



# “Intellectuals, Scholars, and Journalists Have a Moral Duty and Obligation to Speak Truth to Power”: An Interview with Glen S. Fukushima

Interview By David McNeill

*Abstract: This Online Exclusive is part of an ongoing series showcasing perspectives on Critical Asian Scholarship in a Time of Global Crisis.*

**Keywords:** Critical Asian scholarship, Fukushima, APJFF

## Introduction

[Glen S. Fukushima](#) was born in 1949 to a Japanese American father and a Japanese mother. Because of his father’s career in the U.S. Army, he spent his childhood growing up in California and in Japan. After graduating from high school, Fukushima chose to enter [Deep Springs College](#), an innovative two-year college [founded in 1917](#) northwest of California’s Death Valley that enrolls only 10 students a year and has been described as the most unknown selective college in America.

According to Fukushima, the three pillars of the Deep Springs education—academic study, manual labor, and student governance—develop what Cornell psychologist Robert J. Sternberg calls “[triarchic intelligence](#)”: analytical or logical intelligence (measured by IQ tests); creativity (innovative thinking); and practical intelligence (the ability to get things done, or street smarts). Fukushima believes that these three intelligences are essential for leaders to possess, which led him to [donate \\$3 million dollars](#) to support this unique institution of higher learning.

From Deep Springs, Fukushima transferred to Stanford University and spent 1971-1972 as an exchange student at Keio University in Tokyo, where he studied Japanese and took seminars on U.S.-Japan

relations (taught by Kamiya Fuji and Gerald Curtis), Chinese politics (Ishikawa Tadao and Yamada Tatsuo), and international relations at the Tokyo Institute of Technology (Nagai Yonosuke). After returning to Stanford to graduate in June 1972, he went to Japan again in July 1972 to teach English at Athénée Français (1972-1973), work as an editor at the Asahi Evening News (1972-1973), as a paralegal at the Law Firm of Hamada & Yanagida (1973-1974); and study at the University of Tokyo (1973-1974) as a foreign research student, taking seminars on Japanese diplomatic history (Mitani Taichiro), American foreign policy (Saito Makoto), comparative politics (Iwanaga Kenkichi and Omori Wataru), and Japan’s political history (Sato Seizaburo and Ito Takashi).

He returned to the United States in 1974 and spent eight years as a graduate student at Harvard University. After earning his M.A. in Regional Studies—East Asia, he entered the Ph.D. program in Sociology in 1975 and worked as a teaching fellow for David Riesman, Ezra F. Vogel and Edwin O. Reischauer. After finishing all requirements for his Ph.D. in Sociology in 1978, he entered the joint JD/MBA program at the Harvard Law School and Business School. He graduated from the Law School in 1982 and received a Fulbright Fellowship (1982-1983) and Japan Foundation Fellowship (1983-1984) to conduct research at the University of Tokyo on Japanese antitrust policy. He returned to the United States in early 1984 and worked as an attorney at the Law Firm of Paul, Hastings, Janofsky & Walker in Los Angeles.

In this interview, he discusses his career and why he is supporting APJF.

**Q: You came of age during the Vietnam War era and it had a lasting impact on you, right?**

Yes, I was an undergraduate at Stanford in the late 1960s, when the war in Vietnam was raging. I participated in anti-war teach-ins, protests, and demonstrations and almost got arrested several times. The civil rights movement at the time was focused on African Americans, but it created the environment for Hispanics, Native Americans, and Asian Americans to assert their rights, and I'm proud to say that I was actively involved in the budding Asian American student movement.

At Stanford, scholars of Asia such as [John Lewis](#), Harold Kahn, Mark Mancall, and [Lyman Van Slyke](#) were opposed to the war in Vietnam, and at UC Berkeley, Franz Schurmann, Fred Wakeman, and others were also criticizing America's role in Vietnam. I joined the [Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars \(CCAS\)](#) in 1968 and was an avid reader of the CCAS Bulletin; that's where I first read the works of [John Dower](#), Herbert Bix, and [Richard Minear](#), who were among the very few American scholars of Japan active in CCAS and openly critical of America's aggression in Vietnam.

