

Research Report

Name : Peeters Nicholas

Organization (at the start of the grant period): Waseda University

Title of Research:

Japan's Post-war Reintegration and International Economic Organisations : The Problem of Japan's Accession to the OECD and Japan-Europe-US Relations, 1960-1964

Purpose of Research: (200 words)

This research is concerned with Japan's post-war reintegration into the comity of nations through its membership of international economic organisations. Specifically, it aims to uncover and reconstruct the process of the Japanese accession to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) between 1960 and 1964 from the perspectives of the main actors involved: Japan, North America, and Western Europe. Despite that Japan's OECD membership has too date received little academic attention, it is a noteworthy episode when seen from Japan's postwar diplomatic history and the liberal international order: on the one hand because it crowned Japan's postwar reintegration efforts and symbolized its 'coming-of-age' as an economically advanced nation; on the other because it firmly encapsulated Japan into the Western camp of the Cold War and the US-led liberal economic system. In addition, the process of Japan's admission largely coincided with the negotiations leading up to the establishment of the OECD and its first years of existence. An in-depth investigation of Japan's entry into the OECD thus also promises to extend our knowledge about the origins of the OECD itself, still occupying a 'Cinderella' position among multilateral economic institutions.

Content/Methodology of Research: (400 words)

In order to retrace the Japanese accession process to the OECD, this project builds on an extensive multi-archival research endeavor regarding the positions of those countries which were full members, and therefore possessed formal veto power, of the OECD at the time of Japan's application. Having already visited the diplomatic archives of the majority of countries to which I have 'linguistic' access, the generous funding of the Konosuke Matsushita Memorial Foundation was entirely appropriated to conduct archival research in the last four remaining countries to complete this project's research puzzle. Concretely, I undertook on-site archival research in the following countries to lay bare their involvement in creation of the OECD and the Japanese accession process: (1) Australia, (2) New Zealand, (3) Ireland, and (4) Italy. First, although Australia and New Zealand were not members of the OECD at the time of Japan's accession, the importance of exploring the archives of these two Commonwealth countries becomes clear if we take into account that Britain, trapped between Europe and empire, was long the most strongest opponent of Japanese membership. In exchange for its non-veto, Britain tried to engineer the simultaneous accession of Australia and New Zealand. While this eventually did not materialize, I attempted to unearth information on the link between Britain's long-held opposition to Japan's membership and the possibility of these two countries joining. Second, the Irish archives were not only the last remaining archives of the OECD's original members to which I have 'linguistic' access and still needed to explore, but Ireland was also one of the most adamant defenders of the OECD's geographical character. Its role in the birth of the OECD, as one of the founding member countries neither belonging to the EEC nor the EFTA, and the reasons for its eventual acceptance of Japan's membership application thus remained worth investigating. Finally, in the Historical Archives of the European Union in Italy, I looked for primary sources on the multilateral negotiations surrounding the establishment of the OECD in addition to the complicated but gradually intensifying trade relations between the EEC and Japan.

Conclusion/Observation (200 words)

The financial support of the Konosuke Matsushita Memorial Foundation allowed me to move beyond the still rather limited perspective of the state-of-the-art. Although the aforementioned four countries are easily relegated to the fringes of the story of Japan's entry into OECD, an exploration of their diplomatic archives has led to the discovery of a wealth of information on both the origins of the OECD and Japan's OECD membership, including not only previously untapped but also newly disclosed materials. Currently, I am carefully analyzing the large stack of gathered diplomatic records while trying to integrate the perspectives of multiple different actors into a coherent narrative. While this promises to be a time-consuming but hopefully rewarding exercise, I was able to incorporate preliminary insights of my archival research trip in a presentation at the annual convention of the British International History Group (BIHG) in September 2019. I am confident that triangulating this information with the documentation gained in other countries will no doubt enable a much clearer understanding of the Japanese accession process and a focus on hitherto unrecognized and underappreciated sides of this historical event.