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Japan

Human Rights by Grace Havlik

Currently, Japan is the 7th most significant contributor to greenhouse gas emissions. In 2010, Japan reached a peak of 10.5 tons of carbon emissions per capita. This number is staggeringly high compared to countries like Cambodia, where the carbon emissions per capita are .32 tons.

The Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) published the G7 Fossil Fuel Subsidy Scorecard, which ranks countries based on their transparency and commitments on ending support for the production and use of oil, gas, and coal. Japan ranked poorly because of its prolonged endowment for fossil fuels. Japan's oil and gas production finance also included billions of dollars for oil and liquid natural gas projects in the Bahamas, Brazil, Indonesia, Kuwait, Russia, Singapore, Trinidad and Tobago, and the United Arab Emirates. It also grants billions in taxpayer dollars for building coal plants in some of the most climate-vulnerable countries overseas. Climate Change activists suggest that Japan could benefit from shifting the \$12 billion a year it wastes on fossil fuels to better investments in renewable energy and energy efficiency.

Japan is facing the consequences for its contribution to climate change. The Germanwatch institute revealed the results of the Global Climate Risk Index 2020 during COP25 in Madrid. According to their data, based on the impacts of extreme weather events and the socio-economic losses they cause, Japan, the Philippines, and Germany are the most affected places by climate change today. Japan ranks number one, with a Climate Risk Index of about 5.5. In 2018, Japan was hit by three intense extreme weather events, with one being a heavy rainfall in July that was measured to be twice as much as what was previously considered the wettest day in the country. The rain resulted in flash floods, killing more than 200 people and leading to more than 5,000 houses being damaged, as well as the evacuation of 2.3 million people. Extreme weather events like this will continue to happen and grow even larger in scale.

Japan is not a country that has been unfairly affected by climate change because of its involvement in the crisis. Areas of the world that have contributed little to the climate crisis, such as West African nations and low-lying Pacific countries, are expected to bear the burden because they face less crop production and rising sea levels. In terms of “fairness” and morals, I believe that Japan is fairly facing the mess they have conceived. The small countries that have contributed little to the crisis are unfairly facing the consequences, and Japan has done little to help them despite their responsibility. Japan should be pulling its fossil fuel projects in climate-vulnerable countries and continue cutting its carbon emissions.

Energy

Japan is extremely energy dependent on the rest of the world. Around ten percent of the energy used in Japan comes from within the country, and the rest is imported from other places, including Saudi Arabia, the United States, and Australia. More than ten percent of Japan's energy comes from imported oil, mostly supplied from Saudi Arabia and the UAE, but various other countries as well. Liquefied natural gas (LNG) covers slightly less than fifty percent of Japan's total energy usage. It is sourced mainly from Malaysia, Qatar, Australia, and in smaller amounts from Russia, Indonesia, the UAE, Brunei, Papua New Guinea, and more. Nearly all of Japan's coal is sourced from outside of the country, and makes up more than thirty percent of Japan's total energy usage. Most is sourced from Australia, but other countries contribute to Japan's coal supply as well. This energy dependency is becoming extreme, with Japan being the fifth-largest oil consumer in 2019 while only being the eleventh largest country in terms of population.

Recently,, Japan's energy consumption has been descending, with GDP rates decreasing from 2.2% in 2017 to around 0.7% by 2019 partially because of China's slowing economic growth and other factors. Added to this, Japan hasn't been using as much renewable energy after the nuclear incident in 2011 have not helped with the goals of energy autonomy.

In 2010, Japan was much more independent in terms of energy because there was a widespread domestic nuclear power system. This nuclear power provided 30 percent of Japan's power consumption and they were hoping to increase this figure to 40 percent before 2020. However, the Fukushima Nuclear Disaster struck before this could happen. It was a Level 7 disaster on the International Nuclear Event Scale, one of the only two events to have ever received such an extreme classification. The disaster happened after the Tohoku earthquake in 2011, stemming from the failure of nuclear cooling systems after the ensuing tsunami. A nuclear disaster was declared and 140,000 people had to be evacuated from the surrounding area. After this event, the vast majority of

nuclear power plants in Japan were shut down for safety inspections. This caused a large portion of Japan's populace to lose faith in the nuclear system, with more than 80 percent of the population holding anti-nuclear views or distrusting government information about nuclear energy and its effects. Slowly, the populace started to regain trust in nuclear power, with merely 11 percent wanting nuclear power in Japan to be discontinued by March 2021.

