

Japan as a Political Community and the Banner to Raise

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Summary of this paper & my proposal

Preface

I am writing this essay in English. The reason is that I would like to present this paper to my students as a reference material in a bilingual (mainly English) class I am offering. In this class, some International and Japanese students frequently request my personal view on Japan today and my personal opinion as to what Japan should do in the next 20 to 30 years.

Of course, I try to answer these questions in class as much as I can, but at the same time, I thought it was necessary to record my thoughts in a slightly more coherent form.

In fact, I made a similar attempt a year and a half ago in Japanese. ——— “*Reiwa Nihon no Hata (The Flag of Reiwa Japan)*” ——— (*KIRIN No. 29, March 31, 2020 Kanagawa Univ. Faculty of Business, PP51-90*).

In writing this English essay, I briefly reread the previous Japanese essay, and I have decided that what is written in the conclusion and PS of that essay should be mentioned first in this essay as well, because it already expresses my most fundamental perception of our society today. The view expressed there is still valid as a premise for my discussion on contemporary Japan and thinking about the future, which I will discuss in the following chapters.

Please allow me to quote the conclusion and the PS section below.

Start quote ;

Conclusion

As I finish writing this essay, the fury of the coronavirus continues to sweep through the world, unabated. The world is utterly vulnerable in the face of this new threat, and our politics, our economy, and our social life are being fundamentally shaken. Every aspect of our society is on the verge of having its existing framework and understandings destroyed. — omissions — In my essays, I have consistently discussed the progress of history and the ideals that modernity has upheld, but I feel that all of this has been swept away by the fury of the corona. Corona seems to mock the efforts of countless people around the world to realize the great ideals of freedom and equality that they have been sweating and bleeding to achieve. In the face of Corona, we feel as if our ideas and words are powerless. I even get the feeling that for Corona, parliament, democracy, and even economic growth may be “crap,” as if they are not even serious enemies. It’s a paradigm shift, the biggest paradigm shift of all. But let’s take a moment to reflect a bit more on the alarm bells that Corona rings.

Modernity, or the idea of modernity was prepared by the Renaissance as a preliminary stage. In Japanese, it (Renaissance) is translated as literary revival or human revival. From that time on, man began to move again to the center of the world, and replaced God as the main player on earth, becoming a “thinking reed” (Pascal), and creating, maintaining, and changing society according to his ideas and visions, rather than leaving it to nature. We may have been disrespectful to God and nature for a long time.

When I reflect on the arrogance of human beings in various ways, I feel myself being drawn into “Buddhist resignation,” “what will be will be,” and a “it cannot be helped” attitude. But I guess I’ll have to take another step here. We must take the fury of the coronavirus seriously, humbly accept the essence of what it poses, and still test our imagination and boldness to relativize it.

After the “Conclusion”, I wrote the following “Postscript”. I will quote it here as well.

Postscript.

I have concluded this essay as “Conclusion - In front of Corona virus”, but I wanted to add a few more things.

As I have argued in this essay, I believe that the ideals of modernity are still valid and that Japanese society needs to sharpen its thinking on the ideals of freedom and equality and raise them high as the flag of Japan in the future. In other words, my position is that we need to further internalize the ideas of the modern enlightenment.

However, this does not mean that the modern Enlightenment was without its limitations.

It was limited by the time period of the modern era (15th-17th centuries), and at the same time, it must have been limited by space, as it was an idea born mainly from the reality of Europe. The social sciences, which were born out of the modern Enlightenment, have developed and been refined within these limitations, and they naturally have a shelf life. With this in mind, one of the things I am working on now is to reconstruct the grand theory of political science, i.e. <table of political elements> (on which I published a 100—page paper in Japanese entitled “The world of Kamishima’s TABLE OF POLITICAL ELEMENTS”, March 2021 IIBM). In fact, this was the work that my mentor, the political scientist Jiro Kamishima, devoted his heart and soul to in his later years. I would like to advance this work as much as possible, but to what extent can I do so?

