoyama (1977), Takagi (1991), and Yamazaki (2001a, b). In particular, the latter two illustrated important trends in the development of “New Political Geography” after the 1980s. As Yamazaki and Kumagai (2009) point out, during the period from 1982 to 2004 the increase of political geographic studies in Japan was in parallel with that of the subscription to and citation of the journal *Political Geography* by Japanese geographers. They show that the journal played the role of a guide to theoretical perspectives in critical political geography.

A more general relationship between geography and politics has been seen beyond the field of geography. Along with the end of the Cold War and deepening globalization, the paradigm of the modern nation–state has been severely questioned. Such de-territorializing factors have also affected the geopolitical consciousness of the Japanese public (Yamazaki 2002a). Figure 1 shows that there were peaks of books with a word “*chiseigaku* (geopolitics)” in their titles from the late 1970s to the early 1980s and from the mid-1990s to present. While the former peak corresponds to the period of the Second Cold War when the U.S.–Soviet relation became tensed, the latter reflects the geopolitical context in which Japan has been situated in relation to China, North Korea, and the U.S. since the end of the Cold War and 9/11. It can be generalized from this that when the Japanese public increases security concerns about Asia, books on geopolitics attract many readers (Yamazaki 2010a). The recent increase of political geographic studies partially reflects this trend. Thus, the political turn in Japanese geography consists of a combination of intra- and extra-disciplinary factors that have promoted political geographic studies.

### Recent Development in Japanese Political Geography

Since this paper contains topical chapters (Japanese geopolitics, new/critical geopolitics, and environmental movements) by the other authors, this chapter focuses first on (translated) introductory books and moves on to works on electoral geography, the politics of place, territories and borders, public administration and other topics. Other than books, articles published mainly in refereed academic journals are reviewed below.

Books on political geography began to be published in the 1950s by scholars such as Kozo Iwata who was the president of the JAPG. Among them Kiuchi (1968) was the very first introductory textbook on political geography in postwar Japan. It was part of a comprehensive series of geography course books written by several authors, marking a formal establishment of political geography in Japanese geography in the late 1960s. The book explained various issues on state, state territory, and international relations and attempted to show possible research agendas in political geography. Jackson and Yokoyama (1979) was a very first attempt to introduce a theoretical perspective into Japanese political geography. William A. D. Jackson's application of general system theory to political geography was translated into and explained in Japanese although it does not seem to have had much of an impact on Japanese geography. Yokoyama was one of the core members of the JAPG.

After the end of the Cold War, Peter Taylor's textbook (Taylor 1989 [1991, 1992]) was introduced to Japan. This is a very important textbook in political geography and continues to be revised until today. However, Taylor's multi-scalar (and rather structuralist) approach was not necessarily easy to apply to Japanese geographical studies focusing predominantly on the local scale (Yamazaki 2001a). There have been few empirical studies in Japan that employed Taylor's world-systems theory.

In the 1990s, however, as the number of political geographic studies increased in Japan, Japanese geographers became more active in promoting political geography. In 1993, the International Geographical Union (IGU) Commission on World Political Map (currently the Commission on Political Geography) held a regional conference for the first time in Tokyo (Takagi 1994a). The proceedings of the presented papers were published in both English and Japanese (Rumley et al. 1996; Takagi et al. 1998). Subsequently the Political Geography Study Group was organized in the Association of Japanese Geographers in 1994 and continued their activities till 1999. The outcomes of their activities were compiled in Takagi (2002), which is a collection of the papers by twelve members of the Study Group and consists of three parts: theory and development of political geography, political geographies of Japan, and political geographies of international relations and issues. Although synthetic directions of Japanese political geography were not necessarily presented, the book attempted to show possible research agendas by covering various political geographic issues.

Responding to a growing interest in political geography, a book on political geography (Mizuuchi 2005) was again included in a series of geography course books. Unlike Kiuchi (1968) or Takagi (2002), this book contains more theory-oriented chapters on critical geopolitics, the politics of scale, post-colonialism, and the production of space. Although authors of these chapters are not necessarily self-confessed political geographers, the publication of the book indicated that Japanese geographers began to explore the relationship between space, place, and politics on their own.

As a textbook on political geography, Yamazaki (2010a) is the very first one by an active university professor. Unlike the previous textbooks, this book attempts to situate political

geography in the history of postwar geography in Japan as well as the rest of the world and apply political geographic theories and concepts formulated mainly in Euro-American countries to various cases in Japan. Although Japanese political geographers have imported Euro-American theories into Japan, they now need to examine and improve them in the Asian or Japanese context and to export their findings to the world (Yamazaki and Kumagai 2009). Such attempts include Fukushima (1997), Takagi (1998), Maeda (2012), and Yamazaki (1997, 2002a, 2010b).

Since the political turn in Japan, various topics in political geography have actively been explored. Studies on electoral geography have been intermittently published by Takagi (1995), Yamaguchi (1996), Izumitani (1998), Sano and Nakaya (2000), and Abe and Takagi (2005). Although the concept of “the politics of place (*basho no seiji*)” is neither uniformly defined nor conceptualized among Japanese geographers, Kitagawa (2004), Arai (2005), Yamamoto (2005), and Yamazaki (2010a) attempt to illuminate place-based politics in Japan and abroad. Territories and borders have gradually constituted one of the major topics in Japanese political geography (Ukita 1994; Iijima 1999; Nakamura 2000; Yamazaki 2002a, 2007). Robert Sack’s seminal work on territoriality (Sack 1986) attracted Japanese geographers only to a limited degree (see Ueda 1989). Yamazaki (2010a), however, situates territoriality in one of the key theories and concepts in political geography.

