

Conservatism and International Relations: Theories and Strategies of Japanese Foreign Relations

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Conservatism has been a dominant force in Japanese politics for much of the country's post-war history. However, many who study the political Right in Japan have argued that there has been a qualitative change in Japanese conservatism. Where the historically prevalent conservatism emphasized economic and financial growth, the new conservatism has centralized a culturally nationalistic politics both in its domestic and, crucially, foreign policies. Such a shift has been identified by critics as Japanese conservatism's turn further to the Right. These critics argue that this has negatively influenced relations with its neighbours, particularly around issues around the memorialization of the Second World War especially given the revisionist history the new conservatism advocates. At the same time, others have argued that while Japanese conservatives and conservatism may have shifted in quality, the extent of its influence on foreign policy has been overstated. To clarify the state of affairs, this panel investigates the relationship between conservatism as an ideology and its relationship with foreign policy-making in contemporary Japan. It does so by bringing together various perspectives on conservatism – as both a theoretical and empirical phenomenon – at the sites of its formulation, articulation, and manifestation. In so doing, the panel brings clarity to, on one hand, the extent of ideological influence on foreign policy-making and, on the other, where and whether Japan may fit into the global rise of a new political Right.

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