

The Prospect of Political Change in Japan - Elections 2021

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Abstract: Japan in late 2021 faces two important elections - in September for presidency of the Liberal-Democratic Party (and de facto Prime Minister) and in October for Lower House of the Diet. This paper argues that Kishida Fumio, victorious in the former and to contest the latter on 31 October, offers little prospect of change. His government includes the same key figures as the Abe and Suga governments of 2012-2021 and is likely to continue the same US-led anti-China policies, marked by substantial military expansion and multi-national military exercises drawing to the East China Sea warships of major countries including not only the United States but also Great Britain, France, Australia, even Germany. This paper considers current trends and, while suggesting that significant change is not probable, nevertheless draws attention to a citizen-led challenge that could cause upset to the long-established LDP-dominated order.

Games, Viruses, and Politics

In late 2021, Japan follows the upheavals of the Olympic and Paralympic Games and the COVID pandemic with two elections, for president of the Liberal-Democratic party on 29 September and for Lower House of the National Diet on 31 October. Both will reflect, in one way or another, the fact that the two most recent Prime Ministers, Abe Shinzo (2012-2020) and Suga Yoshihide (2020-2021) signally failed to carry the country with them in the way they

addressed the Games and the pandemic. The ruling elite assumed that the grand Olympic celebration would lead the world into an era of peace and recovery (from the 2011 Fukushima quake, tsunami, and nuclear meltdown and from the 2020-21 COVID pandemic) and would clear the way to an LDP election triumph and a revamped constitution with the “peace” clause, Article 9, deleted. However, things did not work out like that.

Eight years after assuring the international community in 2013 that it had the Fukushima problem “under control” Japan offered similar assurances that the Olympic and Paralympic Games would be conducted in completely “safe and secure” mode. But as the Olympics peaked in the summer of 2021 the contradiction between the celebratory spirit of the former and the latter’s “stay at home” and “three avoidances” was palpable. Support for Suga dropped from around 70 per cent in September 2020 to below 30 per cent in August 2021. Aloof and impervious to public criticism and demand, the miasma of scandal, deception, and corruption that Suga inherited in August 2020 steadily thickened during his year in office.

With national elections looming, his position became untenable. When he announced his decision not to stand for re-election as head of the Liberal-Democratic Party (LDP) in the party election, giving as reason his wish to devote himself fully to combating COVID, nobody believed him. The government’s own pollsters reported that, in the event of an election the ruling LDP would haemorrhage seats and potentially lose government.¹ In a Yokohama city mayoral election in August, an independent critic of government defeated a close associate

of the Prime Minister by an extraordinary 180,000 votes (a 12 per cent margin). When Suga announced that he would not be a candidate for re-election as president of the LDP (and therefore as Prime Minister), he was bowing to democratic pressure. He had become a liability to his own party and was in effect being sacked.

But change of personnel did not signify change of policy. In the September 2021 election for successor to Suga, all four candidates were committed to continuation of the Abe-Suga government's basic principles. There is no alternative, in such view, to clientelist service of the US. Major projects such as that for construction of a Marine Corps base on Oura Bay (at Henoko, Okinawa) have absolute priority, irrespective of local opposition or cost or geological and seismic frailty of the site. At Washington's dictates, a military first, anti-China posture is unquestioned.

1. Election Time

In September 2020, when Suga Yoshihide succeeded Abe Shinzo as Prime Minister, along with most commentators I predicted that there would be little change, since Abe's old regime was firmly in control of the levers of state.² Now that Suga has bowed out the year that has passed confirms that judgement. Chosen on 29 September as party president by the one million members of the Japanese conservative Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), Kishida Fumio replaced Suga as Prime Minister-designate. Because the LDP, with its ally, the neo-Buddhist Komeito, holds a parliamentary majority in the Japanese Diet, it means that the roughly one in 100 of the Japanese people who happen to belong to the LDP by choosing a party head were also choosing a new prime minister. He then almost immediately called a general election.



Passing the LDP Baton - Suga (with flowers) hands over to Kishida (Asahi Shimbun, 29 September 2021)

At the election, now scheduled for 31 October, the LDP can be expected to do well. It always does. It may only – according to the May Jiji poll enjoy the support of 32.2 per cent of eligible voters – far fewer than the 44.6 per cent who do not support it – but that should suffice because the party machine is a mighty force honed by more than a half century of success,³ and because close to half the population will not vote.⁴ Though a tiny minority in the country, LDP party members by these two elections will be settling the country's course for the next several years, perhaps longer.