The amalgamation and realignment of administrative districts have attracted many Japanese geographers and provided them with various research topics (Katayanagi 2002; Arai 2003; Hatakeyama 2007; Kajita 2008). In particular, Morikawa (2008) is a comprehensive book to illustrate how local administrative districts have been demarcated in Germany and Japan and is an admirable attempt to reinforce a field of “Administrative Geography (*gyosei chirigaku*).” In an age of globalization, however, the spatial reconstruction of local governance needs to be reexamined as a process of “state rescaling” (Brenner 2004). Todokoro (2006) and Yamazaki (2012) pay due attention to such an aspect of politico-spatial restructuring in Japan from different perspectives.

Spatial and geographical aspects of public policies have become popular topics among Japanese geographers (see Kamiya et al. 2012). Geographies on these topics have not been clearly distinguished from the category of political geography in Japan. From an epistemological, theoretical, methodological, or ideological viewpoint, they are more practical and policy-oriented than political geography as the geography of politics. Todokoro (2000) is an introductory book that explains how urban geography can be applied to regional policies and emphasizes the importance in promoting policy-oriented geographical research in Japan. Sugiura (2005) empirically analyzes the regional differentiation of elder care service provision and the location of elder care facilities in Japanese localities. Other topics on the geography of Japanese public policies include the relationships between local public finance and public works (Kajita 2005, 2011) and between urban politics and redevelopment in local cities (Takano 2005; Musha 2006).

## Prospects

Before concluding this chapter, it should be noted that political geographic studies on gender and sexuality are largely underdeveloped in Japan compared to other countries (Murata 2002). Although Yamazaki (2011) attempts to incorporate feminist perspectives into his research on the militarization of Okinawa, more close interactions between political geographers and geographers on those fields are definitely needed in Japan.

Taken together, Japanese political geography has been making steady progress since the 1980s. The increasing number of independent books, rather than translations, in the field by Japanese

authors is a positive sign of this progress. There are also recognizable trends in which Japanese geographers attempt to brush up theoretical perspectives using cases in Japan. Although the international presence of Japanese political geography is still weak, maintaining the current upward trends would contribute to improving the Euro–American centrality of current political geography in the world.

### III Legacies of Japanese Geopolitics

#### Studies on Japanese Wartime Geopolitics and Its Background

This chapter reviews studies published on Japanese geopolitics during World War II since the 1970s. German geopolitics (*Geopolitik*) was introduced into Japan in 1925 (Takeuchi 1974, 1980). Kjellén (1916) was introduced and reviewed in the *Journal of International Law and Diplomacy* and German geopolitics was introduced in the *Geographical Review of Japan* in the same year (see Fujisawa 1925; Iimoto 1925, 1926). During the 1920s, geopolitics was studied and advanced by geographers as an academic subject. However, it began to take on the character of a geopolitical movement in the late 1930s, leading to its zenith during the war.

As many geographers had engaged in geopolitical studies during the war, some of them were purged from public service by the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers after the war. Therefore, studying Japanese geopolitics during the war has been considered taboo by post-war Japanese geographers. In the 1970s, however, there appeared some studies criticizing the geopolitical studies during the war. Moritaki (1971) regarded regional science and location theory, which were popular in those days, as similar to geopolitics during the war. Mizuoka (1974) problematized geopolitical methodologies and ideas that still remained in those days. Takeuchi (1974) criticized Japanese wartime geopolitics in comparison to Italian and German geopolitics. In addition, he argued that the reason Japanese geographers uncritically studied practical and applied geography was that they did not carefully reflect their engagement to geopolitics during the war.

As Takeuchi (1980, 1994) noted, geopolitical movements and activities by Japanese geographers were divided into three schools: the Kyoto School, which was oriented toward indigenous Japanese geopolitics; academicians who were strongly influenced by German geopolitics; and the academicians, politicians, and military officers who founded the Japanese Society for Geopolitics (*Nihon chiseigaku kyokai*<sup>1</sup>).

The leader of the Kyoto School and a geography professor of Kyoto University, Saneshige Komaki, argued that a new Japanese geopolitics should not imitate German geopolitics but develop the traditional mentality of the Japanese. From this perspective, he attempted to establish *Nippon chiseigaku* (Japanese Geopolitics) based on Tennoism (*Kodoshugi*<sup>2</sup>). Geographers such as Moritaki, Mizuoka, and Takeuchi criticized Komaki's geopolitics as an illogical and pseudo science while they thought that Komaki's justification of the war as a manifestation of *Nippon chiseigaku* was based on traditional nationalistic thought in Japan.

The second group of geographers made an attempt to apply *Lebensraum*, *Raumordnung*, and other concepts and theories in German geopolitics to Japan and its colonies (Ezawa 1943; see also Fukushima 1991, 1997). The third group consisted of geographers, other social scientists, and military officers who joined the Japanese Society for Geopolitics and contributed papers to its journal *Chiseigaku* (Geopolitics). Although they published the journal to distribute geopolitical ideas and methodologies to the public, they never pushed their own unified and strong



propaganda as the Kyoto School did. Consequently, the Society played a role in enlightening the public by following the imperial regime blindly.

Generally speaking, postwar studies on Japanese wartime geopolitics can be divided into two types. The first type criticizes Japanese geopolitics as irrational. The second type examines differences in geopolitical concepts among Japanese geographers and differences between German and Japanese geopolitics as geographical thought from a historical perspective. The former includes studies by Moritaki and Mizuoka, while the latter includes studies by Takeuchi and Fukushima.