What Corona virus is confronting us with at this time may be an even greater paradigm shift asking us to redefine our framework for understanding reality, going beyond human-centered social phenomena to include natural phenomena (especially medicine). When you think about it like that, it becomes a daunting subject. It may be a story that will fundamentally shake the division of social science and natural science into two distinct areas. There may have been a greater and deeper meaning to the fact that the universities that started out in the Middle Ages placed theology, philosophy, and medicine as their main pillars, not only because of the circumstances of the time. If we do not extend our scope to that extent, then it is evident that we have not accepted the issues raised by Corona virus.

However, I take the position of “that is that, and this is that”. In other words, I do not take the position that unless we reconstruct our view of history and society under a major paradigm shift, it is useless to make concrete commitments to politics. I still think that the HERE & NOW — (here and now) attitude — is still important. It is with this in mind that I present my essay, “The Flag of Reiwa Japan”.

End quotation

The above conclusions and PS have been translated into English by me (Masaru Ishizumi), though some parts have been omitted. The word REIWA is used in the above sentences. As well known, the Western calendar and the Japanese calendar called Gengo, are both used in Japan. Japan enacts a new era every time there is a change of emperor, and we are currently in the era named “Reiwa” in our society. The year 2022 is the fourth year of this new era. In this sense, it is very appropriate time to talk about the medium-term image of Japanese society and the nation going into the next of 20-30 years.

Chapter 1: The Global Situation and Japan 2022

First of all, in this first chapter, I would like to describe what I consider to be the most important issues in the current situation for the world and Japan. This is followed by my thoughts on Japan's medium-term national goals and social vision in Chapter 2 and 3.

1-1 Global Situation

1-1-1 <The world has come to a point where the question of democracy or dictatorship is once again sharply debated> .

One of the major events in the world at the end of 2021 was The Summit for Democracy, an online conference called by President Biden and held on December 9-10, attended by leaders from more than 100 nations around the world. Whether it will be comparable to the former Cold War, when the U.S. and the Soviet Union sharply confronted each other, is unclear at this point. But in any case, the U.S. and the rest of the Western world will proceed with the goal of containing China and some other countries, using democracy as the main tool. In the midst of this, countries in the West and beyond are being forced to make concrete choices. This year, 2022, will be even more tense.

1-1-2 <A world in which wealth is even more unevenly distributed - a world in which a major structural reform of capitalism will probably occur>

The pace at which the super-rich are increasing their wealth has greatly accelerated since the new corona pandemic. The division between the strong and the weak is no longer tolerable at the global level or at the level of individual nations. There is no doubt that objections and social changes at various levels will be greatly increased in this situation. Whether this social change will involve violence, or a milder structural shift in capitalism, remains to be seen, but for some time after 2022, the correction of the disparity between rich and poor will undoubtedly be a major theme for the international community.

1-1-3 <Anti-globalization and anti-neoliberalism accelerated by Corona>

The problems posed by the Corona virus, which has been raging for more than two years are manifold. While the above 1-1-1 and 1-1-2 are intertwined, Corona virus has made us more aware of the fundamental issues of anti-globalization and anti-neoliberalism at a global level than before. Anti-globalization is of course linked to nationalism which is rapidly brewing in many parts of the world. Anti-neoliberalism is seen not only as a rejection of economic liberalism, but also as a retreat from liberalism of expression and thought. It is necessary to deal with this keyword - liberalism very carefully.

It is my firm belief that freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and freedom of thought must be further enhanced, and in this regard, Japanese society in particular must make a breakthrough in our notion of and practice toward a freer society. Just as we need to carefully distinguish between economic democracy and procedural democracy when we talk about democracy, the issue of freedom is also a very important keyword, and we need to be very careful in handling it.

In any case, in 2022, I think society has entered a world of politics, a world of political ideas, and a world of political culture. At the center of all this, of course, still sits the idea of modernity. I will discuss this point in the next chapter, where I will discuss the first flag that I believe Japan should raise in the future, which is the flag of freedom.

1-1-4 < They say that the world has entered the era of the Great Reset >

The Corona virus pandemic has accelerated major social change on a grand scale comparable to the fourth industrial revolution. This has been triggered by the new technological and information revolutions that are still underway. It is a major historical event for the world. Some people have described the situation as Before Corona (BC) and After Corona (AC). I agree. In his book, “The Great Reset,” Klaus Schwab, the founder and president of the World Economic Forum (Davos), discusses the nature of this cataclysm and his predictions for the future in the context of three categories. First, the macro-reset, which will affect the world’s economy, society, geopolitics, environment, and technology. Second, the micro-reset, which will affect specific industries and companies. And third, the individual reset, which concerns — a review of values, including a review of individualism and communal values.

