Presentation:

Japan and the Asia-Latin American Connection in the Twenty-First Century

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INTRODUCTION

In 2003, Peter Smith and 15 Latin Americanists from Asia and the Americas published *East Asia and Latin America: The Unlikely Alliance* (Rowman and Littlefield). They contributed articles to this monumental work for the purpose of making clear how the two areas had coped with the global economic crisis around 2000 and, based on this experience, envisaged an ideal relationship between the two regions. It also proposes that Japan should undertake in a substantial way the promotion of the Asia-Latin American connection. The suggestions cover a wide range of topics: strengthening of multilateral institutions, provision of development aid for growth with equity, support for democratization, protection of rights of underprivileged groups such as women and indigenous people, enhancement of cultural exchange, and interregional cooperation for global threats including terrorism, pandemic, and environmental issues (Smith, Horisaka, and Nishijima 2003).

In the twenty-first century, however, Japan has experienced a series of political and economic changes at home and abroad. The historically dominant Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) lost popularity by its own mishandling of political scandals, which allowed the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), the leading opposition party, to take power from 2009 to 2012. In respect of economy, a modest but upward economic trend after the “lost decade” (1990–2000) was frustrated by the 2007–08 global financial crisis and the 2011 disastrous earthquakes.

On top of these domestic turbulences, political and economic upheavals in Asia and the Americas are also too significant to be overlooked. The biggest issue in Asia in the present century is China’s rise: its gross domestic product (GDP) surpassed that of Japan around 2010 and is actually seeking to become the leader of not only Asian but of world economy. Japan’s supremacy in the manufacturing sector, which has been a source of strength for its economy, is also vanishing in step with the growth of Korea, Taiwan, and other Asian neighbors. Casting an eye on the Americas, many countries have experienced a “left turn” in which progressive parties obtained the presidency dominated by pro-neoliberal parties during the last two decades of the twentieth century. This shift gave momentum to the criticism against the traditional structure of inter-American relations dominated by the United States, Japan’s most important diplomatic partner. Finally, the incumbent president of the United States, Donald Trump, is making a historical break from the country’s long-held role as a provider of international public goods: peace, liberal trade regime, support for diffusion of democracy, and others.

This article undertakes a documentary analysis to discuss whether Japan, facing the
difficult situations mentioned above, has successfully applied Smith et al.’s suggestions to our own century. The first section describes basic information about Japanese diplomacy toward Asia and Latin America by referring to previous studies. The second section examines the argument of scholars who stress the emergence of Japan’s “value diplomacy” in the twenty-first century. The third section analyses Japan’s approach to Forum for East Asia-Latin America Cooperation (FEALAC), the only international body for the cooperation between the two regions. The final section wraps up the findings of this study and outlines the future topics.

I Overview of Japanese diplomacy

Five basic pillars

A great number of studies have amassed written and oral evidence to characterize Japan’s foreign policy since its defeat in the Second World War. While reexamination of previous studies is constantly underway, some basic understandings are shared among the scholars.¹

First, the Japanese government has officially declared a “Japan in Asia” policy, which emphasizes Japan’s identity, first and foremost, as an Asian country. Needless to say, behind this announcement there is a strong sense of crisis caused by its colonization of Asia before and during the Second World War. Japan understands that a good relationship with neighboring countries will guarantee its national security and, in particular, the market for its industrial products.

Second, Japan has also recognized that its foreign policy should be in accordance with the United Nations (UN). Since the affiliation in 1956, Japan has considered the UN a strategic arena for establishing a strong relationship with foreign countries. At the same time, as happens in other countries, the UN is regarded as a source of legitimacy for diplomatic decisions.

Third, at the level of bilateral partnership, Japan has prioritized the United States of America. Japan’s postwar reconstruction and reintegration into the international society was carried out under the guidance of U.S. occupation forces with two principles: demilitarization and democratization. As a result, in the midst of the Cold War, Japan’s national security heavily

¹ The following explanations are based on Calder (1988), Matsushita (1991), Iokibe (2010), Oyane
depended on the United States, which also viewed Japan as a strategic ally of the Western Bloc in Asia. Even after the end of the Cold War, under an uncertain situation of global politics, the close relationship between the two continues.

Fourth, since its demilitarization, Japan’s foreign policy has focused heavily on economic issues. As the export industry has been the driving force of Japanese economy, ensuring the supply of natural resources and a market for industrial export products has been imperative. This economy-first and politics-and-military-second attitude came to be known as Yoshida Doctrine, named after the prime minister in office during the reconstruction era.

Finally, Japan has been viewed as an archetype of the “reactive state,” whose defining feature lies in the professionalized bureaucracy highly autonomous from lawmakers. The ministries have their own recruiting system for permanent staff members and hold a leading role in information collection and decision-making: when a diplomatic problem emerges, rank-and-file government officials from concerned ministries negotiate with each other to coordinate policies. In other words, this process lacks top-down and speedy decision-making.

These five pillars are not always compatible with each other. For example, Japan has maintained a close relationship with oil-producing states in conflict with the United States. In addition, Japan has been intensifying its efforts to participate in overseas security missions since the Gulf War in 1991. In this war, caught in the dilemma between its traditional diplomatic principle of keeping away from military issues and the U.S. leadership in the Multi-national Forces against Iraq, the Japanese government decided not to dispatch personnel but to make financial and material contributions to the forces. This half-hearted attitude came in for sharp criticism from inside and outside Japan, which in the following year enacted a law that enabled Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) to participate in UN peacekeeping operations (PKO). Since then, Japan has been engaging more in promoting peace-building and democratization for developing countries, especially in logistics and local welfare areas such as housing and sewage construction.

**Foreign policies toward Latin America**

The study of international relations is one of the most untouched areas of Latin American studies in Japan (Miyachi 2016). Representative Japanese economists interested in Latin America unanimously stress Japan’s strong interest in enhancing the global value chains in Latin America and Asia, and also in deepening the interregional connections (Kuwayama 2015; Hosono 2016; Murakami 2017). Controversy lies in the general characteristic of Japan’s
diplomacy toward Latin America in the twenty-first century.