Like Suga in 2020, Kishida, former Foreign Minister and Defense Minister and core figure in Abe Shinzo governments from 2012, is unlikely to chart any new course or to prove a popular choice. Opinion polls in the weeks preceding the party election showed him recording just 13 per cent and 18.5 per cent popular support, far below Kono Taro, the favorite, with 43 percent and 48.6 per cent respectively.⁵ Kono, an articulate figure on social media platforms, and a graduate of Georgetown University fluent in English, lacked

the party old guard support, especially from the Abe camp.⁶ Kono's hinting at a readiness to open formal investigation into Abe/Suga's possibly criminal acts during office made him anathema to them and brought his bid to naught. The paradoxical, longer-term outcome, however, may well be that the anti-LDP forces will be better able to mobilize to try to overthrow the Abe-Suga, now Abe-Suga-Kishida, government at the October Lower House election than would have been the case if Kono had been successful.

Facing the September and October elections, I find myself wondering: is it possible that Japan's more than half century of virtual one-party government might be approaching an end. The Japanese state is built on foundations laid by the San Francisco treaty in 1951 and simultaneous Ampo agreement that continued US domination in security matters and the active interventions by US agencies including especially the CIA, in setting up and managing the apparatus of long-term US control, including the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) and the Liberal-Democratic Party, since then. The SDF," set up in 1954, has grown in the decades since then to one of the world's most powerful militaries (probably Number Five).⁷ The relationship established at San Francisco of US protector and Japan demilitarized and protected, however, has been steadily transformed into a mutual alliance, in which Japan's military might is boosted and merged in US-led treaty and alliance forces, while the interpretation of "Self Defense" has grown ever looser, especially under the Abe and Suga governments (2012-2021).

For decades Washington has been urging upon Japan a process of "normalization." Japan under Abe responded by adopting in 2014 a new interpretation of Article 9 under which Japan could mobilize its self-defense forces when required for collective self-defense purposes (i.e. summoned by the US, as Japan's most important ally). It amounted to emptying

out the Japanese constitution, overcoming the current impediment (as Japanese and American planners have long seen it) of the pacifist Article 9 and turning Japan into an "ordinary" country, i.e. a comprehensive military and general superpower able and willing to mobilize its forces in future "Coalitions of the Willing."

In 2015, the Abe government adopted a package of security bills in accordance with this new interpretation. Much to the embarrassment of the Abe government, in June that year three eminent specialists, summoned by government to testify to the Diet, all pronounced them unconstitutional. Despite the fact of constitutional scholars overwhelmingly declaring this legislation unconstitutional, the laws were adopted and now define how Japan's forces might behave in future conflict situations.

One of the last initiatives of the Abe government in 2020 was to initiate moves towards acquiring weapons capable of striking missile sites in enemy territory "if an attack is imminent."⁸ It would be hard to imagine any more egregious breach of the constitution's Article 9 than such legitimization of pre-emptive attack.

Under Donald Trump and Joe Biden, the US calls on Japan to become a full US partner and linchpin in the China-containing and confronting four-sided ("Quad") alliance - US, Japan, India, Australia. Such legislative changes as the 2015 security laws serve to advance the transformation of Japan from constitutional peace state and civil democracy to national security state. The 247,000-strong Japanese SDF constitutes an extension of the US's own armed forces, trained, organized, and paid for by Japan but under US direction and serving primarily US purposes. That they would ever act independently is unthinkable.

For Japan, the US alliance constitutes the highest level of national policy. Under it the

Abe (2012-2020) and Suga (2020-2021) governments have maximized war exercises, base construction, purchase of US aircraft, aegis destroyers, missile and anti-missile systems. Following the 2013 establishment of a National Security Council, the government adopted a series of laws concerning secrets (2013), security (2015), conspiracy (2017), drone control (2021), and land usage (2021). This last, the *Tochi kiseiho* land control law, adopted in June 2021, has been compared by some to the pre-war Japanese land control system. Under it, “observation areas” are to be designated in the vicinity of major installations (military bases, nuclear power plants, major communications posts) for surveillance and control. Okinawans in particular suspect that they are to be prime targets for the legislation, in the attempt to constrict and control their anti-base movement.

US criticisms - basically for not paying enough - have been muted by the huge arms purchases for which Japan can be relied on (most recently the purchase for about \$23 billion of 105 F-35B aircraft, bringing Japan’s Air SDF force to 147. Increasingly, the US forces stationed in Japan work alongside their Japanese opposite numbers as part of a unified US-Japan force, under US command.