An important aspect of Takeuchi's studies is that he wrote many articles and chapters in English. He was the Chair of the International Geographical Union (IGU) Commission on the History of Geography and published many works on the history of geography in English. As a result, the general history of Japanese geopolitics became well known to geographers all over the world. Fukushima (1997) also published an article on the legacies of Japanese geopolitics in *Political Geography*. Those studies, written in English, helped foreign geographers know about Japanese wartime geopolitics. For example, several items on Japanese geopolitics written by Paul La Blotier in the *Dictionary of Geopolitics* (O'Loughlin 1994 [2000]) were clearly based on Takeuchi's studies. Furthermore, in his book written in French, Nozawa (2009) reviewed Komaki's geopolitics referring to the history of geographical thought in France and Japan.

Sumio Hatano, a professor of international relations and the history of foreign policies, also investigated Japanese geopolitics and divided it into two groups: the Kyoto School and the geopoliticians who joined the Japanese Society for Geopolitics (Hatano 1981). Like Hatano, there have been many studies on Japanese geopolitics that focus on the Kyoto School. They tend to sensationally treat the mission of the Japanese Society for Geopolitics and the areas Japan occupied. However, few studies have focused on the contents of the Society and its journal *Chiseigaku*.

To the contrary, Takagi (2009) investigates several characteristics of the articles, regions, and authors that appeared in all the journal volumes between January 1941 and November 1943. He notes that the journal contained regional geographical studies in Japan and the Asia-Pacific region, rather than geopolitical studies, as well as dichotomous descriptions that opposed the Asia-Pacific order against the Western-centric one. Takagi (2005a) also analyzes 10 geopolitical articles published in a popular magazine, *Kaizo*, between 1940 and 1945 from the viewpoint of critical geopolitics. He identifies two common characteristics: one is Asianism or Pacificism as opposed to the Atlantic Charter concluded by Western countries; the other is environmental determinism.

There are more studies that pay critical attention to the contents of Japanese wartime geopolitics. Yamano (1999) compares Komaki's *Nippon chiseigaku* with the Society for Kyoto Exploration Geography (*Kyoto tanken chirigakkai*) established in 1938 by Kinji Imanishi, a lecturer of the Faculty of Agriculture, Kyoto University. Yamano argues that the former avoids explorations and advocates idealism based on the spirit of *hakko ichiu*, eight corners of the world under one roof or *Tennoism* while the latter is characterized by observation and theorization through field work. Hisatake (1999, 2000) investigates Japanese geopolitics in the 1920s and 1930s in relation to migration issues. He points out U.S. attempts to exclude Japanese immigration since the 1920s and associates such exclusion with the introduction of German geopolitics into Japan as racial strife.

### Extension of Studies to the Relationship between Geography/Geographers and the Military

Most studies on Japanese wartime geopolitics have critically analyzed books and articles written by geographers from the perspective of the history of geography. Although these studies have shed light on some aspects of geopolitics during the war, they have never revealed how geographers and geopoliticians actually engaged in the act of war. Takeuchi (2000) argues that Japanese geographers need to use military archives to identify such engagement. Since 2000, the real state of geopolitics and geopolitical movements during the war has been gradually revealed. This section reviews these studies, focusing on the relationship between geography, geographers, and the military. Particular attention is paid to three trends: the Kyoto School's relationship to the military, studies on maps of the Asia-Pacific region called *gaihozu*, and studies in military geography in Japan.

First, the Kyoto School's relationship to the military has gradually become clear by several works. Shibata (2005) makes a detailed bibliography of Komaki's works and Shibata (2006) traced the development of Komaki's thoughts using this bibliography. Shibata argues that Komaki's antipathy toward western imperialism and immigration issues led him to emphasize the idea that *Nippon chiseigaku* should be indigenous and have an historic-geographical character. Furthermore, Shibata (2007) clarifies the role that the Kyoto School played in the strategic research of the Imperial Japanese Army, focusing on the connection between the Society for the Research of Comprehensive Geography (SRCG; *Sogo chiri kenkyukai*) and the General Staff Office. Using a diary written by the senior staff officer, Tatsuhiko Takashima, Shibata identifies the relationship between the SRCG and *Kosenkai* (the Society for Imperial War) organized by Takashima. Shibata concludes that the SRCG played a limited role in the war, although it did have the ability to perform tasks requested by the General Staff Office.

However, Kobayashi and Narumi (2007) counters Shibata (2007) based on an investigation of the documents related to Nobuo Muroga, who occupied an important position next to Komaki in the SRCG. They consider the SRCG a civilian agent for an ideological battle in contrast to the widespread view on this group. Muroga's documents have also been published as a book with explanatory comments (Kobayashi et al. 2010). Although there remains a difference of opinion by the authors on the relationship between the Kyoto School and the Army at the present time, the continued study on newly found materials will produce fruitful outcomes in future.

Second, topographic maps were produced by the Land Survey Department in the General Staff Office in Japan until 1945. Japan needed maps of the Asia-Pacific region to expand its national power and obtain overseas territories. *Gaihozu* is a general term for maps of the Asia-Pacific region that were produced from the Meiji Era to 1945. Kobayashi and his colleagues started their study on *gaihozu* in 2000 and established a subsidized study group in 2002. Kobayashi made a list of *gaihozu* that were scattered to (and are stocked in) universities and libraries throughout the world. He investigated the history and production processes for *gaihozu* and made it possible to reuse *gaihozu*. Kobayashi and his colleagues recently organized the results of their studies into a book (Kobayashi 2009). He also published a book on *gaihozu* for a popular audience (Kobayashi 2011).

Finally, for studies in military geography in Japan, Minamoto (2000) analyzes the regional military geography in the Japanese Army from a bibliographical viewpoint. Minamoto (2011, 2012) also investigates in detail the subjects of military geography taught at the Army War College and the Army Academy in Japan.



