

# Should Japan resume commercial whaling?

## What they said...

*'If we give up achieving the sustainable use of marine life resources, including whales, Japan will encounter serious difficulties in food security'*

**Hideki Moronuki, senior fisheries negotiator of the Japanese Fisheries Agency and Alternate Commissioner to the International Whaling Commission (IWC)**

*'Today, with climate change, fisheries interactions and bycatch noise in the ocean, there are many other threats [to whale survival]. To add commercial whaling to that now...would be a really unwise step'*

**Nick Gales, Australia's commissioner to the International Whaling Commission (IWC)**

The issue at a glance

On December 26, 2018, Japan announced that it would withdraw from the International Whaling Commission (IWC) and recommence commercial whaling by June 30, 2019.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/dec/26/japan-confirms-it-will-quit-iwc-to-resume-commercial-whaling>

The government's chief spokesperson, Yoshihide Suga, indicated that the country's fleet would confine its whale hunts to Japanese territorial waters and exclusive economic zone (EEZ), adding that its controversial annual expeditions to the Southern Ocean would end.

Japan's decision has met with condemnation from a range of governments, including Australia, and has been similarly opposed by many conservation groups. There has, however, been gratification expressed that Japan will no longer be whaling in the Southern Ocean.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/dec/26/japan-confirms-it-will-quit-iwc-to-resume-commercial-whaling>

Japan has defended its action as doing no more than responsibly harvesting a renewable food source and has suggested its decision was dictated by the IWC's refusal to allow commercial whaling, despite the IWC's initial purpose being sustainably to manage the whaling industry.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/dec/26/japan-confirms-it-will-quit-iwc-to-resume-commercial-whaling>

## Background

The information below has been abbreviated from a Wikipedia entry titled 'Whaling in Japan'. The full text can be accessed at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whaling\\_in\\_Japan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whaling_in_Japan)

History of Japanese whaling

Japanese whaling, in terms of active hunting of these marine mammals, is estimated by the Japan Whaling Association to have begun around the 12th century. However, Japanese whaling on an industrial scale began around the 1890s when Japan began to participate in the modern whaling industry, at that time an industry in which many countries took part.

Japanese whaling activities have historically extended far outside Japanese territorial waters.

Japanese whaling in the 20th century

During the 20th century, Japan was heavily involved in commercial whaling. During the Second World War, Japan's whaling was significantly limited to more familiar hunting grounds, such as the Bonin Islands, to provide meat and oil for domestic and military use. Whaling there was halted in March 1945 when the islands were taken by United States forces. By November 1945 the whaling stations received permission to reopen; however,

most whaling ships had been commandeered by the Imperial Japanese Navy, and by the end of the war the factory ships and most of the whale catchers had been sunk.

General Douglas MacArthur encouraged the surrendered Japan to continue whaling in order to provide a cheap source of meat to starving people. The Japanese whaling industry quickly recovered as MacArthur authorized two tankers to be converted into factory ships, the Hashidate Maru and the Nisshin Maru. Whale catchers once again took blue whales, fins, humpbacks and sperm whales in the Antarctic and elsewhere.

The post-war recovery established whale meat as a nationwide food source for the first time. In 1947 whale meat made up over 50 percent of the meat consumed in Japan. The market significantly increased through commercial sale and public distribution. In 1954, the School Lunch Act also included whale meat in compulsory education (elementary and middle school) to improve the nutrition of Japanese children. Post-war economic recovery and then boom saw whale meat form a progressively less significant portion of the average Japanese diet; however, the Japanese whaling industry continued until the International Whaling Commission (IWC) moratorium on commercial whaling went into effect in 1986.

Japanese whaling after the International Whaling Commission moratorium

Japan continued to hunt whales using the scientific research provision in the agreement, and Japanese whaling is currently conducted by the Institute of Cetacean Research. This was allowed under IWC rules, although most IWC members oppose it. However, in March 2014 the UN's International Court of Justice ruled that the Japanese whaling program, called "JARPA II", in the Southern Ocean, including inside the Australian Whale Sanctuary, was not in accordance with the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling, and was not for scientific purposes, as it had claimed.

In December 2015, Japan went ahead with their whaling program, renamed 'NEWREP-A'. Their objective was to hunt 3,000 Antarctic minke whales over 10 years, starting with 330 whales during the 2015–16 season. Antarctic minke exist in substantial numbers and have never been classified as 'threatened', though the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has warned that it lacks sufficient data to be sure of the whales' status.

In December 2018, Japan announced that it will resume commercial whale hunts in July 2019 within its territorial waters and commercial zones.

International conflict

Japan's scientific hunts have been a source of conflict between pro- and anti-whaling countries and organizations. The UN's International Court of Justice, in addition to other countries, scientists, and environmental organizations considered the Japanese research program to be unnecessary and lacking scientific merit, and described it as a thinly disguised commercial whaling operation.

Japan has maintained that annual whaling is sustainable and necessary for scientific study and management of whale stocks. Japan, echoing Norway's arguments on its own whaling activities, also argues it is entitled to continue whaling because of whaling's place in its cultural heritage. The whale meat from these hunts is sold in shops and restaurants, and is showcased at an annual food festival.

## **Internet information**

On January 3, 2018, The Economist published a comment by Banyan titled 'Japan withdraws from the treaty that bans hunting whales' which backgrounds the issue essentially from the Japanese perspective. (Please note: The Economist's columnists are published under pseudonyms.)

The full text can be accessed <https://www.economist.com/asia/2019/01/05/japan-withdraws-from-the-treaty-that-bans-hunting-whales>

On December 31, 2018, ABC News published a comment by Peter Bridgewater, Chair of the IWC from 1995-1998 and adjunct professor at the University of Canberra, titled 'Japan leaving the International Whaling Commission is a disaster, but not for the reasons you think' The opinion piece outlines some of the adverse consequences of Japan withdrawing from the IWC.

The full text can be accessed at <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-12-31/japan-leaving-the-international-whaling-commission-is-a-disaster/10671674>

On December 28, 2018, Radio CBC Canada published a report titled 'Why this conservationist is lauding Japan's return to commercial whaling'. The report gives the views of Paul Watson, the founder and head of the whale conservation organisation, Sea Shepherd. The full text can be accessed at <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/thecurrent/the-current-for-december-27-2018-1.4954333/why-this-conservationist-is-lauding-japan-s-return-to-commercial-whaling-1.4959517>

On December 27, 2018, Forbes Magazine published an analysis titled 'As Japan Prepares To Restart Commercial Whaling, How Are Whale Populations Holding Up?' The article considers the impact of Japan's decision of whale stocks in its own and in international waters.

