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Japan and Palestine: Timeline of Main Developments and Turning Points in the last 50 years

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Government of Japan, **Japan's assistance to the Palestinians**

Government of Japan, **JAIP: Jericho Agro-Industrial Park**

Japan and Palestine: **Timeline of Main Developments and Turning Points in the** **last 50 years**

By
Khalil Shikaki

Japan and Palestine:

Timeline of Main Developments and Turning Points in the last 50 years

With a population of 126 million and GDP at \$5.4 trillion, Japan's economy is the third largest in the world after the US and China. The following description highlights the main turning points in Palestinian-Japanese relations during the past 50 years. But it begins with a short introduction that describes Japan's main interests in the Middle East and its earlier positions regarding Palestine and the Zionist designs.

Introduction:

In the early 20th Century, the Anglo-Japanese alliance (1902-1923) left its impact on Japan's position regarding vital Palestinian developments. Japan sided with the idea of establishing a **Jewish national home** in Palestine shortly after the British announced the Balfour Declaration in 1917. The Japanese government also endorsed the **British mandate** at the League of Nations, which opened the way for Jewish emigration and settlement. Between 1917-1945, the Japanese government was supportive of the **Zionist project**.

In the post-World War II period, Japan's interests in the Middle East were mostly economic but its alliance with the US added an important political consideration. Moreover, Japan's post-war international and regional standing and its domestic changes led to greater focus on cooperation with the UN and other Asian countries. These dynamics led Japan in 1952 to **recognize the state of Israel**. But the first Asian-African Conference held in **Bandung, Indonesia in 1955**, presented an opportunity for Japan to normalize its relationship with its neighbors. The conference gave an overwhelming consensus to the rights of the Palestinians and the implementation of all appropriate UN resolutions. In the final communiqué, the resolution read, "In view of existing tension in the Middle East, caused by the situation in Palestine and the danger of that tension to world peace, the Asian-African Conference declared its support of the rights of the Arab people of Palestine and called for the implementation of the United Nations Resolutions on Palestine and the achievement of the peaceful settlement of the Palestine question." Japan voted in favor of the resolution.

Timeline: 1970s-2020s

The 1970s:

Nikaido's statement, November, 1973: Chief cabinet secretary Susumu Nikaido officially announced a new Japanese policy regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict. The new policy reflected Japan's reassessment of its relations with the Arab World after the Arab oil embargo which treated it as a "nonfriendly" state. The statement articulated three policy positions:

- 1) Endorsement of the *Palestinians' right to self-determination* and support for implementation of Security Council Resolution 242.
- 2) *Inadmissibility of acquisition and occupation of any territories by force*, the withdrawal of Israeli forces from *all* occupied territories, and respect for 'he territorial integrity of all nations as necessary peace conditions.
- 3) warning to Israel that Japan might reconsider its policy toward the conflict if not withdraw from the occupied territories.

The Nikaido Statement represented the first instance when Japan openly took a political stance on the question of Israel/Palestine

Voting in favor of PLO admission at the UN, November 1974: In 1974, Japan voted with United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 3237 to give the PLO an observer status in the United Nations

Financial support for UNRWA, 1974: starting in 1974, Japan substantially increased its financial contributions to UNRWA.

PLO opens office in Tokyo, February 1977: The PLO was allowed to open an office in Tokyo. The office, however, did not have a diplomatic status and Japan did not recognize the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

'Middle East Four-Point Plan', June 1979: Esaki, Masumi, Japanese **Minister** of International Trade and Industry was sent to the Middle East in order to implement the 'Middle East Four-Point Plan' introduced by Prime Minister Ohira during the Tokyo economic summit of 1979. Ohira called for a four-point plan for the Middle East within Japan's Comprehensive National Security Policy, by which 'all nations [should work] towards implementation of UN Resolutions 242 and 338; respect for Palestinian rights to national self-determination and; all parties to pursue their own separate policies in order to assure movement towards a comprehensive peace agreement'.