Even though Japan does not currently use much renewable energy, plans for the future incorporate it heavily because of the autonomy it provides and the global benefits of decreasing carbon emissions. The country will no longer have to outsource as much energy because they will be creating it themselves. Japan wants to meet the global standards, so they are willing to follow the greater initiative of saving the planet. Because Japan is a combination of many islands in the Pacific Ocean, the elevation of sea levels and intensified natural disasters due to climate change make them very vulnerable. Therefore, in order to preserve the island nation, it is necessary to slow climate change.

Japan aims to be carbon neutral by 2050. Fossil fuels heavily contribute to climate change, so it is important for the world to cooperate in eliminating fossil fuels. In 2020, Japan recognized that they did not reach their anticipated goal of cutting greenhouse gas emissions by 25%, so has made a goal for 2030 to help achieve their 2050 goal of carbon neutrality. Their goals have increased with time, from initially wanting renewables to account for 23% of their energy sources to the current goal of about 37% by 2030. In response to the United States's urging at the 2021 COP26 conference, Japan plans to cut its greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 by 46% instead of the previously planned 26%. Japan will aim for 14-16% of their energy to come from solar power, 11% from hydropower, 5% from biomass power, 5% from wind power, and 1% from geothermal power. Japan hopes to get at least 30 more of their nuclear power plants previously shut down from Fukushima running again. Nuclear energy is a low carbon emitter, and will also limit Japan's need to

use energy sources such as coal and oil. The goals set for Japan are also beneficial to their economy because they will no longer have to rely on importing fossil fuels from other countries.

Japan is currently funding, and has in the past, the creation of renewable energy systems in developing countries, as they can be expensive to start. Japan will continue to provide this funding and hope other countries will follow. In fact, in 2009, Japan created the “Hatoyama Initiative,” leading Japan to donate over 26 billion dollars to countries from 2009 to 2012 that are vulnerable to the negative impacts of climate change. At COP21 in 2015, Japan announced Action for Cool Earth 2.0, where they committed to donating 1.3 trillion Yen to developing countries by 2020 to help them combat climate change. In the G7 summit in 2021, Japan’s Prime Minister, Fumio Kishida, stated that the country will continue private and public financial assistance using the 6.5 trillion Yen donated from 2015-2021. Japan believes that it is vital that countries like the United States, China, and Russia continue the initiative to combat climate change. Japan has helped provide solutions to climate change by offering new technologies and services for renewable power and hybrid fuel-efficient cars. Japan has strict recycling guidelines, and encourages other countries to take this example. Overall, Japan believes that financially stable countries must combat climate change and help developing countries who cannot support their own climate-conscious initiatives alone. Japan already has a great relationship with the US in tackling climate change, and hopes to build similar relationships.

GLOBAL GOVERNANCE by REILLY COSTELLO & ELISABETH SCHELL

Japan is a parliamentary constitutional monarchy, meaning that although there is a monarch, they still have to exercise their authority based on a pre-existing constitution and do not have the freedom to make decisions alone. After WWII, Japan's government changed radically, largely due to the U.S. Japan made a new constitution in 1946, replacing the Meiji Constitution of 1889. This new constitution stated Japan's aim of maintaining a peaceful and democratic country. In the previous constitution, the emperor was the embodiment of all sovereign authority. Now he is only the symbol of the state, while sovereign power rests with the people. It also establishes autonomy for local public entities and gives significant powers to local assemblies, which are elected by public vote. Japan's government is set up very similarly to the U.S. democracy, as there is a judicial branch, an executive branch, and a legislative branch. It is divided into 47 different districts known as prefectures.