The full text can be accessed at

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/michaelmarshalleurope/2018/12/27/as-japan-prepares-to-restart-commercial-whaling-how-are-whale-populations-holding-up/#71ae67313761>

On December 26, 2018, The Guardian published a report titled 'Japan confirms it will quit IWC to resume commercial whaling'. The report details Japan's decision to leave the International Whaling Commission and resume commercial whaling. It gives the Japanese justification and the reactions of a number of other nations and conservation groups.

The full text can be accessed at

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/dec/26/japan-confirms-it-will-quit-iwc-to-resume-commercial-whaling>

On December 26, 2018, BBC News published a report titled 'Japan whale hunting: Commercial whaling to restart in July' The report details Japan's decision to leave the International Whaling Commission and resume commercial whaling. It gives the Japanese justification and the reactions of a number of other nations and conservation groups.

The full text can be accessed at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-46682976>

On December 26, 2018, The Sydney Morning Herald published a report titled "'Extremely disappointed": Australia lashes Japan's decision to restart commercial whaling'. The report details Japan's decision to leave the International Whaling Commission and resume commercial whaling. It gives the Japanese justification and the reactions of a number of other nations and conservation groups.

The full text can be accessed at <https://www.smh.com.au/environment/sustainability/japan-to-start-commercial-whaling-in-july-20181226-p500a8.html>

On December 26, 2016, The Coffs Coast Advocate published a report titled 'Japan to start whaling again' The report details Japan's decision to leave the International Whaling Commission and resume commercial whaling. It gives the Japanese justification and the reactions of a number of other nations and conservation groups.

The full text can be accessed at <https://www.coffscostadvocate.com.au/news/japan-announces-it-will-resume-commercial-whaling-/3609598/>

On December 26, 2018, the Conservation organisation Sea Shepherd issued a media release titled 'Sea Shepherd Welcomes the End of Whaling in the Southern Ocean' which indicated the group's intention to continue 'to oppose the three remaining pirate whaling nations of Norway, Japan and Iceland'.

The full text can be accessed at <https://seashepherd.es/es/noticias-y-eventos/antarctica-whaling-ends/>

In September, 2018, the Environmental Investigative Agency (EIA) released a report titled 'Commercial whaling: Unsustainable, inhumane, unnecessary'. The report gives detailed arguments against whaling, examining pressure on whale numbers, the inevitable cruelty of the practice and the lack of demand for whale meat as a food source.

The full text can be accessed at <https://eia-international.org/wp-content/uploads/IWC-report-2018-08.pdf>

On June 22, 2016, Frontiers in Marine Science published a comment by Andrew Butterworth, Reader in Animal Science and Policy at the University of Bristol titled 'What Drives Japanese Whaling Policy?' which presents some of the factors contributing to the continuation of whaling by Japan.

The full text can be accessed at

<https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fmars.2016.00102/full#B18>

On March 25, 2016, BBC News published an analysis titled 'Japanese whaling: why the hunts go on' which presents some of the factors contributing to the continuation of whaling by Japan.

The full text can be accessed at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-35003272>

On January 27, 2016, National Geographic published an analysis and comment titled 'Why Whaling Persists in Japan, Despite International Pressure' which examines the cultural and other factors which have contributed to the continuation of whaling in Japan.

The full text can be accessed at <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/people-and-culture/food/the-plate/2016/01/27/why-whaling-persists-in-japan-despite-international-pressure/>

On December 9, 2015, The Conversation published a comment by Justin Rose, Adjunct Associate Professor, School of Law, University of the South Pacific and Adjunct Fellow, Australian Centre for Agriculture and Law, University of New England, titled 'A necessary harvest: it's time to allow Japan to kill whales'. The opinion piece argues that those countries using the International Whaling Commission to effectively place a permanent moratorium on whaling are subverting the purpose for which the Commission was established.

The full text can be accessed at <https://theconversation.com/a-necessary-harvest-its-time-to-allow-japan-to-kill-whales-51740>

On January 7, 2014, ABC News televised a comment and analysis by Donald Rothwell, Professor of International Law at the ANU College of Law, Australian National University. titled 'A lot more is at stake than just whaling' which considers the diplomatic consequences of the Japanese-Australian dispute within the IWC.

The full text can be accessed at <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-01-07/rothwell-a-lot-more-is-at-stake-than-just-whaling/5187542>

On February 19, 2012, The Conversation published an opinion piece by Stephen Wearing, Associate Professor, Management, University of Technology Sydney, titled 'Watching whales makes more economic sense than hunting them' which argues the economic advantages of whale watching.

The full text can be accessed at <https://theconversation.com/watching-whales-makes-more-economic-sense-than-hunting-them-5332>

In June, 2011, the University of Tasmania published a doctoral thesis undertaken at the School of Geography and Environmental Studies by Tanya Julia Bowett. The thesis is titled 'Culture, Politics & Japanese Whaling' It gives a very detailed account of the cultural and political factors determining Japan's policy regarding whaling.

The 294-page text can be accessed at [https://eprints.utas.edu.au/11712/2/whole-\\_Julia\\_Bowett\\_PhD\\_Thesis\\_FINAL\\_7\\_June\\_2011.pdf](https://eprints.utas.edu.au/11712/2/whole-_Julia_Bowett_PhD_Thesis_FINAL_7_June_2011.pdf)

In September, 2000, Japan Australia News published a comment by Shigeko Misaki, Adviser to Japan Whaling Association, titled 'Media Wars on Whales and Whaling' which strongly argues the Japanese case in favour of whaling and argues that the Japanese position is not fairly treated in the media.

An edited version of the text can be accessed at [http://luna.pos.to/whale/gen\\_mis\\_media.html](http://luna.pos.to/whale/gen_mis_media.html)

In 1993 the Japanese Institute of Cetacean Research, the body which oversees whaling in Japan, published a comment by Shigeko Misaki, Adviser to Japan Whaling Association, titled 'Japanese World-View on Whales and Whaling' which is an attempt to explain the Japanese perspective on whales and the manner in which they should be used as a food source.

The full text can be accessed at [http://luna.pos.to/whale/icr\\_wijwr\\_misa.html](http://luna.pos.to/whale/icr_wijwr_misa.html)

## **Arguments in favour of Japan resuming commercial whaling**

1. Japan will only be whaling within its territorial waters

Supporters of the conditions under which Japan now proposes to resume commercial whaling argue that they should not cause dispute with other nations as Japan has indicated that it will limit whaling to its own exclusive economic zone (EEZ) which extends, as with any country, 200 nautical miles from its shoreline. For the last thirty years, since the IWC's imposition of a whaling moratorium in 1986, Japan has been whaling outside its territorial waters, often in waters to which other countries, notable Australia, have laid claim, and sometimes in waters which have been declared whale sanctuaries. Some supporters of Japan's commercial whaling from July 2019 have welcomed it because it means a restriction of the waters within which Japan will be hunting whales.

