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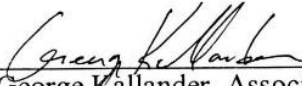
Food Culture and National Identity:  
Japan and the International Whaling Commission


A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements of the Renée Crown University Honors Program at  
Syracuse University

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and Renée Crown University Honors  
Spring 2019

Honors Thesis in International Relations (with Distinction)

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## **Abstract**

This research project focuses on the contentious issue of whaling in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and attempts to make sense of Japan's whaling policy in terms of food culture and national identity. Using a constructivist theoretical framework, I analyze the impact of the whaling issue on Japan's bilateral relations with other nations, in both the East Asian subregion and the larger global community. The results of this paper indicate that whale meat carries a deep symbolism in Japanese national identity and that the general issue of whaling has little effect of Japan's bilateral relations with other nations. Much of the relationship-building between Japan and other nations in regard to whaling has taken place within the International Whaling Commission, but Japan announced its exit from the Commission in December 2018.

## Executive Summary

This project primarily focuses on whaling in a Japanese context. Whaling is a broad term that refers to the catching and killing of cetacean species for their usable products such as oil, blubber, and meat. While many nations around the world once engaged in whaling activities, shifts towards environmental consciousness have created a sharp divide between “pro-whaling” nations and “anti-whaling” nations in today’s international system. Japan is a pro-whaling nation, and one of the few that continues to kill whales for their meat. This does not align with the international ban on whaling, or moratorium, which was enacted in 1982.

The research for this project was conducted using a constructivist theoretical framework. Constructivism is an international relations theory that focuses on the social aspect of states, such as norms and identities, rather than military power or influence from international organizations. My research focuses on the ways in which Japan incorporates whale meat into its national identity and food culture, in effort to understand why the nation continues to pursue a commercial whaling policy in the face of international criticism. It also examines Japan’s complex relationship with the International Whaling Commission (IWC), a global intergovernmental body that oversees and regulates whaling activities, and the impact of whaling on bilateral (or diplomatic) relations between Japan and select other nations. These nations are Norway and Australia, members of the International Whaling Commission with strongly opposing views on whaling, and some of Japan’s regional neighbors in East Asia with International Whaling Commission membership: China, Russia, South Korea, and Mongolia. In December 2018, Japan announced that it would exit the International Whaling Commission, citing fundamental disagreements with the Commission’s policies and treatment of pro-whaling nations.

This project is significant for several reasons. First, it aims to understand Japan's position on whaling without passing judgment on the stances of pro- or anti-whaling nations. Second, it examines the potential diplomatic impacts of an issue that relates to differing cultural norms. Finally, it presents information on an issue that is highly relevant in the modern international system, and will continue to be relevant after Japan's departure from the International Whaling Commission takes full effect in June 2019.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction and Research Overview

In recent years, the modern, globalized world system has seen a rise in environmentally conscious attitudes and behaviors. Many nations have demonstrated increased awareness of their impact on the Earth's forests, oceans, and animal species, leading to the spread of new global norms related to conservation and sustainability. Finnemore and Sikkink define norms as "Shared ideas, expectations, and beliefs about appropriate behavior [that] give the world structure, order, and stability" (1998: 894). These norms shape how nations approach the environment around them and can be significant in the formation of international agreements and organizations.

A particularly contentious issue in regard to contemporary environmental norms is the practice of whaling – that is, the catching and killing of cetacean species for their usable products such as oil, blubber, and meat. While many countries once engaged in extensive commercial whaling, a shift towards the conservation of whales occurred in the 1960s and 1970s in tandem with the rise of Western environmentalist organizations, changing public attitudes towards whales, and a decreasing demand for whale products (Bowett and Hay, 2009). Blok (2008) notes that activist discourse also contributed to the development of a global anti-whaling norm by consistently assigning humanistic qualities such as "friendly," "intelligent," and "socially complex" to whale species, granting them rights and morality "resembling that of humans."

Despite the enactment of an international ban on commercial whaling by the International Whaling Commission (IWC) in 1982, several nations continue to pursue a policy of whaling to satisfy their own national interests. One such whaling nation is Japan, whose “scientific” whaling policy and consumption of whale meat have attracted a considerable amount of negative attention from the international anti-whaling community. With the increasing acceptance of a global anti-whaling norm, the consumption of whale meat in particular has become a “trans-national food taboo” that some see as vulgar and immoral (Blok 2008). While anti-whaling nations such as Australia claim that Japan has defied a global norm and broken international law by whaling in spite of the IWC moratorium, Japan itself claims that the consumption of whale meat is a crucial part of the nation’s culture and identity and that its whaling programs are entirely legal (Payne 2014). This project does not aim to prove the claims of either side right or wrong; rather, it aims to understand the cultural context in which Japan situates whale meat in its national identity and to examine the ways in which Japan’s whaling policy impacts its bilateral relations with other nations in the East Asian region and in the international community. In addition, this project examines Japan’s reasoning for exiting the International Whaling Commission in December 2018.

### **Research Question and Hypothesis**

The primary research question for this project is as follows: How has Japan’s policy of whaling as a cultural practice shaped its contemporary foreign relations? Given the contentious nature of the whaling issue today, determining the level of importance that nations assign to whaling in regard to bilateral relations can be difficult. Do differing positions on whaling and whale-eating have any real potential to make or break international bonds?

I hypothesize that Japan's whaling policy contributes to strengthened relations with other nations that openly engage in whaling. For the purpose of this project, "strengthened" relations refers to any positive developments that emerge between Japan and a given nation with specific connections to whaling. These developments could include cooperation within intergovernmental bodies such as the International Whaling Commission, trade agreements, cooperation in research, public support of whaling programs, and/or a number of other positive communications between nations. I focus on Japan's relations with other East Asian nations involved in the International Whaling Commission, as well as the commercial whaling nation of Norway, to evaluate this hypothesis.

I also hypothesize that Japan's whaling policy contributes to weakened relations with non-whaling nations, particularly those that strictly adhere to an environmentally conscious global norm. The term "weakened" relations encompasses any negative developments connected to whaling that harm Japan's bilateral relationships with other nations. Such developments could include conflicts within the International Whaling Commission, revocation of national support or aid, judicial prosecution, conflicts at sea, and/or any other negative communications between nations tied specifically to the whaling issue. I focus on Japan's relations with other East Asian nations involved in the International Whaling Commission, as well as the prominent anti-whaling nation of Australia, to evaluate this hypothesis.