### Role of a Study Group and Its Journal

Before concluding this chapter, it is necessary to mention a group of geographers and their journal. They have played an important role in promoting studies on Japanese geopolitics and the relationship between geographers and the military. The group was organized in 1978 for the research project on the history of geography subsidized by the Japanese government and for the IGU Congress held in Tokyo in 1980. The research project has continued till today although its theme and members have changed. The study group has provided opportunities for geographers to present their studies and promoted studies on Japanese geopolitics. Well-known Japanese geographers were members of the group. For example, Keiichi Takeuchi played a representative role in the study group from 1980–82 and continued to be its member until he died in 2005. Masahiko Yamano, Hideki Nozawa and Tetsuya Hisatake were also its principal members.

Toshio Mizuuchi, a representative of the group from 1995–2001, founded the journal *Space, Society and Geographical Thought* (*Kukan, shakai, chirishiso*) in 1996. This journal contains original articles, translated articles, and other materials on geopolitics and has promoted studies on Japanese geopolitics. Among these articles, Murakami (1999) and the materials related to the SRCG (Space, Society and Geographical Thought 2001) deserve special mention. Murakami (1999) remembers when he engaged in *Nippon chiseigaku* during the war. The materials related to the SRCG are copies of the originals on sale at a secondhand bookstore that were purchased by a military analyst (Mizuuchi 2001). Murakami's recollections and the materials revealed the relationship between geography, geographers, and the military. Resources such as these would help us investigate and understand the relationship between geographers and the military by way of geopolitics.

## IV New/Critical Geopolitics in Japan

### Revival of Classical Geopolitics or Beginning of New Geopolitics in Japan ?

This chapter explores the genealogy of new geopolitics in Japan over the past two decades. Geopolitics had been a kind of taboo subject in Japan until recently mainly due to its association with academic involvement into the World War II. Attempts to argue for geopolitics to criticize a political agenda in Japan or even to include geopolitics in book and paper titles were often avoided in Japanese postwar geography. The same can be said with the general political attitude of Japanese.

However, the situation concerning geopolitics has changed since the 1990s, remarkably so since the 2000s. We have witnessed the frequent use of words “geopolitics (*chiseigaku*)” and “geopolitical (*chiseigaku-teki*)” in various books outside the discipline of geography. Classics on geopolitics such as Mackinder (1919 [2008]) and Mahan (1890 [2008]) have been republished in Japan since 2000. Among these, works by Masashi Okuyama, who is a strategist and geopolitician but not a geographer, are worth drawing considerable attention. Okuyama published several translations and writings on geopolitics in a traditional sense (e. g. Okuyama 2004; Spykman 1944 [2008]; Gray and Sloan 1999 [2009, 2010]).

A major reason for Japanese aspiration to be geopolitical is the transition of the political conditions surrounding Japan after the end of the Cold War. Continued disputes over the history of Japanese colonization and territories between Japan and other Northeast Asian countries have greatly provoked nationalistic geopolitical representations against North Korea, South Korea, and China in the domains of formal and practical politics, mass-media, and popular culture,

especially comics, in Japan.

Ultimately, such geopolitical conditions in Japan and Northeast Asia suggest that we can no longer limit our study on geopolitics to the matter of academic history pursued within a discipline. The geopolitical has been summoned to the forefront as Japanese society has confronted post-Cold-War globalization and forged a re-territorializing solution to geopolitical vertigo in an easygoing matter. Thus, an urgent question is not whether geopolitics is still a forbidden subject. Rather this is the moment to think what kind of new geopolitics is possible for the society and geographers.

### **“Acceptance” of Anglophone New Geopolitics in Japanese geography**

Japanese political geography had been inactive for a long time after the World War II. This field, however, has become reactivated as it has dealt with contemporary politics. The first catalyst came from importing fruitful achievements of geopolitical studies in Anglophone political geography whose perspectives differ from classical geopolitics that is fundamentally an instrument for statecraft.

Hence, we can ask the following question: how has Japanese political geography, while tabooing geopolitics, accepted Anglophone new geopolitics as a possible research agenda? To answer this question, we can follow Takashi Yamazaki's latest textbook (Yamazaki 2010a) and distinguish two approaches in new geopolitics: the political economy and the critical geopolitics approaches. Briefly, the former is oriented towards positivist-empirical analysis, while the latter attaches importance to representation and discourse analysis.

Concerning the political economy approach, it should be noted that Akihiko Takagi introduced Peter Taylor's works into Japanese geography around 1990 though Taylor's works were not overtly “geopolitical”. Political geography was revived in the Anglophone world during the 1980s and became increasingly a common topic of study alongside other fields in the social sciences. The discipline developed its theoretical perspectives and methodological tools to investigate integrated or structured systems as Taylor's world-systems analysis exemplifies. This analysis, under the great influence of Immanuel Wallerstein, has highlighted the importance of global scale (i. e. the world economy) and demonstrated that unless we consider the global scale, we can never grasp the power of nation states or localities. Takagi turned his attention to this new trend in Anglophone political geography (Takagi 1991) and translated into Japanese the second edition of Taylor's textbook *Political Geography* (Taylor 1989 [1991, 1992]). Using Taylor's approach, Takagi (1994b) made a resolute attempt to review disputes over the nation-state and its scale, which had been put outside of the scope of geographical analysis in Japan. With regards to the spatiality assumed by Taylor, Koji Nakashima presented a materialist criticism of scalar concepts (Nakashima 1996).

