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An Interdisciplinary Study of Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV)

Political Origins of the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers, 1960–1965:

Why the State Sends Young Volunteers Abroad

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# Political Origins of the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers, 1960–1965: Why the State Sends Young Volunteers Abroad

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#### Abstract

This paper examines the political origins of the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV) through the lens of two research questions: (1) Why did the Japanese government undertake the JOCV project in 1965? and (2) Why did the project pursue multifaceted objectives – technical assistance, international friendship, and youth development? These questions are important for two reasons. First, as the country was struggling economically, experiencing domestic turmoil, and vulnerable to international conflict, it is surprising that the government would begin sending young volunteers to developing countries. Second, the JOCV's objectives are inconsistent with each other, and therefore their coexistence requires further examination. Using a multi-level analysis strategy, we explore international and domestic factors. The analysis of international structures focused on the Japan-US relationship and the Cold War in Asia, and proved that two factors motivated the Japanese government to create the JOCV: Prime Minister Ikeda's desire to approach economic development in Southeast Asia; and the US government's demand that Japan take some action regarding the US goal of expanding the idea of the Peace Corps. Our inquiry into the domestic structures focused on youth problems such as unemployment in rural areas, the anti-Security Treaty movement, and rising crime in cities. We have discussed that leaders of youth associations and young members of the governing Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) considered overseas voluntary service like the Kennedy's Peace Corps as a potential solution to these problems. The analysis of agential factors sheds lights on the policy-making. There was disagreement between actors over the definition of the new project. While a coalition of youth associations and young members of the LDP advocated an overseas voluntary service project, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) insisted on dispatching experts rather than volunteers. Eventually, the two sides reached a compromise: the JOCV would be defined as a project providing both technical assistance and youth volunteers; and it should be managed under the supervision of MOFA. Finally, this study demonstrates that when the state sends young volunteers abroad, external ideas and political actors' concern for youth development matter. It also implies that state-sponsored volunteering can be defined as a hybrid of the state project and individual activities, which neither realism nor constructivism in international politics can solely explain.

**Keywords**: Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV), youth associations, Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), policy-making process

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#### 1. Introduction

The Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV) is an international voluntary service<sup>1</sup> that the Japanese government provides each year to developing countries through Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). Since its foundation in 1965, JOCV has sent a total of 38,561 young adults from Japan (21,020 males and 17,541 females) to help economic and social development in 88 countries around the world (as of October 2013). This volunteer project has three objectives: (1) provide technical assistance to developing countries, (2) promote friendship and mutual understanding with foreign countries, and (3) widen the perspectives of young Japanese people about the world (MOFA 1965). Volunteers are selected from among Japanese applicants and dispatched to host countries after receiving special training. Thus, the government identifies it as a national participatory ODA project.

While this overview of JOCV and its mission seems simple, it implies three interesting facts. First, it is remarkable that Japanese people were willing to join this international volunteer project at its launch in 1965, only 20 years after the end of the Second World War—a time of such political, economic, and cultural uncertainty for the country. Second, the project was unusual in its pursuit of divergent goals: two externally oriented objectives, (1) and (2), and one domestic objective (3), relating to youth education. Third, having so far sent over 38,000 young Japanese adults to developing countries, and now approaching its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2015, JOCV has enjoyed conspicuous success.

From these facts arise two research questions: (1) Why did the Japanese government undertake the JOCV project?; and (2) Why did the project pursue three different objectives? To address these questions, we need to delve into the actors' motives, the political process, and the institutional settings for establishing the JOCV. Our focus will be on such actors as youth

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> International voluntary service is defined as "an organized period of engagement and contribution to society sponsored by public or private organizations, and recognized and valued by society, with no or minimal monetary compensation to the participant," who serve at least part of the time in another country (Sherraden et al. 2006: 165).

associations, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA).

This paper is organized as follows: the second section explains the significance of our research questions and presents our analytical framework with a critical overview of previous studies. The third and fourth sections will explore international and domestic structural factors, respectively. The fifth section analyses domestic agential factors in the political process of creating JOCV. Finally, we draw some conclusions.

# 2. Why JOCV matters

# 2.1. Questions about JOCV

Why does JOCV, a youth volunteer project well known in Japan but seemingly not so influential in Japanese and international politics, matter? To understand the significance of this study, we need to discuss in detail the importance of our two research questions.

The first question examines the Japanese government's motives for the JOCV project. This is all the more interesting given the state of the country in the 1960s. While enjoining high economic growth to the extent of becoming a member of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), a club of developed countries, in 1963, Japan was facing serious problems such as a widening income gap and increased poverty (Hashimoto 2010, 25). Japan's real GDP per capita in 1965 was US\$5,934, much lower than the US (\$13,419), Canada (\$10,701), the U.K. (\$9,752), France (\$9,362), and even Argentina (\$6,371) (Maddison 2001).

Hayato Ikeda, a member of the LDP, assumed the office of Prime Minister in 1960, and was succeeded by Eisaku Sato in 1964. Though the LDP held a majority in the National Diet during this time, political confrontations with opposition parties were fierce. Favoring peaceful and unarmed neutrality, the Social Democratic Party of Japan (SDPJ), which held half

as many seats in the Diet as the LDP, fiercely opposed the new Japan-US Security Treaty signed by the LDP government in 1960. The impact of the treaty was so widespread in Japanese society that students, laborers, and the urban middle class also mounted protests against the treaty in 1960, causing domestic turmoil. Japan also faced challenges on the international stage. As the Communist Party of China increasingly threatened the Indochina Peninsula during the 1960s, Prime Minister Ikeda stiffened his resolve to play an important role as a member of the West, fulfilling the "equal partnership" between Japan and the US that President John. F. Kennedy sought (Yoshitsugu 2009, 36-39).

In 1965, as the country was struggling economically, experiencing domestic turmoil, and vulnerable to international conflict, it is surprising that the Japanese government would begin sending young volunteers to developing countries. This was only four years after the Kennedy Administration established its famous overseas voluntary service: the Peace Corp, in 1961, and of course Japan was then far behind the US in terms of economic and political power. Moreover, many Japanese people believed that their young adults would not be able to work as volunteers because they thought that only Christians, such as American youth, were willing to do it (JICA 1985, 17).