My analysis of bilateral relations focuses on the time period after the enactment of the 1982 moratorium on commercial whaling, specifically from 2000 to the present. This decision was due largely in part to the landmark 2012 International Court of Justice case, *Whaling in the Antarctic (Australia v. Japan)*, which suggested to me that the issue of whaling had grown in prominence on the international stage in the years leading up to 2012. I also selected this time

period simply due to ease of access to information; given the extensive history of the whaling issue and the unchanged nature of the moratorium since its enactment in 1982, I knew I would be able to answer my research question more thoroughly by making use of recent sources.

### **Review of Literature**

Hirata (2005) provides an analysis of Japan's whaling policy through the International Whaling Commission and various domestic structures. She uses a qualitative method of analysis, the intrinsic case study, and her focus on norm (non)compliance implies a constructivist theoretical framework. Hirata's research is especially informative in terms of the domestic cultural structure that establishes Japan as a whale-eating culture. She offers three underlying cultural perspectives to explain Japan's view on whaling: the national myth that the Japanese have been eating whale for thousands of years; the view of the whale as a fish, rather than a mammal; and resentment towards the West for interfering in Japanese food culture, which some Japanese people suggest is cultural imperialism.

Arch (2016) examines the history of whale meat in Japan to understand how this food has become such a politicized symbol within Japanese national identity. Her research starts out with an acknowledgement that many contemporary Japanese do not eat whale meat as a regular part of their diet. Unlike many Japanese scholars, Arch establishes the Allied (American) Occupation of Japan after World War II as the era in which whale meat first became a national, rather than local, food source. Children who ate whale meat in school lunches during this time period grew up with the idea that it was a normal and vital part of Japanese food culture. Arch's research employs a qualitative method of analysis, the intrinsic case study, as well as a constructivist

theoretical framework. This framework is implied through her analysis of Japanese history and evolution of cultural norms.

### **Theory and Methodology**

In this research project, I examine Japan's national position on the whaling issue from a constructivist perspective. According to Mingst, Karns, and Lyon, a constructivist framework offers "... a valuable way of studying how shared beliefs, rules, organizations, and cultural practices shape the behavior of states and other actors as well as their identities and interests" (2017: 11). Constructivist theory therefore orients my research towards an analysis of differing norms and national identity, and allows for the exploration of crucial issues related to food culture and traditional practices. Although my research question can be answered from a number of theoretical perspectives, I was able to rule out the use of a liberal framework because I heavily prioritize the role of Japan's behavior *as a state* over the roles of other actors, such as individuals and organizations, in the international system. Additionally, I chose not to use a realist framework because it does not leave room for the exploration of norms and identities, a key part of my analysis.

I use a qualitative research method, the intrinsic case study, to understand Japan's policy of whaling as a cultural practice. This was the most logical choice of research method, as I wanted to analyze the significance of whaling and whale-eating in Japan specifically. The intention of the intrinsic case study is "to better understand intrinsic aspects of the particular child, patient, criminal, group, organization, event, or whatever the case may be" (Lune and Berg 2017: 165). The results, then, explain the role of whaling in Japanese culture, identity, and bilateral relations, but offer minimal insight into the rationale of other countries that choose to

either engage or not engage in whaling. Using Japan as the focus of an intrinsic case study on whaling is not a novel concept; the seemingly defiant behavior of Japan in regard to the whaling issue has led a number of scholars to examine the underlying, intrinsic aspects of their whaling policy (Hirata 2005; Arch 2016).

My research also contains elements of an instrumental case study, particularly in my analysis of bilateral relations. As stated by Lune and Berg, the instrumental case study can “help the researcher better understand some external theoretical question, issue, or problem” (2017: 165). In other words, I use this research method to broadly examine how much “weight” is assigned to the whaling issue within diplomatic relations between nations. The instrumental case study is another qualitative research method that scholars have used to study this issue in the past (Blok 2008; Ishii and Okubo 2007; Butler-Stroud 2016).

I draw data from a variety of sources to answer my research question, including the International Whaling Commission (IWC), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) of Japan, and the *Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species* (CITES) Trade Database. I analyze the data collected from these sources and others through a qualitative document analysis approach.

## Chapter 2

### Whaling in Contemporary Japan

#### **The International Whaling Commission (IWC): An Overview**

The International Whaling Commission (hereafter “IWC”) is a global intergovernmental organization that observes the status of whale species across the globe and advocates for their conservation. In 1946, the IWC and its legally binding Schedule were established under the *International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling* (ICRW). The Schedule protects stocks of sei, minke, fin, blue, right, bowhead, humpback, and gray whale species, among others. (IWC 2016: 6). The treaty also sets catch limits, establishes designated areas as whale sanctuaries, and bans certain capture methods such as the cold grenade harpoon (IWC 2016: 3; IWC, n.d.-a).

The IWC has regular meetings of both the overall Commission and the Scientific Committee. The Commission meetings used to occur on an annual basis, but were changed to a biennial schedule in 2012. The Scientific Committee still meets annually (IWC n.d.-b).

In 1982, the IWC amended its Schedule to initiate an international shift towards whale conservation, rather than sustainable hunting and use. Years of unchecked commercial whaling had heavily depleted whale stocks across the globe, and the IWC determined that these stocks needed time to recover (Animal Welfare Institute, n.d.). Commonly known as the moratorium on commercial whaling, paragraph 10(e) of the Schedule states that “catch limits for the killing for commercial purposes of whales from all stocks for the 1986 coastal and the 1985/86 pelagic

seasons and thereafter shall be zero.” Paragraph 10(e) also states that the moratorium is intended to be temporary and “kept under review,” but as of 2019, it is still in effect.

Despite the creation of the moratorium, several IWC member nations still engage in whaling. Norway and Iceland, for example, continue programs of commercial whaling under objection or reservation to the stipulations of the moratorium (IWC, n.d.-c). While Japan’s whaling policy is frequently described as commercial in nature, the nation was actually allowed by the IWC to whale under special permit, or scientific whaling, until their departure from the Commission in December 2018. These special permits granted Japan the authority to capture and study whales for scientific purposes, so long as the catches and scientific data were regularly reported to the IWC’s Scientific Committee (IWC, n.d.-d). In recent years, Japan has been accused of dishonesty and opacity in its scientific whaling programs, leading to negative international attention and even a case between Japan and Australia in the International Court of Justice.

The IWC also recognizes and permits whaling for the purposes of aboriginal subsistence. This gives native communities the ability to hunt a set number of whales in accordance with their cultural traditions. The IWC recognizes aboriginal subsistence whaling as entirely separate from commercial whaling, and as of 2018 there are four IWC member nations with native communities that engage in it: Denmark (Greenland), Russia (Chukotka), St Vincent and the Grenadines (Bequia) and the United States (Alaska and Washington state) (IWC, n.d.-e). According to Hirata, Japan requested that its coastal communities, such as Taiji, Wakayama Prefecture, be granted aboriginal subsistence whaling rights in the form of small-type coastal whaling; this request was denied by the IWC multiple times due to the presence of “commercial element[s]” in the proposed programs (Hirata 2005: 136).