1-2 Japan’s Situation

1-2-1 < Twilight society Japan continues to drift >

Who could have predicted the long-term stagnation of Japan when the bubble economy collapsed in 1991? Thirty years ago, I myself could not have predicted such a prolonged slump and drift in Japan. I have to admit that I was somewhat naive. International comparisons of various economic and social indicators clearly show the long-term stagnation of Japan.

In 1979, the American sociologist Ezra Vogel’s book “Japan as Number One” took the world by storm. Ten years later, the winds completely changed, and Japan has been in the doldrums ever since. The illusion of the Japanese bureaucracy as the driving force behind Japan as number one has vanished. Moreover, the ethos of the entire society has gone beyond liquidation and is melting away. Japan, the Land of the Rising Sun, has become the Land of Twilight.

1-2-2 < Indicators >

There is no shortage of indicators that show the stagnation and decline of Japan. Let's take a look at some of these, mainly on the economic front.

- + GDP share in the world: 1994 — 17.7% \Rightarrow 2023 (forecast IMF) — 5.5%
- + GDP per capita: 1992 — 4th \Rightarrow 2018 — 25th (IMF)
- + GDP per capita: Japan: \$42,772 South Korea: \$43,001 (IMD 2018)
- + IMD Global Competitiveness Ranking: Japan 34th, Korea 23th (2020)
- + Market capitalization ranking: Toyota Motor Corporation 36th, Samsung Electronics 14th.
- + S&P rating rankings: Japan A+ — Two levels lower than Korea.
- + Japan's contribution to UN regular budget: 2000 — 20% 2021 — 8.55%
- + Real wage: \$39,000 in 2020 at purchasing power parity last year, an increase of just 4% from 30 years earlier, according to data by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. Over the same period, U.S. wages jumped by roughly half to \$69,000, and the OECD average rose by a third to \$49,000.
- + Press freedom ranking (Reporter without border): 2012: 53th \Rightarrow 2021: 67th

Until a few years ago, the reasons for relying on such indicators was often questioned. Some pointed out that the rankings were based on the judgments of the Western value systems. However, the general and relative decline of Japan is so obvious that such arguments no longer make sense. This means that we can no longer defensively use Japan's cultural difference as an excuse.

It was said by Yukio Noguchi who wrote “Heisei Ha Naze Shippaishitanoka”, (2019, Tougensha Publishing) that “We are getting to the point where we cannot complain even if Japan is kicked out of the G7 and South Korea takes its place”. (Diamond On Line 2021.8.26)

1-2-3 < Political stagnation and the withering of postwar democracy >

Thirty years ago, the presence of the Japanese economy in the world was greater than that of China today. At the time, Japan was considered to have a “first-rate economy and third-rate politics.” And it was hoped that Japanese politics would eventually come close to matching its economic success. However, the general stagnation of Japan since then has become obvious, even beyond the indicators mentioned above. The first-rate economy has been lost, dragged down by third-rate politics.

Under these circumstances, it seems that those Japanese people who have been indifferent to politics are finally beginning to understand that political matters strongly impact their lives. Even so, we have yet to reverse the political apathy and put a definite end to the notion of “audience democracy” or “leave it to someone democracy”. For example, 2021 was

the year of the House of Representatives election, which is held once every four years, and the turnout was 55.93%, which is the second lowest in the postwar period. In the meantime, the political culture of “postwar democracy,” which we seemed to have grasped, appears to be on the road to decline before it reaches maturity.

Postwar democracy was, of course, strongly injected by the American occupation forces, but the Japanese were delighted with the bright side of democracy. Democracy education, especially in schools, was greatly welcomed and seemed to have taken root. I was born in 1950, which means I entered elementary school at the same time Japan regained its independence. That generation was definitely baptized in postwar democracy and given a kind of idealistic education. The core of postwar democratic education, which broke away from pre-war feudal education, involved preparing students for future political participation as autonomous citizens. Even elementary school students were encouraged to engage in pseudo-politics at class meetings. This training was the opposite of audience democracy.