The 1980s:

Arafat's first visit to Japan, October 1981: In the visit, which came as a result of an invitation from members of the parliament, Arafat met with Prime Minister Zenkō Suzuki, Foreign Minister Sunao Sonada, representatives of all political parties, and many economic figures. U.S. officials quietly objected on the grounds that it will not help further the peace process in the Middle East and may damage Japan's image in the United States. The PLO viewed the trip as a victory in its efforts to gain international recognition. But Japan did not consider the visit an official one and the visit did not lead to formal Japanese recognition of the PLO. Nonetheless, senior Japanese foreign ministry official told the media that Japan “would like to contribute in a modest way to the solution of this global problem... We are trying to play a moderating influence on the PLO . . . The fact that Arafat will meet with Prime Minister Suzuki and listen to his moderate views is very important.”

Japan's UN vote, mid to late 1980s: In the 1980s, Japan moved toward a more “neutral” position in the Arab-Israeli conflict in response to the US government's demands under President Ronald Reagan that it build ties with Israel. Starting in 1984, Japan abstained more often than voting in favor of resolutions. It should be pointed out that after the second energy crisis subsided in the early 1980s, there was a world oil glut. The Gulf was not as important as it was when the supply of oil was limited and the price high.

Japanese Foreign Minister Uno Sosuke holds his first official meeting with a PLO representative, December 1988: While Japan continued to resist PLO pressure to establish formal diplomatic relations between the two came, this meeting signaled a change. It should be pointed out the meeting took place just few hours after the United States had announced its decision to open dialogue with the PLO.

Arafat's second visit to Japan, October 1989: Unlike his first visit to Japan, Arafat's second visit came as a result of an official invitation by the government. The visit was followed shortly by Israeli foreign minister Moshe Arens' visit in November.

The 1990s

Active Japanese diplomacy in the “Multilaterals”, January 1992-94: The 1990s witnessed a new Japanese political activism toward the Middle East. It participated in the Organizational Meeting for Multilateral Negotiations which held in Moscow to support and supplement the direct bilateral negotiations. At the Moscow meeting, five working groups were established on regional security and arms control, regional economic development, water resources, refugees and the environment. Japan was a member of the Multilateral Coordination Working Group and chaired the Environmental Working Group. In October 1994, in Cairo, the group endorsed an environmental code of conduct.

End boycott, December 1992: Japan called on the Arab states to terminate the Arab boycott of Israel.

Assistance to UNRWA, 1994: By 1994, Japan became the second largest donor to UNRWA.

Assistance to the PA, 1994: Starting in 1994, Japan provided assistance to the Palestinian Authority. As the implementing organization, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) played a significant role in Palestine starting in 1997. The Japanese assistance to the PA was framed as aiming at supporting economic and social infrastructure-building, employment generation, governance, and institution-building of the PA as the means to encourage and accelerate the peace process.

Arafat visits Japan, September 1996: Arafat met Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto. Arafat's visit to Japan came nine months after his election as president of the PA and four months after the election of Netanyahu as Israel's prime minister and the uncertainty that election caused to the future of the Oslo agreement. Arafat expressed his hope that Japan would make efforts to keep the Palestinian track and the whole Middle East Peace process on track, adding that this was of great importance in view of Japan's international role. Prime Minister Hashimoto said that he recognized the importance of the Palestinian track, and said that Japan would continue to do everything in its power to support the Middle East peace process. Asked about Japan's position on the possibility of an independent Palestinian state, a foreign ministry official stated that "this is something to be dealt with in the final status negotiations. Japan is hopeful that agreement will be achieved between the parties. Japan believes that the legitimate rights of the Palestinians, including the right to self-rule, should be respected." When pressed on the issue, a spokesman for the ministry stated that "I do not have an official document to answer you correctly."

The opening of Japan's representative office, 1998: Japan opened the Representative office of Japan to the Palestinian Authority in the Gaza Strip.

Arafat visits Japan twice, April 1999: Arafat held talks with Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi and Minister for Foreign Affairs Masahiko Koumura. In the visit, Arafat explored Japan's reaction to a possible Palestinian declaration of independence once the interim self-government period ended on 4 May. While Japan affirmed its continuous support for the Palestinians' right to self-determination, including the right to establish an independent state, it made it clear that "it is not desirable that the declaration of independence be made at the time of 4 May 1999, and requests President Arafat not to do so." Furthermore, Japan confirmed "that the basic existing principles of the Middle East peace process written in the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 242, 338 and 425 as well as the Madrid Conference and such agreements as the Oslo Accord continue to apply beyond 4 May 1999 and calls on the parties that a peaceful settlement through dialogue based on these principles is the only realistic option toward a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East."