Japan’s foreign policy toward Latin America is considered as a derivative of the abovementioned general diplomatic orientations. A classic work of Hiroshi Matsushita on Japan-Latin American relations highlights four pillars: coordination with U.S. diplomacy, maximization of economic interests, establishment of friendship as many countries as possible to obtain support in the UN, and priority for countries and issues related to Japanese immigrants. Simultaneously, here again, it shows examples of collisions among these pillars. The most representative case is that Japan has never broken diplomatic relationships with communist Cuba. In addition, in the Falkland Conflict, while the United States backed the United Kingdom, Japan supported Argentina. Japan’s approach to the Central America crisis in 1980s is also interesting: it promoted ceasefire and democratization of the region, whereas then U.S. President Donald Reagan actively supported the conservative military regimes of the region. From these facts, Matsushita posits that the primacy of the United States and of the economic issues does not exist anymore (Matsushita 1991).

Some co-authors of Smith et al.’s book examine the Japan-Latin American relations, focusing on its relevance to the traditional diplomatic lines. Keiichi Tsunekawa, author of the chapter entitled “Japan and the Asia-Latin American connection,” argues that post-Cold War Japan has diplomatic alternatives independent from the U.S. national interests. By comparing Japanese foreign policies toward Asia with those toward Latin America, he finds three common characteristics: maintaining equilibrium between cooperation with the United States and autonomous foreign policy, wane of economic diplomacy and growth of “less selfish” policies (debt reduction, peace building, and others), and peace-oriented solutions for international conflicts. In the conclusion, he envisions that these characteristics will endure in the future and, at the same time, that FEALAC will become an arena for the member states to clarify common interests. He also expects that FEALAC will enable Asian and Latin American countries to take actions in concert against the dominant superpower, which means the United States (Tsunekawa 2003).

Hiroyuki Urabe’s suppositions from his 2009 article generally fall in line with Tsunekawa’s arguments. He argues that, while the pro-U.S., pro-Japanese descendants, and economy-focused diplomacy are still prominent, the United States’ relative decline in the global power structure has left Japan margin to take policies independent from the U.S. interests. However, he takes a step further to indicate that a new feature in recent Japanese diplomacy is emerging: Japan has committed key values to promote its long-term relationship with Latin
America. He refers to the example of “A Vision for a New Japan- Latin America and Caribbean Partnership,” which was announced by the Japanese government in 2004 (“2004 Vision”) (Urabe 2009).

Matsushita, in his latest article on Japan-Latin America relations, looks differently at the 2004 Vision. His argument on Japan’s recent diplomatic shift is summarized in the title of his article: “from development aid to partnership.” He demonstrates that in the last century, Japan allocated a huge amount of the budget of the central government to official development assistance (ODA) to strengthen its friendship with Latin America. However, due to prolonged economic stagnation and, as a consequence, the shrink of the aid budget in the twenty-first century from 1.19 trillion yen in 1997 to 0.62 in 2010, Japan was forced to use the limited aid resource more efficiently. One of the breakthroughs is the development of the Partnership Program, which supports leading Latin American countries (specifically, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Mexico) to aid other countries in the same region. Given this partnership do not mark a drastic change of Japan’s previous diplomatic orientation, he presents the conclusion, albeit contradictory to his work in 1991, that the 2004 Vision does not represent a substantial change of the traditional pro-U.S., pro-national descendant, and economy-focused principles (Matsushita 2013).

The latest evaluation of Japan-Latin American relations by academics was published in 2015. The author, Kanako Yamaoka, through her analysis of the change and continuity of relations between Japan and Latin America in these thirty years, concludes that a drastic change was observed only in immigration policies: the policy focus has switched from accepting immigrants of Japanese descendants in search for jobs in Japan to supporting their daily lives. Meanwhile, the political and economic characteristics remain the same as before. While maintaining the tight relationship with the United States, Japan has kept away from political issues and refrained from supporting specific values like democracy or human rights. Moreover, she argues that it has not been necessary for Japan to announce endorsement for specific political values because Latin America has been politically stable. On the grounds of these observations, she concludes that pragmatism prevails in Japan’s diplomacy. In other words, Japan’s diplomacy is still more economic and less political (Yamaoka 2015).

Finally, the majority of recent academic works regarding Japan’s diplomacy toward East Asia does not mention Latin American countries (Hosoya 2007; 2011; Yamakage 2013; Miyagi 2015). The very few references are found in the context of the expansion of the Asian trade market to the American side of the Pacific Rim (Oyane 2012). Latin America is virtually
out of scope for the study of Asian international relations.

**Perspective of this article**

There are two points in dispute among previous studies: the degree of independence of Japan’s diplomacy from the United States and the commitment to certain political values. This article argues that the problem with previous studies lies in the lack of tightly constructed research design and of referable evidence.

In the first place, previous studies, despite arguing the importance of U.S. presence, do not mention the fluctuation of U.S. diplomacy in the present century. They naively suppose that the U.S. diplomatic preference has been constant. While this supposition may have been acceptable during the Cold War era, it is not realistic to assume that the three U.S. presidents of the twenty-first century (George W. Bush, Barack Obama, and Donald Trump) are the same in terms of foreign policy.\(^2\) For example, diffusion of democracy was a historical mission of U.S. diplomacy from the nineteenth century and was highly upheld by Bush and Obama\(^3\) (Smith 2014). In contrast, Trump, based on his inward-looking rhetoric, is not likely to support foreign countries’ democratization at the same expense of financial and human resources as before. In addition, while the United States has been one of the least enthusiastic countries on the issue of global climate change, Obama stood apart from this tradition by signing the Paris Agreement along with a series of domestic reforms on environmental regulations.\(^4\)

Furthermore, the aforementioned scholars provide very little supporting evidence for their arguments. Urabe emphasizes the importance of the 2004 Vision as a shift to a long-term value commitment. Matsushita also pays attention to the frequent use of the word “partnership” in the official documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA). Given that any political discourse can be cliché-ridden, the correspondence of words and deeds should be checked. However, strangely enough, they skipped examining it.

Yamaoka, on the other hand, indicates that Japan’s diplomacy is still affected by the United States and, at the same time, pragmatic. Apart from the lack of the examination on the U.S. interests, her argument has a serious drawback. In opposition to Urabe and Matsushita,

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\(^2\) Bill Clinton is excluded due to his very short period of presidency in the present century (twenty days).

\(^3\) It does not mean in any sense that the United States has been a constant supporter of democratization. See Smith (2014, chs. 2, 5, 6, and 7).

\(^4\) For representative works on Obama’s diplomacy toward Latin America, see Lowenthal (2010), Crandall (2011), and Reid (2015).
who stress Japan’s commitment to certain universal values, she should prove that the commitment is superficial by giving examples that show that the profit maximization is the hidden but driving force of Japanese diplomacy. However, she does not demonstrate this nor even cite any article of the aforementioned scholars.