2. War Games

A global coalition of the willing currently takes shape, united under the US leadership in resolve to stop China in its tracks and to preserve US global hegemony from any challenge. The tempo of military exercises (war games) in East Asia accelerates. Just between January and May 2021, Japan’s Maritime SDF (MSDF) participated in multi-lateral, multi-national exercises on 23 occasions, nearly once-a-week.⁹ Over the last twelve months, major exercises included those in the following table:

Major East Asian War Games, 2020-2021

a) Operation Keen Sword 21¹⁰

26 October to 5 November 2020.

9,000 service members of US Navy/AirForce/Army/Marine Corps, together with 37,000 Japanese SDF members. In waters around Okinawa, Japan

b) La Perouse 21

April 2021.

Japan, France, US, Australia, India.

In Eastern Indian Ocean (Bay of Bengal)

Participation by the French nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, Charles de Gaulle (38,000 ton and 261-meter runway), as well as the nuclear attack submarine Emeraude, the amphibious helicopter carrier Tonnerre and the stealth frigate Surcouf; a reminder of the formidable military presence France maintains on a regular basis in the Indo-Pacific region, including 7,000 troops, 15 warships and 38 aircraft.¹¹

c) ARC 21.

Japan, France, US, Australia.

11 to 17 May 2021, “island recovery”

In “waters off Kagoshima”

d) Operation Orient Shield 21.

7 June to 11 July 2021.

US Army, GSDF (3,000 service personnel)

Multiple bases throughout Japan “to enhance interoperability and test and refine multi-domain and cross-domain operations”

e) Operation Talisman Sabre 21

25 June to 7 August 2021,

Centred at Shoalwater Bay in Queensland, Australia, and nearby Coral Sea

US Marine Corps (8,000-strong), GSDF (8,000-strong), UK Marines, Australian Army (also smaller units from South Korea, Canada, New Zealand)

While not in the category of a multinational exercise, of impact at least as great was the Japan visit of Great Britain’s biggest and most expensive warship, the aircraft carrier *Queen Elizabeth*.

f) “Queen Elizabeth”

UK Aircraft Carrier *Queen Elizabeth*, (56,000 tons, 280 metres long).

September and October 2021, visiting Japan in September to considerable fanfare, accompanied by a US destroyer and Dutch frigate and carrying USAF F-35B Joint Strike Fighters, following joint exercises in adjacent waters with warships from US, Netherlands, Canada and Japan “as part of efforts to achieve a free and open Indo-Pacific.” Welcoming it, Japan’s Defense Minister Kishi Nobuo said, “the involvement of European nations in the Indo-Pacific region is the key to peace and stability as China’s military strength and influence grow.” Participated also on 2 and 3 October 2021 in a formidable

force comprising four carriers (HM Queen Elizabeth, USS Ronald Reagan and USS Carl Vinson, and the MSDF’s JS ISE, together with 13 other warships of Canada, New Zealand, and Netherlands in multilateral exercises in waters southwest of Okinawa.¹²

g) Bayern (Brandenburg-class German Frigate).

Following participation by British and French naval units both advancing (or returning) to “East of Suez” in various recent exercises, Germany too has declared an “Asia-Pacific strategy” and is to send its frigate, the Bayern (a modest 3,600 tons), to join Japan’s MSDF in East China Sea exercises in November 2021.¹³

As warships maneuver in and out of the East China Sea, the possibility of clash, by accident or design, arises, in the most extreme scenario possibly even triggered by the rival claims of Japan and China to sovereignty over the tiny and uninhabited (uninhabitable) Senkaku/Diaoyu islands. It beggars the imagination that the world’s “great powers” (US, UK, Japan, France and, on the other side, China) should be so intent on pressing conflicting claims to Senkaku’s windswept rocks as to risk regional and global peace for them.

3. Plugging the Gaps - Militarizing the Frontier

While Japan spends lavishly on refurbishing and strengthening the existing East China Sea base structure, especially in Okinawa, it also concentrates on plugging “gaps” in its defenses, militarizing the chain of islands

between Kyushu and Taiwan so as, potentially, to block access for Chinese vessels, both military and civil, to and from the Pacific.

The view of China as threat dates to Democratic Party national governments 2009-2011. The National Defence Program Outlines adopted by Cabinet in December 2010 identified the military modernization of China as part of the “security environment surrounding Japan” and outlined a “dynamic defence force” to substitute for the existing “basic defence force” concept.