### **Japan: Whale Meat in Cultural Tradition and National Identity**

Japan became a member of the IWC in 1951, but the history of Japan and whaling reportedly goes back much further. The majority of Japanese society does not consume whale meat as a regular part of their diet; a 2014 survey from the Asahi Shimbun showed that only 4 to 14 percent of the population routinely eats whale (Arch 2016). This statistic raises questions of why Japan continues its whaling policy despite the lack of demand for whale meat among the population. The answer lies in Japan's national identity, constructed in part by a government-sanctioned narrative of the nation's rich whaling history. Understanding the historical narrative is a crucial part of my examination of Japan's modern-day position on the whaling issue.

Japanese scholars and anthropologists use evidence of primitive whale drawings and whale hunting tools to assert that Japanese people began whaling and eating whale meat in the ancient Jomon period (10,000 – 300 B.C.E.) (Hirata 2005: 142-143). As a result of the development of improved whale-hunting technology, people across the country were introduced to whale meat, and Japan subsequently began to formulate its national identity as a *gyoshoku bunka*, or whale-eating culture (Hirata 2005: 143). Whaling in Japan grew into a full-fledged industry during the Tokugawa period, from 1603 to 1868 (Arch 2016). According to the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries (MAFF), whale is a traditional ingredient used in dishes across the country, such as whale soup in Hakodate and Niigata and *hari-hari nabe*, a “whale meat pot” in Osaka (Japan Fisheries Agency 2018: 23). Some traditional dishes appear in an 1832 encyclopedic cookbook entitled *Geiniku Chomikata* (literally “How to season whale meat”), a work that is frequently cited by scholars in research on Japan's whaling history (Akamine 2013, 81). *Geiniku Chomikata* discourages wasteful use of whale resources by

dividing the whale into 70 parts with distinct recipes; each of these recipes are extremely detailed and contain information regarding methods for cooking, desalination, and storage. Deep-frying, pickling, boiling, and stir-frying are just a handful of whale meat cooking methods covered in *Geiniku Chomikata* (Akamine 2013: 82).

Although many Japanese people accept and believe that whale meat has been a part of Japanese culture for thousands of years, Arch (2016) contends that whale meat consumption in Japan became widespread during periods of food scarcity, such as the era of Allied Occupation after World War II (1945 – 1952). During this period, American forces under the leadership of Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP) Douglas MacArthur were given control of all Japanese institutions and tasked with rebuilding the nation (Arch 2016). According to Arch (2016), the changes brought about by postwar reconstruction in the 1940s shifted whale meat from a localized specialty consumed only in whaling villages to a Japanese national food. The Occupation government, searching for a way to bolster Japan's economy through natural resources and to solve food shortage issues with cheap protein, began to encourage the consumption of whale meat through Western-style recipes, magazines, and school lunch programs (Arch 2016). It was also instrumental in reviving Japan's Antarctic whaling program after the war, which inundated Japanese markets with large amounts of inexpensive whale meat and other whale products.

Arch (2016) suggests that the school lunch program during the era of Allied Occupation is one significant reason behind Japan's contemporary pro-whaling stance. From 1955 to 1987, whale meat was rationed out from Antarctic hunts and served to schoolchildren in a variety of different prefectures. A staple lunch food during this period was *kujira no tatsuta-age*, or deep-fried whale meat (Akamine 2013: 78). After the enactment of the IWC moratorium, however,

whale meat was phased out of lunch programs because it became too expensive to acquire in large quantities (Arch 2016). Children's experiences with whale meat in postwar Japan account for a number of the population that answered that they "ate whale meat once in the distant past, but they have not had it recently" in the Asahi Shimbun survey of 2014. As these children grew older and Japan moved out of the postwar era, many of them maintained the idea that whale meat was a critical part of Japanese food culture and national identity, and that Western pushback against Japan's whaling policy was a form of "cultural bullying" (Arch 2016). "Whale meat cuisine was just one of the characteristically Japanese things seized on as a national symbol by people in the 1970s searching for what was being lost in the rapid industrial growth of the postwar period" (Arch 2016).

According to Hirata (2005), Japanese officials are aware of the relative unpopularity of whale meat among the majority of the population and have enacted a number of strategies in attempt to solidify nationwide support of whaling and whale consumption. These strategies generally revolve around pushing back against Western norms and asserting Japan's cultural uniqueness (Hirata 2005: 143-144). For example, Japan's Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries (MAFF) issued a statement prior to the 54<sup>th</sup> meeting of the IWC in Shimonoseki, saying,

"Clearly, the acceptance of other cultures' dietary practices and the promotion of cultural diversity is as important as saving endangered species and the promotion of biological diversity. If the consumption of whale meat does not endanger whale species, those who find the practice unacceptable for themselves should not try to impose their view on others" (qtd. in Hirata 2005: 143).

Similarly, in 2001, current IWC commissioner and former MAFF bureaucrat Joji Morishita pointed out the “double standards” present in Western criticism of Japanese whaling as a cultural practice; while Westerners seem to support the idea that wildlife is to be “seen and admired,” Western nations commonly slaughter cows and pigs for consumption and hunt other mammals (like deer and kangaroo) for sport (Browne 2001).

Japanese officials also call on a key difference between Japanese and Western norms to validate the nation’s whaling policy: In Japan, the whale is viewed as a fish, not a mammal, and fish is a critical part of Japanese food culture. Japan’s whaling activities fall under the jurisdiction of MAFF and the Japanese Fisheries Agency (Peace 2010: 7-8). According to Professor Jun Morikawa of Rakuno Gakuen University, a “small government elite” is in charge of determining Japan’s stance on whaling. He also confirms that these bureaucrats are aware of dwindling profits in the whaling industry, and therefore “spread pro-whaling propaganda and manipulate public opinion so that people think that eating whale meat is part of our national culture” (McCurry 2010).

Japan’s decision to withdraw from the IWC in December 2018 has caused quite a commotion among scholars, government officials, and corporations entangled with the Japanese whaling industry. Former IWC commissioner and MAFF bureaucrat Masayuki Komatsu, a well-known figure in the whaling world of Japan, was outspoken in calling Japan’s IWC exit a “misjudgment” (Denyer and Kashiwagi 2018). According to Komatsu, departure from the IWC means that,

“Japan’s position will become weak. If Japan is taken to an international court, it may suffer and lose ground. If I were in a responsible government position, I wouldn’t want to

take such risks. Rather, I'd stay with the IWC convention and make the best use of its obligations and duties" (qtd. in Denyer and Kashiwagi 2018).