Much of the disputation that has occurred between Japan and those within the international community opposed to whaling, such as Australia and New Zealand, has come about because Japan has conducted its scientific whaling in the Southern Ocean in waters to which Australia claims territorial rights that are not recognised by Japan. Australia claims about 5.9 million square kilometres of the Antarctic continent, and the adjacent ocean out to 200 nautical miles. However, Japan challenges this claim to the Antarctic and views the waters off the Australian Antarctic Territory as the high seas, which under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea can be fished or otherwise exploited by any nation.

<https://theconversation.com/murky-waters-why-is-japan-still-whaling-in-the-southern-ocean-71402>

Complicating this issue further has been the establishment of the Southern Ocean Whale Sanctuary. The Southern Ocean Whale Sanctuary is an area of 50 million square kilometres surrounding the continent of Antarctica where the International Whaling Commission (IWC) has banned all types of commercial whaling. Japan has argued that the establishment of the Southern Ocean Whale Sanctuary was in contravention of the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (ICRW) on which the IWC is based and is therefore illegal. Article V(2) of the ICRW states that the creation of any sanctuary must 'be based on scientific findings' and 'take into consideration the interests of the consumers of whale products and the whaling industry'. Japan argues that the Southern Ocean Whale Sanctuary does not meet these conditions.

The status of the Southern Ocean Sanctuary is reviewed and open to change by the IWC every ten years. During the 2004 meeting a proposal was made by Japan to remove the sanctuary, but it failed to reach the 75 percent majority required. It received 25 votes in favour and 30 votes against with two abstentions.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southern\\_Ocean\\_Whale\\_Sanctuary](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southern_Ocean_Whale_Sanctuary)

The new arrangements which will come into practice from July 2019 mean that Japan will now only be whaling within its own territorial waters. This is a much smaller area than the one over which it currently hunts whales and is also not waters to which other countries lay claim. Therefore there are some commentators who have welcomed this change.

Darren Kindleysides, chief executive of the Australian Marine Conservation Society has stated, 'If Japan leaving the IWC spells the end of their Southern Ocean whaling that would be a win for our whales. Australians have been fighting for decades to get the whalers out of the Antarctic.' <https://www.smh.com.au/environment/sustainability/japan-to-start-commercial-whaling-in-july-20181226-p50oa8.html>

A similar point has been made by Paul Watson, founder and executive director of the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society. Watson has stated, 'This move means they[Japan] will have to withdraw from the southern ocean because they can't do their so-called research whaling, which was bogus anyway.' <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/thecurrent/the-current-for-december-27-2018-1.4954333/why-this-conservationist-is-lauding-japan-s-return-to-commercial-whaling-1.4959517>

## 2. Killing whales for food is no different to hunting game or killing domestically-reared farm animals

Supporters of Japan's decision to resume commercial whaling argued that Western objections to the practice are hypocritical as killing whales for food is no more objectionable than the methods other countries use to supply their populations with animal protein.

Iwao Isono, a Japanese whaler who has hunted the mammal for 44 years, has stated, 'They say it is OK to kill cows but not whales. I couldn't bring myself to kill whales if they looked you in the eyes like cows do.' Another Japanese whaler, Setsuo Izumi, who has been whaling for 37 years, has stated, 'What we eat is different from country to country. It's a cultural thing.'

In Australia they eat kangaroo but I don't want to eat kangaroo.'

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2001/jun/24/whaling.observerfocus>

Joji Morishita, deputy director of the far-seas fisheries at the Japanese Fisheries Agency, has argued, 'The West is suffering from double standards. Wildlife is for them to see and admire, and you should only eat animals such as cows and pigs that are reared. But Australia kills three to four million kangaroos a year, and in the US they catch 5.6 million wild deer...

How would Britons react if Hindus tried to ban the eating of the cows they consider holy?

The West are trying to force their values on us. It is cultural

imperialism.'<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2001/jun/24/whaling.observerfocus>

In an opinion piece published in The New Nationalist on March 14, 2013, Chris Grezo similarly stated, 'The position of Western governments and media effectively boils down to this: exotic animals are nice to look at; it would be a shame if we couldn't do that anymore.

In other words, whales are exotic to us and we like to look at them, so we tell the Japanese that they're not allowed to hunt them.'[https://newint.org/blog/2013/03/14/the-west-](https://newint.org/blog/2013/03/14/the-west-hypocrisy-on-whaling)

[hypocrisy-on-whaling](https://newint.org/blog/2013/03/14/the-west-hypocrisy-on-whaling)

Grezo continued, 'How on earth does the West think it has the moral high ground when its factory farming methods quite literally result in the needless torture of billions of animals each year? How can the West, which provides EU subsidies for bullfighting, in which the beasts are partially blinded and stunned beforehand in order to allow the "brave" matador to win, find the audacity to impose laws on Japan?' [https://newint.org/blog/2013/03/14/the-](https://newint.org/blog/2013/03/14/the-west-hypocrisy-on-whaling)

[wests-hypocrisy-on-whaling](https://newint.org/blog/2013/03/14/the-west-hypocrisy-on-whaling)

In an opinion piece published in The Huffington Post, Katherine Ripley, accused United States critics of whaling of exhibiting culturally-based hypocrisy. Ripley argues, 'There is essentially no difference between hunting non-endangered whales for food and hunting any other species of non-endangered animal, such as deer, for food...

Just as the West looks with disgust upon eastern countries that eat dogs, we malign whaling because whales hold a special place in our hearts. All the while, we sit around our tables eating chickens, cows, and pigs—which studies have proven are actually more intelligent than dogs.

[https://www.huffingtonpost.com/katherine-ripley/the-hypocrisy-of-the-worl\\_b\\_9592752.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/katherine-ripley/the-hypocrisy-of-the-world_b_9592752.html)

Peter Singer, a professor of bioethics at Princeton University, has similarly argued, 'Western nations are in a weak position [to argue against whaling on the basis of cruelty] because they inflict so much unnecessary suffering on animals - through culling (the Australian slaughter of kangaroos), hunting and factory farms. The west will have little defence against the charge of cultural bias until it addresses needless animal suffering in its own backyard.'