The 2000s:

August 2000: Arafat visits Japan: The visit came soon after the failure of the Camp David talk in July 2000. Arafat had talks with Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori and Minister for Foreign Affairs Yohei Kono. During the visit, while affirming its position regarding negotiations as the only means toward peace, Japan indicated that it "has been a friend of the Palestinian and has been supporting the right of self-determination, including the right of the Palestinian people to establish an independent state." It is worth noting that Shimon Peres visited Japan just two days before Arafat's visit.

Japan position on recognition of a Palestine state, September 2000: Spokesman for the Japanese Ministry of foreign affairs stated that "Japan has been supporting and will continue to support the efforts by the parties concerned for the realization of a permanent peace...Japan's basic position on a Palestinian State is that Japan will immediately consider the recognition of a Palestinian State once the Palestinians declare their independence in a peaceful manner [as a result of peace negotiations]. This basic position has not changed. Also, in August when President Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority met with Foreign Minister Kono, Foreign Minister Kono gave President Arafat friendly advice that *it would not be advisable to declare independence without agreement from the State of Israel*. If the Palestinians declare unilaterally the independence, the loss would be huge for the

Palestinians, so Foreign Minister Kono expressed his hope that the parties concerned would continue to be engaged in negotiations patiently.”

Intifada and suicide attacks, 2003: Japan condemned the “worsening cycle of violence in the Palestinian and Israeli region.” It announced that “terrorism cannot be justified for any reason, and that fighting against violence by Palestinian extremists is indispensable in order to achieve peace in the Middle East.” But it also stated that Israeli attacks on the Palestinians in response to the suicide attack “do not serve for the improvement of the situation.” It called on the PA “to exert its utmost efforts to control extremists, and strongly wishes that the both sides, Israelis and Palestinians, exercise their maximum self-restraints and continue dialogue for peace.

Japan freezes assets of Hamas and its military wing and others, including Fatah’s military wing, July 2002-September 2003: in the middle of the second intifada, Japan announced its decision to freeze assets of various Palestinian armed groups. They included Hamas’ Izz al-Din al-Qassem and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), Abu Nidal Organization, Palestine Liberation Front (PLF), Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC), Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade.

On Hamas and its designation as a terrorist organization, August 2003: In response to Israel’s request that Japan designate Hamas as a terrorist organization, Japan’s Foreign Minister Kawaguchi responded that Japan will “carefully examine whether to recognize entire Hamas as a terrorist organization including [the] political wing.”

Second track efforts, 2003: Japan organized non-official meetings under the banner "Conference for Confidence-building between the Palestinians and the Israelis." Senior former officials from Palestine and Israel with experience in negotiations The conference contributed to the so-called Geneva Initiative.

Israeli targeted assassinations, 2004: Japan condemned the Israeli practice of targeted assassinations during the second intifada. Japan’s UN Ambassador Haraguchi Koichi called the assassination of Hamas leader Dr. Abdul Aziz Rantisi “thoughtless and unjustifiable,” April 2004 at the UNSC. Foreign Minister Kawaguchi Yoriko used the same words in when Sheik Ahmed Yassin was assassinated. Japan’s Director General for Middle Eastern and African Affairs Bureau, Domichi Hideaki, said that Japan condemns these Israeli acts.

President Abbas visits Japan, May 2005: Four months after his election as president of the PA, Mahmoud Abbas visits Japan. He held talks with Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and met with Minister for Foreign Affairs Nobutaka Machimura. Abbas expressed willingness to take part in a three-party meeting, if one is held between the Palestinians, Israelis and Japanese. The Japanese side also expressed interest in holding such a meeting if the Israelis agreed to it. Japan expressed interest in playing a role in the Middle East peace process and for this purpose invited the two sides to Tokyo. Moreover, Japan informed Abbas of its intention to provide an additional 100 million dollars in aid for the Palestinians. It should be noted that earlier that year, immediately after Abbas’ election, Japan offered \$60 million in aid to the Palestinians.

