Japan's Rural Decline: Global Perspectives on the Depopulation of Small Towns and the Countryside
Ken Coates, University of Saskatchewan

Over the past two decades, Japan’s rural areas have experienced a profound population decline and substantial economic decay. The contours of the country’s rural depopulation are generally well-known, but little effort has been made to assess the changes in Japan in the context of the widespread rural decline of the industrial world. This paper compares the challenges facing rural Japan by way of a comparison to other industrialized nations and an examination of government strategies to stimulate economic development and demographic stability in small towns and the countryside. This examination demonstrates that the Japanese situation is not as unusual as Japanese commentators typically assert and that the Government of Japan has been more proactive than most other countries in seeking to arrest the slide.

Asia-Pacific Region/Order
David Welch, University of Waterloo

East Asia is in flux. What used to be one of the most stable parts of the world from a geopolitical perspective has been thrown into turmoil by Donald Trump’s America-first alliance bashing and trade wars, North Korea’s continued pursuit of nuclear weapons and strategic nuclear missiles, and China’s drive to secure its position in the region and to safeguard its “core interests.” Where does this leave Japan? For more than 60 years, Japan has relied upon the United States for security and a rules-based international order for prosperity. Can it continue to do so? This is the key question to be explored in this talk.

Japan's Soft Power Foreign Policy towards Africa vis à vis China: Who gets what when and how? A case study of Ghana
Ohene Opoku Agyemang, Jinan University

What has been the driving force behind Japan’s foreign policy towards African states? What role is China playing as a competitor within the area of Soft Power strategy in its foreign policy towards Africa? These questions are significant in the literature of Asia and Africa cooperation. At the crux of Asia and Africa’s foreign policy is the presence and dominance of Japan and China respectively. The impact of Japan in Africa is underpinned by Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) and Japan Official Development Assistance (ODA). This framework set the basis and direction of Japan’s engagement with Africa. The emergence of China as the largest economy in Asia and number economy global
strengthens the frontiers of China’s to ‘lure’ Africa. This study is placed within the rational choice theory. At the crux of the theory is that states act as a rational economic actor. States are motivated to maximize gains. The central question is what Soft Power strategy is Japan using as opposed to China? The study recourse to primary and secondary data. It uses qualitative and quantitative data. The study concludes on the impact of Japan on Ghana’s development paradigm. The common denominator of democratic values serves as an arena for lesson drawing.

Examining the History of Japanese Foreign Aid in the International Community: A Corpus Analysis of Japan’s OECD-DAC Memoranda
Yu Maemura, University of Tokyo

This paper presents the results of a corpus-assisted discourse analysis of declassified memos outlining the foreign aid policies and practices of the Japanese government. This study has compiled and analyzed policy memos submitted by the Government of Japan to the OECD Development Assistance Committee for the annual aid reviews of OECD member countries, and likely represents one of the first attempts at a corpus-linguistic examination Japanese aid from a historical perspective. The data set includes 27 years’ worth of documents spanning from 1965-2014, mainly composed of a) Memoranda outlining the Japanese government’s policies and practices of foreign aid, and b) reports and questions by the Secretariat in response to the reports.

Basic and weighted frequency analyses of the compiled corpus reveals some notable findings. These include the drop-off of mentions of “reparations” after 1971; the surfacing of “untying” in 1973; as well as “environmental”, “global”, “non-governmental”, and “management” issues emerging in the late 1980s. Further work into how policy evaluations and aid reviews help shape the image, perception, and value of Japanese development aid will prove to be a valuable resource for those that aspire to develop a deeper understanding of the past, present, and potential future of Japanese ODA.