Komatsu's commentary on this decision suggests that there may be a divide among Japanese government officials and experts on how to reinvigorate national interest in whaling and whale meat. Some share Komatsu's perspective and believe that exiting the IWC was not the most prudent decision in regard to Japan's diplomatic relations. For example, Yasuhiro Sanada, a researcher with Waseda University who previously called whaling in Japan a "dead industry," referred to the country's IWC departure as a "diplomatic failure" that would attract further criticism from anti-whaling nations (Brasor 2017; Matsuo 2018).

Others appear to be handling the decision with caution. MAFF Minister Takamori Yoshikawa, for example, expressed his personal disappointment with the country's decision to leave the IWC, but also showed hope that the reinstatement of Japan's commercial whaling industry could help to boost the economies of coastal whaling villages like Taiji (Matsuo 2018; Yamaguchi 2018). Several Japanese seafood companies with former ties to the commercial whaling industry, such as Maruha Nichiro Corp. and Nippon Suisan Kaisha Ltd., have told the press that they have no interest in resuming commercial whaling due to the increasingly "sluggish" demand for whale meat (Asahi Shimbun 2018). In addition, supermarket chains like Aeon Co. that sell whale meat in some locations across Japan have stated that they have no intention of expanding sales in light of the resumption of commercial whaling (Asahi Shimbun 2018).

The role of whale meat in Japan is highly politicized, despite its lack of popularity among the contemporary population. At first glance, it is puzzling that whale meat appears to play such a central role Japanese food culture. Japan's positioning of itself as a whale-eating culture comes

from a national identity constructed by a number of historical factors: an ancient history of whaling supported by anthropological evidence and encyclopedic cookbooks like *Geiniku Chomikata*, food shortage solutions during the era of Allied Occupation, and viewpoints of Japanese officials and institutions that emphasize Western cultural imperialism/Japanese cultural uniqueness.

### **December 2018: Japan Withdraws from the International Whaling Commission**

On December 26, 2018, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga issued an official statement on behalf of the government of Japan detailing the nation's decision to withdraw from the International Whaling Commission and resume commercial whaling by July 2019 (MOFA 2018c). The carefully worded statement touches on Japan's disappointment with the IWC's exclusive focus on the protection of whales rather than sustainable use. Suga also expresses the Japanese delegation's frustration that the moratorium, originally intended to be reviewed and/or modified "by 1990 at the latest," has remained in place to date (MOFA 2018c). Ultimately, Suga's statement neatly sums up Japan's grievances with the IWC and anti-whaling nations, but expresses the nation's desires to maintain close diplomatic ties with "countries that share the basic position to promote sustainable use of aquatic living resources" (MOFA 2018c).

Japan's departure from the IWC did not necessarily come as a surprise to other IWC member nations, for a variety of reasons. According to Yohei Matsuo, staff writer for *Nikkei Asian Review*, Japan has left a number of international organizations in recent years – such as the International Coffee Organization and the Common Fund for Commodities – due to economic stress (Matsuo 2018). Regardless, according to NHK World writer Yuya Sekiguchi,

Japan's reputation as a cooperative, diplomatic country means that, "It's extremely rare for Japan to pull out of a major international organization like the IWC" (Sekiguchi 2019).

Although Japan's withdrawal from the IWC is undoubtedly a major development, the Japanese delegation to the IWC has had an extensive history of threatening to leave the Commission. Archived news stories from 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, and 2007 show that Japan threatened to exit the Commission at each of the IWC's annual meetings from 2003 through 2007 (IWC55 through IWC59) (Kirby 2003; Kirby 2004; Reuters 2005; Clarke 2006; Wakabayashi 2007). In 2011, the Japanese delegation and 20 of its pro-whaling allies walked out of IWC63 in order to stall a vote on the establishment of a South Atlantic Whale Sanctuary (Press Trust of India 2011). These instances of threats and noncompliance can be attributed to the fact that Japan strongly believes in the "temporary" nature of the IWC moratorium, and its proposals to resume commercial whaling in coastal communities have been consistently blocked by anti-whaling nations in the IWC. However, even Japan's attempts to come to a peaceful agreement with its opponents in the IWC have failed. In 2015, Japan circulated a letter and questionnaire to all members and official observers of the IWC, outlining a potential small-type coastal whaling program and asking for explanations on any objections. It appears that this questionnaire was an attempt by Japan to compromise with those opposed to its previous proposals on the same issue. The responses to Japan's questionnaire were posted on the IWC website in order to "maximize transparency" (IWC n.d.-f). In each response that was posted, from the delegations of the European Union, New Zealand, Australia, Israel, and the Buenos Aires group, nations reiterated their support for the IWC moratorium but expressed gratitude towards Japan for its cooperative efforts. They did not supply responses to each individual question on the questionnaire (IWC n.d.-g).

The “breaking point” for Japan in regards to its whaling goals and IWC membership was most likely the adoption of the Florianopolis Declaration at IWC67 in September 2018. The Declaration officially designated the main mission of the IWC as whale conservation, rather than “orderly development of the whaling industry,” which is mentioned in the original preamble to the ICRW and a focal point of Japanese activity in the IWC (Barnett 2018a; International Convention 1946, 1). Suga indirectly refers to the Declaration in his statement, saying, “... the 67<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the IWC in September 2018 ... unveiled the fact that it is not possible in the IWC even to seek the coexistence of States with different views” (MOFA 2018c). Essentially, this meeting was the point at which Japan determined that it could no longer compromise with its opponents in the IWC on the commercial whaling moratorium or sustainable use of whales.



## Chapter 3

### The Impact of Japanese Whaling on Bilateral Relations

#### Views on Japanese Whaling Outside of East Asia

I first present my analysis of Japanese bilateral relations with nations outside of the East Asian subregion. For my first hypothesis, I examine Norway, one of the few IWC member nations that still engages in commercial whaling. Within the IWC, Japan, Norway, and Iceland are almost always lumped together as the three main voices of the pro-whaling voting bloc. The nations frequently push back against anti-whaling resolutions and vote together with one another. For my second hypothesis, I focus on Australia, a vocal anti-whaling nation that took Japan to the International Court of Justice over the integrity of its whaling programs. These two nations offer opposing positions on whaling from a Western perspective.

#### Norway

Norway joined the IWC in 1960 (IWC, n.d.-h), and is one of the few nations that is allowed to conduct a commercial whaling program under objection to the moratorium. As two of the world's most vocal pro-whaling nations, Japan and Norway have built an extensive diplomatic relationship through IWC membership, trade, and summit meetings.