On Hamas winning Palestinian parliamentary elections, March 2006: While Japanese officials will not meet with Hamas officials, Japan will continue its aid to the Palestinians announcing in March 2006

a food aid program of US\$6 million through UNRWA and the World Food Program (WFP). In May 2006, Japan urged Israel “to transfer where it is due the tax revenues it has withheld [after Hamas election victory], to alleviate the Palestinians' predicament.” However, in May 2006, Japan announced that new assistance to the PA will be examined by “weighing carefully whether the Palestinian Authority make positive efforts for advancing the peace process through peaceful means.” In July 2006, Japan shifted its direct PA assistance to the office of the president announcing that “in support of President Abbas in his unwavering resolve for peace through dialogue, Japan is extending a total of 3.1 million US dollars in assistance . . . , *with a view to strengthening the function of the Presidential Office* [emphasis added] through, for example, reconstructing and furnishing, and also employing specialists.” Other assistance to the Palestinians was to continue to flow through UNDP, UNRWA, and UNICEF.

Corridor for Peace and Prosperity, July 2006-07: During a visit to Israel, Jordan and Palestine in July 2006, Prime Minister Koizumi proposed the concept of a "Corridor for Peace and Prosperity" to develop the Jordan Rift Valley through regional cooperation. The initiative was seen by Japan as an element in building a viable state for Palestinians accompanied with sustainable economic development through the strengthening of its partnership with neighboring countries, Israel and Jordan. The first meeting of the four countries' ministers was held in March 2007 in Tokyo. The Japanese ministry of foreign affairs announced that “the representatives of the Israeli, the Palestinian, and the Jordanian sides expressed appreciation for Japan's initiative on this concept and its assistance to the Palestinians, and they also expressed their expectation for early implementation of the concept and for Japan's greater role in the Middle East Peace Process.”

Mecca Accords, February 2007: in reaction to the announcement of the Mecca Accords, Japan indicated its support for the creation of a unity government between Fatah and Hamas announcing that “the Government of Japan appreciates that Palestinian Authority President Abbas and Hamas Political Bureau Head Mr. Mishaal agreed after their talks in Makkah, Saudi Arabia, to form a unity government in order to end political difficulties in the Palestinian territories, regarding it as a positive step toward resumption of the peace process. Japan strongly expects that, based on this agreement, violence will cease and that the new government will make its efforts to advance the peace process with Israel. Japan will continue to closely follow the development.

The formation of the Palestinian national unity government, March 2007: Dr. Tatsuo Arima, Special Envoy of the Government of Japan for the Middle East declared in Riyadh that Japan was pleased with the Mecca Accords of February 2007 and that it “welcomes the formation of a *new national unity government* and strongly hopes that, under the principle of co-existence and co-prosperity between Israel and Palestine, the new government will lead the way to the resumption of the Middle East Peace Process.”

No negotiations or contact with Hamas, March 2009: at a press conference, Minister for Foreign Affairs Hirofumi Nakasone reaffirmed Japan's no-contact policy with Hamas. He stated that “Hamas does not acknowledge Israel and is resorting to violence. To conduct negotiations with Hamas is to give them some sort of legitimacy, thus undermining the foundation of President Abbas and the efforts towards the establishment of a "Palestinian State." Therefore, at the present, we do not have any intentions of contacting Hamas. As I stated just now, I would like to proceed with assisting the reconstruction of Gaza through international conferences.”

2010s:

Abbas visits Japan, February 2010: Abbas' second visit to Japan since becoming PA president. He met prime minister Yukio Hatoyama. The prime minister expressed his supports for Abbas' efforts to achieve a two-state solution through negotiations and called upon the Palestinians to continue to take measures to consolidate the cessation of violence. He also stressed the need for Israel to freeze all settlement activities. Prime Minister Hatoyama stressed the *importance of the national reconciliation* of the Palestinians under the leadership of President Abbas. Abbas expressed support for a Japanese initiative that would increase East Asian countries' support for the Palestinian Authority and its efforts for social and economic development and for promoting peace in the Middle East.