In August 2011 the Democratic Party government announced the decision to deploy units of SDF to close “windows of deterrence” against China. By late 2012, defence of the South-Western islands was accorded “the highest priority.” Under Abe and Suga from December 2012 the LDP simply reinforced this posture.

This view of China as “threat” has undoubtedly gathered force in Japan, and, accompanying it, the belief in the Foreign Ministry and on the part of recent governments, that such “threat,” can only be met by confronting China with significant, preferably overwhelming, counter-force and taking every possible step to tie the US to such measures. But such thinking is far from universal in Tokyo. The extremism of the US policy resolve to oppose not just China’s military but China’s very existence and its rise as a global economic powerhouse, is probably not widely shared in Japan. Many insist that somehow an accommodation has to be found because the two countries are bound by history and geography and the alternative would be unimaginably disastrous. A Xi Jinping visit to Japan scheduled for early 2020 during the Abe government had to postponed indefinitely because of COVID. Such a visit was high on the priority list for Kishida even before he took office.

There is no doubt that Japan views China’s growth with deep concern. China’s GDP, one-

quarter that of Japan in 1991 surpassed it in 2001 and trebled it in 2018.¹⁴ Prominent public intellectual Terashima Jitsuro, in calling for an injection of realism to Japan’s policy debate, points out that US-China trade as of 2020 (\$559 billion) was more than three times US-Japan trade (\$183 billion).¹⁵ and that the Japan that constituted 17.9 percent of global GDP as of 1994 had shrunk, relatively, to 6 per cent as of 2020, while China had passed 18 per cent already around 2016 and was headed (according to the OECD) for a probable 27 per cent during the 2030s¹⁶ The clock will not easily be turned back. Terashima sees the alliance system design to curtail this trajectory and “decouple” China from the regional and global system as incongruous and likely either futile or disastrous. Whether such realism can penetrate policy-making circles in Tokyo remains to be seen.

The pace of change in accord with the “China threat” scenario picked up significantly over the past decade as Abe and Suga added multiple SDF missile and coastal surveillance units to the islands of Amami, Miyako, Ishigaki, and Yonaguni, while planning also a completely new comprehensive SDF base on the island of Mage, in Nishinoomote City about 110 kilometers south of Kagoshima City.

Island Bases in the East China Sea

Mage Island, 8.5 kms², uninhabited, to be garrisoned by units of all three Japanese services (150-200 personnel), also hosting FCLP (Field Carrier Landing Practice) for US carrier-based fighter jets. However, although the national government purchased the island from its private owners in 2019 and announced plans for its military development (two runways, harbour, ammunition storage,

refuelling, and maintenance facilities), local opposition is strong. Nishinoomote City elected an anti-base mayor in 2017 and re-elected him in 2021. As of late 2021 the standoff between Tokyo and Nishinoomote continued unresolved.

Amami Oshima, 306 kms², population 73,000. 550-person GSDF surface to ship missile, anti-missile opened March 2019.

Miyako Island, 204 kms², population 46,000. 700-800-person GSDF, surface to air/ship missile and anti-missile force, opened March 2019.

Ishigaki Island, 229 kms², population 48,000, 500-600-person surface to air/ship missile force, under construction from 2019.

Yonaguni Island, 28 kms², population ca 2,000. GSDF 160-person coastal surveillance unit, Camp Yonaguni, opened in March 2016.

The SDF becomes in the process not so much a national defense unit as a component of the US-led global anti-China coalition, its security and missile forces on the smaller islands complementing the existing US military concentrations on Okinawa Island, especially the US Air Force at Kadena and the Marine Corps at Futenma. If Sino-Japanese hostilities were to break out it would most likely happen in the waters of the East China Sea in the vicinity of these islands, with Japan acting to bottle Chinese forces up within the First Chinese defensive line. That of course would be

an act of war.

4. Kabul Shock

The world was transfixed in August 2021 by the spectacle of the global super-power, commanding a huge multinational coalition armed with every weapon imaginable, being driven from Kabul by a ragged band of religious fanatics armed with AK-47s. If in the global system it dominated the US could be driven ignominiously from a state in which it had invested so much, then no state could be fully confident of any US security guarantee. If there is a Kabul message to the world, it might be: "Client States, Beware."