This postwar democratic education functioned as a strong breath of fresh air until about the 1960s, but has since receded significantly. This is the big picture of postwar Japan. And this has something to do with today’s political apathy and spectator democracy attitude. In realpolitik also, this experiment in democracy has taken a major step backward. I won’t go into detail about the background, but I will discuss two things. One is the outbreak of the Cold War and the Cold War structure. The other is the postwar history of the one-party rule system by the Liberal Democratic Party.

The conservative Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) in Japan has been in power for most of the 75 years since the end of World War II. The LDP was indeed at the center of Japan’s miraculous post-war economic recovery and rapid economic growth, but it is also responsible for the 30-year stagnation of Japanese society. Why has the LDP been able to stay in power for nearly 80 years? There are many reasons. Those who are well versed in political history of Japan will be able to offer countless explanations that get to the heart of the matter. There is also an extensive accumulation of research results. But of course, this is not the place to discuss the results of such research.

I believe that the key to the LDP’s long-lasting power lies in its naming, as simple as this sounds. Freedom (Liberal) and Democracy are powerful terms and I believe that the LDP which has been monopolizing this powerful name will never relinquish it, no matter what happens to the substance of the party.

From the modernization of the Meiji era until the defeat in World War II, Japan’s slogan was “wealthy country, strong army,” but after World War II, the slogan was “peace, and money-making”. The slogan of postwar Japan, which is a little more upscale than “peace and money-making,” was probably “freedom and democracy”. Both “freedom” and “democracy”

were only token terms before the war, and the slogan worked very powerfully because it represented a fresh start for Japan in the midst of its total defeat in World War II and the loss of domestic values and ethos. Without a doubt, this slogan expressed the consensus and hope of postwar Japan. This slogan was the key to Japan's postwar recovery and subsequent rapid economic growth, and by extension, Japan's rise to number one. The current emperor, who abdicated of his own volition in the third year of his reign, wrote the word "peace" in a New Year's calligraphy class as an elementary school student in the first year after the war, and this concept undoubtedly had the consensus of the Japanese people. This gave rise to the image of Japan as a nation to be pursued, which was accepted by almost all the people. It was also accepted by the international community with open arms as the sign of hope. This solid philosophy, and the general support of the people of the world in the global situation at that time, was the greatest asset for Japan's subsequent actions and success in the post war history of Japan — at least until 1990's.

Chapter 2: Modernity as the Social Ethos of Japan's Future

2-1 < What Japan needs now is a broad social consensus (social ethos) >

Will Japan continue on its twilight path? Or will it make a comeback? It depends first and foremost on how much the Japanese people, and especially their leaders, share a sense of crisis. One thing which is clear is that Japan's stagnation is not something that can be partially fixed. The decline will continue unless there is a clear and holistic reassessment of the direction in which the society should be heading. The rebuilding of Japanese society cannot be achieved solely by the movements of the political world in the narrow sense of the word. A new social consensus, a new social ethos, is desperately needed to put an end to the country's 30-year-long decline and pave the way for a reversal.

2-2 < Pre-War Ethos and Post-War Ethos >

In his essays on Japan, "Why Japan Succeeded?" and "Why Japan Will Decline?," Prof. Michio Morishima discusses the importance of social ethos. Morishima argues that the leaders of pre-war and post-war Japan were infused with Confucian ethos in their educational institutions and homes, which functioned as the spirit of the Noblesse Oblige. After the war, American-style democracy was injected into Japan, but the democratic ethos was not fully internalized, and as the population shifted from pre-war to post-war born leaders, a social ethos vacuum was created, which has continued since the 1990s. I agree with Morishima's view. This is the reason why I believe that a major social ethos and social consensus needs to be rebuilt immediately, without which Japan's revival will be impossible even if we try to propose changes in mid-level policy options. In this sense, I believe that there is a need for a politically

significant banner that will reshape the social ethos.

2-3 < Recursive Modernity >

In my opinion, in order to build a new social ethos for Japan, it is important to look at the history of Japan since the Meiji Restoration. Its history has been a history of struggle with modernity.

