

Center for Strategic and International Studies

TRANSCRIPT

The Asia Chessboard Podcast

**“Exploring Abe's Role on the Chessboard with Professor
Yuichi Hosoya”**

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SPEAKER

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- Andrew Schwartz: Welcome to the Asia Chessboard, the podcast that examines geopolitical dynamics in Asia and takes an inside look at the making of grand strategy. I'm Andrew Schwartz at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.
- Ben Rimland Mike sits down with Keio University professor Yuichi Hosoya to discuss one of the longest-tenured players on the Asia chessboard, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. Mike and Yuichi kick off the episode by discussing Yuichi's role as both an academic and an informal adviser to the Abe government on foreign policy. The two then turn to discussing how history and foreign policy are taught in Japanese universities. The conversation then moves towards analyzing the cornerstone of Abe's contribution to the Asia chessboard, the Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP). What does FOIP mean to Japan and to Abe? Is it fair to characterize FOIP as a counter-China strategy? What is ASEAN's role in FOIP, and how should the U.S. understand FOIP's evolution with the present thaw between Japan and China?
- Michael Green: Welcome back to the Asia chessboard. I'm Michael Green and I'm joined by Hosoya Yuichi. Professor Hosoya is at Keio University where he teaches international politics and he's also a senior fellow at the Tokyo Foundation for Policy Research. Hosoya Sensei is part of a new generation of Japanese scholars who apply history and political science theories and scholarship to questions of strategy in Japanese foreign policy and in very influential ways in terms of their role in advisory commissions to the prime minister. Professor Hosoya has done that. Deliberations in the LDP and generally in the formulation of strategic concepts. So we're going to talk about how that works in Japan. About Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategy or vision. The US-Japan Alliance and geopolitics in Asia. But Sensei, let's start with you. How did you get into this international affairs business? When you were going to school, it was still pretty unusual for Japanese students to want to study history and strategy. So what happened?
- Yuichi Hosoya: Yes, thank you very much. In my generation, there are many who actually have a very strong interest in international affairs because when we were high school student, we saw the fall of the Berlin Wall and the demise of the Soviet union and the end of the Cold War. All of these events actually awakened us to international politics. So that's why in my generation, there are many who got interest in international affairs after having seen these series of really, really significant international events.
- Michael Green: Well I went to university in Japan about that time, I guess when you were a high school student and there were very, very few professors who could teach realism in international affairs and there were lots of Marxists, lots of critical theory, but it was hard to find a realist. I mean I studied with Sato Seizaburo at Tokyo university. Who'd you work with? How did you find your path?
- Yuichi Hosoya: Exactly, I was really fortunate that I could attend a lecture and a seminar by professor, Shinichi Kitaoka. Professor Kitaoka was formally a student of

Professor Seizaburo Sato and they were exceptional in advising the government. And also they are realists. And they really, really understand the importance of security issues. So I think was exceptional in touching upon this kind of a realist traditional international politics in Japanese University.

Michael Green: Very, very few in the 60s, 70s, 80s, 90s in that school in Japan, Sato Seizaburo at Tokyo University, Kosaka Masataka at Kyoto University, but that very small group of realist who were very much the minority really created this generation like yourself and the Japanese government has reached out to people like you to serve on advisory commissions, on revising interpretation of Article Nine, the 2014-15 defense guidelines and a new legislation on the midterm defense on various advisory commissions on defense and foreign affairs. Did something happen in the Japanese government to be more receptive to scholars informing strategy? I mean or was it mainly that people like you were being produced in Japanese universities? Was it a demand side signal from the government as well or primarily a supply side that scholars like yourself were able to influence the debate?

Yuichi Hosoya: I think that both. I mean the matching of the two trends because the end of the Cold War changed the academic community in Japan because during the Cold War years, we had the really severe ideological confrontation and the pacifist traditional liberal were really predominant in Japanese academia. But after the end of the Cold War, we began to notice the importance of the realist tradition in Japanese academic community because we were really disillusioned by socialist dream. And after that I think that in our generation, we are really, really neutral and we are basically free from such kind of ideological battle. We are really interested in the facts, historical facts and the fact happened today and also... so we observe international relations from a quite neutral, somewhat very free way of thinking. That's why I think that the government official, after reading my books or articles, they I think felt that new generation of scholars actually came into academia. That's why this is a beginning I think.

Michael Green: So the Abe government, you think, is using facts and using history. I wish that were true more in our government and some other governments in the world. But it's fair to say then that the Abe government is actually looking for facts and data and history to back up its strategic thinking.