One of the most significant indicators of IWC cooperation between Japan and Norway came in 2011, when the Government of Japan selected a Norwegian national by the name of Lars Walløe to provide an expert testimony on Japan's whaling programs in the International Court of Justice case, *Whaling in the Antarctic (Australia v. Japan)*. Significantly, Japan did not call any

Japanese nationals to serve as a scientific expert for this case. From 1989 to 2015, Walløe served as head of the Norwegian delegation to the Scientific Committee of the IWC, the organization that monitors scientific whaling activities (Walløe 2013, 3). On behalf of Norway, Walløe has expressed views on whaling that directly support non-Western pro-whaling norms and indirectly support Japan's food culture: "We kill [deer, elk, and moose] for meat and we don't see the difference between killing a minke whale and a moose as long as it's done humanely" (Illmer 2018). In 2009, the government of Japan awarded Walløe the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Neck Ribbon for contributions to "the promotion of Japan's policy in the field of fisheries" (MOFA 2009). Japan's cooperation with and reliance on Walløe suggest that Japan and Norway have strengthened their relations through membership in the IWC Commission and IWC Scientific Committee.

Information from the CITES Trade Database shows a thriving trade relationship between Japan and Norway in terms of whale meat, with Japan primarily acting as the importer. I examined data available from 2000 to 2018 in accordance with my time frame. Iceland is also involved in this trade (CITES Trade Database, n.d.). Although the CITES Treaty prohibits the trade of whale meat, the three major whaling nations are technically allowed to import and export it because each has registered reservations on CITES-protected whale species (CITES 2013). This trade relationship makes it possible for Japan to supply its domestic demand for whale meat without feeling pressured to acquire whale meat through illegal methods. By actively engaging in trade of whale meat with Japan, Norway both affirms its support of Japanese dietary practices and establishes itself as a reliable pro-whaling diplomatic partner. It is important to note that the CITES Treaty maintains a close watch on Japan's activities in the whale meat

market; in October 2018, Japan was censured by CITES for illegally harvesting Japanese-caught whale meat from outside of its national waters (MAREX 2018).

The whaling issue has been a frequent topic of discussion between Japan and Norway at summits and meetings between foreign affairs ministers. Japanese MOFA records indicate that whaling was discussed between the two nations at meetings in 2004, 2016, 2017, and 2018; in each case, either one or both parties expressed interest in “continuing” or “advancing” cooperation in the field of whaling. For example, the MOFA summary of a 2017 summit meeting between Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Norwegian Prime Minister Erna Solberg states that “Abe explained that he would like to maintain the amicable cooperative relationship in the field of whaling” (MOFA 2017). In the summary of a 2004 meeting between Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs Yoriko Kawaguchi and Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs Jan Petersen, further cooperation of the two nations in the IWC is mentioned under a category subtitled “Bilateral Relations” (MOFA 2004).

The Norwegian response to Japan’s decision to leave the International Whaling Commission has been mixed. Norwegian Minister of Fisheries Harald T. Nesvik stated that Japan’s departure will not harm Norway’s whaling industry, citing the warm relations between the two nations inside and out of the IWC in regard to management of marine resources (Wijnen 2018). Nesvik also acknowledged Japan’s reliance on importing Norwegian whale meat, but expressed confidence that the two nations would still cooperate in trade regardless of IWC membership. Said Nesvik,

“Whale meat trade is regulated by an international convention (CITES), and only countries that have reservations to the ban on such trade can export and import meat between themselves. The fact that Japan leaves the IWC does not change this, and we

will continue to work for easier access to the Japanese market for Norwegian whale meat” (qtd. in Wijnen 2018).

Other Norwegian nationals have expressed doubt in Japan’s choice to leave the IWC. For example, Norwegian diplomat and former Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme Erik Solheim showed concern on social media over Japan’s decision to leave the IWC (McCurry and Weaver 2018). In a Tweet published on December 26, 2018, Solheim wrote: “It’s dangerous when nations break out of global agreements and start setting their own rules.” He also urged his followers to “ask Japan to reconsider” their decision (Solheim 2018).

The above records from the IWC, CITES Trade Database, and MOFA of Japan offer significant evidence that Japan and Norway have incorporated the whaling issue into their bilateral relations, using their common interests in whaling to promote friendship and cooperation between the two nations. Japan’s decision to leave the IWC has had little observable positive or negative impact on Japan-Norway relations to date.

### **Australia**

Since the enactment of the IWC moratorium on commercial whaling in 1982, Australia has been one of the most vocal anti-whaling nations in the IWC and the international system as a whole. An IWC member since 1948, Australia’s contemporary relationship with the whale is rooted firmly in a philosophy of whale-watching, rather than whale-eating (IWC, n.d.-h). Despite starkly contrasting views on the whaling issue and a heated battle in the International Court of Justice (hereafter “ICJ”), the governments of Japan and Australia have made efforts to prevent the issue from harming their otherwise warm bilateral relations.

In 2010, Australia brought a case against Japan in the ICJ over concerns that Japan's Second Phase of its Whale Research Program under Special Permit in the Antarctic (JARPA II) was in violation of the *International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling* (ICRW). New Zealand intervened in the case on behalf of Australia (Payne 2014). Australia cited Article VIII of the ICRW as the main area of Japan's violation, which establishes the basic rules for governments that wish to grant special permits for scientific whaling. Australia also accused Japan of "[failing] to act in good faith" by not abiding by the 1982 moratorium and capturing whales in the protected Southern Ocean Sanctuary (Payne 2014). Japan countered these accusations by re-asserting the scientific nature of JARPA II and by pointing out that scientific whaling lies outside of both the regulations of ICRW and the 1982 moratorium on commercial whaling (Payne 2014). The Court ultimately ruled that special permits granted by Japan for JARPA II were not for scientific research purposes, meaning that Japan was in violation of Article VIII of the ICRW. In 2014, the Court ordered Japan to cease all whaling operations under JARPA II (Payne 2014).

According to Heazle (2013), Australia had long kept whaling disputes with Japan contained within the IWC to avoid harming bilateral relations. He argues that the decision to challenge Japan in the ICJ was motivated primarily by Australian domestic politics, particularly the 2010 elections, and that this decision "[abandoned] the long-held 'agree to disagree' approach between Australia and Japan to managing the whaling issue within the broader bilateral relationship" (Heazle 2013). Because Heazle's research was conducted prior to the ICJ ruling, he was not able to determine how the outcome of the case would impact Japan-Australia relations. However, information from 2018 demonstrates that the "agree to disagree" approach was still employed by both nations after the ICJ case, and that this case did not cause any

tangible damage to bilateral relations. In response to Japan's bid to resume commercial whaling at the 67<sup>th</sup> Meeting of IWC (IWC67) in September 2018, Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop published a statement on her website, saying that "Australia and Japan enjoy a deep and strong bilateral relationship, but we disagree on the issue of whales" (Bishop 2018). Similarly, at a January 2018 summit meeting between Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, Abe "expressed the view that efforts should be made to ensure that the whaling issue does not have a negative impact on the favorable bilateral relationship as a whole" (MOFA 2018b).