The majority of authors in the CCAS Bulletin were scholars of China and Southeast Asia. So even at that time, I noticed that most American scholars of Japan were supporting U.S. aggression in Vietnam, and their connections with Japan were with conservatives: the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), the government bureaucracy, and Keidanren (Japan Business Federation, representing big business). Interestingly, British scholars of Japan such as Ronald P. Dore and Arthur Stockwin were opposed to American aggression in Vietnam, and I agreed with them.

During my undergraduate years at Stanford (1968-1972), I was heavily influenced by the so-called "revisionist" scholars of American foreign policy:

[William Appleman Williams](#), [Lloyd Gardner](#), [Thomas Patterson](#), [Gar Alperovitz](#), Barton Bernstein, etc., many of whom argued that the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki should be understood as the first act of the Cold War as much as the final act of World War II.



**Andreas Biagosch with Glen S. Fukushima, ICS Symposium, 2000.**

As an undergraduate, I was greatly influenced by several books published by Pantheon Books, including *Towards a New Past: Dissenting Essays in American History*, edited by Barton Bernstein (1968); *American Power and the New Mandarins* by Noam Chomsky (1969); and *America's Asia: Dissenting Essays on Asian-American Relations*, edited by [Edward Friedman](#) and Mark Selden (1971).

**Q: The draft was an issue at the time, too.**

Yes, in 1969, there was a lottery for the U.S. military draft. I fortunately ended up with number 220, which was high enough that I was unlikely to be drafted. But the possibility of being conscripted to fight in an illegal war was always there. I could have graduated from Stanford one term early (in March 1971) before going to Keio University on the Keio-Stanford Exchange Program, but I was advised by draft counselors at Stanford to go to Japan as an

undergraduate to minimize the probability of being drafted, especially since my predecessor as Stanford's exchange student to Keio, Paul Batchelor, received draft notices from Camp Zama in Japan after he arrived in Tokyo in April 1970 after graduating from Stanford one term early in March 1970.

In the late 1960s, the civil rights movement and the war in Vietnam shaped my view of the U.S. government's role in domestic and foreign policy, including its role in Asia. This was followed in the early 1970s with the Watergate scandal. As a graduate student at Harvard in the 1970s, I studied "modernization theory," which revealed how so many American scholars were complicit in U.S. attempts to overthrow foreign governments in the name of "stability" and "anti-Communism." Books such as *Containment and Change* by [Carl Oglesby](#) described how the U.S. government, in the context of the Cold War, routinely sided with dictators against democratic forces around the world, including in Greece, Iran, the Philippines, Latin America, Africa, etc.

The Cold War, the war in Vietnam, the civil rights movement, and [Watergate](#) all shaped my view of the role of the United States, both positive and negative. As a patriot who believes strongly in the positive role America can play in the world, I think that intellectuals, scholars, and journalists have a moral duty and obligation to seek the truth and not only to describe and report, but also to analyze, explain, and critique the status quo, proposing solutions when possible.

**Q. Your father had a military background, too, right?**

Yes, my father was a Nisei (second-generation American of Japanese ancestry), born and raised in California. His parents emigrated to the United States from Kyushu in the early 1900s. He was a high school senior in Los Angeles when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor in December 1941. He and his family were incarcerated by the U.S. government in [Amachi](#), an internment camp in Colorado. His

two brothers volunteered for the U.S. Army's 442nd Regimental Combat Team and fought the Nazis in Germany and in France. My grandparents had sent my father to Japan to attend an elementary school in Kumamoto and to attend Nakano Gakuen in Tokyo, a school that many Issei (first generation Japanese Americans) sent their Nisei children to so they wouldn't forget the Japanese language.