We can also address the question of the government's motives in general terms. Research has acknowledged that since the state cannot solve such problems as conflicts, poverty, and inter-cultural misunderstandings, the focus shifts to the potential of volunteers (Sherraden et al. 2006).<sup>2</sup> The literature, however, has not paid enough attention to the motives of the state. This paper will fill the academic gap by studying the state of Japan, exploring how and why the state launches international volunteering projects such as JOCV and the Peace Corps. With this focus, our case study will also contribute a unique Asian perspective to the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Their topics are multidisciplinary: the role of international volunteers in global civil society, its effectiveness as a mode of developmental aid, capacity development of individual volunteers, international comparison of volunteer projects, etc.

literature, which is not well known to students in Europe and North America (Sherraden et al. 2006).

Second, our study will attempt to explain the JOCV's multifaceted objectives, which have remained as technical assistance, international friendship, and youth development ever since its establishment. These goals, however, are inconsistent with each other, and therefore their coexistence requires further examination. For example, while technical assistance is foreign-oriented and based on volunteers' particular expertise, youth development is domestic-oriented and educational.

Comparing the JOVC's multifaceted orientation with other countries' voluntary services will provide clarity. The US Peace Corps has had a strong orientation towards youth development and international cultural exchange rather than technical assistance since its foundation. The Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) of the U.K. emphasizes the importance of technical assistance based on volunteers' expertise. While the objectives of these two organizations differ from each other, they each maintain an internal consistency and singular focus for their goals. In contrast, the JOCV has had diverse and multiple goals. This paper will explore why.

## 2.2. Analytical Framework to Integrate Agency and Structure

Before presenting our analytical framework, we will briefly survey the literature regarding the history of JOCV, most of which has been written in Japanese.

As practitioners, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and its affiliated organizations have published several reports emphasizing the roles of actors such as leaders of private youth associations and young LDP members of the Diet (JICA 1985; JICA 2001; JICA 2004). The former include Ichiro Suetsugu and Yoshiaki Sagae, who are now admired as the "founding fathers of JOCV," and who considered it necessary to educate young people in the aftermath of WWII and seriously worried about jobless youth in rural areas, most of who were

the second or third sons of farmers. The latter, represented by later Prime Ministers Noboru Takeshita, Sosuke Uno, and particularly Toshiki Kaifu, was influenced by the Peace Corps that Kennedy established. The JICA reports, however, pay much less attention to international and domestic structures and institutions, which might shed light on these individuals' motives and behavior.

Academic studies are historical. For example, Fujimoto and Suzaki (2004) discuss the effects of the politics and ideologies of the LDP and Nippon Kensei Kai (Young Men's Association for Japanese Reconstruction) – a youth association that Suetsugu founded – on the formation of JOVC, and also examine the pressure applied by the US government. Exploring the ideology of Kensei Kai, which maintained that Japan should be a "moral state" and educate young people through physical activities, Nihei (2011, 253-258) concludes that the LDP and MOFA accepted Kensei Kai's plan for overseas volunteers and promoted it in cooperation with private youth associations. Ito (2005) considers the foundation of JOCV to be one of the government policies for young men in rural areas, and emphasizes a link between JOCV and public youth organizations (for example, Sangyo Kaihatsu Seinen Tai [Industrial Development Youth Corps: IDYC]).

While focusing more on structural factors than the JICA reports, these studies have empirical shortcomings. Fujimoto and Suzaki don't provide evidence based on primary sources in their analysis of Japan-US relations and also ignore the role of MOFA, which had jurisdiction over the JOCV project. Nihei's study lacks an analysis of MOFA's motives and pays no attention to the fact that there was a major difference between Kensei Kai and MOFA in how to characterize the project. Finally, Ito explores mainly domestic issues in rural areas, thereby missing the problems of urban youth and the role of the US government.

Thus, the literature focuses, in a one-sided manner, on either individual or structural factors. In order to complement the literature and analyze the political process surrounding the establishment of JOVC, this paper will integrate agential, and domestic and international

structural factors. Our integrative approach is the "funnel" strategy as defined by Mahoney and Snyder (1999), who reviewed comparative political studies on regime change. This strategy combines variables from five levels of analysis: (1) macro-structural (international system), (2) domestic-structural (socioeconomic factors), (3) institutional (formal domestic organizations), (4) social group (subjectively defined groups), and (5) leadership (individuals who lead domestic organizations and social groups).

Using this strategy, the analyst sequentially moves down from the "top" of the funnel, or the macro-structural level, through domestic-structural, institutional, and social group level, toward the "bottom" or the leadership level. These moves across levels are unidirectional because causation is treated as non-reciprocal between levels. Once the analyst determines that the explanatory power of a level has been exhausted, then he or she shifts to a lower level. "The funnel metaphor describes the process through which more causes are accounted for as the analysis descends from higher to lower levels of aggregation. ...As the analysis shifts downward, the range of possible outcomes contracts as the explanatory force of increasingly more variables is exhausted" (Mahoney and Snyder 1999, 12).<sup>3</sup>

Although the funnel strategy enables us to explain an outcome by integrating the agential and structural variables, it has limitations (Mahoney and Snyder 1999, 13). First, this strategy assumes that structural factors cannot be sufficient causes of human action, thereby fostering the perception by the analyst that actor maneuverability always exists despite structural constraints. Second, the strategy ignores the possibility of interactive causation across levels of analysis. This one-way causation inhibits the consideration of how agential variables influence structural ones.