In retrospect, this first move to import new geopolitics did not immediately stimulate political geographic research in Japan. However, it significantly contributed to the development of the discipline in the subsequent decades. For example, theoretical perspectives to problematize the national and global scales have brought political terms such as ‘sovereign state’ and ‘inter-state system’ into Japanese geography. New geopolitics has provided a ready-made multi-scalar perspective that consists of the local, national, and global scales although it simplistically presupposes a clear-cut distinction between reality and ideology.

The critical geopolitics approach has become popular in Japan since the late 1990s. This approach began to attract attention with the works of Gearóid Ó Tuathail (Gerard Toal). A series

of his theoretical works have been translated by Japanese geographers in the journal *Space, Society and Geographical Thought* (*Kukan, shakai, chirishiso*) (Ó Tuathail and Agnew 1992 [1998]; Ó Tuathail 1998 [2001]) and in the *Revue de la Pensée d'aujourd'hui* (*Gendai shiso*) (Ó Tuathail 1996 [1999]), see also 1997 [1998]), a well-known left-oriented journal on critical theories.<sup>3</sup> These developments have inspired Japanese geographers and stimulated discussion on the theoretical aspects of geopolitics and geopolitical discourse since the 2000s (Takagi 2005b; Yamazaki 2009, 2010a).

However, it was Atsushi Naruse (1997), not known as a political geographer, who realized crucial implications of critical geopolitics for geographical practices at the earlier stage. Drawing on Edward Said's critique of orientalism, Naruse problematized not only state-centric traditional and contemporary geopolitics but also "geo-politics." The term "geo-politics" stands for the political connection between power, knowledge, and space that is inherent in any action of geo-graphing/writing the world. In other words, he evaluated the critical geopolitics approach and identified the crisis of representation as a problem investing the whole geographical practices. In an additional note, Naruse's criticisms keenly underlined the need to examine numerous geographical representations in popular cultures. Such an approach is currently known as popular geopolitics (on comics, see Fukumoto 2008).

While the political economy approach may be considered one of many methodologies in human geography, the critical geopolitics approach has confronted the larger problem of the crisis of representation that has invested human geography as a whole and is not avoidable, particularly for younger researchers. Therefore, it may be correct to assume that the latter approach has been more influential in the discipline than the former.

Importantly, we need to briefly detail the interventional attempts of Yamazaki to deal with both approaches of new geopolitics in Anglophone geography (Yamazaki 2001a, 2006). According to him, we must carefully account for the background of theory formation in order to determine its appropriate application. In other words, Yamazaki emphasized the necessity not for the simple "acceptance" or "introduction" of theories but for the "translation" of these approaches into the socio-political and disciplinary conditions of Japan.

Yamazaki has played a key role in Japanese political geography over the last decade. He earned a Ph. D. in the U.S. under the supervision of John O'Loughlin, Editor-in-Chief of the journal *Political Geography*. After returning to Japan, he invited O'Loughlin and Ó Tuathail to the meeting titled "New geopolitics: political geographic approaches to the world after 9/11" in 2006.<sup>4</sup> Based on his experience in the U.S., he maintains that we should contextualize theories of new geopolitics, especially those from the U.S. It is difficult for us to understand or employ these geopolitical theories unless we situate them within specific disciplinary contexts, such as direct or indirect connections between U.S. official geopolitics and scholars' intellectual practices and scholars' positionality in relation to their colleagues and personal histories. Approaches in new geopolitics have been produced through (conflictive) entanglements between knowledge, power, and scholars' subjectivities and positionalities, as well as academic conditions in the U.S. (Yamazaki 2006). For that reason, when geopolitical theories are applied to different contexts, such as Japanese human geography, we cannot help engaging in translation.

Before concluding this section, we need to mention recent affairs concerning the "acceptance" of new geopolitics. The *Dictionary of Geopolitics* (O'Loughlin 1994 [2000]) and *Géopolitique* (Lacoste 2008 [2011]) were translated by non-geographers. Unfortunately, both translations lack sufficient attention to the historical and geographical contexts of new geopolitics and thus carelessly emphasize the usefulness of classical geopolitics in the present world.

Concerned about such a trend, Japanese political geographers are currently preparing to translate *Introduction to Geopolitics* (Flint 2011 [forthcoming]). The purpose of the translation is to show the public that geopolitics is not only a form of state-centric classical geopolitics but also a developing field of study in human geography that includes various critical theories and non-state-centric perspectives in the globalizing world.

### **“Translation” of New Geopolitics in Japan: Toward a Multi-Scalar Geopolitics**

Today, we are witnessing studies on new geopolitics emerging from inside Japanese human geography. There seems to be an awakening among Japanese geographers to undertake analyses via the “translation” of new geopolitics. Several important works need to be mentioned here.

In 1993, the IGU Commission of the World Political Map Regional Conference “The Asia-Pacific and global geopolitical change” was held in Tokyo. As mentioned above, Japanese political geography was still inactive at that time. Nevertheless, Japanese geographers and those from other countries discussed political issues at the global scale in the conference. Presented papers were published in both English (Rumley et al. 1996) and Japanese (Takagi et al. 1998).

A series of geopolitical studies from a multi-scalar perspective emerged in Japanese human geography, especially in the early 21st century. In the midst of this process, Okinawa has been discussed as a key field site. Okinawa is a group of islands located in the East China Sea and has been historically entangled in a strongly oppressive manner with national and global politics. It has been incorporated into the fabric of power relations at the global scale through the heavy concentration of U.S. military bases, as well as at the national scale through the forcible annexation of Okinawa to Japan and the subsequent colonization of the islands.

