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**CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF THE
PRESIDENCY & CONGRESS**

**FOSTERING COOPERATION BETWEEN
THE US CONGRESS & DIET OF JAPAN**

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The Hon. Glenn Nye
President & CEO

The Hon. Mike Rogers
David M. Abshire Chairholder

Dan Mahaffee
Senior Vice President, Director of Policy

Hidetoshi Azuma
Senior Fellow

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Introduction

As the global competition for technology and innovation leadership grows more intense, the geopolitical, economic, and technological importance of the U.S.-Japan alliance becomes apparent. In both countries, there has been a realization among policymakers of the scope of the challenge posed by the economic, technological, and military policies of the Communist Party of China (CCP). However, economic interdependence makes the competition more complex than the binary blocs of the Cold War, and many in the private sector still strive to balance their economic interests in mainland China with the growing risk of doing business there. Still from COVID lockdowns to executive detentions, the Hong Kong crackdown to the Uyghur genocide, the path of Xi Jinping, his consolidation of power over the Chinese Communist Party, and the geopolitical danger become clear.

Both nations are now moving to address this competition, while navigating the complexity of the economic and private sector interests. As like-minded partners in terms of democratic values, rule of law, and private enterprise, the United States and Japan are also economic and technological leaders alongside their other G-7 partners. Given the importance of the relationship, it is important to foster deeper ties between both nations' legislatures—the United States Congress and the Diet of Japan.

Over the past two years, the Center for the Study of the Presidency & Congress (CSPC) has sought to analyze how the U.S. Congress and Japanese Diet have recognized and responded to the issues of economic security and threat perceptions of competition with the CCP. CSPC researchers engaged in off-the-record in-person and virtual discussions with U.S. and Japanese lawmakers about shared approaches by the legislatures, as well as strengthening avenues for legislator-to-legislator dialogues.

While the pandemic made in-person travel more difficult, CSPC hosted online symposia for lawmakers and their staff members to discuss areas of cooperation between the U.S. Congress and the Diet of Japan. CSPC President and CEO Glenn Nye and Senior Vice President, Director of Policy Dan Mahaffee, both based in Washington, D.C., traveled to Tokyo for meetings with Japanese legislators, Diet and Ministry staff, political analysts, and private sectors leaders, as well as related research on these topics. CSPC Senior Fellow Hidetoshi Azuma, based in Tokyo, served as an interlocutor in Japan, and briefed Congressional staff in Washington at regular intervals on developments in Japan and prospects for inter-legislature dialogue.

Based on these efforts, the following report briefly explores the domestic political dynamics in Japan and the United States; provides an overview of both nations' legislative responses to

economic and geotech security challenges; identifies challenges to Congress-Diet cooperation; and recommends solutions for policymakers in both Washington and Tokyo.

Politics & the Recognition of Competition

Recognizing this competition, the legislatures of both nations have passed legislation to pursue industrial policy, promote economic security, secure supply chains, and strengthen national defense. Furthermore, formal and informal groups of lawmakers have begun to dive into the details of economic security, technology competition, and the broader geopolitical environment. These extensive accomplishments have come despite political tumult in both nations.

In the United States, a polarized body politic is struggling to deal with heated disagreements on abortion, gun control, immigration, inflation, a growing debt, and doubts about the very health of American democracy. A growing sense of isolation and retrenchment has been halted by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, but support for Kyiv is slightly, but increasingly, partisan in outlook. Despite all this both parties have united around the need to respond and strengthen the United States and work with allies for the competition with the Chinese Communist Party.

In Japan, there was a tectonic and tragic shift in the political landscape with the shocking assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who had been a stalwart for Japan's security normalization. Efforts to pursue such normalization—the expansion of the Japanese defense budget, expansion of defense authorities and platforms, and increased interoperability with U.S. and other allied militaries—has long been a lightning rod issue given Japan's post-World War II tradition of pacifism and the historical tensions raised with regional nations by Japanese re-armament. However, under Prime Minister Abe's leadership, Japan had also emphasized diplomatic and doctrinal engagement in the region, notably via the Quad framework with Australia, India, Japan, and the United States, as well as the concept of the "free and open Indo-Pacific." To varying extents, the politics in Canberra and Delhi have also shifted on the perception of the threat from Beijing.

Following the Abe assassination, the long-in-power Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) was also rocked by the follow-on scandal involving LDP lawmakers' ties to the South Korean Unification Church. Still, as in the United States, the threat perception of China and the realization of the return of geopolitics following the invasion of Ukraine has pushed Japan through these political gyres towards a more robust economic security and defense posture.