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2008/jan/19/animalwelfare.uk>

### 3. Whaling will help Japan achieve food security

Supporters of Japan renewing commercial whaling argue that the practice is necessary to help achieve food security. Japan is a country which imports approximately 60 percent of its citizens' calorie intake. <https://medium.com/indrastra/japans-food-security-problem-increasing-self-sufficiency-in-traditional-food-f48937a757c5> This compares with countries such as Australia which produces sufficient food to supply 173 percent of its citizens' calorie requirements and the United States which could supply 124 percent.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_countries\\_by\\_food\\_self-sufficiency\\_rate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_food_self-sufficiency_rate)

Japan's geography makes food security difficult to achieve. Japan is an island country and most areas are mountainous with steep terrain and heavily covered with forest. In 2014 out of the total land in Japan 12.0 percent was arable land, 3.1 percent residential area and 66.3 percent forest area. Complicating this situation is that Japan's post World War II

industrialisation has drawn even more of its population into the cities, while dramatically improved living standards have prompted a Westernisation of the Japanese diet. Both of these factors have made the country increasingly dependent on food imports, a situation about which Japan's political class is uneasy. <https://medium.com/indrastra/japans-food-security-problem-increasing-self-sufficiency-in-traditional-food-f48937a757c5>

In 2016, Japan announced that the country's food self-sufficiency rate had fallen to a 23-year low on a calorie basis. The self-sufficiency rate fell one percentage point from the previous year to 38 percent, the second-lowest level on record after the 37 percent recorded in fiscal 1993, when the country suffered a serious rice shortage following unstable weather.

The drop reflected significant falls in the production of wheat and other crops in Hokkaido, which suffered typhoon damage, in addition to the continuing decline in rice consumption. Demand for meat is increasing, due to the Western influence on Japanese dietary habits, while consumption of rice, for which Japan has high levels of self-sufficiency, is steadily declining. Per capita annual rice consumption fell 0.2 kg to 54.4 g, less than half the amount consumed 50 years ago. On the other hand, meat consumption rose 0.9 kg to 31.6 kg. Though the government has set a self-sufficiency target of 45 percent to be achieved by fiscal year 2025, it acknowledges that this will be difficult to reach.

An agricultural cooperative official has stated, 'With the number of farmers decreasing and trade liberalization progressing, the self-sufficiency rate will not rise unless the government goes all out to take necessary steps.'

[https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/08/10/business/japans-food-self-sufficiency-rate-hits-23-year-low-rice-consumption-decline-continues/#.XDLxC81S\\_IU](https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/08/10/business/japans-food-self-sufficiency-rate-hits-23-year-low-rice-consumption-decline-continues/#.XDLxC81S_IU) Increasing whale meat consumption is one of these steps.

Kyoshi Ejima, a member of the Japanese Upper House who in 2017 voted in favour of legislation which paved the way for the recently announced return to commercial whaling, stated, 'This resource exists out in the world, there are minke whales down in the Antarctic Ocean that are of body weight of around 5,000 to 10,000 kilograms. These are a great source of food and my position is that we should harness this for food.'

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-07-07/japan-passes-whaling-bill-with-view-to-resume-commercial-whaling/8689226>

Shigeki Takaya, director of the whaling affairs office at Japan's fisheries agency, has stated, 'Basically, we believe whether it's whales, sharks or tuna, all marine resources should be used sustainably based on scientific research. I think it should not be banned because of emotional or unscientific reasons.' <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-07-07/japan-passes-whaling-bill-with-view-to-resume-commercial-whaling/8689226>

In September, 2018, Hideki Moronuki, senior fisheries negotiator of the Japanese Fisheries Agency and Alternate Commissioner to the International Whaling Commission (IWC), argued that the IWC should represent both conservation interests and backers of sustainable use of resources. Moronuki has stated, 'If we give up achieving the sustainable use of marine life resources, including whales, Japan will encounter serious difficulties in food security.'

<https://nationalpost.com/news/world/japan-to-continue-to-push-resumption-of-commercial-whaling-citing-serious-difficulties-in-food-security>

#### 4. Whaling is economically important to some Japanese communities

From the time the IWC imposed a complete ban on commercial whaling, Japan has argued that some of its coastal whaling communities are particularly economically dependent upon whaling and should be allowed to continue the practice. The site of the Japanese ambassador to Australia states on this question, 'Even today, people are engaged in whaling in various parts of the world. This is not the kind of whaling that was formerly conducted by the US,



UK and Australia in the past for the sole purpose of obtaining whale oil (machine oil, soap and so on) and which led to overhunting and wastage of resources.

The small-scale whaling carried out today is sustainable whaling rooted in long tradition and distinctive cultures that make effective use of the entire whale for food and for other useful purposes. To reject this type of whaling, including that of Japan, without any scientific justification is denying ...these people.' [https://www.sydney.au.emb-japan.go.jp/english/top/important\\_info/japanese\\_governments\\_position.htm](https://www.sydney.au.emb-japan.go.jp/english/top/important_info/japanese_governments_position.htm)

In 1990, the Japanese government presented a submission to the International Whaling

Commission detailing the effect that the whaling moratorium had had upon Japanese coastal communities that depended on whaling. It stated, 'In Japan the zero-catch limit has affected individuals economically, socially, culturally and in respect to health. The effects include disruption and failure of small businesses, job loss and employment at less valued positions and/or limited work in temporary or seasonal positions. Because of the nature of small-type whaling the zero-catch limit affects individuals in small villages more than in the industrial centres. The small size of the local economy has required physical moves for individuals and families in order to find employment. High levels of unemployment for former whalers result from the highly specialized nature of their work and barriers to re-employment due to age and the particularities of Japanese employment and fisheries practices. As whalers enjoyed prestige, their job loss is especially stressful. Within the family interpersonal stress, disruption of rigid gender related division of labor and stress on children occurs. Local businesses depending on whale products have been severely affected and the loss of revenue threatens the survival of such institutions as fishery cooperative associations. Tourism is highly dependent upon the availability of whale meat which also plays an important role in religious observances and community celebrations. These impacts pose a serious threat to the continued survival of these traditional small communities.'

[http://luna.pos.to/whale/gen\\_st\\_impact.html](http://luna.pos.to/whale/gen_st_impact.html)

The report detailed the initiatives that had been taken to assist those economically displaced by the whaling moratorium and the extent to which these measures had succeeded.

Salmon-farming has not proved economically successful and has not benefitted former small type coastal whaling (STCW) communities either in terms of lost income or jobs. Despite a continued fishery based upon small quotas of pilot and beaked whale, more than half the whalers engaged in STCW have lost their jobs as a result of the minke whale zero-catch quota imposed in 1988. Most positions obtained by whalers losing their jobs are seasonal or part-time, low paying and without security or benefits associated with satisfactory employment. Due to the limited (six-month) duration of the STCW season, laid-off whalers are ineligible for more than a few months of compensation under national regulations. Boat owners are not eligible for part-compensation for the lack of livelihood resulting from the minke zero-catch quota, due to the requirement that they surrender their capital equipment and business licenses if receiving government compensation. The ongoing commitments boat owners have to various institutions and individuals in their home communities renders this option socially and culturally, as well as in a business sense, quite unacceptable.