Nevertheless, these limitations are not crucial shortcomings for a study of a relatively short-term political process such as ours. Regarding the first limitation, the assumption that

7

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> A "filter" metaphor may be better than the "funnel" to describe this strategy, because in the process of analysis the dependent variable is explained more clearly as we move down to lower levels, which reminds us of filtering water.

structural factors cannot be sufficient causes is in keeping with a short-term process in which both domestic or international structures and their effects remain constant. In fact, our case of Japan covers a short period from 1960 to 1965, in which international and domestic structural factors were presumably stable and constant. Thus, there is every reason to assume that actors enjoy considerable room to maneuver. Using the same reasoning, we can also assume that structures are not influenced by agencies, thereby justifying one-way causation across levels of analysis.

To observe the effect of structural factors, we will examine the behavior of agencies and identify whether that behavior is determined by their ideas and beliefs or by the structures and institutions in which they act. Agencies in this paper include both individuals and governmental and private organizations, such as political leaders, politicians, the LDP and MOFA, and private youth associations and their leaders. For our structural analysis, we will deal with international political structures and domestic socio-economic conditions in rural and urban areas.

#### 3. International Structural Factors

This section examines how international structures shaped the Japanese government's motives for founding JOCV. After describing the course of events in the policy-making, it will discuss the Cold War in Southeast Asia, the Japan-US Security Treaty, and US efforts toward diffusing the idea of the Peace Corps.

The first official announcement on the establishment of JOCV was likely made on December 12, 1963. In a session of the Committee on Budget in the House of Representatives, Prime Minister Hayato Ikeda said, "US President Kennedy has special authority to enforce the Peace Corps project. We are considering a similar project to this in Japan" (The Diet Record

1963). One month later, on January 21, 1964, Ikeda clearly expressed his idea to create JOCV in a speech on government policy that he delivered to the Diet:

The government has the intention to promote economic and technical cooperation through various measures for developing countries, especially Asian countries, in coordination with other countries of the Western bloc. Furthermore, we consider it important that young Japanese people who have acquired technical skills stay in emerging countries, for example those of Southeast Asia, to live and work together with young local people for deepening mutual understanding. From this perspective, we are preparing to launch this project (The Diet Record 1964).

In May 1964, MOFA, the Overseas Technical Cooperation Agency (OTCA, currently JICA), private youth associations, and business associations organized a joint research group using a research fund set up in the National Budget for fiscal 1964. Its mission was conducting research on host countries' intentions to accept Japanese volunteers and specific fields and conditions for voluntary service. The group consisted of four teams dispatched to Indonesia and the Philippines; Thailand and Malaysia; Ceylon, Pakistan, and India; and Ethiopia, Kenya, and Nigeria. Sosuke Uno and Toshiki Kaifu, both young members of the Diet and later Prime Ministers, led the first and fourth teams, respectively. They were pushing hard for their idea of the JOCV project inside the LDP.

After the joint group finished its missions in June 1964, MOFA, the youth associations, and the Ministry of the Prime Minister's Office separately presented their drafts of the project for discussion. The government examined each draft and concluded that the management of the project should be entrusted to OTCA, while MOFA would supervise it.

In January 1965, presenting a policy speech to the Diet, Prime Minister Eisaku Sato mentioned that the government was preparing to dispatch volunteers abroad. Thus, the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers project was officially inaugurated on April 20. The first volunteers, five young men and women, were sent to Laos in December, and dozens of young

Japanese followed them: four and five volunteers arrived in Cambodia and Malaysia, respectively, in January 1966, twelve went to the Philippines in February, and three to Kenya in March.

The newly established volunteer project had three objectives, defined in MOFA's February 1965 document "On the outline of the implementation of the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers project." They were to (1) provide technical assistance to developing countries, (2) promote friendship and mutual understanding with foreign countries, and (3) widen the perspectives of young Japanese men and women about the world (MOFA 1965). As previously mentioned, these goals have remained consistent up to the present day.

# 3.1. The Cold War and Japan-U.S Relations

In 1960, there was staunch opposition within Japan to the revision of the Japan-US Security Treaty, led mainly by the SDPJ, the Communist Party, and student associations (the National Federation of Students' Self-Government Associations or Zen-Gaku-Ren). Their mass demonstrations threatened social order to such an extent that the Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi felt compelled to cancel the forthcoming visit of the US President Dwight D. Eisenhower to Japan, which was planned for June 1960. These events created the impression among the Western bloc that Japan had not developed enough as a constitutional and democratic state, and consequently shook their confidence in the Japanese government. Worse, the Western bloc counties began to suspect that Japan might become neutral in the Cold War, or even Communist (Suzuki 2008, 92).

After succeeding Prime Minister Kishi in July 1960, Prime Minister Ikeda recognized that restoring confidence was the most important challenge of his administration. In his policy speech on October 21, he said, "Keeping people's minds calm and maintaining social order is a precondition for our country's economic prosperity and cultural advancement, and will lead to

an increase in international confidence in our country and the strengthening of our diplomatic position" (The Diet Record 1960).

Restoring the relationship with the US was a key aspect of meeting this challenge, as the Eisenhower Administration was deeply shocked by the cancelation of the President's visit to Japan and increasingly suspicious of Japan's neutralization. These suspicions were shared by the Kennedy Administration, which came into power in January 1961 (Yoshitsugu 2009, 24-25, 32-35). Therefore, during his visit to the US in June 1961, Prime Minister Ikeda attempted to highlight the fact that Japan was a firm member of the Western bloc. To this end, in his meeting with President Kennedy, Ikeda emphasized Japan's active diplomacy within Asia. Specifically, he expressed his desire to foster economic development in Southeast Asia, which he considered his duty as a leader in Asia and an influential member of the Western bloc (Yoshitsugu 2009, 36-37, 42-43).

Ikeda also expressed his strong hope for economic assistance in Southeast Asia in his talks with Secretary of State Dean Rusk and founding director of the Peace Corps Sargent Shriver. After listening to Shriver's explanation of the Peace Corps, Ikeda voiced strong approval of the concept, but suggested that US assistance to developing countries such as those in Southeast Asia had not performed well in terms of its return on investment. Ikeda explained that an understanding of oriental psychology seemed to be lacking, and suggested that Japan would be glad to cooperate with the US on projects in the region, lending its perspective as an Oriental nation. In response to Shriver's request for ideas to make projects in the Far East more effective, the Prime Minister noted that Japan should be able to assist the Peace Corps with projects in places like Pakistan and in establishing small productive enterprises suited to the needs of the Southeast Asian region (Department of State 1961b).