Yamazaki (2007, 2011) has provided exemplary studies on Okinawa, including a set of papers to translate Anglophone new geopolitics into Japanese human geography in Japan. Bringing together statistical analysis of election results and discourse analysis of social movements in Okinawa, his works map out the geo-historical variety of political actions by Okinawans. He uses original documents made by the U.S. military to illustrate processes of place formation through spatial control by the U.S. military administration and local subject formation in the military base town where a large U.S. air base is located (Yamazaki 2010c). Yamazaki’s works show the heterogeneity of geography in Okinawa, which should not be overlooked and cannot be readily reduced to a rigid framework of dominance/resistance. Moreover, he has conducted geopolitical studies at the national and global scales by exploring the rise of Japanese neo-nationalism (Yamazaki 2002a) and the post-Cold War Japan-U.S. security relationship (Yamazaki 2005b). In sum, Yamazaki’s multi-scalar approach to geopolitics demonstrates that geographers can examine political negotiations and conflicts between local people and actors at the larger scales while exploring the dynamics of geopolitical processes (see Yamazaki 2005a).

Moreover, Okinawa has become one of the main *topos* for critical “geo-political” (not only “geopolitical”) inquiry by other geographers. Nakashima (2008, 2010) focuses on the actual conflictive process of the relocation of a U.S. air base to an off-shore area of a northern village within Okinawa Island. Nakashima shows difficulties in the articulation between anti-base movements and nature-conservation movements. This is because an objectified concept of “nature” tends to deflect from protestors’ sight lived experiences constructed through human-nature interactions such as local fishermen’s labor. From the perspective of (post-) colonial geography, Naoki Oshiro, a cultural geographer, has investigated the orientalist and geo-political imaginations of the hierarchy among West, Japan, and Asia, especially Okinawa (Oshiro 2005). Such imaginations

subordinate the public through cultural and political practices such as the Kyushu–Okinawa Summit Meeting in 2000 (Oshiro 2003). Advancing de-militarization, Tomokazu Arai (2011) strongly argues for the necessity of a feminist approach to geopolitics, which has been absent in Japanese political geography.

It is worthwhile to briefly discuss recent studies by younger political geographers. They tend to have experiences to conduct research abroad. Shinya Kitagawa has developed critical research on geopolitics in Europe, particularly in Italy. Through discourse analysis of new regionalism in northern Italy, he shows the structural contradiction between the desire to surpass the nation-state and that to stay inside the nation-state in the context of neoliberal globalization (Kitagawa 2004). Furthermore, Kitagawa (2005) reflects on the entanglements between biopolitics and geopolitics to extend the subjects of critical geopolitics. His inquiry into biopolitics leads him to the spaces of migrant camps in Europe–Mediterranean, and he conducts an analysis of antagonism between their mobility and borders (2007, 2011). Taizo Imano (2011) grapples with Jewish settlements in the West Bank in the middle of the Palestine–Israel conflict and clarifies the ways Jewish inhabitants give religious and political meaning to the spaces of settlements.

As mentioned above, new geopolitics is on the rise in Japan. Scholars related to this field have spontaneously engaged with their own research but many of them have actually employed a multi-scalar perspective. Current developments in Japanese geography represent a creative incarnation of geopolitics through the translation of Anglophone new geopolitics into Japan.

Before concluding this chapter, it should be noted that a meeting titled “For September 11th” was organized by Yamazaki and other geographers in November 2001 (see Yamazaki 2002b). Rarely has been seen such an immediate response to an acute geopolitical issue in Japanese human and political geography. Such collective talks would contribute not only to the growth of new geopolitics but also to the production and sharing of knowledge based on critical (anti-) geopolitical imaginations, which would be different from hegemonic global geopolitics.

## V Trends in Studies on Japanese Environmental Movements

### Outline of Japanese Environmental Movements

The history of environmental movements in Japan begins with its modernization. Although movements opposing air pollution took place during Japan’s rapid economic growth in the 1950s and 60s, environmental movements occurred before World War II. In the late 19th century the air and water became polluted in the copper mine in Ashio, Tochigi Prefecture. The pollution damaged agriculture and forestry in the area. Inhabitants adjacent to the mine and those in the lower basin demanded compensation from the manager of the mine, and the opposition movement spread to Tokyo. Around the same period, opposition movements began to be organized by inhabitants living near factories in industrial areas around large cities. Inhabitants who lived on agriculture and fishery sought compensation for the damage caused by the operation of the factories.

After recovering from the damage during World War II, Japan enjoyed a time of economic growth, during which more intense environmental movements began to take place. Industrial areas moved from the outskirts of large cities to local cities, and Japanese key industries shifted from agriculture to the manufacturing and service industries. An environmental movement that reflected the era was organized in Minamata, Kumamoto Prefecture. In the area, a chemical fertilizer factory discharged methyl mercury and polluted the sea and fish. By eating fish that



had accumulated methyl mercury, inhabitants began to suffer from illness, even died from it without knowing the cause. As pollution such as this occurred in many industrial areas in the 1960s and 70s, environmental movements were organized to seek for a solution to pollution problems.

The nationalization of such problems increased people's interest in environmental issues. Knowing that nature might be easily damaged in industrial cities, city inhabitants became more and more sensitive to the pollution of water and air. Even in an area far way from factories, people were able to find dirt in their tap water, meaning that even agricultural drainage and household wastewater could pollute rivers.

After World War II, many inhabitants in Japanese cities participated in protest movements against environmental degradation. They were emboldened by postwar democratization through the introduction of constitutional liberties and local autonomy. Before the 1980s, most geographers did not pay attention to environmental movements in Japan. If such interest had existed in Japanese geography, environmental movements would have been studied using geographical methodologies.

