

WHY I CONTRIBUTED \$1 MILLION TO FULBRIGHT JAPAN

GLEN S. FUKUSHIMA

ABSTRACT

The United States and Japan, as the world's two largest capitalist democracies as measured by GDP, have much to learn from each other and to gain by cooperating with each other. Recent trends, however, indicate declining mutual attention. Fulbright alumni in both countries can contribute to reversing this trend and to ensuring that the two countries remain strong partners and allies.

Keywords: Japan • United States • US-Japan relations



Forty years ago, in September 1982, I arrived in Japan on a Fulbright Fellowship to conduct research at the University of Tokyo for my doctoral dissertation comparing antitrust law and policy in the United States and Japan. This topic was a way for me to combine my interest in Japan, law, business, and political/organizational sociology, which I had studied during eight years at Harvard University in four degree programs: MA in Regional Studies East Asia, PhD in the Department of Sociology, MBA in the Business School, and JD in the Law School.

JAPAN AS NUMBER ONE

Japan in 1982 was an exciting country. Having recovered from the oil crisis of 1973-74, Japan had become the world's most aggressive exporter of products ranging from textiles, consumer electronics, machine tools, and steel to automobiles and semiconductors. Japan was so successful that Ezra F. Vogel, one of my academic advisers at Harvard, wrote a book published in 1979 entitled *Japan as Number One: Lessons for America*.

My year in Japan on the Fulbright Fellowship proved to be highly productive. I spent time at the University of Tokyo, Rikkyo University, Sophia University, and Keio University taking seminars on Japanese economic law; attended government advisory councils on antitrust law and policy; and interviewed numerous politicians, business leaders, government bureaucrats, lawyers, scholars, and journalists to understand the evolution of antitrust in postwar Japan and how it differed from antitrust law and policy in the United States.

My research helped me to understand not only antitrust in Japan but also the fundamental premises of the postwar Japanese economy, the ties between government and business, the relationship between companies, and what makes Japanese capitalism different from Anglo-American and European

capitalism. This knowledge proved indispensable when I served for five years at the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) from 1985-1990 engaged in trade negotiations with Japan and with China. It also informed my work as a business executive representing one European and four American companies in Japan between 1990-2012, and during my tenure as president of the American Chamber of Commerce in Japan.

FULBRIGHT JAPAN ESTABLISHED IN 1952

Since the creation in 1952 of the Japan-United States Educational Commission (JUSEC; also known as Fulbright Japan), nearly 10,000 Japanese and Americans have benefited from the opportunity to study, teach, and conduct research in each other's country. Six Fulbrighters went on to win the Nobel Prize.

Although the 70-year history of JUSEC has seen many successes, one recent trend is alarming. In 1997, there were over 47,000 Japanese students studying in universities in the United States for a year or more, making Japan the country with the most students studying in the United States. By 2012, however, Japan had dropped to number seven, with fewer than 20,000 students. By 2020, Japan had fallen to number 11, with fewer than 12,000 students. This contrasts with China, which until recently had as many as 390,000 students in the United States, and other Asian countries such as India and Vietnam. South Korea, with less than half of Japan's population, sends three times more students to the United States. And Taiwan, with one-fifth of Japan's population, sends almost double the number of students to the United States.

JAPAN'S INSULARITY

Many reasons have been cited for this decline in the number of Japanese students in the United States. These include: (1) Japan's demographic decline, (2) lack of interest among young Japanese to study abroad, (3) parents' reluctance to let their children (especially sons) take what they view as risks studying abroad, (4) the high cost of tuition in American universities, (5) the lack of rewards in Japan accorded those who study abroad, (6) relative decline in the competitiveness (e.g., English speaking ability) of Japanese applicants compared to their other Asian counterparts, and (7) increasing appeal of other countries (e.g., China, Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand) that have lower tuition and a more hospitable environment than the United States (e.g., less gun violence, fewer Anti-Asian hate crimes, and fewer white supremacist political leaders).