Japan has a liberal democracy, meaning Japanese people enjoy freedom, peace and prosperity. Despite this, there are still a few major separate parties, one of which is the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), known for being more conservative. This group has been in power almost continuously since its foundation in 1955. Currently, this party has the majority of the seats in both the House of Representatives (lower house) and the House of Chancellors (upper house). The party is often characterized by intense factionalism, as it includes several different ideological groups ranging from moderates to right-wing nationalists. The second major party in Japan is the much newer Constitutional Democratic Party (CDP), as it was founded in 2017. It is considered the primary opposition party to the LDP, and currently holds the second most seats in both the House of Representatives and the House of Chancellors right behind the LDP.

Japan is a country that upholds the basic principles of freedom, democracy, and human rights for its citizens. High expectations are placed on them by the rest of the world, especially in

fields of economic cooperation, though it is felt they do not always fulfill this responsibility. Many other countries also feel threatened by the rapid progress Japan is making in the fields of science and technology. Japan has the second largest economy in the developed world, accounting for about 10% of the free world's gross national products.

Japan has had many disputes with other countries over the sovereignty of certain territories. There was a dispute between Japan and Russia over a group of islands known in Japan as the "Northern Territories" and in Russia as the "Southern Kuril Islands," as they were by the Soviet Union (now Russia) and claimed by Japan. This was the primary sticking point to signing a peace treaty formally ending World War II hostilities. The San Francisco Peace Treaty stated that Japan must give up "all right, title, and claim to the Kuril Islands" but at the same time, it still does not recognize Russia's sovereignty over them. To this day, the dispute has not reached a definite end. There was a separate but similar dispute between Japan and South Korea over Liancourt Rocks. It has been occupied by South Korea since 1954; however, both countries claim sovereignty.

Japan for the most part has very diplomatic relations with all free countries. Japan's relations with the U.S are its most important foreign policy. This relation includes the Mutual Security treaty, which allowed U.S forces to remain on Japanese soil. Japan, while maintaining its relationship with the U.S, has managed to expand its ties with other nations. Ever since the end of WWII, the issue of repentance and forgiveness remains a source of tension between Japan, China and South Korea. The Chinese government often criticized Tokyo's policies.

On December 18th, 1956, Japan became the 80th member of the U.N. Since January 2016, Japan has been serving as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, fulfilling a key role in the maintenance of peace and security in the international community.

In the past Japan was one of the leading countries in climate change reform; however after the explosion of Fukushima, a key nuclear power plant, they have reverted back to using a lot of coal

and other fossil fuels. This is because the country closed down many of their nuclear power plants in an effort to avoid further disasters. This shift away from nuclear energy, which is a renewable energy source itself, is what prompted the switch to more harmful alternatives. As such, Japan is the world's third-biggest importer of fossil fuels. While more than 20 countries agreed to phase out coal power at the U.N. climate talks in Glasgow, Japan declined to sign because officials said they needed to preserve all its options for power generation. Despite this, Japan has pledged billions of dollars for countries vulnerable to the effects of climate change and to support building infrastructure in Asia for renewable energy and cleaner-burning fuels, and have begun to start up their nuclear power plant initiative again.

Japan's updated 2030 Paris Agreement target commits to reducing emissions by 46% below 2013. This new target is a significant step forward from the previous 26% reduction target, even though it falls short of the more than 60% reduction that scientists have agreed is necessary to limit warming to the international goal of 1.5°C. Part of the process to reach this 46% goal was enacted with the approval of a new Basic Energy Plan in October 2021. It includes a target mix of electricity sources such as increasing the percentage of renewable electricity used from 22-24% to 36-38%. Although the plan hoped to decrease coal usage from 26% to 19%, that does not fall in line with the full coal phase-out by 2030 that other countries such as Poland and Vietnam have agreed to.

In terms of Japan's stance on the Ukrainian-Russian conflict, Japan was very quick to condemn the decisions of Russian president Vladimir Putin. Japan met the G-7 call for financial sanctions of Russia and continued their support by offering financial, humanitarian, and material aid for President Zelensky. Japan has also sanctioned Belarus and other countries who have been identified in supporting Putin's war. The Japanese government has offered refuge to Ukrainians fleeing their war torn country as well as similar refuge to Russian citizens who opposed their

country's decision to invade. According to a poll on March 7, 82% of Japanese citizens supported their government's response.