While the shock waves continued from the American retreat from Kabul, a different kind of shock spread from the simultaneous announcement in Washington, London, and Canberra of the AUKUS agreement to transfer American or British nuclear submarine technology (and at some future if indefinite point probably between 2040 and 2060, actual submarines) to Australia.¹⁷ The announcement of this fresh Anglo-Saxon coalition must have been a bitter pill for Japan to swallow since it implied a two-level structure of clientelist order, with Australia a quasi-nuclear state one rung higher and closer to Washington. In the minds of Abe and his associates, undoubtedly, was the question: if Australia can have nuclear submarines, why not Japan?

Kishida now heads what amounts to the third phase of the Abe government that began in December 2012 and continued in 2020-21 under Suga. At its inner core sit the so-called "Triple A" of Abe and his closest associates, former Deputy Prime Minister Aso Taro and Amari Akira, the LDP's Secretary-General, joined by Abe's brother Kishi Nobuo as Defense Secretary and his disciple, the extreme right-winger Takaichi Sanae, as Chair of the Political Research Council.

For almost thirty years, since he first took a seat in the Japanese Diet in 1993, Abe Shinzo has had a hand on the tiller of state. Even when he was not actually the head of government, his wishes have been treated as virtual commands under the principle of *sontaku* (anticipatory compliance, the mentality of underlings who hasten to carry out the will of their superiors even before it has been expressed). Kishida Fumio and Suga Yoshihide have been his faithful acolytes since 1993 and 1996 respectively. Since about half of the new cabinet seats have been given to novices, the policy influence of the handful of heavyweights – the “Triple A” at its center – is expected to be especially high.

5. October Prospect

On October 4, when Kishida did as expected and called a general election for October 31, support for his government, at 49 percent, was roughly thirty points lower than it had been when Suga took office a year earlier. However, that did not necessarily translate into greater support for the LDP’s opponents. While military-fist-ism advances it does so almost imperceptibly, without the social phenomenon commonly associated with full-blown militarism. The general mood of the country is one of disaffection, not of any rush to war. According to various polls, the combined popular support for the opposition parties might be as low as 10 and no higher than 20 per cent, so they will have to attract a substantial group of the disaffected during the campaign to have any hope of forming a government.

As the Abe (now Abe-Suga-Kishida) stamp remains fixed on the face Japan shows to the world, voices attuned to the crucial and universal questions facing humanity – peace, sustainability, justice, equality – are scarcely to be heard in global fora. For decades, the state they have headed has been conspicuous for its

blend of nationalist bluster about Japan’s history (including its crimes against its neighbours), obsessiveness about state rituals centered on the emperor, and servility towards Washington. The global outlook today might be even bleaker, more right-wing, more dangerous (for Japan and the world), and even less attuned to a democratic, peace-oriented, and citizen-centered agenda than at any time during their ascendancy.

However, opposition to the basic formula and priorities of the LDP-led Japanese state does of course exist and grow, fed by anxiety over the Abe government’s divergence from constitutional pacifism. There have been important bottom-up efforts by local and national governments – in the 1990s and in 2009 – to contest military-first, client state agendas, but always thwarted by the national government for whom clientelist service of the US is unshakably paramount. Contemplating the 2021 election the “Civic Alliance for Peace and Constitutionalism,” commonly known just as “Citizens’ League” or Shimin Rengo, formulated a set of principles as part of a “switch to life-affirming politics” that was adopted on 8 September 2021 by heads of the major opposition parties (Constitutional Democratic, Japan Communist, Social Democratic, and Reiwa Shinsengumi).¹⁸ This charter made no explicit reference to Japan’s client state status or relationship to the US, but its implicit message, through the call for reversion to constitutionalism and adoption of a peace-oriented regional and global role, was clear.¹⁹

The “Citizen League” currently mobilizes for a united front of opposition parties on peace and constitution matters, and for pursuit of the political and possibly criminal responsibility of recent governments on multiple issues. Analysts point out that had the opposition parties organized themselves on such a united

front basis in the 2017 election they could have defeated LDP-Komeito candidates in 106, instead of 43, seats.²⁰ In the forthcoming election a united constitutionalist slate could threaten even major front bench government members.²¹

Under Kishida, should he and others of the LDP old regime prevail in the October election, military spending can be expected to grow substantially. No sooner had the election been announced than the LDP issued a set of policy pledges included a doubling, or more than doubling, of defense expenditure from its current roughly 1 per cent GDP level.²² The merger with US forces in an anti-China coalition throughout East Asian and Western Pacific waters can be expected to continue. Egged on by Washington, Japan would proceed further to ready itself for war. The sort of realism advocated by Terashima would likely find it difficult to be heard in Kishida

government circles.