This article, instead of stepping into a complicated work of identifying the U.S. interests, undertakes a general check of whether changes in Japan’s diplomatic actions, if any, occurred in accordance with those of its own diplomatic discourse and those of the U.S. presidency. This gross comparison, as seen in the following sections, is enough to offer renewed understandings of Japan’s interregional policies.

II “Value diplomacy” reexamined

Three announcements

Is Japan’s diplomacy toward Latin America still pragmatic or does it advocate certain political values? An important fact, which Urabe does not reference but should be taken into account, is that Japan’s “value diplomacy” attracted worldwide attention after the 2004 Vision. In the end of November 2006, Taro Aso, the Foreign Minister of the LDP government of Shinzo Abe, presented the idea of “Arc of Freedom and Prosperity (Jiyuu to Han-ei no ko).” It proposed that Japan should contribute to the peace and the economic prosperity of the Eurasian “arc,” which starts from Finland, passing through East Europe, Middle East, Central Asia, and ends in Japan and other East Asian countries (Australia and New Guinea). Aso planned that Japan, as a country with a stable democratic regime and matured economy, along with Scandinavian countries, would take the lead in the promotion of the democratic values as well as economic development.5 His idea was soon incorporated into the government’s official diplomatic strategy (MOFA 2008). Although the 2004 Vision and Aso’s proposal were announced independently, both imply a shift from pragmatic to norm-based diplomacy of Japan (Hosoya 2011; Anno 2014, 18).

5 http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/fm/aso/speech0611.html. Aso (2007, 29) shows the geographical coverage of the Arc, which is carefully located to avoid China and Russia. It excited the opposition not only from the Chinese government but also from pro-China Japanese lawmakers. Aso commented that the Arc was a diplomatic outline for Eurasia and it would be complementary to the ongoing diplomacy toward China and Russia (Aso 2007, ch.3; Kokubun 2013, 9).
After the 2004 Vision, the Japanese government proposed twice an outline of the diplomacy toward Latin America. The first is Aso’s speech in a meeting by Japan Business Federation (Keidanren) in July 2007. Aso proposes simply: “first of all, strengthening our economic relations; second, supporting efforts by the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean to spread social fairness and equality … and third, undertaking even more things with Latin America and the Caribbean on the international stage.” These would later become the categories of the subsection for the chapter on Latin America in the Diplomatic Bluebook (DB, Gaiko Seisho), the annual report on Japan’s foreign policies published by MOFA.

The second was an announcement of Abe in his second term as prime minister from December 2012 to the present. Following his visit to Argentina in September 2013, which was the first visit of a Japanese prime minister to Latin America after a five-year absence, he officially announced at a business forum held in Sao Paulo in August 2014 three principles of Japan’s approach to Latin America: progressing together, leading together, and inspiring together (progredir juntos, liderar juntos, e inspirar juntos in Portuguese).

This section examines the three declarations by Japan in 2004, 2007, and 2014, paying attention to three points: continuity of Japan’s diplomacy toward Latin America with that of the past, position of Asian countries, and congruency between words and deeds.

The 2004 Vision

The 2004 Vision, announced in the speech of the then Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of LDP at a meeting with the governor of Sao Paulo, comprises two policies: cooperation (kyoryoku) and exchange (koryu). The first has two components: revitalization of economic relations (conclusion of the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), financial cooperation for project of resource extraction and of infrastructure, and others), and solution of problems in the global society (UN reforms, especially the expansion of the Security Council membership, support for World Trade Organization (WTO)-Doha Development Agenda, establishment of a global recycle society, cooperation for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP)). As for the second policy, Japan promised to accept 4,000 youth from Latin American countries as exchange students in the following five years and

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also to assume a leading role in promoting FEALAC.\footnote{http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/koizumispeech/2004/09/15speech.html (Accessed July 5, 2017)}

In response to the Koizumi’s speech, in May 2005 MOFA presented a communiqué entitled “Proposals for revitalization of economic relations between Japan and Latin America” in the name of the Japanese ambassadors to the Latin American countries. It consists of five suggestions: intensification of top-level dialogs through bilateral and multilateral meetings, public-private cooperation for business expansion, establishment of EPAs and other diplomatic schemes, support for broadening business opportunities through development aid for infrastructure and knowledge diffusion, and strengthening of partnership with international organizations including FEALAC.\footnote{http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/area/latinamerica/taishi/kaigi_05t.html (Accessed June 25, 2017)}

Compared with the overall diplomatic policies for Latin America, which Matsushita explained in the previous section, the issues of the 2004 Vision are not new in any sense. The priority clearly rests on the economy and the UN, and political issues such as democratization do not receive a mention. The only newness is the positive attitude toward promoting the international organization for Asia- Latin America connections, to be specific, FEALAC.

\textbf{The 2007 Speech}

Given that its author, Aso, is a leader of Japan’s value diplomacy, it would be expected that the 2007 speech would be full of commitments to so-called global values. However, the 2007 speech rather resembles the 2004 Vision.

The first leg of the Aso’s proposal tripod, strengthening economic relations, refers to the increase in trade with and investment in Latin America. Regarding the second, support for social fairness and equality, Aso does not offer a clear definition, although throughout the speech he highlights various issues: poverty reduction, elimination of inequality, improvement of education, protection of the environment, and disaster prevention. Most of these issues can be categorized as non-business aspects of human welfare. The final proposal, mutual cooperation for solution of global issues, is slightly mentioned in the speech. Aso just says, “Areas such as climate change and the environment are ones in which we should, quite literally, pursue benefits that we will enjoy in common, and I believe that these are areas in which we should deepen our partnership internationally.” Juxtaposed with the 2004 Vision, the 2007 speech makes virtually no difference except the wide and thin commitment to extensive aspects of the human security.
The 2014 Declaration

As shown above, the latest diplomatic outline for Latin America, the 2014 Declaration comprises three principles: progressing together, leading together, and inspiring together. The details of the declaration show that each element has a specific meaning that reflects the government’s interests.

The first refers simply to “a call to further deepen the economic ties between Japan” and Latin America at the private business level. Prime Minister Abe wraps up the paragraph on “progressing together” with a straightforward message: “Count on Japanese companies as your partners. Let us progress together.”