[http://luna.pos.to/whale/gen\\_st\\_impact.html](http://luna.pos.to/whale/gen_st_impact.html)

In 2016, Japan once again requested that the IWC allow small hunts by coastal communities, arguing that for three decades these groups had been unjustly barred from a traditional source of food. Russia, Norway and Iceland supported the request, and Russia's deputy IWC commissioner, Valentin Ilyashenko, stated, 'I think that we all have to remember that those four communities in Japan that have been asking for quota, they have a 5,000-year history of whaling.' <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/oct/26/japan-pleads-with-whaling-watchdog-to-allow-cultural-hunts>

## 5. Whaling bans challenge Japan's cultural and national autonomy

Whaling has been conducted in and around the Japanese coastline for thousands of years. The village of Taiji has long been well known as a whaling centre in Japan and the birthplace of the amatori method of killing whales that spread to a small number of other whaling villages, such as Ayukawa and Wada, in the 17th century. <https://think.iafor.org/whaling-in-japan/> Advocates of the cultural significance of whaling in Japan argue that it reflects the animistic characteristics of religions such as Shinto and Buddhism which can allow Japanese fishermen to hunt these marine mammals while still honouring them.

<https://eprints.utas.edu.au/11712/2/whole->

[\\_Julia\\_Bowett\\_PhD\\_Thesis\\_FINAL\\_7\\_June\\_2011.pdf](#)

Julia Bowett, as part of a 2011 doctoral thesis for the School of Geography and Environmental studies at the University of Tasmania, has noted, 'At Ōshima, which was the main whaling ground in Fukuoka, northern Kyūshū, a festival was held annually to honour whales and thank them for sacrificing their lives. At least 25 memorials and festivals are held every year in Japan to honour killed whales, with tombs and memorial stones for whales existing in at least 48 locations, from Hokkaido in the north to Kyushu in the south.

<https://eprints.utas.edu.au/11712/2/whole->

[\\_Julia\\_Bowett\\_PhD\\_Thesis\\_FINAL\\_7\\_June\\_2011.pdf](#)

Those with reservations about the IWC's opposition to Japan's attempts to re-establish commercial whaling have suggested it indicates an insensitivity to Japanese cultural concerns. Peter Bridgewater, Chair of the IWC from 1995-1998 has stated, 'I witnessed Japan produce volumes of detailed studies on the cultural significance of whales and whaling to key settlements mainly in the north of Honshu - all contemptuously dismissed... to the palpable disappointment of the Japanese delegation.' <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-12-31/japan-leaving-the-international-whaling-commission-is-a-disaster/10671674>

Supporters of Japan's resumption of commercial whaling argue that whaling bans undermine the country's cultural and national autonomy. It is claimed that in continuing to support whaling research and to lobby for a resumption of commercial whaling, successive Japanese governments have been asserting their right to act independently of foreign interference.

On December 9, 2015, The Conversation published a comment by Justin Rose, Adjunct Associate Professor, School of Law, University of the South Pacific and Adjunct Fellow, Australian Centre for Agriculture and Law, University of New England. Professor Rose argued, 'It is not Japanese demand to eat whale meat that is the primary incentive to continue whaling, but instead the desire to not give in to foreign pressure.'

<https://theconversation.com/a-necessary-harvest-its-time-to-allow-japan-to-kill-whales-51740>

Rupert Wingfield-Hayes writing for the BBC noted, 'The answer from the Japanese government is that...Japan will never allow foreigners to tell its people what they can and cannot eat. One Japanese official once said to me: "Japanese people never eat rabbits, but we don't tell British people that they shouldn't".' <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-35397749>

The same point was made by Shaun O'Dwyer in an opinion piece published in The Japan Times on April 10, 2013. O'Dwyer, an associate professor in the School of Global Japanese Studies at Meiji University, stated, 'While most Japanese today rarely eat whale meat, some defend pelagic whaling out of a belief that Japanese eating habits should not be dictated to by foreign activists.'

[https://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2013/04/10/commentary/japan-commentary/a-japanese-poets-whale-elegy/#.XDKaR81S\\_IW](https://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2013/04/10/commentary/japan-commentary/a-japanese-poets-whale-elegy/#.XDKaR81S_IW)

## **Arguments against Japan resuming commercial whaling**

1. Many whale species numbers are low

Opponents of a resumption of commercial whaling note that as a result of this practice many whale species were driven to the brink of extinction and that even now many of their numbers are recovering slowly. Renewed commercial hunting is condemned as an unnecessary pressure on many whale species. Of particular concern to whale conservationists is that if Japan resumes commercial whaling within its own exclusive economic zone (EEZ), the whales in this region will be threatened as their numbers are low. The International Whaling Commission makes the following data available on the status of the whale species named. Blue whales in the Southern Hemisphere were reduced to only a few percent of their unexploited stock size by industrial whaling in the Southern Ocean, primarily during the 1920s-1940s. They remain at very low levels - in the low thousands - with current figures suggesting an annual growth rate of 8 percent

Blue whales in the North Atlantic were also exploited heavily. Available evidence suggests there are around 1,000 animals off Iceland and several hundred in the Gulf of St Lawrence. There is insufficient data available regarding blue whale status in most parts of the North Pacific although there is evidence of an increase rate of about 3 percent for the Gulf of California. Blue whales in the eastern tropical Pacific are thought to number around 3,000. <https://iwc.int/status>

Humpback whales in the Southern Hemisphere were heavily exploited by commercial whaling primarily from the 1920s-1950s in both their Southern Ocean feeding grounds and in their tropical breeding grounds. Whales have shown evidence of strong recovery towards their unexploited size in a number of areas. However, there is no evidence of recovery for populations in some areas such as Oceania, where there may be as few as 2,000 animals. The total Southern Hemisphere number is probably about 60,000.