While the Japanese Diet has long been more inclined towards pursuing trade deals—as evidenced by Japan’s leadership of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP)—the U.S. Congress has been considered more skeptical of trade given the concerns regarding the environment and labor among the base of the Democratic Party and the Republican Party’s shift on trade under the leadership of then-, and now former President Trump. In terms of the next steps on U.S. trade policy, the Biden administration has put forward the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF), of which Japan is a leading participant. While IPEF focuses on regulatory alignment, supply chain management, counter-corruption, and standards-setting, designed to address the broader economic and technology competition, it falls short of providing the market access provisions of traditional trade agreements. This has allowed it to bypass Congressional approval thus far, and Congress has expressed concerns over both the procedural end-around as well as the weakness of an agreement without market access. Furthermore, the mixed Congressional response to the U.S.-Japan deal on critical minerals to address the new requirements of the Inflation Reduction Act suggests that there are promising steps forward, but still more progress to be made, on shifting U.S. Congressional attitudes towards trade. Positive momentum on trade—and broadening the Congressional understanding of the importance of the U.S.-Japan economic and technological relationship—is driven by greater attention to the U.S. posture vis-à-vis the CCP.

Therefore, the overall political dynamics reflect the growing sense of the challenge posed by Xi Jinping’s consolidation of power and the changing policies of the CCP. The military and diplomatic challenge is also accompanied by a greater sense of the economic and technological contest. However, the complexity of U.S. domestic politics often has U.S. policymakers focused on the threat, and the reliability of the relationship with Japan can result in good relations with Tokyo being taken for granted. Still, there are some barriers to stronger U.S.-Japan relations that reflect memories of past economic competition. As lawmakers on both sides of the Pacific increasingly reflect upon what must be done for the competition with the CCP, they will benefit from seeing and elevating the importance of the U.S.-Japan relationship and strengthening legislator-to-legislator dialogue.

The Legislative Response

In both the United States and Japan, lawmakers have responded to their perceptions of the threat of the CCP in military and economic/technological domains. Reflecting perhaps the relative strengths and shortcomings of each nation, the United States has focused on economic efforts—what can openly be called industrial policy related to semiconductors, electric vehicles, batteries, and other green technologies. Japan, on the other hand, has moved not only to strengthen its protections of economic security and protection of private sector and industrial

secrets, but also more revolutionary shifts in security normalization. These include a doubling of the defense budget and the issuance of a National Security Strategy shifting Japan’s defense policy to work closer with the United States in responding to regional crises and expanding Japan’s defense platforms and doctrine to better deter regional threats.

The CSPC reports on Geotech issued in 2022 and 2023 provide in-depth detail about both nations’ legislative efforts—informed in part by the dialogues facilitated by CSPC between the Congress and Diet.¹ These summaries are not intended to be exhaustive, rather to highlight the crosswalks in legislative approaches and impact on U.S.-Japan relations.

U.S. Industrial Policy

In the United States, the twin pillars of a new approach to economic policy and open industrial policy are the CHIPS and Science Act and the Inflation Reduction Act. The **CHIPS and Science Act** was designed to address concerns about vulnerabilities in the U.S. supply chain for semiconductors, while continuing U.S. leadership in cutting-edge chip technology. The legislation provided \$52.7 billion via the Commerce Department for U.S. domestic chipmaking—both legacy nodes and advanced—while also providing \$100 million, over five years, for the U.S. State Department’s International Technology Security and Innovation Fund.

Despite this large initial outlay, it will take time to construct these domestic semiconductor facilities and industry experts believe the \$50-plus billion is only the beginning of what will be needed to develop and support domestic semiconductor manufacturing capacity as lawmakers intended. In the initial guidelines for the CHIPS Act subsidies and grants, the Biden administration has applied a range of guardrails and criteria upon which projects will be assessed. While a guardrail that companies that accept the funds cannot expand production capacity in China is a reasonable protection of taxpayer funds, others related to stock buybacks, childcare, labor benefits, etc. raise questions of politicization of the process and raise questions about bipartisan support for inevitable follow-on funding.

The U.S. **Inflation Reduction Act** also directs nearly \$400 billion to federal climate programs, and, when combined with the CHIPS and Science Act and the 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, amounts to what McKinsey estimates to be \$2 trillion in new federal spending over the next decade.² This massive push by the U.S. government to support domestic supply chains and green energy has strained relations with close allies including Japan, South Korea, and the European Union. The United States and Japan did move to address the IRA requirements

¹ <https://www.thepresidency.org/reports>

² <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-and-social-sector/our-insights/the-inflation-reduction-act-heres-whats-in-it>

regarding batteries and critical minerals with a bilateral agreement that meets the IRA's standards for a free-trade agreement. The negotiations continue with the European Union at the time of this writing.