Yuichi Hosoya: Yeah, I think that not just Prime Minister Abe, but other conservative politicians as well. They first thought perhaps that historically academic community was really occupied by Marxist historians. Partly I think it was true, but in our generation, Marxist historians are not so predominant and we are relying on the facts and including Prime Minister Abe, these politicians began to think that they can rely on some of the historical research written by these younger generation of scholars. That's why I think that they are becoming more and more interested in the works written by I think younger generation scholars like me.

Michael Green: So, part of the impact here is that historians like yourself, international relations theorists, and in Japan still the study of international relations is not heavily

theorized like the United States and not focused on datasets and methodology. It really is still a hybrid approach, it seems to me of history, political science in pursuit of knowledge, which is one reason why it's useful to the government. But the government values this, the foreign ministry and defense minister started valuing this more. But within the Liberal Democratic Party there were some real conservative hotheads on the right who also studied in this period with Marxists, who were taught that everything Japan did was wrong. The U.S.-Japan Alliance was wrong.

Michael Green: I mean that was a lot of the education people went through in Japan from junior high school on because of the teacher's union. Some of these politicians as they've come of age and come to power, many of them around Prime Minister Abe have argued now it's time for Japan to teach the correct history and teach that Japan didn't do anything wrong and that Japanese colonialism was benevolent and various other things that in themselves are a little bit ahistorical and you've been pulled in because you are respected to engage in some of these political groups and these advisory committees and my impression is you've tamed them a little bit, you've made them think about historical inquiry in a more balanced way and get away from history as propaganda. Is that right or is this battle still underway?

Yuichi Hosoya: I don't know very well whether I was taming them or if I could tame them, but basically, I discussed with them and because they are interested in the history and they thought in the beginning that the historical study was basically distorted by left-wing historians. Facts were distorted by left-wing historians. But they began to learn that history was also distorted by right-wingers as well. That both right-wingers and left-wingers have been distorting historical facts, and they are really interested in facts and history as itself. That's why they listen to really, really [inaudible 00:08:57] about these kind of new research based on archives, based on facts and based on documents and they try to know more about these historical facts and they support this kind of historical research. So in this way, we are providing new kind of ideological free historical research and they are also interested in this kind of a new outcome written by younger generation scholars. So I think that, when we meet together, are they really serious enough to learn or study something new from these new works?

Michael Green: Was this part of the process, this debate and discussion? The study of history that led to Prime Minister Abe's statement on the 70th anniversary of the end of the war, in 2015, which was generally well received within Japan, well received by democracies, criticized a little bit by China, but generally successful as a diplomatic move and also as a political move to create some consensus about the past. Not perfect. A lot of people can find areas to criticize, but was this debate and historical inquiry part of that process that led to that?

Yuichi Hosoya: I believe so. As I said, during the Cold War years, historical research was really, really occupied by ideological confrontation. But in my generation, we are much more neutral and I think that Prime Minister Abe was trying to create a national consensus on history because otherwise we cannot construct sound foreign

policy supported by much broader Japanese public opinion. That's why I think that Prime Minister Abe was really successful in creating a kind of national consensus on historical understanding which can be accepted by some right-wingers and some left-wingers as well as some middle ground people. That's why I think that, based on that historical understanding, Prime Minister Abe's foreign policy has become much stronger based upon much broader support of the Japanese people.

Michael Green: So the framework that a Prime Minister Abe has articulated, the Japanese government has articulated for its approach to foreign policy strategy is the Free and Open Indo-Pacific vision, used to be called Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategy. It is informed by geography, by history. Why don't you tell us a bit about FOIP and then let's talk about sort of the intellectual roots of that concept.

Yuichi Hosoya: Yes. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, for the first time, launched his diplomatic doctrine in August 2016 and the next year Prime Minister Abe launched his historical statement in August 2015.

Michael Green: His statement on the 70th anniversary.

Yuichi Hosoya: Exactly. And this was because Japanese foreign policy could be much broadly supported by Asian countries beforehand. Some things that Japan was trying to do was often regarded as the revival of pre-war Japanese invasion or a greater East Asian prosperity or something. That's why there are many, many reluctance among Japanese politician to launch something like this. But after 2015, I think that Japanese political leaders could become much more brave or bold enough to try to create something new, quite strong diplomatic initiative supported by the American people.

Michael Green: A vision not just for Japan's foreign policy, a vision for the whole region, really.