Because my father had studied in Japan and had better Japanese language ability than his brothers (who had never been to Japan), when he volunteered for the U.S. Army in 1943, he joined MIS (Military Intelligence Service). He was sent to Fort Snelling and Camp Savage in Minnesota to learn Japanese military terminology. In late 1943, he was assigned to the Philippines, where he intercepted Japanese codes and interrogated Japanese prisoners. In 1945, during the Battle of Okinawa, among his jobs was to persuade Okinawans to come out of their caves so they wouldn't be incinerated by the flamethrowers used by the U.S. Marines to flush out the caves. After the war ended in August 1945, he was assigned to SCAP (Supreme Commander Allied Powers) in Tokyo, where he worked in the postwar Occupation. He never talked with me about that period.

In the early 1950s, he was assigned to the Korean War, then to Camp Sendai, where Tohoku University is now located. I attended kindergarten and first grade at the U.S. Army dependents' school at Camp Sendai. In 1956, my father was assigned to Fort Ord, California, so I attended second, third, and fourth grade in Seaside and Monterey. In 1959, my father was assigned to the Presidio of San Francisco, so I attended fifth grade and part of sixth grade in San Francisco. I remember Douglas Edwards reporting on CBS-TV the results of the November 1960 presidential election (which John F. Kennedy won against Richard M. Nixon) just as my parents and I were getting ready to board our MATS (Military Air Transport Service) flight to Japan via Hawai'i and Wake Island.

My father spent most of his career in the U.S. Army

and was apolitical, although by temperament he was quite conservative. In the mid-1960s, an article appeared in the Gardena Valley News, a local newspaper, by Lillian Baker, a white woman who argued that the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II was fully justified because, she argued, Japanese Americans were no different from Japanese nationals in their allegiance to the Emperor of Japan. This prompted me to write a rebuttal letter to the editor of the newspaper. But my father and I ended up having a heated argument. He told me he didn't want me to send the letter, and I told him that not sending the letter would deny everything I had been taught in school about the value of freedom of expression, debate, and assertion of democratic rights.

I had hoped that my father would appreciate and support my standing up to the racist and xenophobic Lillian Baker. But he told me that if my letter appeared in print, "Rocks might be thrown through our windows, and our house could be set on fire." After that argument, my father and I avoided discussing politics.

*Fukushima has previously said that for many decades following World War II, many Japanese Americans avoided Japan because of their experiences during the war. "But because my childhood was primarily in California and on U.S. military bases in Japan, I grew up in a racially diverse environment and did not feel singled out as being odd or different," he said. "It was during the 1960s, when I was an undergraduate at Stanford University and involved in the Asian American student movement and anti-War in Vietnam protests, that I started to feel a stronger sense of ethnic identity and solidarity with people of color."*

*Fukushima's bilingualism, elite education, and deep knowledge of both countries made him an ideal candidate for public service. In 1985, he was offered a position to work at the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) in the Executive Office of the President, during the peak of America's trade tensions with Japan. His triarchic skills helped to*

*make him a very effective negotiator (Hamamoto, 2009), and he served as director for Japanese affairs (1985–1988) and deputy assistant U.S. trade representative for Japan and China (1988–1990).*

**Q: You have positioned yourself in the middle of many choppy crosscurrents: between Japan and the U.S.; between academia, policy and business; between support and critical engagement. We're curious about how you've managed it.**

"Positioned yourself" implies intentionality, but I actually didn't plan my career. When I applied to graduate schools in the fall of 1973 (to UC Berkeley, Stanford, Yale, and Harvard), it was with the intention of getting a Ph.D. and becoming a professor. But after completing all requirements except the dissertation, I concluded that I would prefer work that would impact the real world. I started law practice at a large law firm in Los Angeles, but I got a call one day in January 1985 from Washington, D.C. saying that USTR was looking for someone to be its director of Japanese affairs. My name had come up because during my time at Harvard Law School, I had spent two summers in Washington, working at law firms. And I later learned that both [Ezra Vogel](#) and [Edwin Reischauer](#) had put in a good word for me.