The importance of study abroad and the precipitous decline in the number of Japanese students studying in the United States led me this year, the 70th anniversary of Fulbright Japan, to donate \$1 million to JUSEC to create the “Fulbright/Glen S. Fukushima Fund” to support intellectual, educational, and cultural exchange between the United States and Japan. With tuition alone costing \$60,000 a year at some of America’s leading universities, cost is a major deterrent to Japanese studying in the United States.

In my experience, and in the experience of many colleagues, study abroad can help students to be good questioners and listeners, humble, flexible, adaptable, agile, curious, and innovative; to value and embrace diversity; and learn across different cultures and nationalities. It can help students to broaden their horizons, see the world through different eyes, and put themselves in others’ shoes. In many ways, study abroad is one of the best ways to understand one’s own language, culture, society, and politics, since the experience forces one to question, compare, and evaluate what may seem obvious and natural to those who have never left their native country or been confronted by radically different ways of thinking, acting and solving problems.

Some Japanese have argued, “Young Japanese don’t want to go abroad because we’ve created such a perfect society. Japan is safe, clean, and comfortable; our trains run on time; we enjoy Washlets; and Tokyo boasts more Michelin-starred restaurants than any city in the world. If we go abroad, there is crime and disease, it’s dirty and unsafe, we’re forced to speak foreign languages, and we face racial discrimination. It’s perfectly natural and rational that young Japanese prefer to stay in Japan.”

JAPAN’S FUTURE

There is no denying that Japan can be a comfortable place to live. But the benefits to individuals of study abroad I listed above have contributed greatly to Japan’s success in the decades following the end of the Second World War. By reverting to insularity and complacency over the past two decades, Japan risks falling behind the global community in accessing and sharing the latest ideas, activities, initiatives, best practices, and resources. The ability to engage actively and productively with the outside world is a strength Japan needs consciously to enhance, and study abroad is one of the best ways to achieve this.

The ability to engage actively and productively with the outside world is a strength Japan needs consciously to enhance, and study abroad is one of the best ways to achieve this

In addition to the decline in the number of Japanese students going to the United States to study, another concern is the decline in Japanese Studies in the United States. The study of Japan hit a peak in the period 1975-1995, spurred in part by such publications as Ezra F. Vogel’s *Japan as Number One: Lessons for America* and Chalmers Johnson’s *MITI and the Japanese Miracle: The*

Growth of Industrial Policy, 1925-75. In my first year at the Harvard Business School in 1978-79, half of the cases used in the required first-year BGIE (Business, Government, and the International Economy) course were on Japan its industrial policy and management practices. In July 1989, *Business Week* published a Louis Harris public opinion poll revealing that Americans feared the Japanese economic challenge (68%) more than the Soviet military threat (22%), with 10% responding that both were equally challenging to America. Now, however, interest in Japan has declined to such an extent that there is no tenured professor teaching Japanese politics at such leading American universities as Stanford, Yale, Princeton, and Columbia.

My modest donation to Fulbright Japan aims to support Japanese to study in the United States and Americans to study in Japan. The two countries have tremendous potential to learn from each other and to work together to enhance their mutual, as well as global, stability and prosperity. I also hope that my donation will stimulate others to contribute to Fulbright and other programs that promote educational, intellectual, and cultural exchange between the United States and Japan.

NOTES

1. Vogel, Ezra. *Japan as Number 1: Lessons for America*. Harvard University Press, 1979.
2. Johnson, Chalmers. *MITI and the Japanese Miracle: The Growth of Industrial Policy, 1925-75*. Stanford University Press, 1982.

BIOGRAPHY

Glen S. Fukushima is Vice Chair of the Securities Investor Protection Corporation, nominated by President Joe Biden in October 2021 and confirmed by the Senate in April 2022. He is also a Senior Fellow at the Center for American Progress and served as Deputy Assistant United States Trade Representative for Japan and China at USTR and as President of the American Chamber of Commerce in Japan. After studies at Deep Springs College, Stanford, and Harvard he had a Fulbright Research Fellowship in Japan in 1982-83. He can be contacted at gsf1280@gmail.com