Yuichi Hosoya: Exactly. So previously Japanese foreign policy was much more occupied by bilateralism, bilateral relations between Japan and the United States, between Japan and Russia or between Japan and China. But that diplomatic initiative, I mean FOIP, Free and Open Indo-Pacific vision or strategy has much broader scope. It is really exceptional for Japanese prime minister to launch something like this. So in the sense this is quite new.

Michael Green: What are the roots? Where did it come from?

Yuichi Hosoya: The roots actually comes from Prime Minister Abe's speech in New Delhi in 2007, September when he launched a new concept of the confluence of two sheets by combining two huge oceans, Pacific ocean and Indian ocean, but combining two sheets which can create something huge like Indo-Pacific region. This is the mega region which covers so many sub regions, Northeast Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Middle East and East Africa, Australia. So by combining

these sub regions, I think that we can furthermore accelerate economic growth in the region.

Michael Green: At its core though, is the Free and Open Indo-Pacific vision essentially... is it a balance of power strategy? I mean the balance of power between Japan and China is shifting in unfavorable ways for Japan. But there are within a multipolar Asia, other powers like India, and Abe started with the quad, which included India, and Australia, and Japan, and the U.S., in his first term as prime minister in 2006-07. So is this about expanding the number of countries who are on Japan's side to protect rules and values? Or, is this about a vision for inclusive growth in Asia that includes China or both? It's a little bit of a combination of national objectives it seems to me.

Yuichi Hosoya: Yes. I agree with the last explanation. I mean this is a combination of so many different kinds of objectives. And basically any kind of regional cooperation needs some philosophy or idea. And I think that Japan and the United States should bring important values and idea into the region. I mean the Indo-Pacific. Democracy, the respect for human rights and the freedom and rule of law. If Japan and the United States don't do that, of course China will do that. China will bring different kinds of ideas to the region and we don't like to see that. I mean, because our political system is different from Chinese political system and as well, I mean the Japanese people basically strongly desire the continuation of American leadership and the United States remain the leader in the region.

Yuichi Hosoya: Of course China can have much higher position and will be respected more in the region. But still, I would say that the United States should remain the only real leader in the region and Japan has been supporting that. The U.S.-Japan Alliance is the main tool to invite United States in the region and to support American leadership in the region. That's fine I think that the U.S.-Japan Alliance has to be the core of Japanese diplomatic strategy like FOIP.

Michael Green: So the Free and Open Indo-Pacific vision really has its genesis in internal debates in Japan, and in some ways in the U.S., because this is a vision that goes back in the U.S. Strategic history to people like Alfred Thayer Mahan and even Commodore Perry, who argued in the 1850s that someday the Asia-Pacific region would be kept open by the collaboration of big maritime democracies. And he mentioned Japan, the U.S., Britain and Germany, potentially Germany. So there's a long history in the U.S. and perhaps in Japan as well of thinking about how to maintain a favorable balance of power, rules-based open. But there's another side to FOIP, which in the past has been more controversial. You know, when Abe-san first proposed the quad, the U.S, Japan, Australia, India quad in 2006-07, or the security diamond when he first came back in 2012. These were very much counter to China and very much emphasizing alignment among democracies.

Michael Green: And I wonder if it even has some roots in earlier debates in Japan in the 60s and 70s, because Abe, of course, comes out of the so-called *Hishiryukai*, the group

of LDP leaders who were not in the mainstream of the party, flowing from Yoshida Shigeru on, who really wanted to engage China and work with China. And the resistance to that came from more ideological people like Kishi, Abe's grandfather. And so people were suspicious of this initially because it had that, some critics would say neo-con flavor of countering communism, countering China. Is that fair and is it gone? Is that still in there somewhere?

Yuichi Hosoya: Maybe both. I mean we can find some elements like that in the current Japanese diplomatic initiative even though the element is not so huge. It means that in the beginning as you said, Prime Minister Abe wanted to promote the idea of quad. I mean the cooperation among democracies, a bigger democracy, the United States, Japan, India and Australia in the region. But little by little, I think that the Japanese government realized that if we promote this quad, ASEAN, India, Australia, couldn't be so happy to see because they try to maintain a very, very deep, strong economic relationship with China, and if we try to exclude China, they cannot fully support this diplomatic initiative and also ASEAN as well. ASEAN countries really don't like to see the division of the region, Indo-Pacific, into two opposing camps because ASEAN needs both the United States and China.