More broadly, the U.S. Congress's outlay of subsidies, grants, and credits, as well as the Biden White House's administration of the programs marks a sea change expansion in the scope and conduct of U.S. industrial policy. The coordination of these efforts with allies and partners is critical to avoiding beggar-thy-neighbor competition with our friends that ultimately benefits our adversaries. The U.S. Congress will play a critical role in follow-on legislation and appropriations, as well as the oversight of the Biden and future administrations' policies. Congress will also play a critical role in further legislative efforts such as potential outbound investment review, export controls, data privacy and management legislation, and any hope for a more robust trade agenda.

Congress is also playing a critical role beyond policymaking in providing a forum for developing a U.S. strategy for the competition with the CCP and raising U.S. and allied public awareness about this challenge. The creation of the **U.S. House Select Committee on the Strategic Competition Between the United States and the Communist Party of China**, the "Select CCP Committee" led by Chairman Mike Gallagher (R-WI) and Ranking Member Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-IL) will provide such a forum. The committee has emphasized, both in its name and the leaders' remarks, that the focus is on competition with the CCP, not the Chinese people nor Chinese civilization. While the committee will not have legislative authority—instead making its recommendations to other committees of jurisdiction—its hearings and findings will provide an opportunity for strategic thinking regarding this competition, our strengths, our weaknesses, and what we and our allies and partners all gain from working together.

Finally, leading U.S. lawmakers have **strengthened their outreach to Taiwan**, most notably with the visit of former Speaker Nancy Pelosi to Taipei and the meeting of Speaker Kevin McCarthy, the leaders of the Select CCP Committee, and other legislators with Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen at the Reagan Library in Simi Valley, California. These meetings prompted retaliation in the form of People's Liberation Army exercises and heated rhetoric from Beijing. The issue is far more sensitive for Japanese leaders, and any political support for Taiwan must be accompanied by the necessary diplomatic and military efforts to deter a PLA invasion of the island. To fail to do so risks reversing President Theodore Roosevelt's advice, as legislators could speak loudly and carry little in the way of a stick.

Japan's Economic Security & Security Normalization

Recognizing the scope of the geopolitical and geoeconomic challenge ahead, Japan has also embarked on a range of legislative and policy measures that reflect a changing mindset and opportunities for U.S.-Japan coordination.

In terms of economic security, the **May 2022 Economic Security Promotion Act (ESPA)** reflected Japan's realization of the economic competition at hand. Japan had experienced the impact of previous economic disputes with Beijing—including past rare earth embargoes, political and social campaigns in mainland China against Japanese companies, and ongoing detentions of Japanese executives—but the shift in CCP policies under Xi Jinping and the Russian invasion of Ukraine prompted action. The four pillars of the ESPA address: supply chain security for critical products and the creations of domestic capacity or stockpiling; protections for stable provision of essential infrastructure services; promotion for the R&D and commercialization of critical technologies; and reforms to the patent system for protecting sensitive intellectual property.

Reflecting growing public concern about Japan's defense posture and the threat from Communist China and North Korea also resulted in the December 2022 issuance of the new **National Security Strategy (NSS)** and the accompanying plan for a defense buildup. The major step forward in the new NSS is the authorization of counterstrike capability to attack missile launch sites in enemy territory. This reflects a sea change in Japan's regard for what were once considered offensive strike, rather than purely defensive, military platforms—as counterstrike capabilities are also inherently offensive. Indeed, the new NSS *de facto* recognizes Japan's first strike capabilities marking a significant departure from the country's postwar pacifism. This is reflected in Japan's plan to purchase U.S.-made Tomahawk cruise missiles as well as to develop its own strike missile capabilities.

The NSS and Japan's new security posture go beyond counterstrike capabilities and include an expansion of the Self Defense Forces as well as new Marine-like units for operations in amphibious and littoral environments. Acquiring F-35B fifth-generation aircraft and joint sixth generation aircraft development efforts with the United Kingdom and Italy also demonstrate efforts to improve naval and land-based aviation capabilities. Reflecting the security challenge and the need for these new capabilities and platforms, in December 2022 the Japanese cabinet unveiled and in February 2023 the Diet lower house approved, a **26.3% year-over-year increase in the Japanese defense budget, to total ¥6.8 trillion (\$51.4 billion)**. The plan furthermore promises to double Japan's defense budget from the current 1% of GDP to 2% by 2027. Combined with the 2022 NSS, this reflects a greater normalization and resourcing of Japan's

defense and will improve the prospects for U.S.-Japan joint regional deterrence, security operations, and cooperation in times of crisis.