Alternatively, in the unlikely but not inconceivable event of a Constitutional Democrat-led coalition victory at the end of October, with party leader Edano Yukio in the Prime Minister's seat the current momentum towards war might be arrested and a window opened upon a different, truly alternative future. Such a government would face the immediate test of its seriousness, however, when formulating policy beyond high-sounding generalizations. Will it announce suspension and cancellation of the Marine Corps construction works at Henoko on Oura Bay in Okinawa? Will it stop and reverse the militarizing of the Southwest Frontier islands? Will it call on the governments of the United States and other East Asian States to reverse the present momentum towards conflict and to negotiate together a post-San Francisco regional framework of disarmament and cooperation?

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An earlier, shorter version of this paper, without notes, was posted on the *Jacobin* magazine site in early October.

Notes

¹ “Jiminto ni shogeki no chosa kekka! Shugiin ‘60 giseki gen’ de masaka no kahansu ware,” *Nikkan gendai*, 25 August 2021.

² “Japan’s new leader, Suga Yoshihide, will maintain the old regime,” *Jacobin*, September 2020

³ Jiji seron chosa, “Naikaku shiji 32.2%, hossoku irai saitei,” 14 May 2021

⁴ The voting rate in the October 2017 Lower House election was 53.68, and in the Upper House election in July 2019 48.8 per cent.

⁵ *Mainichi shinbun* poll of 19 September and Kyodo poll of 17-18 September.

⁶ For a perceptive comment on this election see Jake Adelstein, “‘Reluctant’ Kishida to

become Japan's next leader," *Asia Times*, September 29, 2021.

⁷ Following US, Russia, China, and India, and surpassing France, UK, Germany etc. Global Firepower, "[2021 Global Military Strength](#)," March 2021.

⁸ Motoko Rich, "Japan's been proudly pacifist for 75 years. A missile proposal changes that," *New York Times*, 16 August 2020.

⁹ As noted in the SDF journal *Asagumo*, and reported by military affairs critic Maeda Toshio, "Higashi Ajia INF joyaku to iu reariti," *Sekai*, September 2021, pp. 148-157, at p. 151.

¹⁰ US Pacific Fleet, Public Affairs, "Sword 21 embraces US-Japan exchange," 6 November 2020.

¹¹ Martine Bulard, "Is an Asian NATO imminent?" *Le Monde Diplomatique*, June 2021.

¹² Alex Wilson, "Three aircraft carriers train together near Okinawa as China ramps up pressure on Taiwan," *Stars and Stripes*, 4 October 2021.

¹³ "Doku kantei, 11 gatsu no nihon kiko to kyodo kunren," *Sankei shimbun*, 5 June 2021.

¹⁴ Terashima Jitsuro, "Noryoku no ressun," No 192, "Chugoku no kyodaika kyokenka wo seishi suru, Nihon no kakugo," *Sekai*, April 2018, pp. 42-47, at p. 42.

¹⁵ Terashima Jitsuro, "Honshitsu o miayamaru to Nihon wa beichu kankei no honro' Keizai ampo-ron otannjun na 'Chugoku fujikome' ni yudaneru na," *Toyo Keizai*, 22 June 2021.

¹⁶ OECD, "[The long view: Scenarios for the world economy to 2060](#)."

¹⁷ Brian Toohey, "[Australia's nuclear submarine deal won't make us any safer](#)," Pearls and Irritations, 13 October 2021.

¹⁸ Well-known civil activist scholars, including Hosei University political scientist Yamaguchi Jiro and military affairs critic Maeda Tetsuo, play important roles in this constitutionalist front.

¹⁹ "[Shugiin sosankyō no okeru yato kyōtsu seisaku no teigen](#)," 8 September 2021.

²⁰ Ikegami Akira and Yamaguchi Jiro, "[Yato kyōhō e no kabe to senkyō kyōryoku no genkai to wa](#)," *AERA*, 18 October 2021.

²¹ Nogami Tadaoki, "[Jiko o oitsumeru gyakuten shori '64 senkyō' yato 4 to wa kyōto kasoku, seisaku kyōtei goi de 'ukezara' ni](#)," *Nikkan gendai*, 9 September 2021.

²² "Boeihi 'GDP hi 2% ijo mo nento' jimin ga seiken koyaku, chikara de no taiko jushi," *Asahi Shimbun*, 12 October 2021.