Discourse analyses of Australian media on the whaling issue suggest that it is contentious enough to cause drastic changes in Australian public opinion about Japan and the Japanese people (Kato 2015; Kimura and Egege 2017). Kato (2015) points to an incident that occurred in 2009, following the release of a documentary called *The Cove* that aimed to expose the whaling practices of the Japanese town of Taiji. In response to the sensationalized nature of the documentary and coverage by Australian newspapers, the Western Australian town of Broome temporarily suspended its sister-city relationship with Taiji. Although the suspension was quickly lifted, this incident implies that media is can be persuasive in altering views regarding the whaling issue (Kato 2015). Kimura and Egege (2017) show that Japanese and Australian media both exaggerate in how they portray the whaling issue, with Australian media frequently using emotive and loaded language to establish the Japanese as "unlawful and aggressive" villains. "This type of discourse," say Kimura and Egege, "reinforces prejudice and discourages any balanced or critical discussion of the issues" (2017).

Following the departure of Japan from the IWC in December 2018, Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs Marise Payne and Minister for the Environment Melissa Price issued a press

release on behalf of the Australian government that stated, “Their decision to withdraw is regrettable and Australia urges Japan to return to the [*International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling*] and [The International Whaling Commission] as a matter of priority” (Payne and Price 2018). The press release reiterates Australia’s anti-whaling position and strict condemnation of commercial whaling practices. In addition, the statement “welcomes” Japan’s decision to cease all whaling activities in the contested Southern Ocean Sanctuary, while acknowledging Japan’s continued involvement in the IWC as an observer rather than a member state (Payne and Price 2018). The overall tone of the press release suggests that adherence to the “agree to disagree” method of maintaining bilateral relations between Japan and Australia may be faltering due to Japan’s decision to leave the IWC, but it is too early to say so definitively.

Overall, Japan and Australia have managed to maintain close bilateral relations in other areas by deliberately choosing to bypass the whaling issue in foreign affairs. Although the ICJ case represented a major escalation of the whaling dispute outside of the IWC, it did not appear to have any major impact on bilateral relations. Media portrayals of the whaling issue present a possible threat to how the citizens of each nation perceive the other, but also do not appear to have weakened Japan-Australia relations.

### **Regional Views on Japanese Whaling in East Asia**

According to the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN-ESCAP), “East and North-East Asia” refers to the nations of Japan, China, North Korea, South Korea, Mongolia, and Russia. Hong Kong and Macau are included as well (UN-ESCAP, n.d.). Of these nations, Japan, China, South Korea, Mongolia, and Russia are current members of the IWC (IWC, n.d.-h). Patterns of support and opposition for whaling among Japan’s neighbors

are important to analyze. Among the East Asian IWC nations, Japan is undoubtedly the most outspoken proponent for whaling. I found very little direct evidence of cooperation or conflict between these nations and Japan in regard to whaling.

### **China**

Evidence of the whaling issue in relations between Japan and China is difficult to come by. Chinese news publications and information from the MOFA of Japan indicate that bilateral relations in regard to whaling fluctuate with the general state of bilateral relations between Japan and China. China has been a member of the IWC since 1980 (IWC, n.d.-h), and has voted in solidarity with Japan on many resolutions in the past (Robertson 2005). Vassili Papastavrou, a whale biologist with the International Fund for Animal Welfare, suggests that China's partisan votes on these resolutions came from a position of relative indifference, as China is not a whaling nation (Robertson 2005). In a 2003 meeting between Chinese and Japanese foreign affairs ministers, former Japanese Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi expressed her thanks towards China for supporting Japan in a vote against a resolution adopted by anti-whaling nations at the 55<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the IWC (IWC55). Chinese Minister Li Zaoxing simply replied that "China has consistently understood Japan's interest regarding the whaling issue" (MOFA 2003).

According to Robertson (2005), environmentalist groups began to urge China to oppose Japan's views within the IWC following a "downturn" in Sino-Japanese bilateral relations. Said downturn was caused in part by Japan's attempt to join the United Nations Security Council as a permanent member, leading to a series of anti-Japanese protests that swept across China in 2005 (Robertson 2005). Around this time, China restructured its delegation in the IWC and established Wang Yaming as the new representative. Stated Wang,



“There is not much of a relationship between Japan and China over the IWC, as Japan is not important for China. Every decision made on this issue is a decision for a sovereign country” (qtd. in Robertson 2005).

In more recent years, Wang has expressed concern over the implications of Japan’s whaling program in the northwest Pacific Ocean; in 2016, he noted the dwindling numbers of minke whale stocks in the region and also added that their migratory routes cross through the exclusive economic zones (EEZs) of Russia, South Korea, North Korea, and China (Global Times 2016).

Aside from communications between foreign ministers and IWC representatives, it does not appear as though China and Japan have experienced any significant cooperation or conflict in regard to the whaling issue in recent years. China has not yet commented on Japan’s departure from the IWC. Therefore, I conclude that whaling has had little impact on bilateral relations between China and Japan.

## **Russia**

As was the case with China, there is not a large amount of easily accessible data detailing the state of bilateral relations between Russia and Japan in regard to the whaling issue. Russia (formally known as the Russian Federation) joined the IWC in 1948 (IWC, n.d.-h), and is one of only a few nations to have lodged an objection to the moratorium on commercial whaling (IWC, n.d.-b). Russia does not capture whales under this objection, but the indigenous community in Chukotka is permitted to whale for aboriginal subsistence purposes.

Within the IWC, Russia has been vocal in offering its support to Japan in relation to several pro-whaling proposals. Most notably, at the 66<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the IWC (IWC66), Russia

backed Japan's proposal to allow small-scale whaling in their coastal communities. As mentioned above, Japan has attempted numerous times to gain IWC approval for a small-type coastal whaling program to no avail. Russia's deputy IWC commissioner, Valentin Ilyashenko, commented,

“I think that we all have to remember that those [whaling communities] in Japan that have been asking for quota, they have a 5,000-year history of whaling. Our task is not only to conserve biodiversity but also to conserve culture and traditions” (Agence France-Presse 2016).

At the 67<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the IWC (IWC67) in 2018, Russia also joined Japan and other pro-whaling nations in blocking a proposal that aimed to establish a whale sanctuary in the South Atlantic Ocean (AFP-JIJI 2018).