Abbas' third visit to Japan, April 2012: Abbas met prime minister Yoshihiko Noda and the two sides discussed issues of the peace process and Japan's assistance to the PA. But they also exchanged views on other issues such as Palestinian reconciliation, the Arab Spring, and the Iranian nuclear development. The issue of North Korea came up during the discussion. The prime minister referred to a recent North Korean missile, or "satellite," launch and Abbas referred to the launch as a "provocative action that should be denounced." Prime Minister Noda responded that the launch was a "grave, provocative act against security that undermines the peace and stability of the region and the international society and a clear violation of the related United Nations' Security Council resolution, and that it was unacceptable and very regrettable."

Palestine accepted as a non-member observer state at the UN, November 2012: Japan voted in favor of UNGA resolution accepting Palestine as a non-member state. In explaining its vote, Japan stated that now "Palestine will bear greater responsibility vis-à-vis the international community." But Japan asked the PA to show "prudence with respect to conduct, such as accession to international organizations, an action which might negatively affect the prospect for the resumption of negotiations."

CEPAD I, February 2013: Japan hosted the first ministerial Conference on "Cooperation among East Asian Countries for Palestinian Development" (CEAPAD) meeting. The group is made up of Japan, Indonesia, South Korea, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, Vietnam, the Sultanate of Brunei and Palestine. The creation of this group and its mission has been a Japanese idea. The conference was the first opportunity for these countries to manage their aid to Palestine more effectively. Surprisingly, China did not participate. The participants in the first meeting expressed the willingness to cooperate among themselves to better contribute to the international efforts for peace in the Middle East by providing economic assistance to Palestine.

CEAPAD II, March 2014: The second CEAPAD was held in Jakarta, Indonesia and was attended by ministers and high-ranking officials from 22 countries and five international organizations including Japan, Indonesia, Palestine, Brunei, Singapore, Vietnam, Thailand, South Korea, Malaysia, the Philippines, Laos, Cambodia, and China. Japan's minister of foreign affairs Kishida announced that Japan will provide 200 million U.S. dollars in assistance to the Palestinians. He also announced that Japan will support the training of about 1,000 Palestinians over a five-year period. The conference agreed to expand the number of participants and encourage greater engagement of civil societies in East Asia to assist the Palestinians. A joint statement issued at the conclusion of the conference said the

participants agreed to encourage greater engagement of civil society and non-government organizations in East Asian countries.

Israeli prime minister, Netanyahu, visits Japan, May 2014: Netanyahu's visit to Japan served as an opening for a greater Japanese investment in Israel in the years to follow. This was a five-day trip which was heavily focused on boosting the hi-tech trade between the two countries. In a joint statement, the two sides "confirmed their intention to build a new comprehensive partnership in order to further enhance the bilateral relations." Moreover, "both sides reaffirmed the importance of the bilateral working group on economy. They welcomed the recent visits between the two countries' business circles and the expanded investment, and confirmed to start working on the launch of negotiations on an investment agreement in order to further encourage this trend. Both sides affirmed to make further efforts for exploring a possible cooperation to promote joint industrial research and development." Prime Minister Abe proposed commencing work toward launching negotiations on an investment agreement, and promoting cooperation in areas such as joint industrial research and development, science and technology, including the space field, food culture and tourism. Prime Minister Netanyahu welcomed these proposals, along with emphasizing the possibility of bilateral cooperation in the field of innovation. On 4 January 2015, the Israeli government presented plans to further strengthen economic ties and cooperation between Israel and Japan.

Japan's position on the Arab Peace Initiative (API), January 2015: Japan reaffirmed its support for the API. It indicated its belief that "the resolution of the Israel-Palestinian issue could lead to the improvement of the relationship between Israel and Arab States." Therefore, its foreign ministry stated that "Japan supports the Arab Peace Initiative and urges Israel once again to consider the Initiative seriously, and also urges Arab countries to respond by taking concrete steps to implement the initiative. Japan is ready to be actively engaged in the multilateral process when it is convened."