Yuichi Hosoya: That's why I think that after seeing their opposition to this diplomatic concept, I mean the FOIP based on the quad, I think that the Japanese government has been slowly transforming this into a different form. And I call it as a FOIP 2.0. FOIP 2.0 is not the containment strategy of China, even though FOIP One was partly the containment strategy by four democracies. So basically, ideologically, I think that the Japanese government remain to stick to the norms like democracy, human rights and so on. Japanese government doesn't abandon this kind of important role, but still it's not quite necessary to openly exclude China from the framework because the essence of FOIP is also the connectivity. Connectivity means that Japan needs to connect subregions of the mega region of the Indo-Pacific, including China.

Michael Green: So it's evolved over time towards what you call FOIP 2.0 from a somewhat harder-edged Abe vision of uniting maritime democracies in a very Mahanian way to deal with this China challenge. It's evolved from that towards something somewhat more inclusive, including agreement between Japan and China in theory, in principle that China's Belt and Road Initiative, Japan's infrastructure under FOIP, might work together, things like that. But you're saying, I think that the key variable in that was actually ASEAN, and India to some extent, but it was these countries that don't want to have to choose and so it's interesting in a game of influence, strategic influence between Japan, China, the U.S., Japan listened to ASEAN. And even though ASEAN as an organization has failed spectacularly to deal with security challenges like the South China Sea, what you're telling me is that ASEAN and has significant influence on the strategic choices of big powers like Japan and China, because Japan adjusted FOIP because of ASEAN's preferences for not having to choose for more inclusive vision.

Yuichi Hosoya: Yeah. First of all, I would like to say that Japan is the only great power which has been supporting strongly the ASEAN centrality, the last four decades, four or five decades. ASEAN in the beginning was quite confrontational to the expansion of Chinese communist ideology in the region. So at that time ASEAN wanted the organization to defend themselves from the spread of communism in the region. And Japan has been supporting ASEAN, ideologically. And also because ASEAN should be the core of any kind of regional cooperation in the region. Because if ASEAN leads a process, every great power can join in. If China lead the process, maybe United States and Japan aren't so happy and if the United States lead the process, China cannot join in. So in that sense, if ASEAN leads, we all can join in.

Yuichi Hosoya: And the other thing is that geographically, ASEAN is important because without ASEAN, we cannot combine two sheets. So in the sense from the geopolitical point of view, ASEAN is really essential. In a sense, we have to include ASEAN in our camp and then both the United States and Japan can be more influential in the region.

Michael Green: And you include ASEAN by being more moderate, ultimately. The strategic play, if you're going to compete, ironically, is be a little more moderate.

Yuichi Hosoya: Exactly.

Michael Green: So what about the U.S. as a factor? When Abe came back to power, it was the Obama administration, 2012-13. Xi Jinping had proposed the new model of great power relations, which is the antithesis of the FOIP vision. It's a vision of a bipolar Asia where the U.S. and China would avoid a Thucydides trap in conflict by, in the worst-case scenario for Japan, establishing spheres of influence without any input from Japan, India, or Australia. Now the Trump administration for all of its warts and flaws, at least at the level of the national security establishment, has fully embraced this FOIP type of maritime vision and has clearly rejected a new model of great power relations or some kind of G2 or bipolar condominium in Asia. Is that also a factor behind what you call FOIP 2.0? In other words, does Japan have more room for maneuver now because the U.S. has rejected a bipolar condominium with China? Or even is Japan now improving relations with China because the U.S. has become a little unpredictable? How much is the U.S. a factor in this evolution of the FOIP strategy?

Yuichi Hosoya: Yeah, of course this is a very important factor or key factor why Japan launched this diplomatic initiative. Because I think that in this region, there are three great powers, United States, China and Japan who actually can bring some diplomatic initiative.

Michael Green: You didn't mention India. I'm curious why. When you say this region, you mean East Asia or...

Yuichi Hosoya: India is a regional superpower, India is interested in the region, but not beyond the region. India is becoming more and more influential and more and more powerful. So within a decade or two I think that India will become a global superpower. But still I would say that India mind is quite regional as they stick to the region. That's why I think it takes time. So that sense, the United States, China and Japan. And if United States has no particular interest in creating some diplomatic initiative in the region, the remaining great power would be China. And China is proposing quite important diplomatic initiatives such as a BRI, Belt and Road Initiative.

Yuichi Hosoya: And I think that we in Japan cannot fully join in the process because we respect human rights, democracy, rule of law, and so on. So our basic ideology, political system is quite different from Chinese political system. If China tried to expand that ideology, Japan will become much more defensive without American strong leadership. So it means that until the day when the United States will truly become regional, the most important leader, I think that Japan has been trying to and continue to try to consolidate these important norms in the region and then I think that the United States that can come back to the original position. Otherwise, if China would become more and more influential in the region, it will be difficult and more difficult for the United States to come back to this region. Of course, I don't think that the United States leave this region, but I think that Japan is trying to create the atmosphere where the United States or the American people really feel that they really like to come back to engage more deeply.