So I flew to Washington for the interviews and was offered the job. Many friends advised me against accepting, in part because it was such a demanding and pressure-filled job and because my annual salary would plunge from about \$120,000 to about \$57,000. But my wife was supportive, and we decided that the financial sacrifice was counterbalanced by what I could learn first-hand about the nitty gritty of U.S.-Japan relations and what I might be able to contribute to resolving problems between the two countries.

Joining USTR had risks, especially being a Japanese American, since there had been very few Japanese Americans in senior U.S. government positions, especially dealing with Japan. But my decision reflects my inclination to do things that others don't do, or to

be contrarian. If joining USTR was my second major contrarian decision, the first was to attend Deep Springs College rather than the five other colleges that had accepted me—Stanford, Pomona, Reed, New College (Sarasota, FL), and the University of California at Santa Cruz. My third contrarian decision was to join Airbus, as I will explain later.

I didn't plan my career, but that phone call in January 1985 inviting me to apply for a job at USTR was important because had I not taken that option, I might have ended up with a career as a corporate lawyer. But those five years at USTR (1985-1990), at the height of U.S.-Japan trade tensions, were an exciting and event-filled period, and I learned a great deal that informed my future career.

During my five years at USTR, I traveled to Japan once a month and survived on three or four hours of sleep every night because there was so much work to do. But it gave me exposure to a wide range of Japanese and American (and other countries') politicians, government officials, business executives, lawyers, journalists, and scholars. And much of what we discussed in government-to-government negotiations ended up on the front page of the next morning's newspapers, reflecting how important our work was perceived by the media of both countries. It was an eye-opening experience for a young lawyer in his 30s to see up front the realities of U.S.-Japan relations behind the veil imposed by both governments.

A long line of American company representatives came to USTR to complain: "Our business has been successful in the U.S., Europe, Latin America, Asia, and virtually every market in the world except one: Japan. There are unfair trade barriers in Japan that only the U.S. government can remove." Reality was complicated. In some cases, the American companies had not modified their products or services to fit the Japanese market, had not hired the right people, or had chosen the wrong distributor. But in many cases, there were real barriers—governmental, structural, or psychological. It was fascinating to see this up close, and this intensive experience helped me in

my subsequent work representing one European and four American companies in Japan and in serving as President of the American Chamber of Commerce in Japan.

From the mid-1970s to the mid-1990s, Japan was seen as the world's most competitive economy and viewed with a mixture of admiration, respect, envy, and fear. A Louis Harris poll published in Business Week in July 1989 found that when Americans were asked about the economic threat from Japan versus the military threat from the Soviet Union, 68% responded that Japan was the bigger threat, 22% that the Soviet Union was the bigger threat, and 10% rated them equal.

I was fortunate that, precisely because Japan was seen to be so important as both a market and as a competitor, many American and European companies valued people who understood Japan and could represent them effectively in Japan. I was able to apply my experience in academia, law, and government; Japanese language ability; and extensive personal networks among leaders in the U.S. and Japan to help American and European companies do business and Japan. And beyond the individual companies I represented, I was able to make broader societal contributions by serving as President of the American Chamber of Commerce in Japan, as a Trustee of the Japan Association of Corporate Executives, and as a member of the board of directors or board of advisors of American, European, and Japanese companies.

Fukushima then returned to the private sector, as vice president of AT&T Japan (1990-1998), CEO of Arthur D. Little Japan (1998-2000), President and CEO of Cadence Design Systems Japan (2000-2004), co-president of NCR Japan (2004-2005), and President and CEO of Airbus Japan (2005-2010). He served on multiple boards, including Mizuho Bank and Daiwa Securities, and was president of the American Chamber of Commerce in Japan for two successive terms. In addition, he continued to energetically support higher education by serving as

a visiting professor or on advisory boards at Stanford, Harvard, Keio, Waseda, Rikkyo, Tsukuba, ICU, Sophia, Kyoto, and Tokyo universities.