In sum, Prime Minister Ikeda expressed his hope for economic cooperation, including support of the Peace Corps and similar projects, within Southeast Asia in order to restore the confidence of the Western bloc countries in Japan. There seems to be a connection between

Ikeda's stated desires and the Japanese government's creation of JOCV. In fact, most of JOVC's young volunteers in the early years were dispatched to Southeast Asia.

It is, however, important to note that the US government did not recommend that Japan launch its own project similar to the Peace Corps. According to a briefing paper prepared by the State Department for Prime Minister Ikeda's US visit, Kennedy Administration staff members had already been informed that the youth of Japan were enthusiastic about such volunteer projects and "the Japanese Government is now giving serious consideration to the foundation of an entity analogous to the US Peace Corps, for utilization primarily in Southeast Asia" (Department of State 1961a). The Kennedy Administration was, therefore, expecting the Japanese Prime Minister to present the possibility of cooperation between such an organization and the Peace Corps during the summit talks.

While the US government agreed in general with such an idea, its official position on the possible proposal was, "not [to] propose any closer liaison between the US Peace Corps and any entity which the Japanese may establish." The briefing went on to explain that the "over-identification of any Japanese effort with the US Peace Corps would be unfortunate, in that it might tend to make the Japanese appear as our agents," and also that any such liaison could inhibit the development of closer relations between Japan and Southeast Asia and adversely affect the morale of the Japanese volunteers (Department of State 1961a).

This position of the US does not support the view of Fujimoto and Suzaki (2004), who argue that Japan, under pressure from the US, intended to substitute JOCV for the Peace Corps, which was not welcome in developing countries (13, 17, and 36). On the contrary, as demonstrated above, the US government believed that it would be unfortunate for Japan to be considered as its agent.

In August and September 1961, after the summit talks in which Premier Ikeda expressed his hope of supporting the Peace Corps, two members of the Youth Division of the LDP, Director Noboru Takeshita and Sosuke Uno, who were both later Prime Ministers, went

on a fact-finding tour to Taiwan, Thailand, India, Pakistan, and Ceylon for three weeks to work out a plan for "the Japan Peace Corps" (JICA 1985, 42). Available documents fail to prove that Ikeda instructed Takeshita and Uno to go on this tour, and in fact Uno's testimony during a round-table discussion suggests that they may have acted on their own initiative: "Although I strongly proposed the plan (of the Japan Peace Corps) to Prime Minister Ikeda, it failed to materialize" (OTCA 1965, 25). Despite this failure, young Diet members of the LDP attempted again to launch JOCV a few years later, which we will discuss in Section 5.

#### 3.2. Pressure from the US in the Puerto Rico Conference

The US government, despite worries that Japanese volunteers might be overly associated with Americans, began to encourage similar projects to the Peace Corps in other countries including Japan. Their intention was not to substitute those similar projects for the Peace Corps, but instead to build up middle-level manpower or skilled labor in developing countries. Toward that end, the US held "the International Conference on Middle-Level Manpower" in Puerto Rico in October 1962 (Suetsugu 1964a, 157-158; Godwin et al. 1963, xv-xvi).

Initially, the secretariat of the US Peace Corps planned this conference with the aim of studying the effect of their volunteer programs in developing countries. Later, however, during the process of preparing for the conference, organizers decided to focus discussion on the broader issues of middle-level manpower in developing countries. As a result, they included in the conference agendas voluntary services that developed countries would offer to ease shortages of middle-level manpower, and they invited Japan and European countries to the meeting. In the conference many representatives of participant countries agreed that voluntary services such as those provided by the Peace Corps would be necessary to train middle-level manpower (Godwin et al. 1963, xi-xvi).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Godwin et al. (1963) is a report on the Puerto Rico Conference edited by executives of the Peace Corps secretariat.

Japan's response to US requests to promote overseas volunteering was not positive. The former Minister of Foreign Affairs Zentaro Kosaka and Diet member of the LDP Noboru Takeshita, made a pledge to consider sending junior experts, rather than volunteers, abroad. Subsequently, the Japanese government budgeted for the fiscal years 1963 and 1964, and dispatched 14 experts through OTCA to five Asian countries including Cambodia and Thailand (JICA 1985, 41; Godwin et al. 1963, 125-126). This response was bitterly criticized by Ichiro Suetsugu, leader of the influential youth association Nippon Kensei Kai, who complained that this project was an eclectic mixture of both the Colombo Plan (technical assistance) and the US Peace Corps (volunteering and youth development), describing it as "a lukewarm action urged by the US" (Suetsugu 1964a, 157-158).

It is necessary to explore why the Japanese government rejected the idea of volunteer activity and instead dispatched junior experts in a framework of the existing technical assistance. MOFA, it seems, was dubious of utilizing overseas volunteering to solve domestic youth problems. It argued that the government should send junior experts and provide monetary rewards, claiming that young Japanese people could not afford to provide complete voluntary service as the US Peace Corps did (Suetsugu 1988, 260). Interestingly, this preference for sending experts was not unique to Japan. For example, British and Canadian delegations to the conference in Puerto Rico remarked that what developing countries needed was experts and technicians rather than volunteers (Godwin et al. 1963, 118-120). This decision between volunteers and experts came up again in later stages of policy-making, and will be discussed further in the next section.

In summary, this section discussed how the Japanese government was motivated to approach a voluntary service project by international structures such as Japan-US relations and the Cold War. Our focuses have been on Prime Minister Ikeda's hope for developmental cooperation in Southeast Asian countries in order to restore international confidence in Japan, and also on pressure from the US government for spreading the idea of the Peace Corps.