Humpback whales in the North Pacific were also heavily exploited and again have shown positive increase rates in most areas for which there are data. Total North Pacific numbers are estimated at over 17,000. <https://iwc.int/status>

Fin whale populations in the Southern Hemisphere were heavily exploited by industrial whaling in the Southern Ocean, especially between the 1930s and 1960s. The existing estimates are of the order of several thousand animals. Pre-exploitation numbers have been estimated at 200,000. Partial estimates for the eastern North Pacific reveal around 10,000 animals with some evidence of annual increase rates of 4-5percent. <https://iwc.int/status> Commercial exploitation of Antarctic minke whales (the smallest of the large whales) began in the early 1970s, much later than the other large whale species. There are several hundred thousand Antarctic minke whales and thus they are not endangered. However, there has been an appreciable decline in their estimated abundance between the multi-year circumpolar surveys conducted between 1982/83-1988/89 and 1991/92-2003/04 <https://iwc.int/status>

Of particular concern to whale conservationists is that Japanese whaling will now be restricted to Japan's Exclusive Economic Zone, where species have shown a slow rate of recovery. In an opinion piece published on the ABC on December 31m 2018, written by Peter Bridgewater, Chair of the IWC from 1995-1998 and now adjunct professor at the University of Canberra, Professor Bridgewater stated, 'The problem is that for whaling in the Japanese Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), the scientific evidence suggests that stock levels are low, and do not show the levels of robust recovery seen elsewhere. So, while there is a gain for whales in the Southern Ocean (where it's least needed), the threat to northern Pacific populations increases.' <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-12-31/japan-leaving-the-international-whaling-commission-is-a-disaster/10671674>

## 2. Whales are a highly intelligent species that cannot be hunted humanely

According to a 2014 IWC report on whale welfare, it is difficult to ensure an instant and therefore painless death, even when performing a 'mercy killing' on a stranded whale that

cannot be rescued. For instance, New Zealand reported that several stranded pilot whales required 'multiple gunshots' over two to four minutes.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/michaelmarshalleurope/2018/12/27/as-japan-prepares-to-restart-commercial-whaling-how-are-whale-populations-holding-up/#4e0cfb203761>

When it comes to hunting moving whales in open water, the process of killing can become much more drawn-out. According to the IWC, Greenland's minke whale hunt achieved instant deaths no more than 30% of the time, while humpback whales took 13-15 minutes to die. Russia reported that gray whales took an average of 35 minutes.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/michaelmarshalleurope/2018/12/27/as-japan-prepares-to-restart-commercial-whaling-how-are-whale-populations-holding-up/#4e0cfb203761>

New Zealand research have similarly demonstrated that an explosive-tipped harpoon fired from a cannon on a moving vessel at a moving, partly submerged, unsecured animal is unlikely to lead consistently to instantaneous death. In the 2002 Norwegian minke whale hunt, 20 percent of whales were recorded as not dying instantaneously. In the Japanese 'scientific whaling' hunt for minke whales in Antarctica, 60 percent of whales do not die instantaneously. <https://www.doc.govt.nz/about-us/science-publications/conservation-publications/native-animals/marine-mammals/conservation-of-whales-in-the-21st-century/conserving-whales-a-challenge-for-the-21st-century/humane-killing/>

In addition to the length of time it is likely to take for a harpooned whale to die, researchers have claimed that whales have a level of cognitive functioning and awareness which means that they are not only capable of registering pain, but endure suffering as a result.

Georges Chapouthier, a neurobiologist and director of the Emotion Centre at Pierre and Marie Curie University in Paris, has stated, 'Suffering supposes a certain level of cognitive functioning. It is difficult to define what that level is, but there's a lot of data now to suggest some higher mammals have it, including great apes, dolphins and, most likely, whales.'

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/earth/wildlife/7841882/Whales-can-feel-and-suffer-as-humans-do.html>

Recent studies of whale and dolphin brains has provided insights into how these animals have evolved and the processing skills for which their brains have adapted. Dr Lori Marino, a leading researcher in whale and dolphin brain anatomy, has stated, 'Despite the vast differences in cortical organization cetaceans (the collective name for all whales, dolphins and porpoises) and humans (as well as great apes) share a number of complex cognitive abilities, such as self-recognition... These similarities, importantly, mean that cetaceans, as humans, are vulnerable to emotional and social stresses that can lead to considerable harm. This important point is critical to guiding the ethics of how we interact with and treat cetaceans.' <https://au.whales.org/wdc-in-action/scientific-evidence-for-whale-and-dolphin-rights>

Some scientists have described the exhibition of specific emotions, such as grief, in some whale and dolphin species. Giovanni Bearzi of Dolphin Biology and Conservation, a non-profit organisation that studies and advocates for dolphins, collected 78 scientific reports of grief-like displays in cetaceans described between 1970 and 2016. Of the 88 cetacean species currently known, they found 20 had been observed showing signs of grief, referred to in Bearzi's study as 'post-mortem attentive behaviour'. Most grief behaviours, 75 percent, were recorded in females mourning their calves

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/study-suggests-dolphins-and-some-whales-grieve-their-dead-180969414/#hgGUVliYOeTpPdeZ.99>

Opponents of whaling have further argued that not only does whaling cause pain and distress to the animals being killed, the whale's death also causes distress to the other members of its pod who witness its death. Jeff Hansen, managing director of Sea Shepherd in Australia, has stated, 'And that's not to mention that they are killing them with their family members, with

their pods having to witness their family members screaming out in pain.'  
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-45364696>

### 3. Whale meat is not favoured by most Japanese consumers

Opponents of Japan's decision to recommence commercial whaling argue that from a food security point of view it is an unnecessary and pointless decision as the vast majority of Japanese do not eat whale meat.

Though Japan has a long history of whale hunting, critics of the practice note that it has not formed a significant part of the country's traditional diet. Before World War II whale consumption was relatively insignificant at 10,000 tonnes a year in 1922-23.

<https://www.smh.com.au/opinion/japans-sad-whale-obsession-is-a-dying-tradition-20140401-zqp6i.html> Whale meat consumption was fostered after World War II when a General McArthur encouraged a reestablishment of whaling on an industrial basis to meet the needs of a war-ravaged country unable to feed its population. Whale meat soon reached 47 percent of postwar protein intake and by 1962 whale meat consumption was 220,000 tonnes a year. However, increasing prosperity and the ever-growing availability of imported meats has seen a long-term decline in whale meat as a significant and preferred part of the Japanese diet, especially among the young. <https://www.smh.com.au/opinion/japans-sad-whale-obsession-is-a-dying-tradition-20140401-zqp6i.html>

Kazuhiko Kobayashi, an agronomy professor and the co-author of Japan's Dietary Transition and Its Impacts, has stated, 'Whale has lost its position among the animal meats, and will belong more to the category of curious foods for the predominant majority of Japanese.'

<https://www.wired.com/2015/12/japanese-barely-eat-whale-whaling-big-deal/>

Nanami Kurasawa of the Iruka and Kujira (dolphin and whale) Action Network (IKAN) has stated, 'Actually many (regular) people don't have any interest in whales or whaling now in Japan.' Mr Kurasawa also stated that eating whale is becoming 'less and less popular'.