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe visits Palestine and Israel, January 2015: Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe visits Palestine and meets president Mahmoud Abbas. Abe stated that Japan will provide 100 million in U.S. dollars in new assistance for humanitarian and Gaza reconstruction purposes as well as support for the PA. In Israel, a large Japanese economic mission of business leaders joined Prime Minister Abe during his visit. This was the first visit by a Japanese prime minister to Israel in nine years. In his talk with Netanyahu, Abe welcomed the Israeli "Plan to Strengthen Economic Ties and Cooperation with Japan" and the two sides instructed working-level officials to aim to finalize investment agreement negotiations by the end of the year. Abe also requested that Israel "review the suspension of the return of tax revenues to the Palestinian Authority that is being implemented by Israel." It is worth noting that Abe's visit to Israel comes just two days after the International Criminal Court said it would open a preliminary probe into possible Israeli war crimes following a complaint filed by the Palestinians. Japan is a party to the court and also one of its biggest financial backers.

Japan outlines position on permanent status issues of Palestinian-Israeli negotiations, January 2015: for the first time, Japan expressed in some details its vision for the resolution of the various issues of Palestinian-Israeli permanent status negotiations. The issues covered were settlements, Palestinian statehood, borders, Jerusalem, and refugees.

Settlements: Japan takes a position that it will not recognize any unilateral change by either party which may prejudice the final resolution. While considering that the issues including the final status should be solved through direct negotiation, Japan reaffirms that Israeli *settlement activities in the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem, are against international law* and should be immediately and fully frozen, and reiterates its call to Israel to completely freeze the settlement activities.

Palestinian Statehood: Japan understands the strong wish of the Palestinians for their future independent state, and *supports the realization of it*. Therefore, Japan supported the United Nations General Assembly resolution to accord Palestine Non-member Observer State status in the United Nations in November 2012. Japan understands that Palestine holds greater responsibility for the international community after the passing of this resolution. Japan strongly urges Palestine to exert further effort to realize peace in the Middle East, while urging Palestine to take a restrained stance against any unilateral actions without negotiations, such as accession to international organizations which may negatively impact the resumption of the direct negotiations.

(1) **the borders** under a two-state solution should be defined through negotiations, *based on the 1967 lines, with mutually agreed swaps*, in a way that will achieve peaceful co-existence of a viable Palestinian state and Israel with secure and recognized borders. Through such a two-state solution, the Palestinians will be able to exercise their rights to establish an independent state, and Israel will be able to enjoy a greatly enhanced security environment, and both parties will be able to launch full-fledged cooperation for mutual prosperity.

(2) The final status of **Jerusalem** should be resolved through negotiations based on the assumption that it *will be the future capital of both sides*. Japan stresses that it will not recognize any attempt which may prejudice the final status of Jerusalem, including the Israeli annexation of East Jerusalem, and expresses deep concern about the change of status quo conditions of East Jerusalem, such as continuation of the settlement activities and the demolition of Palestinian housings.

(3) Japan considers that the issue of **refugees** *should be resolved through negotiations* between the parties concerned in a fair manner as an important element of the final status issues.

Position on the Gaza Strip, January 2015: Japan expressed concern about the situation of Gaza in the aftermath of the 2014 Israel-Hamas war. It stated that “the resolution of the Gaza issue should lead to the resumption of the Middle East Peace negotiations and stabilization of the entire Middle East region.” It called for a PA control over the Gaza Strip and for the creation of an international mechanism supported by the international community to provide aid to Gazans

Abbas visits Japan, February 2016: Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and President Mahmoud Abbas met in Tokyo and discussed relations between Japan and Palestine as well as Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Abe informed Abbas that Japan continues to support Palestine so that it would become “an independent, democratic, viable and contiguous state.” He announced that Japan will provide more than 78 million US dollars in an additional economic assistance to Palestine. Mr. Abe stressed the importance of Palestinian reconciliation and viewed it an “indispensable for the just and transparent elections.” Abbas call for a multilateral peace process was welcomed by Abe who stated that “based on the idea that the international community should proactively support the peace in the Middle East, Japan welcomed the

idea of convening the multilateral talks on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.” He announced Japan’s “readiness to be actively engaged in the multilateral mechanism in cooperation with the regional stakeholders when it is convened.”