The second element is qualitatively different from the first. Confirming that Japan and Latin America had been in “the unwavering pursuit of peace … (the) respect for liberty, the honoring of human rights, and the upholding of democracy and the rule of law,” it argues that “[w]hen Japan and Latin America and the Caribbean come together to make the world a better place, our foothold is reinforced by the values and visions we share.” The issues mentioned in relation to the “values and visions” are not only economic (bilateral EPA and Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP)) but also non-economic, including climate change amelioration, peace building, non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, and prevention of natural disasters. It is safe to say that these are clear manifestations of “value diplomacy” for Latin American countries.

The final element refers to the intensification of people-to-people exchange. Based on the fact that between “Japan and Latin America and the Caribbean lies a history of friendship spanning a period of more than 400 years,” there is a desire to breathe “new life into it, mindful of the impact that personal exchanges has on the younger generation,” and to tighten “our bonds with the young leaders of tomorrow of Latin America and the Caribbean” by reinforcing “our exchange programs.” Considering that Japan organized a great number of exchange programs between Japan and Latin America in the previous century, it does not seek a qualitative change of the existing exchange schemes such as creating a new program but a quantitative change by increasing the number of outbound and inbound persons.

Summarizing the above, the 2004 Vision and the 2007 Speech follow the traditional diplomatic strategy of Japan, while the 2014 Declaration marks a qualitative break from the past by committing clearly universal political values.

Words and deeds

Has the diplomatic policy-making of Japanese government followed the three
announcements presented above? The chronological list of events featured in the DBs published in the present century enables us to verify the correspondence of these announcements and the trend of the diplomatic actions toward Latin America. Regarding the 2014 Declaration, it remains to be seen whether the Declaration leads to a significant break from the past because it was announced just three years ago. However, it is possible to examine if a short-term change is observed.

The Appendix to this article shows the list of the events featured in the section “Latin America (Chunanbei)” of the version of DB published from 2000 to 2016. Each event is codified in the format “Action-Issue-Counterpart” and then classified into the four categories: economy, immigrant-culture, humanity-ecology, and others. For example, the description “Japan started a negotiation with Mexico for a future EPA” is codified into “N (negotiation) -EPA -Mexico” and categorized in “economy.” The code for participation in an annual meeting of FEALAC is “M (meeting) -GI (general issues) -FEALAC” within the “Others” category.

The version of the DB prior to the 2004 Vision (from 2000 to 2004) features a handful of actions considered to be non-traditional for Japanese diplomacy, which are participation in election observation missions (EOMs), humanitarian aid for Colombia, and a meeting with Cuban officials for human rights, though their presences are not so frequent as the events for business promotion. Regarding connections with Asia, the participation in FEALAC or its former body appears every year except 2003.

Issues after the 2004 Vision do not show a drastic change from the past: economy and Japanese descendants are the top priorities, and the commitment to the other areas such as the interregional cooperation is constant. However, three remarkable changes are observed: long-lasting support for the Partnership Program since 2008, participation in the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) from 2010 to 2013, and frequent activities for non-economic aspects of human security, especially ecological issues. The question to be addressed is whether they are really unprecedented actions of Japanese diplomacy toward Latin America. Given that DB offers information on flagship projects, answering it requires examining more detailed information about Japan’s diplomatic actions.

**Partnership Program**

The Partnership Program is, according to Matsushita’s explanation shown in the previous section, a breakthrough of Japanese aid policies confronting budget reduction of ODA. It is expected that the objective of the Partnership Program would be just to secure funding for
foreign aid in the treasuries of the counterpart countries, and, as a result, that the contents of the aid projects would not be different from those of the direct aid programs from Japan to Latin America. The documents of the Partnership Program support this. For example, the projects prepared for Mexico in 2012 under the program included waste management in Guatemala, air quality monitoring in Honduras, quake-proof house construction in El Salvador, among others (Embassy of Japan in Mexico 2012). Needless to say, these are among the conventional aid projects.

However, Matsushita overlooks an important difference of the Partnership Program from the other aid projects: transfer of knowledge for planning, executing, and evaluating aid projects. Taking again Mexico as an example, Japan has been supporting Mexican agencies for foreign aid (Agencia Mexicana de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo (AMEXID)) and its former entity. Prior to the establishment of AMEXID in 2011, Japan started a three-year aid project under the scheme of Partnership Program, in which Japan sent a specialist to provide Mexican government with the know-how for efficient delivery of aid projects.\(^\text{10}\) In other words, the Partnership Program is an aid for capacity development of Latin American governments as development aid donors.

The aid project dataset provided by Japanese government shows that foreign assistance for the aid management capacity of Latin American countries started in the decade of 1990s.\(^\text{11}\) Nevertheless, Japan’s support for emerging donor countries in the present century should be considered qualitatively distinguished from that in the previous century. Specifically, the former is aimed mainly at implementing practical aid management skills while the latter corresponds to the preliminary phase in which Japan researched the needs of the recipient countries.

**PKO**

Second, sending personnel to MINUSTAH is a high-profile diplomatic activity. In the sense that Japan took part in an established multilateral framework for peace building and democratization, the participation in MINUSTAH can be regarded as the same type of non-economic activities as before. However, at the same time, it is undeniably remarkable that


Japan bore a heavier burden for peace building.

MINUSTAH, which started in 2004, has as the principal objective to control violence among the political factions vying for power. At first, Japan did not take part in it following the traditional diplomatic principle of avoiding political-military affairs. However, a disastrous earthquake struck the highly populated southern area of Haiti in January 12th, 2010, and caused more than 200,000 deaths, which facilitated Japan’s participation. A week later the UN Security Council adopted a resolution urging support for the disaster relief. Japan responded to it and in three years dispatched to the mission in total 2,200 JSDF officials, the majority of whom worked for re-establishment of the infrastructure.

**Ecological diplomacy**

As for the third change, the surge in action toward ecological policies does not implies a qualitative change, given that Japan took up the problem of environmental protections long before the 2004 Vision. Best-known is Japan’s Kyoto Protocol initiative adopted in 1997 at COP3. Thus, the question to be answered is whether DB’s frequent reference to ecological issues is a reflection of a quantitative increase of policies or not.