Japan also continues to serve as an important multilateral leader. Its **upcoming leadership of the G-7 summit** will convene heads of state and government, but is reflective of the role that Japan plays among the leading industrialized democracies. The United States and Japan also cooperate in many international standards-setting bodies, development banks, and other international forums. In these bodies the United States and Japan can lead on economic matters, technological standards, counter corruption efforts, environmental protections, digital freedom, and other important diplomatic and political aspects of this competition. Congressional and Diet oversight and understanding of these efforts is important.

Finally, as the U.S. Congress has developed its own formal and informal groups to look at economic security, its relationship with national security, and other aspects of grand strategy and global competitiveness, Japanese lawmakers have also done the same. It will be important for Japanese lawmakers to find ways to liaise with the Select CCP Committee in the U.S. House. An informal group of cross-party lawmakers from both the lower and upper houses of the Diet participated in CSPC symposia and other outreach to U.S. lawmakers. Following virtual meetings during the pandemic, the CSPC team has continued to liaise with these Members of the Diet for their reflections on Japanese policymaking and cooperation with the United States. This and similar groups are a useful conduit for virtual dialogues with U.S. lawmakers and future in-person CODELs to Tokyo or visits by Members of the Diet to Washington.

Challenges for the Relationship

Deepening ties between the United States Congress and the Diet of Japan face multiple headwinds. While we do not discount the existing ties—like the work of the U.S.-Japan Caucus, U.S.-Japan Parliamentary Exchange, Mansfield Foundation programs, or various Congressional delegation (CODEL) opportunities for group travel—what we describe are broader impediments that we identified to deepening those efforts or developing new ones.

First, and foremost, there are the demands of time and lawmakers' bandwidth. The relationship is sometimes taken for granted given the many demands on lawmakers' schedules, as well as the inevitable gravity of day-to-day politics and crises. Expanded lawmaker-to-lawmaker engagement should move beyond the regular calendar of cultural events to more strategic forums and dialogues. While events like the Cherry Blossom Festivals, Imperial Birthday, and other valuable cultural bridges are well-appreciated and supported by both the U.S. Congress and Japanese officials, they should complement deepened inter-parliamentary dialogues on

trade, economics, technology, and national security. The depth of exchanges and legislative participation in regularly-scheduled transatlantic events—e.g. NATO Parliamentary Assembly, legislators’ participation in the Munich Security Conference, etc.—should be a model for what can be achieved in deepened U.S.-Japan exchange.

Engagement from the Japanese side should reflect what Japan contributes to the U.S. economy, technological innovation, and global national security. Following the U.S.-Japan trade tensions in the 1980’s and early 90’s as well as the overhang of the “Lost Decade”, Japan has opted for a more subtle approach to its relationship with the United States and regional partners. Today, as competition with authoritarians comes into focus, U.S. policymakers are looking for what strengths our like-minded allies and partners can bring to the table. Few are stronger than Japan. In some areas of industrial policy, financial influence, and regional power, Japan has strengths and lessons-learned that are beneficial to the United States. So too are U.S.-Japan economic interdependence and the employment and investment of many Japanese multinational companies working in the United States.

The strength of Japan is also becoming clearer in the emphasis on building defense capabilities and reformed doctrine via both the new National Security Strategy and the massive increase in Japanese defense spending. This is growing strength that Japan can demonstrate to U.S. lawmakers. One Member of Congress recently commented that it would be worth simply spending additional effort pointing out to U.S. lawmakers how recent Japanese policy initiatives are changing the game in the Indo Pacific, setting a strong example for others to emulate, and supporting common security goals with the United States. Likewise, it will be important to deepen U.S.-Japan defense cooperation from platform procurement to intelligence gathering to joint command. For long-term defense budgeting and planning, legislator-to-legislator dialogue will be important, as will dialogue amongst staff. What continues to hamper deeper U.S.-Japan intelligence and defense cooperation is the lack of a formal security clearance system in Japan. Given debate over this topic, it is worth noting the advantages and disadvantages of the U.S. system, as well as also emphasizing that the U.S. model automatically grants a clearance to elected officials based on the voters’ will.

There are also fundamental structural differences—constitutional and bureaucratic—which create difficulties in one-to-one exchange between U.S. policymakers and their Japanese counterparts. The following examples can affect how dialogue is facilitated on policy matters. First and foremost, Japan’s parliamentary model has bureaucracies reporting directly to ministers who sit in the Diet, while the U.S. Legislative-Executive separation of powers splits the legislative process from the executive bureaucracy. U.S. Congressional offices have a greater number of staff (Senate offices enjoying even more numerous staff) for both policymaking and

constituent services—plus related staff for legislating and oversight on committees of jurisdiction—while Japanese policymaking is largely handled by ministry staff.