It was after 1990 that Japanese geographers began to conduct studies on environmental movements, referring to studies on social movement in Euro-American political geography and cooperating with physical geographers. In the following sections, prospects of this line of inquiry will be shown by reviewing the recent trends in studies on environmental movement in Japanese geography and other fields.

### **Dawn of Geographical Studies on Environmental Movements in Japan**

Asano's study on the neighborhood movement in Lake Kasumigaura (Asano 1990) marks the beginning of research on environmental movements in Japanese human geography. Asano has primarily studied neighborhood movements from a sociological perspective and analyzed its local contexts in the Kasumigaura outskirts. He recognized geographical characteristics as the distribution of neighborhood movements because movements spread from areas close to Kasumigaura to a nearby major city. In the case of the water quality and pollution issue in Kasumigaura, Asano proved that urbanization was a very strong factor to promote environmental conservation movements.

Subsequently, Asano (1997) explored opposition movements against water conversion and land reclamation in the Nakaumi and Lake Shinji area from the viewpoint of locality. Asano found differences in the policy, member organization, and strategy of environmental conservation campaigns in different places adjacent to the Lake. This paper referred to several geography articles that dealt with neighborhood movements such as a landscape preservation campaign (Fukuda 1996) and a campaign against elementary school unification (Miyazawa 1996), indicating an increasing interest in social/environmental movements among geographers.

An article by Kagawa (1998) on Kawasaki City, a manufacturing town, widened the historical analysis of environmental movements. Drawing on Miller (1992), Kagawa attempted to grasp the location of factories and a movement against environmental pollution in the early 20th century as a geographical manifestation of social relations rooted in the place. Placeness and its geographical differences are quite important in the organization of social movements, which would make the geographical investigation of social movement possible and promising.

Reviewing Anglophone political geography, Yamazaki (2001a) confirms that social movements, including environmental movements, can be studied in political geography as examples of the



politics of place and the politics of scale. Social movement studies have already been established as a sub-field of political geography in Anglo-American countries (Gregory et al. 1994; Painter 1995; Agnew 1997) and are being incorporated into Japanese geography in the 21st century.

### **Vitalization of Geographical Studies on Environmental Issues and Movements in Japan**

Since the beginning of the 21st century, there has been a trend to establish methodologies for research on environmental movements in Japanese geography. Continuing discussions about the methodologies have led to an increase in case study in parallel with an upsurge in environmental movement all over Japan. The accumulation of geographical studies on the subject has also been promoted.

Within this upward trend, Asano (2002) demonstrated a local geographical approach to the environmental movement using the case of land reclamation in Nakaumi. This case study elucidated the impact of the environmental movement on policymaking, the character of the environmental movement including the consciousness of varying participants, and various spatial scales and local contexts over which the environmental movement operated.

Kagawa (2003), in his study on historic environmental movements, attempted to capture a movement against pollution in Wakayama within the frame of locality. Based on previous studies on social movements, this study clarified regional differences in the relationship between the locality's history before the movement began and residents' participation in the movement.

An increasing interest in environmental movements among geographers led to further achievements. Ito and Asano (2003) was a good example of collaboration between physical and human geographers. Kagawa (2004) illustrated the point of contact between Euro-American geographical studies on social movements and the Japanese counterpart. Kagawa placed an importance on neighborhood movements which were actively studied in sociology in order to build a bridge between geographical studies on social movements and the sociological counterpart. As case studies on environmental movements accumulated, a chapter on the geography of social movements came to be included in a Japanese geographical textbook (Mizuuchi 2005). Approximately 10 years after the publication of political geography textbooks that includes a chapter on social movements (Painter 1995; Agnew 1997), Japanese geographers began to investigate environmental movements in foreign countries (e. g. Ishiyama 2004). Studies on environmental movements are becoming rooted in Japanese geography in this way.

While engaged in environmental movements, Ito (2005a, 2006, 2008) raised the issue of water resources, criticized the governmental description of water resources policy, and exposed the political inside story about waste disposal (Ito 2005b). Deeply involved in the environmental movement, Ito has played an active part in both research and political action.

Likewise, Ono (2006) criticizes the current geographical education because it has not promoted public participation in environmental movements. It may be seen in the future that environmental education develops through the public recognition of geographers' actions to solve the environmental problem. In fact, a recent study used geographic information systems (GIS) to conduct land use analysis for the issue of environmental conservation (Yamamoto 2006).

Research on environmental movements is now an established field of study in Japanese geography and is expanded by Asano and colleagues (Asano 2008a, b; Asano et al. 2009, 2010, 2011). Research on environmental movements by Japanese and Korean geographers has been conducted in Korea and China to compare with Japanese cases in terms of the conservation of shorelines. Environmental movements have also been accepted as a research field not only in political

geography but also in human geography in general (Takenaka et al. 2009; Sugiura 2012). Geographers have swiftly shifted their interest in social problems. Geographical studies on environmental movements will be able to continue by accumulating case studies through field work.

Interests in social movements in political geography can be seen not only in environmental movements but also in conflicts over military installations (Yamamoto 2005; Nakashima 2010; Yamazaki 2010a). The construction and relocation of military installations can affect the natural environment of their location. Because anti-base movements are often connected to environmental problems, interests in environmental movements can be a motive to integrate the issues of peace and environment into a unified movement, which would increase the appeal of such social movements to the concerned citizens. In this respect, Arai has conducted research on the military base problem (Arai 2007) on one hand and paid attention to the environmental problem on the other hand (Arai et al. 2011).