To date, evidence for quantitative change is weak. The point is that the government renamed economic projects as ecological ones. There are 48 governmental loan aids for Latin American countries from 2001 to 2016. It is remarkable that just 3 out of 21 projects from 2001 to 2008 mention ecological effects as an expected achievement, while so do no less than 20 out of 28 from 2009 to 2016. The main cause of this increase lies in the difference of framing the projects. The overviews of the projects for infrastructure up to 2008 say that they aim to improve production, while those published after that year are regarded as ecological projects. For example, the loan for the construction of a hydroelectric plant in Iguazú, Paraguay, in 2005 would contribute to stable power supply and, in the long run, to sustainable economic development. Nine years later, in 2014, an aid loan was established to construct a hydroelectric plant in Moquegua, Peru. According to its overview, it would contribute to stable power supply and, in the long run, diversify the Peruvian energy mix and contribute to climate change mitigation.

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Why did the Japanese government start to label infrastructure projects with “ecological” from 2009? In the previous year, Japan presented a series of appeals on climate issues to the international community. In January 2008, the Japanese government, led by Yasuo Fukuda of LDP, announced at the World Economic Forum “Cool Earth Partnership (CEP)” that it promised to offer 10 billion U.S. dollars over five years to developing countries with a clear statement for greenhouse gas reduction. This project virtually continued after the end of the CEP by establishing new initiatives such as “Action for Cool Earth (ACE)” in November 2013 and “ACE 2.0” in December 2015, both proposed by Abe of LDP. In order to exhibit the achievement of its commitment, the Japanese government has tagged all of the projects with certain positive effect on the environment as “ecological.”

The facts mentioned above, however, should be interpreted carefully. If the “ecological” labeling since 2009 is considered as padding of ecological efforts, it also means that ecological efforts before that year is underestimated: the infrastructural projects by 2009 can be considered as geared toward ecological issues. In any case, the apparent difference between the projects before and those after 2009 should not be taken at face value.

Result

On the whole, the discourses of Japanese foreign policies toward Latin America in the new millennium has maintained traditional diplomatic lines established in the previous century: prioritizing economic relations, taking care of overseas Japanese communities, and maintaining friendships with as many countries as possible. The close reading shows that the 2004 Vision and the 2007 Speech virtually repeated the traditional diplomatic principles. Nonetheless, two things are noteworthy. First, FEALAC, which aims at bridging Asia and Latin America, has been featured in almost all versions of DB. Given that FEALAC was established in 2001, promoting Asia- Latin American connections through an international organization is unprecedented in the last century. Second, unlike the 2004 Vision and the 2007 Speech, the 2014 Declaration made a clear commitment to the promotion of democracy and human rights.

This discursive trend matched in general that of the policies actually implemented by the Japanese government. Japan has carried out the contents of the aforementioned three

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announcements, from business promotion to participation in FEALAC meetings. It should be mentioned that the “active” engagement in ecological issues, while it appears to be a new approach to Latin America, does not represent a drastic change from the past. On the other hand, there are two incongruences between words and actions. First, the Partnership Program and the participation in MINUSTAH are new achievements in the non-economic areas, while they took place before the clear commitment to political values, namely the announcement of the 2014 Declaration. Second, the 2014 Declaration has not yet produced a visible change in Japan’s diplomatic actions.

In conclusion, Japan has maintained the traditional approach to Latin America and, at the same time, has developed new actions, albeit a few, to promote non-economic values such as democracy, human welfare, and capacity development of Latin American countries. However, these actions were not taken as a consequence of the three diplomatic announcements due to the incongruence between words and deeds. Rather, the actions represent a slow but steadily ongoing change of recent Japanese diplomacy as explained by Tsunekawa: wane of economic diplomacy, growth of “less selfish” policies, and peace-oriented solutions for international conflicts. It is just in this sense that Japan has practiced “value diplomacy.” The diplomatic announcements toward Latin America should not be regarded as substantial ones.

In the argument developed above, there is still a black box to be opened: FEALAC. Japan’s engagement in this organization will be examined in the next section.

III FEALAC

Overview

FEALAC, founded in 2001 as an initiative of the former prime minister of Singapore Goh Chok Tong,17 is an overarching international platform for Asia and Latin America. As of June 2017, 16 Asian countries and 20 Latin American ones participate in FEALAC. The group’s objectives cover various issues including economy (trade, investment, and finance), science and technology, environment protection, and culture, while some important issues for international relations, such as democracy, human rights, and migration, are out of the scope.18

17 For the detailed history of the establishment of FEALAC, see Tsunekawa (2003, 288–291).
It is worthwhile to mention that the United States is not a member of FEALAC. While the Western military blocs of the Cold War era have disappeared or declined, the United States has reached out to Latin America and Asia through bilateral and multilateral frameworks. This means that FEALAC is unique as an interregional space independent from the United States.

When Smith et al. published their book in 2003, the newly born FEALAC was considered positively as a strategic arena independent of the United States in which the member states coordinate foreign policies (Smith, Horisaka, and Nishijima 2003, 373–374; Tsunekawa 2003, 291). However, the majority of Japanese scholars were not enthusiastic about FEALAC. Urabe pointed out that the members had not succeeded in finding shared interests (Urabe 2009, 148). Matsushita was also skeptical about FEALAC although he did not specify the reason (Matsushita 2013, 59).

Japan’s role in FEALAC

What has the Japanese government done for FEALAC? Two aspects characterize Japan’s approach to FEALAC.

First, FEALAC has been perceived not as an Asian issue but a Latin American issue. The discourse of the DB published in the present century clearly shows a transition of the government’s framing on the role of FEALAC. FEALAC appears for the first time in the DB of 2002. It is remarkable that FEALAC is featured not only in the chapter for regional policies (Latin American section of Chapter 3) but also in the overall diplomatic strategies (Chapter 1). Along with Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) and APEC, FEALAC was expected to assume an important role in the Japan’s multi-layered cooperation structure for the Asia-Pacific region. However, while the Asia-Pacific section of the regional diplomacy chapter has maintained a part for ASEM and APEC until the latest DB, it has not referred to FEALAC since 2004. On the other hand, as shown in Appendix, FEALAC has appeared almost every year in the Latin American section.