**Q: You decided after five years that it was time to leave...**

The conventional and easiest path from USTR would have been to rejoin a law firm. But I considered law practice to be a bit boring and I wanted to do business. I had discussions with Intel, Motorola, AT&T, IBM, and General Electric as well as with several financial institutions.

In December 1989, I interviewed with Andy Grove, Craig Barrett, Les Vadez, and Ron Whittier, many of the people who started Intel. My friends in Silicon Valley and at Stanford said, “Intel may have done pretty well up to now, but its days may be numbered because the large vertically integrated Japanese semiconductor companies like NEC, Hitachi, Toshiba, Fujitsu, and Mitsubishi Electric are almost certainly going to overtake and might even acquire Intel. So if you want to be in global business, you should join a large company with plenty of resources.”

[AT&T](#) had Bell Laboratories with seven Nobel Prize winners. They had nearly 300,000 employees, advanced technology, and massive financial resources. This, plus the fact that I was interested in telecommunications, led me to join AT&T. But the Telecommunications Act of 1995 resulted in the trivestiture of AT&T into AT&T, Lucent Technologies, and NCR in 1996.

When I left AT&T in 1998, its share price had dropped to below when I joined in 1990. But Intel shares between 1989 and 1999 grew by 39 times. So if I had ignored what the “experts” advised and joined Intel, I might have earned enough on my stock options that I could have retired in my 40s and started a foundation or two. So my decision in 1990 to join AT&T rather than Intel clearly influenced my subsequent career.

A career decision I made in 1993 also had a profound impact on my future. In January 1993, U.S. Secretary of Commerce Ron Brown offered me a job to join the Clinton Administration as Assistant Secretary of Commerce for International Economic Policy. But I concluded that the timing wasn’t right. Only three years had passed since I had left USTR in 1990, and I was enjoying my transition to the world of business as Vice President of AT&T Japan. My wife had graduated from Stanford Business School and was starting her successful business career. So I declined Ron’s offer. Chuck Meissner, who took the job I turned down, was tragically in the airplane with Ron that crashed in Croatia in April 1996. So if I had taken that job at Commerce, I would almost certainly have been on that flight and would have died in an [airplane crash](#) on a hillside in Croatia. I didn’t know it at the time, but those two job decisions could have yielded starkly different outcomes: had I joined Intel in 1990, I might have retired 10 years later as a multi-millionaire; had I joined the Commerce Department in 1993, I might have died in Croatia at the age of 46.

**Q: What do you think the worlds of business, academia, journalism, and law fail to convey to each other?**

Each profession has its priorities, goals, strengths, and limitations and can learn from each other. Having lived in Washington for a total of nearly 20 years since the 1980s, I’ve observed that Republicans have been more successful overall than Democrats in achieving their policy goals in part because Republicans have leaders with experience in business or the military, two professions that place a high priority on setting achievable goals and executing them based on a clear strategy. Democrats, on the other hand, have many leaders coming from law, academia, and nonprofit organizations, which tend to value ideals, debate, and process.

An example is the success that Republicans have had in increasing the influence of conservatives in the federal judiciary, including achieving a 6 to 3

majority in the U.S. Supreme Court. This didn’t come about by accident. Conservatives decided over 50 years ago that the legal profession was too progressive, and they formulated a strategy to change this. Central to their strategy was the creation of the Federalist Society in 1982 to influence legal education, professors, students, lawyers, and the judiciary to promote a conservative view of the law.

They raised and used millions of dollars to do this, and they did it systematically and consistently. When Donald Trump ran for the presidency in 2016, one way in which he persuaded Republicans to support him was to pledge that he would use recommendations put forward by the [Federalist Society](#) when nominating federal court judges, including especially for the U.S. Supreme Court. Democrats should learn from Republicans that people with business and military backgrounds can be very effective in setting goals and crafting strategies to achieve those goals. To be successful, Democrats need to place less weight on process and greater weight on achieving results.