UN Security Council Resolution 2334, December 2016: Japan, along with another 13 countries, voted with this UNSC resolution that demanded that Israel immediately and completely cease all settlement activities and fulfill its obligations as an occupying power under the Fourth Geneva Convention. It stated that Israel's settlement activity constitutes a "flagrant violation" of international law and has "no legal validity". It is worth recalling that the US abstained thus making this the first UNSC resolution regarding Israel/Palestine to pass since 2009.

Japan votes in favor of UNGA vote on Jerusalem, December 2017: In response to the Trump Administration decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and to move the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, the UN General Assembly, in defiance of President Trump, adopted the “Status of Jerusalem” resolution calling on all countries to refrain from establishing diplomatic missions in Jerusalem and stating that measures contravening past Security Council resolutions concerning Jerusalem would not be accepted. A total of 128 UN member states voted in favor of the resolution that declared Trump's Jerusalem decision "null and void." The overwhelming backing for the resolution came despite US threats to cut funding. Japan voted in favor of that resolution. Nine countries opposed it and 35 countries abstained.

Japan’s Prime Minister visit to Palestine and Israel, May 2018: in his meeting with President Abbas, Prime Minister Abe expressed Japan’s understanding of the “sensitivity of the Jerusalem for Palestine.” He stated Japan’s position that the issue “should be resolved through negotiations, based on the consent of both parties and relevant UN resolutions,” and assured Abbas that “Japan will not be moving its embassy to Jerusalem.” In Israel, Mr. Abe met Prime Minister Netanyahu and discussed ways to promote bilateral cooperation in the fields of economy and cybersecurity: “Prime Minister Abe stated that science and technology, which form the basis of cyber capabilities and innovation, are areas of strength for both Japan and Israel, and wished to see progress made in cooperation in various fields of research and development, to which Prime Minister Netanyahu agreed.”

CEAPAD III, June 2018: The Third Conference on Cooperation among East Asian Countries for Palestinian Development (CEAPAD) was held in Bangkok. Japan’s foreign minister Taro Kono indicated that Japan “has implemented assistance of about 2 billion USD to Palestine since 1993.” He also stated, “Japan will work on upgrading "Corridor for Peace and Prosperity" initiative including developing Jericho Agro-Industrial Park (JAIP), enhancing ICT sector in Palestine, and facilitating logistics in the West Bank.”

CEAPAD IV, July 2019: The Fourth Conference on Cooperation among East Asian Countries for Palestinian Development (CEAPAD) was held for the first time in Palestine. It was co-hosted jointly by the Palestine and Japan. Mr. Takeshi Okubo, Japan’s ambassador to Palestine, said that the Asian countries that are members in CEAPAD, including Japan, are committed to continuing to provide development support to Palestine, pointing out that the conference is aimed at enhancing economic development opportunities in Palestine. PA Minister of National Economy, Khaled Ossaily, stated that "This economic forum is an opportunity to strengthen economic and trade cooperation with CEAPAD countries, enhance the possibilities for joint investments, expand our cooperation in the fields of industry

and support the national product." He added that the PA was "counting on your support and role in assisting us in implementing our strategic projects aimed at expanding the productive base and enhancing the steadfastness of our people while benefiting from the experiences of the CEAPAD countries in developing the Palestinian economy."

Japan's Foreign Minister Taro Kono on Japan's peace making role, July 2019: In an interview with Faisal Abbas, the editor in chief of *Arab News*, Kono stated, "I believe Japan should play a bigger political role in this region because Japan is religiously and ethnically very neutral. We can play an honest broker in the Middle East, as we have no colonial history or negative footprint in the region. Also, our economy depends on the energy coming from the region so I think we have to increase our role in the peace process as well." He added that "forty percent of crude oil we import comes from Saudi Arabia and 80 percent of crude oil we import goes through the Strait of Hormuz, as well as 20 percent of our natural gas. So, stability and peace in the Middle East are directly connected to our economy." On the Palestinian front, Kono added that "Japan has been investing quite heavily in the West Bank. We have worked with Palestinians, Israelis and Jordanians to set up an industrial park near Jericho and it's been going very well. Also, Japan set up a framework called the CEAPAD (Conference in Cooperation among East Asian Countries for Palestinian Development) to bring Southeast Asia to this peace process. We wanted to share how we develop the Asian economy and we want to share our experience with Palestinians and people in the region."