Second, Japan has focused mainly on people-to-people exchange for technological

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19 The South East Asia Treaty Organization was disbanded in 1974 due to the defeat of the United States in the Vietnam War. The Americas’ counterpart, the so-called Rio Treaty, is still in function but with a smaller membership than the original one. Four countries with radical left governments (Nicaragua, Venezuela, Ecuador, and Bolivia) left the Treaty in 2014. In addition, the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR, the Spanish acronym), in which the United States does not participate, established a regional security council in 2008.
and environmental purposes. The MOFA’s webpage for FEALAC has a complete list of the projects carried out by the Japanese government. Out of 16 projects, no fewer than 13 are people-to-people exchange programs that invite young public officers from Asia and Latin America to give lectures on technology.\textsuperscript{20} While the first three projects (December 2002, February 2004, February-March 2005) focused mainly on the business issues, the fourth project convened by the same government in December 2005 featured Clean Development Mechanism, the aid scheme stipulated by the Kyoto Protocol.\textsuperscript{21} Subsequently, DPJ defeated LDP in the 2009 election and became the ruling party. However, attention to ecological issues was maintained: two meetings in the last year by the DPJ government (December 2012) centered on ecological problems. Moreover, at the Fourth Foreign Minister’s Meeting of FEALAC held in Tokyo in January 2010, the Japanese government announced the “FEALAC Regional Okada Green initiative (FROG),”\textsuperscript{22} under which Japan would “host the High Level Meeting on Environment Business in the next year or so” and invite “young leaders of FEALAC member countries in the area of environment business” (FEALAC 2010). After LDP’s return to government in December 2012, FROG disappeared from the official documents of FEALAC and of the Japanese government. Despite of it, support for projects relating to environmental education was maintained until the latest project concluded in March 2017.

\textbf{In search of uniqueness}

Japan’s aforementioned focus comes into line with FEALAC’s self-identity that has been molded throughout its history. As pointed out earlier, the fundamental challenge FEALAC faces is defining common interests among the participating states. For example, FEALAC’s 2012 official guide differentiates itself from two other interregional forums, APEC and ASEM. While APEC focuses on “Trade & Investment Liberalizations & Facilitation and financial cooperation” and ASEM on terror, international crime, and trade tariffs, FEALAC’s main activities “strengthen cooperation among members on sustainable development on climate change, environmental issues” and others (FEALAC 2012, 17).

What is more, in 2014, FELAC’s Vision Group, which comprises member states’

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{21} Through this mechanism, a donor country can count the amount of carbon-dioxide reduction realized by its aid project as her Certified Emission Reduction. For details, see http://unfccc.int/kyoto_protocol/mechanisms/clean_development_mechanism/items/2718.php (Accessed July 12, 2017).
\item \textsuperscript{22} This initiative was named after Katsuya Okada, the then foreign minister.
\end{itemize}
representatives (Tsunekawa participated as a representative of Japan), published a recommendation to reformulate FEALAC’s objectives. Its final report recommends the immediate implementation of four iconic projects: a business forum, a university network, a science and technology competition among students enrolled in higher education, and a think-tank network (FEALAC 2013). This proposal, along with traditional issues like trade and investment, shows FEALAC’s strong interest in the creation of an epistemological community across the regions.

**Asymmetrical perception**

The two characteristics of Japan’s approach to FEALAC shown above are explained as a residue after eliminations of other alternatives.

The first characteristic, the perception of FEALAC as a Latin American issue, is derived from the asymmetric economic importance between the two regions. Table 1 shows that less than 5% of East Asian export and import depends on Latin America, while 15% of export and 30% of import of Latin America derive from East Asia. Taking into consideration that Asia and economy are among the main diplomatic pillars of Japan, if the Asian economy were highly dependent on Latin America, the Asian Bureau would be more interested in FEALAC.

The number of international organizations in which Japan participates is also different between Asia and Latin America. Japan, identified as an Asian country, is a core member of various international regimes of Asia: East Asian Community, derivative meetings of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (ASEAN+3, ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conferences, ASEAN Regional Forum), ASEM, and APEC. In contrast, as Japan is not a Latin American country, FEALAC and APEC are the few regional forums with which Japan and two or more Latin American countries share membership. On top of this, given that APEC comprises mainly Asian countries (16, including Russia) and has just three Latin American members (Mexico, Peru, and Chile), FEALAC is virtually the only regime with a significant presence of Latin American countries. In other words, FEALAC is just one of many regimes for the Asian Bureau, while it is the only one for Latin American Bureau.

Finally, in qualitative terms, a lack of pressing problems between the two regions is also a cause of the low interest by the Asian Bureau. This point is related to the competition for coverage among regimes, which will be analyzed more detailed in the following.
Table 1  Import and export ratio between East Asia (EA) and Latin America and Caribbean (LAC)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>EA</th>
<th>LAC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Export to LA</td>
<td>Import from LA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>2.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>1.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>2.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>3.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>3.86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Note: “East Asia” includes Australia, Brunei, Cambodia, China, Fiji, French Polynesia, Hong Kong, Japan, Macao, Malaysia, Mongolia, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Palau, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Samoa, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam. “Latin America and Caribbean” includes Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Aruba, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Cayman Islands, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, St. Vincent and the Grenadine, and Uruguay.

Coverage of agendas

Regarding the second characteristic, which is Japan’s continuous commitment to people-to-people exchange on technological and environmental issues, the reason why other critical topics such as trade, democracy, and human rights have not become main concerns in FEALAC should be examined.

(1) ASEAN-way forum

The first thing to be understood is that FEALAC is a so-called “ASEAN-way” regime. Unlike “hard regimes” like World Trade Organization (WTO), which was given a clear objective the moment it was established, requires that the members observe its rules and decisions, and seeks to maximize output or solve as many conflicts as possible, an “ASEAN-way” regime does not put a limit on agendas to be discussed, nor does it intend to
bind the members with rules. Rather, it emphasizes the process of opinion exchange, which helps foster a gradual cooperation among members (Acharya 1997). In fact, as Tsunekawa explains, the member states kicked off FEALAC with a vaguely understanding of the benefits of cooperation. A proposal by Singapore at the Senior Officers’ Meeting in 2000 represents its ASEAN-way idea. It presented three purposes of FEALAC: (1) to increase mutual understanding; (2) to tap the potential cooperation in various areas from economy to culture, and (3) to expand common ground on important international political and economical issues (Tsunekawa 2003, 290). Setting up the aforementioned Vision Group also represents FEALAC’s flexibility.

The openness of FEALAC does not mean, however, that FEALAC can choose whatever agenda items it wants. Because FEALAC is a space for creating gradual cooperation, sensitive agendas for some state members are, albeit not completely excluded, less likely to be discussed.

(2) Trade

The most representative issue of an international regime is trade liberalization. FEALAC also refers to trade issues as an agenda item of interest, though it is virtually impossible to become a main topic. While Asian countries and some Latin American countries on the Pacific Rim (Mexico, Panama, and Chile) generally support free trade, many Latin American countries are historically negative toward free trade. In particular, Brazil, in spite of being the leading country of investment to and import from Asia, has shied away from trade liberalization deals.