Other news reports and IWC votes suggest that bilateral relations between Russia and Japan in regard to whaling are not as warm as they could be. In 2014, Russian authorities captured a Japanese whaling vessel, the Shonan Maru No. 2, that had been tracking and observing whales in Russian waters (Kyodo 2014). Reportedly, the ship changed its route without first notifying Russian authorities. The Shonan Maru No. 2 was allowed to continue its mission after prosecutors questioned the crew and charged them a small fine (Kyodo 2014). Although this situation did not escalate very far, the actions taken by Russia imply that the nation will not allow Japanese violations of international maritime law – and violations of Russian sovereignty – to go unpunished.

Although Russia did show some support for Japan at IWC67, it abstained from voting on one major proposal by Japan that would have allowed Japan to resume a commercial whaling program. Russia stated that the choice to abstain came from a growing concern about the sharp

divide between pro- and anti-whaling nations in the IWC. The proposal was ultimately voted down, leading Japan to threaten its departure from the IWC (Barnett 2018b).

Because Russia and Japan share a pro-whaling sentiment, I expected to find evidence of more direct cooperation on whaling between the two nations. However, the majority of this cooperation appears to be limited to support within the IWC. The CITES Trade Database shows no cooperation between Japan and Russia in the trade of whale meat between 2000 and 2018, and no information is available from MOFA of Japan that would indicate discussion of the whaling issue between foreign ministers from Japan and Russia. Within the IWC, Russia's decision to support Japan's proposal to allow small-type coastal whaling is understandable, as Russia has native communities that are permitted to whale for aboriginal subsistence purposes. However, Russia's decision to abstain from a vote to resume Japanese commercial whaling and capture Japanese whaling vessels is also understandable – despite its pro-whaling stance, Russia is not an active whaling nation and does not necessarily have a relationship with Japan in this area. Russia has not yet commented on Japan's departure from the IWC. Overall, it appears that Russia is more interested in protecting its own national interests and maintaining balance in the IWC than strengthening whaling relations with Japan.

### **South Korea**

Bilateral relations on whaling between Japan and South Korea (formally Republic of Korea) are especially important to examine because of similar perspectives on whaling and whale meat consumption. Tatar and Lee (2012) note that “the Republic of Korea has not been known widely as a ‘whaling nation’ although whale meat is consumed as a delicacy in certain regions of the country.” South Korea joined the IWC in 1978, and although it is not permitted to whale under

reservation to the moratorium or scientific permit, rates of illegal whaling and illegal whale bycatch in the nation are quite high (Tatar 2014).

South Korean motives for whaling are related mainly to culture and national identity, as is the case with Japan. Whale meat is a delicacy consumed in various coastal communities throughout the country; South Korean citizens in these communities view the moratorium on commercial whaling as “unjust and a threat to their livelihood” (Tatar and Jung 2018). A similar sentiment was echoed by the Secretary General of Japan’s Liberal Democratic Party, Toshihiro Nikai, after the decision was made to exit the IWC: “... anti-whaling members [of the IWC] don't have the slightest consideration toward the livelihoods of the fishermen who depend on whaling” (qtd. in Sekiguchi 2019).

To satisfy the demand for whale meat, South Korean whalers capture whales illegally or harvest whales that are “accidentally” entangled in fishing nets (Tatar 2014). Additional evidence shows that South Korea may be engaging in illegal trade with its whale-eating neighbor. For example, a 2010 study by Baker et al. shows that whale meat from Japanese catches was found in a restaurant Seoul, South Korea. The CITES Trade Database shows no evidence of a trade of whale meat between Japan and South Korea between 2000 and 2018, indicating that this meat was acquired through illegal means.

Despite an announced crackdown by the South Korean government on illegal whaling in 2011, the South Korean delegation announced plans to initiate a program of scientific whaling at the 64<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the IWC (Tatar 2014). This program was never enacted due to heated objections by anti-whaling nations, especially Australia and New Zealand (Associated Press 2012). When asked about South Korea’s proposed research whaling program and any potential cooperation with Japan, Japanese Deputy Press Secretary Naoko Saiki stated,

“We have not been approached by the Government of the ROK on this matter. We are aware of the statement made by the delegation of the ROK at the IWC annual meeting in Panama. We understand that the ROK announced its policy to start scientific research whaling, but we do not know the details of the plan” (MOFA 2012).

I was generally surprised to find little evidence of direct cooperation between Japan and South Korea related to whaling. Various literature that compare the similarities in their motives and views led me to infer that the two nations could perhaps see strengthened bilateral relations in the future, especially if anti-whaling nations continue to push back against their cultural traditions. According to Tatar and Jung (2018), although the two nations differ in their methods of capturing whales, “in both cases their policies on whaling are intended to maintain outward compliance with the moratorium, while supplying whale meat for cultural needs.” If Japan and South Korea chose to expand their bilateral relations to incorporate the whaling issue, the two nations could potentially act together and pose a strong counterargument to Western norms that position whale meat as taboo.

South Korea has not yet commented on Japan’s departure from the IWC. However, some environmental activists, such as Astrid Fuchs of the worldwide charity Whale and Dolphin Conservation (WDC), fear that the country’s exit might encourage other countries to leave the Commission. She notes that South Korea could likely follow Japan’s lead due to increased demand for whale meat among parts of the South Korean population (McCurry and Weaver 2018).

## **Mongolia**

Bilateral relations between Japan and Mongolia in relation to whaling are more complicated than surface perceptions may indicate, particularly within the IWC. Mongolia became a member of the IWC in 2002, a decision that seems contradictory given the nation's landlocked position in East Asia. In order to understand Mongolia's status as a pro-whaling ally to Japan, it is important to first discuss the issue of "vote-buying" within the IWC.

Japan has long been accused of offering official development assistance (ODA) to low- and middle-income nations in return for pro-whaling support in the IWC. This has been referred to by Japan's anti-whaling opponents as "vote-buying." Several scholars have researched this issue in the past, reaching conclusions that indicate a relationship between Japanese ODA and IWC voting patterns (Miller and Dolšak 2007; Strand and Tuman 2012). McNeill (2007) suggests that Mongolia fits into this pattern, citing substantial amounts of aid in the form of cultural grants and loan assistance (8). He provides a statistic reportedly from Japan's MOFA website that appears to either be outdated or lost. However, updated ODA information from MOFA shows that Japan still provides considerable amounts of aid to Mongolia. From 2013 to 2017, Japan was Mongolia's top aid donor (MOFA 2017b: 184); the most recent ODA report from MOFA shows that Mongolia is also in the top 30 recipients of Japan's total bilateral aid (MOFA 2017b: 183). This information alone does not prove that Japan provides more aid to Mongolia because of its membership in the IWC and/or pro-whaling stance, but it does indicate that Mongolia relies heavily on Japanese financial support. The whaling issue may be a factor that Japan considers in its provision of aid to Mongolia, but without official word from either nation or more concrete evidence, I cannot say with certainty. Perhaps this is a topic for future researchers to consider.