Of course, international structures alone cannot explain why JOCV was characterized as both a voluntary service and a youth development project, although MOFA initially considered it in a framework of technical assistance. It is necessary to further explore whether the idea of overseas volunteering emerged in Japan only after the launch of the Peace Corps, or existed already in Japan prior to that time. Analysis of the domestic level will provide answers to these questions.

# 4. Domestic Structural Factors

This section examines youth problems in rural and urban areas of Japan prior to the launch of JOCV. Our inquiry will explore: (1) Why the JOCV was defined as both a voluntary service and a project for youth development, rather than as technical assistance by junior experts, and (2) The original ideas for overseas young volunteers in Japan and how they emerged. Here we will argue that these original Japanese ideas helped to define JOCV.

In the 1950s, unemployment among second and third sons of farmers was a serious social problem in rural areas.<sup>5</sup> To deal with this issue, the government set up two youth corps for rural development in various regions: IDYCs (see section 2.2) under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Construction, and Noson Kensetsu Seinen Tai (Rural Development Youth Corps: RDYCs<sup>6</sup>) under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.<sup>7</sup>

However, in the second half of the 1950s, as the Japanese economy grew rapidly and unemployment in rural areas simultaneously fell, these youth corps began to lose their purpose. As a result, they and their related ministries sought to redefine their mission from rural

15

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> These young men were considered to be surplus labor in many farming families. Although they had gained the right to inherit their parent's land thanks to post-war agricultural land reform, the traditional primogeniture still dominated in rural areas. Consequently, they had to seek jobs outside of farms, but the labor market could not fully absorb them until economic growth in the late 1950s and the early 1960s (Morita 2005).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> The names of the two youth corps have been translated into English by the author.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> The government also promoted overseas emigration of rural unemployed youth.

development toward overseas technical assistance as well as the prevention of the communization of rural young people (Ito 2005, 65-70).

An example of the new direction was the "Japan Peace Corps," an idea that resembled those presented by the young LDP politicians but was proposed separately from the LDP. This corps was planned in 1962 by Nihon Sangyo Kaihatsu Seinen Kyokai or San Sei Kyo (Japan Industrial Development Youth Association: JIDYA), the peak association of regional IDYCs organized in 1953 (Ogawa 1988, 69-70; Terada 1988, 13). This suggests that the JOCV has its origins in the initiatives of the youth corps and associations.

Of course, youth problems were not unique to rural areas. Along with the decline in rural unemployment, youth problems in urban areas received more attention. Since 1960, there had been increasing concern about the anti-Security Treaty student movement, terrorist acts carried out by young right-wing men such as the assassination of Inejiro Asanuma, the then-President of the SDPJ, and a rise in youth crime.

These issues were often discussed in the Diet in the early 1960s,<sup>8</sup> and Prime Minister Ikeda was also increasingly interested in them. He stated in his policy speech in January 1962 that, "The youth are a sacred source of our nation's life force...I hope they have a great sense of mission and an admirable education" (The Diet Records 1962a). In March, he remarked on youth crime in the Committee on Budget, the House of Councilors, that, "The best way to eradicate youth crime is to let youths have dreams and hope" (The Diet Records 1962b). Finally, in his policy speech in August, he expressed "[his] resolution to make the best efforts toward building human resources that are fundamental to nation-building," and said, "our purpose of bringing up youth is developing better Japanese nationals who cultivate the virtue and love of our country, have knowledge and techniques to keep up with the current issues of

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> This fact is confirmed in the following Diet Records: No. 1, Committee on Local Administration and Judicial Affairs, House of Representatives, 36. October 24th, 1960; No. 6, Plenary Sitting, House of Councillors, 38. February 3rd, 1961; No. 7, Committee on Budget, House of Councillors, 40. March 7th, 1962.

the times, and can contribute to the prosperity of our nation and promote world peace" (The Diet Records 1962c).

It is likely that these politicians' serious concerns about urban youth impacted the foundation of JOCV. As Fujimoto and Suzaki (2004) argue, in the wake of the 1960 Security Treaty conflict, the LDP government had more misgivings about young people, to such an extent that some LDP politicians who feared the growing danger of the situation found hope in Kennedy's Peace Corps and its approach to educating youth.

To sum up this section, domestic structural factors – rural and urban youth problems – explain why JOCV was defined as a volunteer project for youth development and how these original ideas emerged in Japan. However, this explanation has limitations. First, it lacks an examination of how JOCV's agenda was set through policy-making and how political parties and government ministries took up the agenda to be discussed in the administration and the legislature. Second, while the youth problem might have influenced the government's motives, further discussion will be necessary to explore how these domestic issues were linked to the idea of international voluntary service, and the roles played by youth associations and LDP politicians in creating these links. Moving our analysis down further to the domestic agential level will help us address these limitations.

### 5. Domestic Agential Factors

This section will continue to explore how an original idea similar to the US Peace Corps emerged in Japan and why the JOCV was defined as a project for both youth development and technical assistance, specifically by examining the roles of leaders of youth associations and young members of the LDP. The section will discuss how these leaders were motivated, and set agendas and policy during the political process.

### 5.1. Youth Associations' Leaders and Young Members of the LDP

The original idea for sending young Japanese volunteers abroad came from youth associations, led by the eminent Ichiro Suetsugu and Yoshiaki Sagae, both known as the founding fathers of JOCV (JICA 1985).

Suetsugu, who was a first-generation student of the Military Army Nakano School (Rikugun Nakano Gakko), Futamata branch, established Nippon Kensei Kai (Young Men's Association for Japanese Reconstruction, hereafter Kensei Kai) in 1949 for the purpose of reconstructing Japan in the post-war years. The activities of Kensei Kai encompassed a variety of projects such as youth development and education, assistance to post-war repatriates, and a campaign for the release of war criminals (Suetsugu 1964b). As the president of the association, Suetsugu dedicated himself to these projects, building up networks with politicians and business executives like Nobusuke Kishi, Yasuhiro Nakasone, Noboru Takeshita, and Ryuzo Sejima. O

The idea of sending young volunteers abroad was likely drawn from Kensei Kai's own experience with Asian developing countries. Since 1957, it had been inviting young Asians to train in agriculture, and dispatching Japanese instructors to Iran and Malaysia to support those invited trainees in their activities (Suetsugu 1964a, 153-156). Eventually, in 1960, Kensei Kai, in a meeting with youth association leaders, announced a project to send young volunteers abroad (JOCV 2012). Against this background, Suetsugu wrote in his book, "When Kennedy launched his Peace Corps, we were really disappointed. Then we were also considering a similar project. Meanwhile [the Americans] went ahead" (Suetsugu 1964a, 157).