Michael Green: Do you think that there's any cause for worry in Washington about FOIP 2.0 and the evolution of a more benevolent version of FOIP vis-a-vis China?

Yuichi Hosoya: Yeah, I think so.

Michael Green: Don't worry or worry?

Yuichi Hosoya: I have some worry, concern.

Michael Green: You should be a little worried.

Yuichi Hosoya: Exactly. Because...

Michael Green: Interesting.

Yuichi Hosoya: Security concern, economic concern, security interests and economic interest are two wheels so we cannot remove any one wheel. We need the both, security interests and economic interests. But today I think that Japanese foreign policy is a little bit too much orienting towards economic consideration. Economic cooperation with Russia, economic cooperation with China. And I don't think that Prime Minister Abe loses his interest in security policy. But the Japanese government always needs to strike the balance between the two

considerations. That's why I want Japanese government to focus a little bit more on security issues.

Michael Green: And so we're not as well-aligned as we should be, sounds like. It may also be that the Abe government in 2013, in its national security strategy articulated a very clear all of government approach to competing with China. The U.S. didn't do that until 2017 really, I worked on two national security strategies for 25 years. We never mentioned competition with China. In 2017, to its credit, the Trump Administration did say we're in competition with China. But Japan is now five, six years into implementing its strategy and the cooperation with China piece is coming in a little bit and it could be that the U.S., having finally figured out we're really in strategic competition with China, is eventually going to have to do what Japan did and figure out, okay, we're competing, we're strengthening our alliance, but where and when and how can we cooperate? So it could be that Japan is just a little bit ahead of us right now in terms of the strategic consensus, even though that may not be a source of concern, it certainly is something to watch. Last question for you.

Michael Green: What do your students in Keio think of all this? Is the younger generation of Japanese studying international affairs? Are they more realist? Are the more idealistic? Are they more or less interested? What are you finding among your students? Keio is one of the best schools in Asia, of course.

Yuichi Hosoya: Thank you very much.

Michael Green: In the world I should say.

Yuichi Hosoya: Thank you very much indeed.

Michael Green: Which is why at Georgetown, we always love Keio students.

Yuichi Hosoya: Thank you very much. Yeah. I'm trying to encourage Japanese Keio university student to study at Georgetown as well.

Michael Green: Great.

Yuichi Hosoya: Because Georgetown is the best skilled for international relations, international politics, particularly Asian studies. That's why I am always encouraging them to study here. One of the thing... what I want to mention is that more and more Japanese students actually study in Chinese universities. They are interested in learning Chinese, like many American younger students. And at the same time they're realists, so they are not very much attracted by Chinese culture or Chinese politics or the current Chinese society.

Yuichi Hosoya: So they're pragmatic. That's why they think that they know more about China, but at the same time they are totally supporting important value of democracy, rule of law and freedom and so on. They, of course cannot abandon these, so

they are neutral in the sense ideologically of course supporting democracy, human rights and so on, but they are less ideological than before. This is one thing. The other thing is that they are much more interested in business issues, much less on public goods or public affairs. So this is I think global trend. Students are losing interest in politics, international relations and the public goods and public affairs. They are much more interested in business issues, economic issues and their focus is becoming narrower and narrower. So I'm trying to encourage them to have much broader perspective. On the other hand, I feel that Chinese students have a really, really broad perspective.

Yuichi Hosoya: Not all but many. So in the sense, we are engaging several different battles or competitions with China, science, technology field of course and the politics as well. And a real political arena, we are competing each other of course, but intellectually we are competing with China as well. Of course, we can collaborate with them, but at the same time Japan needs to be relevant, Japan needs to be powerful enough to encourage young students to go abroad and to be more intellectual in the sense. I think that the Keio students are brilliant, but they should have much broader perspective, first of all, and they should also have much stronger interest in public affairs. So then I think that they can open up their mind to the world.

Michael Green: Well, Professor Hosoya Yuichi, thank you for reminding us that ideas matter in statecraft, that history matters, and that Japan's academy is producing more and more students who can think despite these challenges you mentioned and more ideas and these ideas are influential in Japan, but they're influential in U.S. strategy now. We are learning from each other and learned from you today. Thanks very much.

Yuichi Hosoya: My pleasure, thank you very much.

Andrew Schwartz: Thanks for listening. For more on strategy and the Asia Program's work, visit the CSIS website at csis.org and click on the Asia program page.