According to Aimee Leslie, global lead for cetaceans and marine turtles for WWF, the number of people in Japan who regularly eat whale meat is very small.

Motoji Nagasawa, Greenpeace's whale campaigner in Japan, said: 'The government has been spending a lot of money spreading misinformation that whaling is an important national interest, and all Japanese want it. But that is the opposite of the truth. Whale meat is sold in limited areas in Japan. I've no idea where to buy whale meat - it's not in the supermarkets. We now have so many other sources of food, we do not need whale meat.' For most Japanese, whaling is not a significant issue. A Mori poll for Greenpeace showed that 10 per cent of Japanese supported commercial whaling, 14 per cent were opposed and the rest had no opinion. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2001/jun/24/whaling.observerfocus> A 2006 poll commissioned by Greenpeace and conducted by the independent Nippon Research Centre found that 95 percent of Japanese people very rarely or never eat whale meat. And the amount of uneaten frozen whale meat stockpiled in Japan has doubled to 4,600 tons between 2002 and 2012. <https://www.wired.com/2015/12/japanese-barely-eat-whale-whaling-big-deal/>

In 2013, nine of 10 Japanese said they hadn't bought whale meat in the past year, leading to thousands of tons of the meat being stockpiled, according to a survey commissioned by the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW). One survey showed that 65 percent of Japanese people have never eaten whale, and for most of those that had, it was only as a schoolchild. In another survey of Japanese people released in 2014, only 4 percent of respondents said they ate whale meat occasionally, compared to 37 percent who said they did not eat it at all. <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/09/14/asia/japan-whaling-iwc-intl/index.html>

Aimee Leslie has claimed that the diminishing market for whale meat in Japan means that it is only government subsidies that keep the industry alive.

<https://edition.cnn.com/2018/09/14/asia/japan-whaling-iwc-intl/index.html>

Whaling is also economically insignificant. There are only four traditional whaling villages, with five boats between them. The ban on commercial whaling led to a loss of just 450 jobs, and the current total market is 2,000 tonnes of minke whale meat a year, with a retail value of just £70m. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2001/jun/24/whaling.observerfocus>

#### 4. Whale watching can make a larger contribution to the Japanese economy

Opponents of commercial whaling argue that the practice could be replaced by whale watching, which could be particularly valuable in rural and coastal communities without the range of employment options available in cities such as Tokyo.

Critics of whaling note that whale watching is a significant tourist industry worldwide with a total economic impact of \$2.1 billion across 120 countries, according to an IFAW report.

<https://www.mnn.com/earth-matters/animals/blogs/could-whale-watching-replace-whaling-in-japan> The report, which examined whale watching in Japan and Iceland, demonstrated that whale watching participation grew from 9 million tourists in 2001 to 13 million in 2008, with revenues rising from \$1 billion to \$2.1 billion per annum over that period.

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/233443359\\_From\\_whaling\\_to\\_whale\\_watching\\_Examining\\_sustainability\\_and\\_cultural\\_rhetoric](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/233443359_From_whaling_to_whale_watching_Examining_sustainability_and_cultural_rhetoric) Japan already has a robust whale-watching industry. Established in the 1980s, it now includes some 200 tour operators who served more than 200,000 tourists in 2013. And with a yearly growth rate of 6 percent, Japan is in the top 10 percent of the global whale-watching market. <https://www.mnn.com/earth-matters/animals/blogs/could-whale-watching-replace-whaling-in-japan> Matthew Collis, of the International Fund for Animal Welfare, has stated, 'Those very same people who operate in boats out of these fishing villages to go whaling have the same means at their disposal potentially for operating whale-watching businesses.' <https://www.mnn.com/earth-matters/animals/blogs/could-whale-watching-replace-whaling-in-japan>

It has been suggested that the economic benefits of whale watching are potentially far greater than those offered by whale, which is currently in decline and supported by government subsidies. IFAW whale specialist, Patrick Ramage, has stated, 'The economic benefits [of whale watching] are much more widespread than the meagre funds associated with whaling, which is actually an activity heavily subsidised by the government. [Whaling] doesn't pay its own way anymore.' <https://www.mnn.com/earth-matters/animals/blogs/could-whale-watching-replace-whaling-in-japan>

The potential for whale watching to displace whale hunting is being shown in Iceland, which is one of three countries, together with Norway and soon Japan, where commercial whaling is practised. In Husavik, a bay in the north of the country, or in the Faxafloi Bay near the capital Reykjavik, more than 355,000 people went whale watching in 2016. That was an increase of 30 per cent over 2015 and four times more than a decade ago. The whaling industry, on the other hand, appears to be in potential decline. Whalers have in recent years consistently failed to meet their quotas of kills - typically around 200. Warmer waters are pushing the whales to follow the mackerel, their main source of food, closer to Greenland where the water is colder. <https://www.straitstimes.com/world/europe/far-from-harpoons-whales-star-in-iceland-ecotourism-boom>

In an opinion piece published in The Conversation on February 19, 2012, Stephen Wearing, Associate Professor, Management, University of Technology Sydney stated, 'The state-supported whaling industry in Japan has made consistent losses over the past 20 years – an estimated US\$223 million since 1988 – and amassed a stockpile of whale meat estimated at 4000 tonnes in 2010.'

In Iceland, where the whale hunt has been supported from other fishing industry profits, whale watching is growing faster than it is in the rest of Europe, averaging 17percent per annum. In 2010, whale watching's total economic contribution was estimated at US\$16.4 million.' <https://theconversation.com/watching-whales-makes-more-economic-sense-than-hunting-them-5332>

Professor Wearing concluded, 'In both countries, successful whale watching businesses have been launched out of former whaling and fishing ports, offering an alternative economy for those communities.' <https://theconversation.com/watching-whales-makes-more-economic-sense-than-hunting-them-5332>

##### 5. Japan's departure from the IWC threatens the international regulation of whaling

Some critics of Japan's decision to leave the IWC argue that the action puts Japanese whaling outside international regulation, increasing the likelihood that whale species may be hunted without proper regard for their conservation status. There is concern that Japan's action may prompt imitators and that the continued existence of the IWC may be at risk.

Kitty Block, president of Humane Society International (HSI) has stated, 'By leaving the International Whaling Commission but continuing to kill whales commercially, Japan now becomes a pirate whaling nation killing these ocean leviathans completely outside the bounds of international law.' <https://www.smh.com.au/environment/sustainability/japan-to-start-commercial-whaling-in-july-20181226-p50oa8.html>

Block summed up the attitude of the HSI toward Japan's current actions as, 'This is the path of a pirate whaling nation, with a troubling disregard for international rule.'