Returning to our earlier discussion of Sternberg’s triarchic intelligence, in my experience Democrats tend to be strong in analytical/logical intelligence and weak on practical/results-oriented street smarts.

*Since 2012, Fukushima has been a senior fellow at the Center for American Progress. In 2021, President Joseph R. Biden nominated him to be vice chairman of the Securities Investor Protection Corporation, and the Senate confirmed him in April 2022. He has been described as a “bridge” between what he calls the world’s two largest capitalist democracies, a term he rejects. “Don’t be a bridge,” he has says. “A bridge is something to be walked over and used by others...Be players, actors, and decision-makers.”*

*In the last few years, with his wife, Sakie Tachibana Fukushima, Glen has turned much of his energy to philanthropy. In 2022, he donated [\\$1 million](#) to Fulbright Japan, “the largest single donation by a U.S.*

*citizen in the program’s 70-year history.” In 2023, he pledged \$3 million to Deep Springs College, creating the Glen S. and Sakie T. Fukushima Visiting Faculty Fellowship. In 2024, he and Sakie pledged \$1 million to the Japan-America Student Conference. He has also donated \$10,000 to this journal, with another \$20,000 as a matching fund. He calls *Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus* “one of the few publications in English that provide the critical perspective so important to analyze and understand Asia accurately.”*

**Q. You mentioned Dower, Bix, Selden, Minear, and others such as E.H. Carr, Howard Zinn, and Noam Chomsky. What have you taken away from reading them?**

I first read these authors as a college student in the late 1960s, in the context of the Cold War, the war in Vietnam, and the civil rights movement. I firmly believe that scholars should pursue reality, uncover the truth, and engage in critical analysis to understand, explain and critique the world as it is. Scholars should not, in my view, be mouthpieces to explain, justify, or hide governments policies. The role of scholars is especially important in an age when governments are increasingly weaponizing history to create narratives promoting their biased view of the world.

Last week, I was asked to give a talk in Tokyo to a visiting tour group consisting of subscribers to *The Nation*, the prominent progressive magazine. I welcome the opportunity to describe and explain Japan to such educated and informed audiences who usually know very little about Japan other than what they read in the press.

The Japanese Establishment is used to dealing with foreigners who have no clue of what’s happening in Japan under the surface, and they want to be sure to keep it that way. So there are legions of veritable “gaijin handlers” whose job is to ensure that foreigners will be exposed only to the “tatemaie” (public façade, pretense, what they want others to believe),

not the “honne” (true feelings, reality, empirical truth).

This is another reason that the Asia-Pacific Journal is so important and worthy of support. It is a publication that welcomes diverse and critical perspectives by informed analysts on controversial issues, some of which are not likely to be published by mainstream publications.

**Q: You say scholars and intellectuals have a moral duty and obligation to speak truth to power. Independent journalism and critical scholarship seems under threat these days, particularly in the U.S. One of the most pressing contemporary issues is the concentration of wealth and how this allows the rich to control the tools of communication. Is there something we can do to limit this?**

This was at the core of my interest in antitrust law and competition policy as a graduate student at Harvard, and why my dissertation (which I never completed) was titled, “The Japan Fair Trade Commission and Competition Policy, 1947-1982.” The concentration of economic power inevitably leads to a concentration of political power, which has been a disturbing trend around the world, but especially in the U.S. since the 1970s. This has been compounded since 2025 with the Trump Administration pressuring universities, law firms, and media organizations to submit to its dictates. The best way to counter this is to elect political leaders who will enact legislation and appoint senior government officials who will enforce the antitrust laws to ensure free and fair competition. Intellectuals, scholars, and journalists have an important role in countering the concentration of economic and political wealth by exposing how they are inimical to a just, equitable, and democratic society.