### **Other Possibilities for Further Research on Environmental Movements in Japan**

As mentioned above, geographical studies on environmental movements have steadily increased in number in Japan. The earlier studies on environmental movements paid attention to the maintenance of the water environment for cities rather than the problem of water resources in general (Yamashita 2001). City inhabitants attracted academic attention as the main constituents of environmental movements, including those for better water quality. However, it is not only city inhabitants that pay attention to natural environments. In the agricultural sector, the eutrophication problem has been caused by pesticide pollution and the increasing use of artificial manure. Studies on this problem have stimulated movements to make agriculture eco-friendly (Sasaki 2003). The actions chosen by the scholars of agriculture will also become connected to environmental movements.

Agriculture in the developed countries has been declining in the number of farmers and the area of farmland as the industrial structure has become modernized. Nevertheless, city inhabitants' interests in green space within their cities and in farming, including their preference to garden plots, have been heightened with increasing demand for food safety (Higuchi 1999). Governmental policies to secure farmland in cities and eco-friendly agriculture have contributed to the development of environmental movements, and the inflow of tourists in farming and mountain villages has promoted green tourism (Ohashi 2002). Therefore, environmental movements, agriculture, and tourism have been combined to create increasing public awareness of the natural environment.

It was said that the old Japanese lived their life that fitted the natural environment though agriculture, fishery, or forestry. Their life was tied to the natural environment until the industrialization and urbanization began after the Industrial Revolution (Sano 2003). This drastic change in the relationship between humans and their environment prompted search for a "natural" life though such a life is an illusion. Geographers have also attempted to examine such a psychological human attitude towards natural environments and the human view of nature or the environment (Whatmore 2002). These studies are inspired by research on environmental movement and are attracting increased attention as the issue of the global environment. It can thus be said that geographical studies on environmental movements will make a further progress.

### **Remarks on the Geography of Environmental Movements in Japan**

Bunge's study on a neighborhood movement in 1971 was recently reprinted (Bunge 2011).

Governance over the decision making regarding environmental problems is actively discussed as a reflection on excessive development and economic growth. Environmental movements, including an anti-nuclear movement against energy policies (Bunge 1973; Miller 2000) and a movement against a military installation (Routledge 1993) are now actively organized and widely seen in Japan and attracting Japanese geographers.

As environmental destruction worsened in the 1970s, environmental movements reached their height. Nevertheless, studies on environmental movements in Japanese geography began as late as in the 1990s. Between these periods, local inhabitants came to recognize the environmental problem as a threat to their living environments. This recognition underlay many geographical case studies, including studies on historic environmental destruction, movements against water resources policy, and environmental problems. Many comparative and collaborative studies with foreign researcher have been presented at symposia, indicating an upward trend of the research in Japan and elsewhere.

Such a trend has been brought about not only by individual researchers but also by the positive treatment of geographical perspectives in books on environmental movements. Currently, interests in political geography in Japan are becoming strong. In future, we may see the increase of studies that will explore green tourism as an environmental movement.

Finally, with regard to the disaster on March 11, 2011, Japanese physical geographers began to tackle the problem of nuclear power generation (Nihon Seitai Gakkai Kaminoseki Yobosho Afutakea Iinkai 2010; Koide et al. 2012). Studies such as these may develop into ones that will promote an ultimate environmental campaign to control national energy policies for the whole world based on the perspective of Japanese human geography.

## VI Conclusion

This paper has thus far discussed the recent development of Japanese political geography from various perspectives — general trends in Japanese political geography, legacies of Japanese wartime geopolitics, the introduction of new geopolitics into Japan, and geographical studies on environmental movements. We conducted a thorough review of the literature and attempted to make a legitimate assessment of the state of affairs in Japanese political geography: Yamazaki identified a constant upward and widening trend in the discipline as a whole; Takagi traced deepening historical examinations of the relationship between geographers and the military through Japanese wartime geopolitics; Kitagawa emphasized the importance of the introduction of empirical and critical perspectives to contemporary geopolitical studies in Japan; and Kagawa illustrated a promising increase in studies on Japanese environmental movements. All of us have confirmed with confidence that Japanese political geography has been reemerging and making steady progress in terms of theory, methodology, and case study since the 1980s — the time political geography was almost “dead” in Japan.

If we regard the current stage of Japanese political geography as its regenerative phase, we still need to make every effort to make it mature as a sub-field in Japanese geography. Such a challenge includes the further refinement of political geography so as to cope with various aspects of society and social problems in the globalizing world — such as deepening social fragmentation (along gender, ethnic, racial, class, national, and other lines), ongoing political conflicts (within/between developed and developing countries over resources), and spreading struggles (for peace, justice, environment, and democracy). If we look back on ten or fifteen years ago, we would have never

thought that Japanese human geography would be able to tackle these pressing issues and needs for academic and practical research. Although we admit that Japanese political geography is not mature enough, we strongly believe that political geography should be firmly embedded in Japanese geography. This is simply because any “social” science cannot exclude “the political” from its research on society. Hence the remaining question is how we face the political in our academic practice.

## Notes

1. Takeuchi (2000) added the members of Hidemaro Konoe's 'brains trust' to these three trends and movements.
2. See Komaki (1940). To distinguish Komaki's geopolitics from Japanese geopolitics, we use '*Nippon chiseigaku*' for the Kyoto School and 'Japanese geopolitics' for Japanese geopolitics in general.
3. Ó Tuathail's work was translated with the writings of other eminent geographers such as David Harvey and Neil Smith in an issue concentrated on the “spatial turn” in the *Revue de la Pensée d'aujourd'hui*.
4. The meeting was held in the Research Group on Geographical Thought (*Chirishisho bukai*) of the Human Geographical Society in Japan (*Jinbunchiri gakkai*), one of the major Japan's academic societies of geography.

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