Furthermore, the mainstream mode of trade liberalization has been shifting from lumped multilateral implementation under WTO to agreement among a small number of signatories. The latter’s advantage over the former lies in the fine-tuning of conditions between the states, which reduces the margin of exit from the negotiations. In reality, the numbers of agreements between Asian, between Latin American, and between Asian and Latin American countries are steadily increasing, especially in the twenty-first century (Table 2).23

Japan is also not an exception. Until the 1990s, its ministries in charge of trade agreements (Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Industry, and Agriculture, Forestry, and

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Table 2  Accumulated number of signed trade agreements, 1955-2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Asia</th>
<th>Latin America</th>
<th>Inter-Asia</th>
<th>Inter-Latin America</th>
<th>Asia-Latin America</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1955-59</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960-64</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965-69</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970-74</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975-79</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980-84</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985-89</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990-94</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995-99</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-04</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-09</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-14</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015-16</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: JETRO (2016)

Note: “Asia” are the Asian members countries of FEALAC: Australia, Brunei, Cambodia, China (including Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Macao), Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, New Zealand, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. “Latin America” are the Latin American members: Argentine, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Venezuela, and Uruguay. The column of “Asia” and “Latin America” shows the numbers of trade agreements with at lease one signatory from “Asia” and “Latin America”, respectively. Those of “Inter-Asia” and “Inter- Latin America” mean that all the signatories are exclusively from “Asia” and “Latin America”, respectively. That of “Asia- Latin America” means that agreements are signed between “Asia” and “Latin America”, including those with three or more signatories.

Fishery) upheld multilateralism. However, with the number of agreement offers from outside on the rise and an effort of a handful of public officers, Japan in the twenty-first century has
switched to promote bilateralism. An important point of Japan’s bilateralism approach is that it does not always seek a rigorous free trade. As is always emphasized, the aim is to conclude an EPA, which the Japanese government defines as an agreement for tightening broader economic relationships that include rule-setting for fair competition, protection of intellectual properties, and others.

Finally, Asian and Latin American countries, especially those on the Pacific Rim, already have various platforms for trade coordination. Besides bilateral negotiations, APEC, TPP, and Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) have been considered as principal multilateral frameworks. In addition, China’s recent globalizing strategy, which takes shape in the “Road and Belt” project and the establishment of its financial arms such as Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), is creating new spaces for regional and interregional trade negotiation.

Under the foregoing conditions, trade liberalization has not been able to become the first agenda item in FEALAC. To date, the best thing it can do for trade is to present a commitment to promote interregional trade. In fact, the recommendation of Vision Group published in 2013 endorses a revitalization of economic relations, but it never uses the word “liberalization” (FEALAC 2013).

(3) Democracy

Smith et al.’s book in 2003 proposed that Japan should promote democratization in the two regions. However, doing so in practice through FEALAC would complicate the relationship among the member countries. To carry out a democratization project, it is inevitable to undertake the sensitive work of diagnosing a country’s regime status to decide whether it is democratic or not. As mentioned in the introduction of this section, FEALAC has excluded democratization from the coverage of the topics of interest. Therefore, the issue at stake is

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24 For a detailed process of this shift, see Hatakeyama (2015).
26 RCEP does not have its own website and the greater part of the negotiations is in secret. MOFA says that RCEP comprises 10 ASEAN members and 6 Asian countries (Australia, China, Korea, India, Japan, and New Zealand) (http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/files/000231134.pdf (Accessed July 4, 2017)), while Myres (2017) reports that RCEP incorporates some Latin American members.
27 Although Road and Belt does not cover Latin America, Brazil, Peru, Venezuela, Bolivia, Chile, and Argentina have been granted prospective membership of AIIB. See “Members and Prospective Members of the Bank” https://www.aiib.org/en/about-aiib/governance/members-of-bank/index.html. (Accessed June 25, 2017)
whether Japan can persuade the other members to make FEALAC assume a role to conduct mutual checks on the participants’ domestic politics.

Unfortunately, the condition is not favorable. According to Polity IV, one of the most cited dataset of political regimes around the world, there are only seven country members qualified as “full democracy” (Australia, Mongolia, New Zealand, Chile, Uruguay, Costa Rica, and Japan), while more than 10 countries are rated as “anocracy” or “autocracy.” The wide gap between the degrees of democracy among the members makes it difficult to establish a consensus to authorize FEALAC to take a proactive approach toward democratization, which would be considered interference in internal affairs.

If the gap were not so wide, it would not be difficult to implement a mutual-check mechanism. A very good example is the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR). None of the UNASUR members has been an autocratic regime since 2002. In the course of the deepening crisis of political conflicts in Venezuela since the death of charismatic President Hugo Chávez, UNASUR has actively approached Venezuela to create opportunities to solve the country’s domestic unrests. In spite of the fact that the majority of the UNASUR members are not full democratic countries themselves and the leadership of the democratizing superpower, the United States, is absent, the UNASUR has been able to take actions to democratize the members’ domestic affairs.

(4) Intellectual platform: an issue left uncovered

Knowledge exchange has become one of the featured themes of today’s FEALAC. It can be interpreted as a consequence of taking the substantial international issues, namely trade liberalization and democratization, out of the FEALAC’s coverage. However, as a technological and educational vanguard, Japan has a comparative advantage in this area. In particular, medicine, environmental protection, and disaster prevention are among the most needed technologies for the improvement of human development. In fact, Japan has been intensifying people-to-people exchange since before the establishment of FEALAC. In the preparatory meetings for FEALAC, Japan proposed expanding the technology education program with Singapore to all the member states and convening symposiums of intellectuals (Takano 1999).

It would go against the intuition that, while having succeeded in implementing

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29 For more detailed information, see UNASUR website: www.unasursg.org. (Accessed June 25, 2017)
educational programs, Japan has failed to organize an iconic project proposed by the Vision Group: university platform. In June 2016, China officially held the kickoff conference of “East Asian partners dialogue on Latin American studies” in Shanghai. It adopted the “Shanghai Consensus,” which declared this platform to be an academic body that would take part in the decision-making on academic exchanges under the scheme of FEALAC. The second seminar is scheduled to take place in Macao.\(^\text{30}\)

Despite its positive attitude toward knowledge exchange, why did Japan not undertake a formation of an academic platform? This is partly due to the weak connection between the government and the Japanese academic circle of Latin American studies. The ministries in charge of Latin American affairs, especially MOFA, have numerous staff members in charge of collecting day-to-day information to make an optimal decision under severe time pressures in a rapidly changing political environment. As a consequence, the government does not make frequent contact with academics in its everyday operations (Miyachi 2016). Another crucial factor is, as mentioned above, a scarcity of specialists of international relations among Japanese Latin Americanists. If Japan had convened a platform, it would have faced the lack of human resources to manage it in a sustainable way.