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> The Military Army Nakano School was famous as a training school for spies in the Second World War. Its Futamata branch was opened for the short-term training of officers in guerilla warfare.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Commission in Praise of Ichiro Suetsugu (2002), a book of condolence honoring his memory, shows clearly Suetsugu's extensive network of politicians, technocrats, business executives, scholars, etc. See also Fujimoto and Suzaki (2004, 3-4).

In the second half of the 1950s, other private groups related to agriculture, Christianity, and Asian issues, and critical of the international cooperation by the government, also sent young Japanese people to Asian countries and trained Asian counterparts in Japan.

Yoshiaki Sagae, another of JOCV's founding fathers, recognized that young Japanese people were deceived by the ideology of ultra-nationalism in wartime, and was shocked by the drastic changes in values in post-war society. In response, he involved himself in the youth movement in Yamagata Prefecture, a rural area in the northeast of Japan, to enhance youth independence (Yaguchi 2011, 81-86). In 1955, he took up the posts of executive director of JIDYA (see section 4) and vice president of Nihon Seinendan Kyogikai or Nissei Kyo (Japan Youth Corps Council). JIDYA was the peak association of IDYCs, and Nissei Kyo was the largest youth organization in the country, affiliated with Kensei Kai and JIDYA (Fujimoto and Suzaki 2004, 5; JICA 2004, 13-14). As rapid economic growth increased rural employment in the mid-1950s (see section 4), JIDYA and IDYC were losing their reasons for being. This situation pushed Sagae into changing IDYC's direction toward youth development instead of rural employment (Ogawa 1988, 63-64, 69-70, 74).

These two leaders, individually but with the common purpose of youth development and education, approached their projects of sending Japanese abroad in the late 1950s. Following Kennedy's speech on the Peace Corps in 1960, they then initiated their plans for public policy-making. This timetable implies that while young Japanese leaders had generated their own ideas, Kennedy's initiative had a strong impact on their actions.

The various youth associations in Japan set their own initiatives. JIDYA undertook a plan to become the Japanese version of the Peace Corps and, on Sagae's instructions, organized round-table conferences on IDYC's overseas cooperation and invited Robert Kennedy, Attorney General in the Kennedy Cabinet, to give a lecture in Japan (Ogawa 1988, 69-71).

Kensei Kai, on the other hand concerned itself with the development of its members for the purpose of promoting its relations with Asia (Fujimoto and Suzaki 2004, 9-10). In the spring of 1962, the association effectively formed the "Council for Promotion of Japan Youth Volunteers Plan (Nihon Seinen Housitai Keikaku Suishin Kyogi Kai)," in which Suetsugu

assumed the role of secretary general with the assistance of Sagae. The council enjoyed the participation of youth association leaders, members of JIDYA, and university professors (Suetsugu 1988, 260).

Members of the council and Suetsugu believed that the Japanese government's commitment to the project during the Puerto Rico Conference was lukewarm and indeed could be a hindrance to their own plan. Thus, for the purpose of pushing forward with their own plan, Suetsugu went on a three-and-a-half month overseas tour, beginning in March 1963, to investigate potential host countries for Japanese volunteers and to make on-the-spot inspections of Peace Corps activities (Suetsugu 1964a, 158; JICA 1985, 17).

The impact of Kennedy's initiative went beyond inspiring youth associations. In fact, members of the LDP also began to discuss the formation of a "Japan Peace Corps." In December 1960, two months after the announcement of the Peace Corps project, young LDP members who were influenced by Suetsugu and Sagae, such as Noboru Takeshita, Sosuke Uno, and Michita Sakata, had already started to discuss "their idea to give youths, full of ambition, the dream of going abroad and to develop friendships with foreign countries" (JICA 1985, 42).

Importantly, there was another young LDP member who was attracted by Kennedy's project: Toshiki Kaifu. Hoping to establish a Japan Peace Corps, he actively exchanged opinions and ideas with Kensei Kai and other youth associations (JICA 2004, 17-20). Strongly encouraged by Kaifu's ambition, LDP's Youth Division finally proposed the "Plan of the Japan Peace Corps" for formal discussion at the party in April 1961 (Ito 2005, 70). In August, Takeshita and Uno of the LDP's Youth Division went on a tour of Asian countries, although their initiative ultimately failed, as was previously mentioned.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Different from the US Peace Corps, this plan intended to promote manufacturing-related exporting from Japan and also provide volunteers with an option of emigration (Ito 2005: 70-71).

# 5.2. Policy-making: LDP and MOFA

Immediately after Suetsugu returned home from the tour in July, all involved parties began to take action (Suetsugu 1964a, 158). First, in August 1963, Kensei Kai presented "Main Points of Japan Overseas Cooperation Youth Corps" based on the investigations by Suetsugu. Second, in the same month, the Youth Division of the LDP announced its "Draft of Main Points of Japan Peace Corps" and invited several youth associations and universities to organize a "Council for Promotion of Japan Youth Volunteers (Nihon Seinen Hoshitai Suishin Kyogi Kai, hereafter the Council for Promotion)". Third, this council publicized its "Main Points of Japan Youth Volunteer Corps" (Suetsugu 1964a, 159; JICA 1985, 346). These three plans were very similar in defining the activities of their corps as a voluntary service for developing countries on young people's own initiative.