I firmly believe that Trump is an aberration in the long course of American history and that the U.S. will return to normalcy before too long. I expect that Democrats will regain the majority in the House of Representatives in the November 2026 midterm

elections unless Republicans are wildly successful in their gerrymandering attempts. The Senate is difficult because Democrats lost four seats in the last election. It may be able to regain two or three seats in the 2026 midterms, but four is a real stretch. There is an excellent chance for Democrats to take back the White House in the 2028 election. My assessment of the 2024 election is that Trump won not because he was strong but because Biden and Kamala Harris were so weak.

I don’t want to underestimate the changes that Trump and his allies are undertaking. It’s very serious, but I don’t consider it to be an inevitable and irreversible shift of the U.S. away from its fundamental values. Being from California, I am encouraged by how much my state has changed for the better since I was growing up there in the 1950s and 1960s.

Until 1992, California always supported the Republican presidential candidate, including Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan. But Bill Clinton won California in 1992, and the Democratic candidate has won the state in every presidential election since. This is the result of urbanization (population shifting from the agricultural inland to coastal cities including San Francisco, San Jose, Los Angeles, and San Diego); higher voting participation by women, youth, and people of color; and increased immigration, especially from Asia and Latin America.

California’s policies are essentially the opposite of Trump’s—on trade, investment, climate change, immigration, abortion, same sex marriage, gun control, limitations on campaign financing, etc., etc. And it’s heartening to know that California is the harbinger state, leading the rest of the country by 20-25 years. After all, California has grown to become the world’s fourth largest economy, as measured by GDP, largely thanks to trade, inward foreign direct investment, immigration, and investment in education.

**Q. What is it about APJF that you consider important?**

I’ve been impressed with many of the articles that have appeared in the journal, which often deal with topics that are not covered elsewhere, or they will publish on topics with a perspective that’s different from what one might normally find in traditional academic journals or in mainstream newspapers and magazines.

When Abe Shinzo was prime minister, I would often get inquiries from American and European institutions saying that they were having a hard time finding Japanese who could speak candidly about the political situation in Japan. They said: ‘We want to invite a Japanese speaker who (1) is well informed (knows what he or she is talking about), (2) can speak fluent and persuasive English; and (3) is not a mouthpiece for the Japanese government. We’re having a hard time identifying such individuals.’

At that time, it appeared that [Nakano Koichi](#) and [Fujiwara Kiichi](#) were among the very few Japanese scholars who met the criteria listed above. And there have been few American scholars of Japan who have stood up to criticize Trump for his disastrous policies, both domestic and foreign. That’s another reason that APJF plays such a valuable role.

**Q: Finally, you believe that non-government actors will become more important?**

Because the U.S. and Japanese government are so unpredictable, we need to enhance our efforts to support nongovernmental actors, including politicians, business people, lawyers, journalists, and scholars. Support should also go to institutions such as corporations, universities, schools, think tanks, cultural institutions, nonprofits, and the media, which can provide some measure of stability, continuity, and predictability, as well as foster cooperation. The national governments in Washington, D.C. and Tokyo set the framework for how the two countries deal with each other. But the nongovernmental arena, including cultural activities—art, music, film, wine, sports, martial arts, etc.—are also important to maintaining strong ties between the two countries. And to

ensure that the next generation learns from the past, education and scholarship—reflected in such publications as APJF—are vital.

Hamamoto, Ben, “Glen Fukushima,” *Discover Nikkei*, August 24, 2009. <http://discovernikkei.org/en/journal/2009/8/24/nikkei-heritage/>

This interview was conducted by David McNeill.

**About the Author:**

**David McNeill** is a professor at the Department of English Language, Communication and Cultures at Sacred Heart University in Tokyo. He was previously a correspondent for *The Independent* and *The Economist* newspapers and for The Chronicle of Higher Education. He is co-author of the book *Strong in the Rain* (with Lucy Birmingham) about the 2011 Tohoku disaster. He is an Asia-Pacific Journal editor. Follow David on Twitter @DavidMcneill3. E-mail: davidamcneill@gmail.com.