IV Conclusion

Smith et al.’s expectation of Japan as a bridge between Asia and Latin America has been partially fulfilled. The majority of the ideas announced by Japanese government as to the future relationship with Latin America were based on traditional principles of Japanese diplomacy. Similarly, the actions taken by the Japanese government have almost been the same as those in the past in a qualitative sense, although a few remarkable policies, which include the Partnership Program, the participation in MINUSTAH, and the continuous support for FEALAC, were observed. In particular, supporting FEALAC is exceptional because it seeks to locate Latin America in the relationship with the politically and economically rising Asian region. While FEALAC has not succeeded in establishing a great presence in the international

\(^{30}\) http://www.fealac.org/File_download.jsp?Type=PROJECT02&AttachFileIdx=540 (Accessed June 25, 2017). The author participated in the first-day meeting with 15 Chinese institutions and six foreign institutions (Australia, Japan, Peru, Republic of Korea, Russia, Thailand).
community in comparison with well-known interregional organizations such as APEC, Japan has been engaging in FEALAC to promote people-to-people exchange programs, especially in the field of environmental protection and disaster prevention.

The argument of this article shows that the previous studies fail to grasp the continuity and the discontinuity of Japan’s diplomacy toward Latin America in the twenty-first century. Urabe’s expectation for “value diplomacy” has not yet been realized. His evaluation that the 2004 Vision is a new step is misleading as it is far from novel. Matsushita is correct in explaining the general character of the Japan-Latin America relationship, although he does not take seriously the newness of the Partnership Program and FEALAC. Finally, Yamaoka, along with ignoring the remarkable actions taken by the Japanese government mentioned above, follows diplomatic events superficially and jumps to the easy conclusion that Japan keeps following U.S. diplomacy as it did before.

In terms of the influence of U.S. diplomacy, Japan’s foreign policy toward Latin America is static in comparison with the relatively big swings of diplomatic attitudes among the U.S. presidencies. It implies that the institutional inertia of Japanese diplomacy matters and, therefore, that the United States is not so influential. A good example is the diplomatic conflict between the United States and so-called radical left presidents: Chávez and Nicolás Maduro of Venezuela, Rafael Correa of Ecuador, Evo Morales of Bolivia, and Daniel Ortega of Nicaragua. They cast antagonistic discourses against the United States, and Morales and Chávez even expelled the U.S. ambassador in 2008 and in 2009, respectively, while Japan, as the Appendix shows, has never ended contact with these countries. On the contrary, Japan has maintained a sound relationship with these countries.

The future of Japan’s diplomacy in the Asia-Latin American connection is intriguing. The biggest issue for Japan is whether it will put into practice the value diplomacy proposed by the 2014 Declaration. Japan’s potential role as a leader of democratic values has become salient by Trump’s taking office in the United States. Without the United States, Japan is the democratic country with the largest GDP of the world. The Japanese government will have to keep its promise by creating new policies for promoting democracy in foreign countries. If Japan seeks to do so in FEALAC, it will be epoch-making, although it is highly difficult due to the obstacle of the gap between the degrees of democracy among the members.

Another interesting issue is the possibility that FEALAC will become an arena for economic integration. Recently, MERCOSUR countries have opened themselves to free-trade-oriented countries. For instance, MERCOSUR is keeping contact with Pacific
Alliance, a pro-liberalization trade bloc of Latin America, to develop closer ties. If this liberalization turn spreads across South American, it would enable the member states to talk about taking a further step toward interregional economic integration in FEALAC.

**Appendix**

**Featured events of the Japanese government toward Latin America in *Diplomatic Bluebook* published between 2000 and 2016**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Economy</th>
<th>Immigrant-Culture</th>
<th>Humanity-Ecology</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>M-Biz-Bra, M-TA-Mex</td>
<td>C-Imi-Per, C-Imi-Bol, C-Imi-Col, C-Imi-Bra</td>
<td>Ai-EA-Ven, F-Nar-OAS, F-LM-OAS</td>
<td>Ai-EOM-Gua, M-GI-Mex, M-GI-PreFEALAC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Ai-PR-Col</td>
<td>Ai-Hum-Col</td>
<td></td>
<td>M-GI-PreFEALAC, M-GI-Carib, Ai-EOM-Per</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>M-FTA-Mex</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>F-GI-CARICOM, M-GI-FEALAC, Ai-EOM-Per, Ai-EOM-Nic, M-Gov-Cub, M-HR-Cub</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>N-EPA-Mex, M-Biz-CA, M-GI-MERCOSUR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M-GI-CARICOM, M-GI-SICA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>N-EPA-Mex, N-FTA-Chi, M-GI-MERCOSUR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M-GI-CARICOM, M-GI-SICA, M-GI-FEALAC, Ai-EOM-Gua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>N-EPA-Mex, M-GI-MERCOSUR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M-GI-Mex</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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31 For the latest meeting of the two blocs, see ICTSD (2017).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>M-EPA-Chi</th>
<th>M-EPA-Mex</th>
<th>M-Biz-Bra, C-Biz-CA, C-Misc-MERCOSUR (tourist office opening)</th>
<th>C-Cul-CA, C-Cul-Mex</th>
<th>M-GI-CA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 M-GI-Bra, A-GI-Chi, F-Misc-Pan (canal expansion)</td>
<td>M-Biz-Col</td>
<td>Ai-Hum-Hai, Ai-Eco-Guy, A-Eco-Chi</td>
<td>M-GI-FEALAC, Ai-EOM-Gua, Ai-EOM-Col</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 N-EPA-Per, A-GI-Mex</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ai-EA-Hai</td>
<td>M-GI-FEALAC, M-GI-SICA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Note: Each event is codified in the format “Action-Issue-Counterpart.” Abbreviations are as follows:

**Action:** A-agreement, Ai-aid, C-ceremony/fair, M-meeting, N-negotiation


**Counterpart:** Countries are abbreviated into the three initial letters. For example, Argentina is “Arg”. “Dom” is Commonwealth of Dominica. International organizations’ abbreviations are official one; Caribbean Community is CARICOM.

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