In these plans there were differences regarding the agencies that should be placed in charge of the service: while the Youth Division of the LDP proposed it should be OTCA, the Council for Promotion suggested establishing a foundation under the supervision of the Ministry of the Prime Minister's Office. Kensei Kai's idea was a rather eclectic mixture of these two: setting up a foundation to oversee the service but outsourcing the dispatch of volunteers to OTCA (JICA 1985, 43). In September, the Policy Research Council of the LDP (the party's important policy-making body) agreed to keep these three plans on file for future discussion, when these differences would again be a critical issue.

It is important for this discussion to explore why the LDP showed a keen interest in establishing an overseas voluntary service in 1963, whereas Takeshita and Uno had failed to develop their "Japan Peace Corps" plan in 1961. Youth associations and young members of the LDP might have more effectively persuaded the party leaders in 1963, but the most critical

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> This council was different from the above-mentioned council organized by Kensei Kai (see section 5.1).

factor was the general elections held in November 1963. In fact, the Policy Research Council decided to publicly propose the plan for the coming election campaign (Suetsugu 1963, 73).<sup>14</sup> After the victory of the LDP, Prime Minister Ikeda expressed his idea in his policy speech in January 1964 (see section 3).

Although the LDP government decided to undertake the project, many problems still remained unsolved. To examine them, the Policy Research Council of the LDP set up the "Special Commission for Japan Overseas Youth Volunteers (hereafter Special Commission)" in February; a young LDP member Michita Sakata, who had been involved with the issue since 1960, assumed the role of president. In May and June, this commission formed a joint research group including MOFA, OTCA, youth associations, and business associations, thereby dispatching four teams on a research mission to Asia and Africa, as was discussed in section 3. MOFA supported the research teams in their tour, and the commission's president Sakata set the budget for the mission (JICA 1985, 26; Suetsugu 1964c, 87).

After the four research teams returned home, three organizations drafted their own plans respectively. Suetsugu's essay (1964c, 87) provides a neat overview of two of the three drafts. First, MOFA presented a draft that focused on the dispatch of young experts rather than volunteers, an idea almost identical to the ministry's proposal following the Puerto Rico Conference. The draft, defining the project as a kind of technical assistance, proposed that MOFA should supervise the project and OTCA manage the services. In fact, MOFA had already budgeted for dispatching over 80 experts through the national budget of fiscal 1965.

Second, the Council for Promotion, including Kensei Kai, argued for sending young volunteers rather than experts, who would live with local people and dedicate themselves to volunteering. Characterizing the project as a private activity, the council suggested that a newly

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> The third was presented by the Ministry of the Prime Minister's Office. Suetsugu's essay suggests that "the Ministry will finish their draft soon" and asserts that "their idea seems similar to that of the private associations (i.e., the Council for Promotion)" (Suetsugu 1964c, 87).

formed incorporated foundation should manage the service under the co-supervision of MOFA and the Ministry of the Prime Minister's Office.

LDP's Special Commission examined these three drafts. Although Suetsugu expected most members of the commission to agree with the draft put forth by his Council for Promotion (Suetsugu 1964c, 91), he was disappointed. A document prepared by the Economic Cooperation Bureau of MOFA, "Policy on Affairs of Volunteer Corps" dated December 1964 (MOFA 1964), 16 noted that the Special Commission fundamentally accepted MOFA's draft and offered little opposition to the idea that OTCA should manage voluntary services as a technical assistance project, on the condition that the government would send volunteers for the purpose of foreign relations. However, the basic understanding of the commission was that this volunteer project should not only be characterized as technical assistance but also as a new approach to youth problems. Therefore, the commission really wanted to promote the second aspect of the project by establishing a new entity responsible for advocacy, recruitment, selection, and training.

By contrast, MOFA's view was quite different. The above-cited document noted that the overseas research conducted by the joint group in May and June proved that what developing countries wanted was development assistance provided by Japanese experts. For this reason, MOFA maintained that "[MOFA] must flatly reject the idea of tackling our domestic youth problems on the lands of foreign countries," arguing instead that "it is appropriate and practical to expand and arrange our current plan of young experts and to entrust OTCA with management services," and that "we do not need to create a new entity for the project (MOFA 1964)."

In fact, there were no ministries likely to form such a new entity, despite the Special Commission's recommendation. Both the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of the Prime Minister's Office declined the role as supervisor when approached by the commission. As a

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> The discussion in the following two paragraphs also draws on this document.

result, the commission had no choice but to approve MOFA's draft and finally agreed on its "Basic Outline of Japan Youth Overseas Volunteers." But, as the commission persisted in defining the project as an approach to domestic youth problems, it laid down one condition for the agreement: that MOFA agree that the Ministry of the Prime Minister's Office would set up a liaison conference (consultation body) organized by advisors from the public and private sectors; and that MOFA respect the opinions of the consultation body with regard to JOCV policies. Finally, the Foreign Ministry accepted this compromise by the commission and assumed authority over the overseas volunteer project (MOFA 1964).

Although MOFA's demand for young experts instead of volunteers was refused by the Special Commission, the final decision taken by the government about the requirements and allowances for each volunteer actually reflected MOFA's preferences. Applicants for JOCV were required to have as much knowledge as graduates of junior colleges, technique and skill necessary for their mission, and basic English and local language ability (JICA 1965). Allowances for each volunteer were very high in comparison with the then-salary of Japanese workers. The sum of monthly allowances that each volunteer received in 1965 amounted to JP¥69,000 (author's calculation from JICA 1965), which was equivalent to 2.9 times as much as the then-starting monthly salary of male university graduates (JP¥24,102).<sup>17</sup>

Thus, the government concluded to send young volunteers with knowledge and skills, and formulated a policy that MOFA supervise the project and OTCA manage related services. In line with this, Prime Minister Eisaku Sato announced in his policy speech in January 1965 that the government was preparing for dispatching young volunteers overseas. In February, MOFA informed OTCA that the ministry would entrust the agency with service management (MOFA 1965). As a matter of fact, OTCA had already set up a temporary office to handle

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Each volunteer's monthly allowances consisted of an overseas allowance of US\$150 (JP\54,000) and an accumulative fund of JP\15,000 (JICA 1965). The then-exchange rate was 360 yen/dollar. The starting salary of male university graduates in 1965 is cited from Morinaga (2008, 444). I am grateful to Youzo Kaneko, President of the Japan Overseas Cooperative Association (JOCA), for his suggestion of this comparison.

preparations in January (JICA 1985, 46). Eventually, the Secretariat of Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers was formally built in April, and the first volunteers – three men and two women – landed in Laos in December.