Aside from the vote-buying issue, environmental groups have blatantly accused Japan of soliciting Mongolia into the IWC. In 2002, a worldwide charity known as Whale and Dolphin Conservation (WDC) published a brief blog post describing an article from the Asahi Shimbun that reportedly claimed Mongolia had “admitted that Japan had solicited its entry into the IWC” (WDC 2002). The blog post provides no link to the full story, and after a thorough search of Asahi Shimbun’s website and other related news outlets, I have been unable to locate the story. The Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, an environmental activist group that has clashed with Japanese whalers in the past (Peace 2010: 5), has also published blog posts making similar claims. A particularly sardonic 2006 post featuring commentary from Sea Shepherd founder Paul Watson states, “Mongolia is not a wealthy nation so there must be some economic motivation to send delegates halfway around the world to support the resumption of commercial whaling.” In the same post, Watson includes quotations attributed to Mongolian IWC commissioner Tsend Damdin who speaks highly of Japan and the potential economic benefits of joining them as an ally in the IWC (Watson 2006). The credibility of these quotations is questionable, given the lack of citation or context as well as the general tone of the piece. In another Sea Shepherd blog post by Watson made in 2008, he claims that Japan has been paying the membership fees and travel expenses of the Mongolian delegation to the IWC. No sources are provided (Watson 2008). Although highly biased and questionable, these blog posts give some insight into the pro-whaling perspective on relations between Japan and Mongolia – the two countries do cooperate in regards to the whaling issue, but this cooperation might be less than honest.

Around the time of Japan’s departure from the IWC in December 2018, Watson published a blog post on the Sea Shepherd website detailing why the country’s exit would be a “positive development” (Watson 2018). He predicts that, without Japan present to pay bribes,

many “puppet nations” currently present in the IWC will either vote differently in favor of conservation or quit the Commission altogether. Watson refers directly to Mongolia here: “Mongolia for example has absolutely no connection to whaling historically or practically” (Watson 2018). As of February 2019, no other IWC member nations with affiliations to Japan have exited the Commission.

Mongolia’s whaling relationship with Japan does extend outside of the IWC, unlike China and Russia. In 2017, MOFA of Japan published a document outlining an “Action Plan for a Strategic Partnership” with Mongolia. “Whaling” is present under a category labeled “Cooperation in Politics and Security” (MOFA 2017c). This document, along with the information presented above, leads me to conclude that Japan and Mongolia have indeed experienced strengthened bilateral relations in the area of whaling. Although Japan may have offered aid to Mongolia in exchange for support within the IWC, both nations have clearly benefited from one another in light of the whaling issue – Mongolia continues to receive large amounts of Japanese ODA and has adopted an action plan that prioritizes whaling (among other developments), while Japan gains another pro-whaling ally in the both the IWC and broader global community.



## Chapter 4

### Recommendations, Conclusions, and Further Research

My initial policy recommendations focused on the International Whaling Commission as a significant setting for the development of bilateral whaling relations between Japan and other nations. However, given Japan's departure from the IWC in December 2018, my recommendations have changed. I mainly support a policy recommendation from former Japanese IWC commissioner Masayuki Komatsu, who believes that Japan should have remained a party to the ICRW to continue its scientific whaling programs and to contribute to sustainable whaling practices. Komatsu states that, without this membership, Japan runs the risk of being targeted by "foreign governments and NGOs" and violating the *United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)*, which requires nations to work with international organizations in regard to management of cetacean species (Komatsu 2019). Without membership in the IWC, Japan can no longer conduct scientific whaling and use the resulting statistics to argue that the commercial whaling moratorium should be overturned. Therefore, like Komatsu, I believe that it would be best for Japan to rejoin the ICRW and IWC and to work on systematically changing the commercial whaling moratorium, rather than openly defying the anti-whaling nations who uphold it.

Japan should continue to work on clarifying its official stance on whaling to maintain transparency in the international community. Although the country announced its withdrawal from the IWC for the purpose of resuming commercial whaling, Japan has still not offered any

official explanation as to *why* it wants to continue the practice. My research has shown that whale meat is not regularly eaten among the Japanese general public and that Japan is able to supply any and all demand for whale meat through trade relationships with commercial whaling countries Norway and Iceland. My research also strongly suggests that the consumption of whale meat is a constructed part of Japanese national identity, controlled by government elites in an attempt to push back against Western norms. If Japan was able to formulate a comprehensive and reasonable explanation for why it continues to pursue a policy of commercial whaling, then perhaps the nation could engage in more productive conversations with anti-whaling nations on the nature of whaling as a cultural practice.

Japan must also be careful to establish clear and straightforward rules for itself a commercial whaling nation outside of the IWC. It must also be transparent in any new whaling programs and/or policies that it enacts going forward. Although Japan is no longer bound to the stipulations of the IWC and ICRW, it is still expected to uphold international law (such as the *United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea [UNCLOS]* and CITES) by restricting its whaling activities to Japanese national waters. Anti-whaling nations who have been vocal opponents to Japan's whaling policies in the past are likely to observe Japan's whaling actions outside of the IWC. Ultimately, Japan must proceed honestly and carefully in its resumption of commercial whaling to avoid harming bilateral relations with other nations in the international system, particularly valuable diplomatic partners such as Australia.

Whaling will undoubtedly remain a contentious issue so long as there are pro- and anti-whaling nations in the international system. Japan, a country that situates whale meat within a rich history and national identity, will not accept the imposition of Western norms on its cultural practices. Although Japan's whaling policies have been criticized by many other states in the

global community, Japan has maintained relatively neutral and even positive bilateral relations with its regional and international neighbors in regard to this issue. In addition, the nation's decision to leave the IWC has attracted international attention and speculation, but little action thus far.

A future researcher may want to provide further updates to the information I have presented in this project. Japan's decision to leave the IWC will remain relevant in the international system, especially after the decision becomes official in June 2019 and Japan resumes commercial whaling. Alternatively, Japan may return as a party to the IWC in the future. In other words, questions surrounding Japan's whaling practices are not going to disappear in the near future. Another consideration for research could be a discourse analysis on meetings of the International Whaling Commission, to detect patterns of pro- and anti-whaling sentiment at meetings. Through this type of study, a researcher could determine the validity of Japan's claims that the contemporary IWC is not a supportive environment for pro-whaling nations. Overall, the Japanese policy of whaling as a cultural practice is quite extensive with many potential layers to be examined in the future.

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