Acknowledging that the Executive Branch handles much of the execution of various aspects of U.S.-Japan relations, the Congress plays an important role in long-term strategy via its appropriations and oversight roles. U.S. Congressional dynamics can be driven by the partisan demands of majority-versus-minority politics and what party controls the Oval Office. In Japanese politics, the various centers of political gravity are the factions within the LDP, but the diverse breadth of opposition parties in Japan also includes religious parties and the Communist Party of Japan (CPJ). Because of the LDP's *de facto* single party rule status, the Japanese Opposition is chiefly interested in checking the ruling party, though the cross-party effort on Japan's 2022 economic security legislation, could serve as a model. Involving the Japanese opposition in bilateral legislative dialogue to shape its economic and national security perceptions is an important imperative for the U.S.-Japan relationship. Given the lingering cultural pacifism in Japan, bilateral legislative dialogue would be best done in an off-the-record format, especially if the Japanese opposition were to be involved. Given the track record of convening numerous of the off-the-record roundtable discussions, CSPC is uniquely positioned to lead such efforts.

Finally, while it may seem obvious, time zones, physical distance, and cultural differences will continue to be impediments that must be overcome. U.S. and Japanese lawmakers will continue to have different ways of communicating with each other and their constituents. Neither side will or should change their customs and habits, but rather, given the importance of the relationship, both should take the time to better understand each other, how to best present information to one's colleagues, and, despite the odd hours or long flights, invest in bridging the divide with opportunities for dialogue.

Conclusions

The importance of the U.S.-Japan relationship for the future of both nations' economic prosperity and national security requires a sustained and deepened dialogue between the U.S. Congress and the Diet of Japan. Coordination on economic security, technology innovation, and intelligence and defense are critical for both countries in their approach to the geopolitical and geoeconomics challenges ahead.

While opportunities to strengthen existing programs should be embraced—and we hope that post-pandemic normalization increases in-person dialogue and travel opportunities—new avenues should be fostered that focus in greater depth on economic security, military power,

and grand strategy. Models of transatlantic cooperation should be considered in strengthening the bilateral, and potentially multilateral, legislative exchange between the U.S. Congress, Japanese Diet, and the legislatures of other allies and partners. As technological innovation, defense procurement, and military planning are critical for the geopolitical challenges ahead, we hope that the legislators' can bring these items to the top of their agenda. As the U.S. Congress now seats a committee focused on competition with the CCP, it will be critical for Members of the Diet and other Japanese officials to liaise, formally and informally, with its members and staff.

Dialogues between the United States and Japan should be structured to emphasize how the relationship best strengthens both sides' prosperity and security. Showing Japan's strengths in innovation, industry, and finance, as well as its growing military might and reformed doctrine, all demonstrate the value of the relationship to U.S. policymakers. U.S. lawmakers should also be more publicly engaged in their outreach to Japan, including bipartisan CODEL visits, demonstrating to their constituents the importance of the U.S.-Japan relationship. Like any good friendship, it should operate on the principle that our agreements are lauded publicly, while our disagreements are respectfully discussed privately.

The agenda for U.S.-Japan legislative dialogue will also be important. Cultural events and travel exchanges provide opportunities to improve understanding, but in the long-run it is important to build meaningful, deep-seeded partnerships. The United States and Japan align upon a range of economic, technological, and security issues, but still there are differences to be overcome. The Congressional response to the post-Inflation Reduction Act critical minerals agreement with Japan reflects how a range of matters from batteries and critical minerals to the decarbonization of transportation and industry all have potential fault lines in U.S.-Japan relations. Dialogue now on these topics—such as the green transition, advanced semiconductors, AI/machine learning, biotech, digital freedom and data privacy, and shared geopolitical and economic approaches to our interests—can ensure a more coordinated approach by the United States and Japan. Such an approach can also serve as a model and center of gravity for other important bilateral and multilateral alliances and partnerships.

Finally, reflecting the differences in how policy is set in Washington versus Tokyo, future avenues of staff exchange should promote dialogue between policy staff in U.S.

Congressional offices and committees and the respective bureaucrats in the Japanese ministries. This will provide the most direct opportunity for exchanges on policymaking and legislation related to economic security, technology policy, and national defense.

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President & CEO, Center for the Study of the Presidency & Congress