A YouGov poll on Arab perception of Japan, October 2019: A poll conducted by YouGov using online interviews with 3,033 Arabs from 18 Arab countries found that 56% of respondents identified Japan as an ideal mediator in the Israel-Palestine dispute. Right after Japan came the EU with 15%, Russia with 13%, the US with 11% and the UK with 5%. The poll found that 61% of Arabs interviewed see the Japanese people as hardworking.

Abbas visits Japan, October 2019: During his meeting with President Abbas, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe stated that "it is important to resume dialogue with Israel and the United States," and added that, "Unless peace talks can be resumed it is unlikely that a 'two-state solution' could be achieved." President Abbas expressed his hope that Japan would play an increasing role in political aspects of the peace process. On bilateral issues, Mr. Abe told Abbas: "I would like to continue to work with you with a view to further advancing Japan's unique initiatives, including the 'Corridor for Peace and Prosperity' initiative and the 'Conference on Cooperation among East Asian Countries for Palestinian Development (CEAPAD).'"

2020s

Israeli settlements plan in the West Bank, January 2021: Japan expressed concern over the Israeli government approved of plans for the construction of about 800 housing units in settlements in the West Bank: "The Government of Japan remains deeply concerned by and deeply deplores the continued settlement activities by the Government of Israel despite repeated calls from Japan and the international community for freezing such activities. Settlement activities are in violation of international law and undermine the viability of a two-state solution The Government of Japan strongly

urges the Government of Israel to reverse the above-mentioned decisions and fully freeze its settlement activities.”

Palestinian parliamentary elections, January 2021: Japan expressed its support for the holding of Palestinian elections and welcomed Abbas’ election decree of 15 January 2021 to hold a series of elections in Palestine. Statement by the government indicated that “Japan believes realization of these elections will mark an important step towards establishing a future democratic and independent Palestinian state.” It urged Hamas and Israel to engage positively with this Palestinian effort to ensure its success and said that “Japan strongly hopes that free, fair, and inclusive elections will be held, including voting by Palestinian residents of the Gaza strip and East Jerusalem.” It saw in these elections the means to achieve Palestinian unity: “Japan continues to support Palestine, working together with the international community, to achieve its unity through these elections and to engage firmly in the realization of Middle East peace.”

Sheikh Jarrah and East Jerusalem, May 2021: Addressing the developments in East Jerusalem that led to the Hamas-Israel May war, Japan stated expressed its concerns over the possible “eviction” of Palestinian families and the Israeli settlement plans. It stated that “the potential ruling of Palestinian families’ evictions from their homes in East Jerusalem, including Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood, could exacerbate the situation. The Government of Israel’s approval to construct 540 units in East Jerusalem is nothing but the continuation of the settlement activities by the Government of Israel, of which the Government of Japan has repeatedly called for retractions as they are in violation of international law, and thus is totally unacceptable. The Government of Japan once again urges the Government of Israel to reverse the above-mentioned decision and fully freeze its settlement activities.”

Israeli “Economy for Security Plan”, January 2022: Foreign Minister Hayashi Yoshimasa told Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid that Japan appreciate d his engagement with the Palestinians, including the “Economy for Security” plan for the Gaza Strip. Minister Hayashi “expressed his hope that confidence building measures respectively taken by Israeli and Palestinian sides would lead to an easing of tensions and the stability in the region” and reiterated Japan's position to support a two-state solution.

The **Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research** explored Palestinian-Japanese relations by establishing a joint Palestinian-Japanese working group made up of experts and academics to engage in a dialogue on the various facets of the relationship with the aim of proposing a joint vision on how to strengthen and advance that relationship in a manner that helps it meet the challenges of the future. This initiative sought to examine *Japan's role in the Middle the Middle East by focusing on Japanese-Palestinian Relation through a Joint Japanese-Palestinian second track policy workshops and consultation.*

The dialogue took place in two online workshops to discuss the current relationship and explore ideas and policies for the future. In addition, the effort included the preparation and publication of various background reports and working papers addressing some aspects of the current relationship. PCPSR also issued two reports summarizing the presentations and discussion of the two workshops as well as the recommendations of the second workshop.

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