# 6. Conclusion and Implications

This paper examined the political origins of the JOCV through the lens of two research questions: (1) Why did the Japanese government undertake the JOCV project? and (2) Why did the project pursue multifaceted objectives? We explored several factors using the funnel strategy, moving down from the international structural level, through the domestic structural level, toward the agential level. This final section summarizes our analysis and presents some theoretical implications.

The analysis of international structures focused on the Japan-US relationship and the Cold War in Asia, and proved that two factors motivated the Japanese government to create JOCV: Prime Minister Ikeda's desire to approach economic development in Southeast Asia against the background of declining international confidence in Japan; and the US government's demand that Japan take some action regarding the US goal of expanding the idea of the Peace Corps. This explanation of the international structural level has its limitations, notably, a failure to explain how JOCV was defined as both a voluntary service organization and a youth development project, and how the original ideas for JOCV emerged.

Our inquiry into the domestic structural level focused on rural and urban youth problems: unemployment among the second and third sons of farmers, the anti-Security Treaty movement, and rising crime in cities including right-wing terrorism. This paper has proved that leaders of youth associations and young members of the LDP considered the Kennedy's Peace Corps as a potential solution to those problems and consequently approached overseas voluntary service for young Japanese people.

While the analysis based on the international and domestic structural factors helps to explain the motivation of actors, we need to move further down to the agential level in order to explore the political processes of agenda-setting and policy-making. There was substantial disagreement between actors over the definition of the new project. On the one hand, being motivated by the domestic structural factors, a coalition of youth associations and young members of the LDP advocated an overseas voluntary service project. On the other hand, MOFA, while agreeing to send young Japanese people abroad in light of the Japan-US relationship and under pressure from the LDP, insisted on dispatching experts rather than volunteers. Eventually, the two sides reached a compromise: the JOCV project would be defined as a project providing both technical assistance and youth volunteers; and it should be managed by OTCA under the supervision of MOFA.

Thus, JOCV was established in 1965 as a new international project of Japan and also as a compromise between domestic political groups. However, the subsequent and conspicuous success of JOCV has its origin in that compromise. Once established, the JOCV project has continued for almost 50 years, thanks to continuous support offered by the LDP, youth associations, MOFA, and returned volunteers. As a result, the number of volunteers has consistently increased from 1965 to 2009, reaching nearly 40,000 in total by the end of 2013. Host countries have included those in Southeast Asia, Africa, Latin America, and former Socialist countries were added after the end of the Cold War. The project's multiple objectives – providing technical assistance, promoting international friendship, and improving youth development – can also be traced back to that compromise between the youth association/LDP coalition and MOFA. These three objectives have continued without any revisions for half a century.

This study demonstrates that international and domestic factors matter when the state sends young volunteers abroad. In the case of Japan, the US Peace Corps as an external idea was influential on young politicians of the LDP, youth association leaders, and MOFA, thanks

to its own novelty and attractiveness, the pressure from the US government, and the charisma of President Kennedy as a main proponent of the project. Theoretically, such a powerful project can diffuse across countries through various mechanisms: coercion, competition, learning, and emulation (Simmons, Dobbin, and Garrett 2008). Exploring the mechanisms of diffusion of international voluntary service will be a topic for future research, however.

The domestic factor at play was the political actors' great concern for youth development. As our case proved, youth problems tend to become a political issue in an economically growing and demographically changing society in industrial countries. Leaders of political parties and youth associations seek solutions to those problems, although they are difficult to deal with in the short term. As a result, those leaders may find a solution in voluntary services abroad, which can inspire young people.

The final implication of this study is the greater understanding of international politics. It is well known that there are two contrasting views of the international structure: realism and constructivism. While the former view assumes that sovereign states are the primary actors in an anarchic international system, the latter argues that non-governmental organizations (NGOs), non-profit organizations (NPOs), and even individuals are important actors in a global civil society. The concept of international voluntary service like JOCV, however, does not fully align with either of these two views but rather falls somewhere in the middle. On the one hand, it is consistent with the state-centered view because the state does deal with the dispatch of volunteers and support their activities. On the other hand, it also aligns with the view centered on non-state actors, because it is individuals who provide the voluntary service for local people.

Therefore, we can define international voluntary service as a hybrid of the state project and individual activities, which neither realism nor constructivism can solely explain. In fact, this kind of hybrid can be found in other cases. For example, an emigration project is planned and managed by the state but individuals are essential agents in such project. These cases

suggest the necessity of a new approach to understanding international politics. Hopefully, our study will be a stepping-stone to future research.

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# **Abstract (in Japanese)**

### 要約

本論の目的は、日本政府の海外ボランティア事業である青年海外協力隊(JOCV)の政治的起源を探ることにある。研究課題は、①なぜ 1965 年に JOCV が設立されたのか、②なぜ JOCV は技術援助、国際親善、青年育成という多様な目的を追求することになったのか、という二つである。分析の焦点は国際的、国内的要因に当てられている。国際構造としては、日米関係とアジアの冷戦に着目し、国内構造については、農村の失業、安保闘争、都市の犯罪という青年問題を取り上げた。これらの問題の解決策として、青年団体や自民党は海外ボランティア事業に着手したが、政策決定過程では、技術専門家の派遣を主張する外務省との対立と妥協があった。その結果、多様な目的を持つ JOCV が設立された。この研究は、国家が海外ボランティア事業を始める動機として、米国平和部隊のような外来のアイデアおよび国内の青少年問題が重要であること、そして JOCV は国家事業と個人活動のハイブリッド事業として国際政治の理解にも含意があることを示唆している。