<https://www.smh.com.au/environment/sustainability/japan-to-withdraw-from-iwc-to-resume-commercial-whaling-reports-20181220-p50nes.html>

Astrid Fuchs, programme lead at Whale and Dolphin Conservation, has similarly stated, 'The oversight that the IWC was having over Japan's whaling will now be lost. We won't know how many whales they are catching, we won't know how they will report it. It might spell doom for some populations. There is an endangered population of Minke whales off Japan, which is already under threat.' <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/dec/26/japan-confirms-it-will-quit-iwc-to-resume-commercial-whaling>

Japan's current whaling practices conducted in the name of supposed scientific research have already faced large-scale international censure after Japan reported in early 2018 that its whaling fleet had killed 122 pregnant whales during its annual research hunt in the Southern Ocean last winter. Of the 333 minke whales caught during the four-month expedition, 181 were female – including 53 juveniles.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/dec/20/japan-to-resume-commercial-whaling-after-leaving-iwc-report>

There is also concern that the action of Japan in leaving the IWC will encourage some other current members to do likewise and so increase unregulated whaling in other areas.

Astrid Fuchs has stated, 'We are very worried that it might set a precedent and that other countries might follow Japan's lead and leave the commission ... especially South Korea where there is an interest in consuming whale meat.'

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/dec/26/japan-confirms-it-will-quit-iwc-to-resume-commercial-whaling>

Others have expressed concern that Japan's withdrawal could threaten the IWC's continued existence. Australian Marine Conservation Society chief executive, Darren Kindleysides, has stated, 'Japan has failed to bully the IWC into permitting a return to the cruel and outdated industrial whaling of the past. Japan has failed to persuade the international courts to allow them to kill whales under the guise of scientific research. So now Japan is reportedly threatening to turn their back on international efforts to control whaling and conserve whales.'

Leaving the IWC would set a very dangerous precedent for other international treaties and conventions. Not satisfied with harpooning whales, it now looks like Japan is threatening to harpoon the future of the IWC.' <https://www.smh.com.au/environment/sustainability/japan-to-withdraw-from-iwc-to-resume-commercial-whaling-reports-20181220-p50nes.html>

## **Further implications**

The withdrawal of Japan from the International Whaling Commission(IWC) had become inevitable. The Commission was originally established to oversee the sustainable exploitation of whales by countries involved in the industry. It has become a body exclusively devoted to whale conservation. In 2017 Japan failed to have the Commission lift its 30-year moratorium and allow commercial whaling.

Responding to Japan's withdrawal from the IWC, Natalie Barefoot, a University of Miami law professor and expert in whale law, has argued that it would be better to have all whaling nations operating under the oversight of an international regulatory body than acting independently. Professor Barefoot has stated, 'As we become an increasingly global community, it's better to have everyone at the table, even if you disagree, and just to continue to work. These are global issues we're addressing, and we need to address them together.' <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/2018/12/japan-considers-leaving-international-whaling-commission/>

What Professor Barefoot's comment fails to acknowledge is that the IWC had ceased to function as a body through which conflicting views could be addressed and resolved. There had ceased to be any possibility that those nations wishing to continue commercial whaling would be able to find a place at the table and have their practices endorsed sufficiently so that they could be regulated by the IWC.

Japan has consistently been treated in a manner which it has condemned as unjust and prejudiced. There are still a small number of Japanese communities which can claim a strong cultural connection and an economic dependence on whaling. Japan has regularly made representations on their behalf to the Commission but these have been ignored. This has been seen by the Japanese government as inequitable as the IWC allows various indigenous groups around the world to hunt whales for 'subsistence'. For example, the people of the Caribbean island of Bequia hunt humpbacks, even though they learnt whaling only 150 years ago, from New Englanders. In Taiji, on Japan's main island, memories of whaling are more recent and the tradition many centuries old. People have family names like Tomi ('lookout') while stone monuments along the coast honour the spirits of whales, whose meat sustained the town through famines. <https://www.economist.com/asia/2019/01/05/japan-withdraws-from-the-treaty-that-bans-hunting-whales> Despite such strong cultural connections the IWC has not made exemptions that would allow these communities to continue whaling.

Effectively, successive Japanese administrations have seen IWC bans on commercial whaling activities as an unjustifiable restriction of Japanese national and cultural sovereignty. Thus Japan's ultimate withdrawal from the Commission has long seemed inevitable. In a thesis published in 2016, Mika Ranta predicted, 'The only way to truly save face, safeguard international legitimacy of the state and reputation while continuing whaling in the future, would be to resign from the restricting and stalling regulatory framework and continue to whale completely under domestic controls.' <https://digi.lib.ttu.ee/i/file.php?DLID=6152&t=1> What is regrettable is that a situation has now been created in which Japanese whaling will be conducted completely outside the regulation or even the observation of any international body.

The Japanese government plans to allow whaling in Japan's huge territorial waters. A small local fleet has survived by hunting cetaceans not covered by the IWC, such as dolphins and Baird's beaked whale, and by conducting 'research' of its own. Freed from the Commission's



constraints, it might increase its catch from 50 minke whales a year to 300.

<https://www.economist.com/asia/2019/01/05/japan-withdraws-from-the-treaty-that-bans-hunting-whales> This is similar to the number previously being taken from Antarctic waters for research. The difficulty here, however, is that the number of whales to be harvested in this manner is far fewer. As Peter Bridgewater, a former IWC chairman, warned, 'Japan is giving up catching minke whales from a healthy population in the Southern Ocean in return for catching unmonitored numbers from a population in the north Pacific whose health is much less certain.' <https://www.economist.com/asia/2019/01/05/japan-withdraws-from-the-treaty-that-bans-hunting-whales>

The inflexible moratorium imposed by the IWC on Japanese whaling did not make adequate allowance for the political situation in Japan. The number of people actively affected by the moratorium is very few, but from the point of view of a country sensitive to infringement of its national autonomy the ongoing rejections had to become politically damaging to any government. For conservatives in prime minister Shinzo Abe's Liberal Democratic Party, whaling is a nationalist emblem. <https://www.economist.com/asia/2019/01/05/japan-withdraws-from-the-treaty-that-bans-hunting-whales> In an era of growing nationalism around the world, as indicated by the Brexit movement in Great Britain and the United States growing isolationism under Donald Trump, the assault to national pride represented by constant rebuffs from the IWC was unlikely to be accepted indefinitely by Japanese governments.

Peter Bridgewater has concluded, 'This is a moment of breakage and pain for the international system, driven partly by political manoeuvring in Japan, but enabled by rote chanting in the West of "we don't like killing whales".' <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-12-31/japan-leaving-the-international-whaling-commission-is-a-disaster/10671674>