Japan did everything in its power to bring in modern thinking and modern systems in all areas of politics, economics, and culture. Even at the cost of its own traditions and culture, Japan did its best to modernize or westernize. And for the first time in a non-Western society, Japan succeeded. Then came the miserable defeat in 1945. It was a painful reprisal from the seniors of Western modernity. The cost of completely misjudging the fundamental strength of modernity was great, and Japan was in fact the leading actor in the drama of world history from the latter half of the 19th century to the middle of the 20th century. We Japanese experienced the light and shadow, success and failure of the 20th century more intensely than anyone else. This goes to the core of Japan's self-awareness. The future of Japan should have depended on how far we could delve into this national experience, think it through, and overcome it dialectically. The essence of Japan's history since the Meiji era (1868-1912), which culminated in the defeat in 1945, is still a great asset for envisioning the future, but we have not fully utilized it.

It is my position that the "modernity" that the West has carved out and sometimes forcefully promoted to the world, has not yet reached its expiration date. I do not take a position of total denial of the values of modernity. My position is that the slogans of modernity, "liberty, equality, and benevolence," are still alive at least in the conceptual arena. When "modern Western society," which stands for modernity, tries to stifle freedom of criticism, tolerance of the emergence of competing ideas, and freedom of the press and freedom of association as devices that make this possible, it falls into the self-contradiction of denying modern values. This is what I mean by "recursive modernity" which includes the idea of a dialectic in which modernity is open to scathing criticism of its nature and content.

2-4 < Libert , Egalite, Fraternit  >

"Freedom, Equality, and Philanthropy", the banner under which modern society was established, is still very much alive in modern society. The basic framework and understandings of our society, such as democracy, constitution, separation of powers, parliament, human rights, etc., have been formed based on the principles of freedom, equality, and benevolence,

These basic principles of modern society are still very much in force in the international community.

It is often said that capitalism and its siblings, democracy and individualism, have gained power by strongly promoting the great idea of “freedom”. Socialism, on the other hand, was born in the concrete pursuit of the great idea of equality. Leaving philanthropy aside for a moment, capitalism, with its banner of “freedom” that drove the establishment of modernity in the 15th and 16th centuries, was challenged by socialism, with its banner of equality, from the beginning of the 20th century. That socialism suffered a devastating blow at the end of the 20th century in the form of the collapse of the Soviet Union, does not mean that the flag that was raised there in the first place, the flag of equality, has lost its meaning. The flag of equality has not disappeared even in capitalism, which seems to have won the day. Criticism and uprisings against greedy capitalism have occurred in many places. The main banner of these revolts is equality. This is happening, for example, even in the U.S., which is said to be the embodiment of capitalism. In this context, I will later briefly touch on the Sanders phenomenon in the selection of the Democratic presidential candidate in 2019.

Chapter 3: Banner of Freedom, Equality and Peace

3-1 The First Flag: The Flag of Freedom

< Why does Japan need the flag of freedom now? >

It is easy for people to talk about the importance of freedom as if it were a matter of course, but the future of Japan requires a reaffirmation of the importance of this notion. It is Atari's prophecy and belief that the history of mankind will continue as a history of the acquisition of “freedom,” and I agree. This is true regardless of whether we live in a capitalist economic system or a socialist society. The view that <capitalism = freedom> and <socialism = suppression of freedom> is rather one sided. It is true that the socialist and communist societies that have existed so far have sometimes been accompanied by the suppression of freedom, but it would be a mistake to think that the concept of socialism is in total conflict with the concept of freedom.

What we raise is a flag, and it is the torch that we are heading for, even if we have not yet achieved it. Just as the Statue of Liberty of Manhattan is a torch. The same can be said for the flag of equality and the flag of peace, but we do not have to lower it just because we are powerless to realize it at the moment. The reality of “what is” is important, but the future of “what should be” is even more important.

We have been saying for a long time that we are in the liberal camp, but I think we need to think about this again. It is true that Japan is a member of the G7 and a major member of the liberal camp, but have we, at the individual level, internalized the value of freedom. Do

we uphold the ethos of freedom in our society to the same extent as the US, UK, France, Germany, Italy, Canada, etc.? This is a difficult but very serious question in discussing the future of Japan. More to the point, have we, as individuals, really internalized the value of freedom even in comparison to the individuals living in Russia and China? It is true that the Constitution guarantees freedom of thought, choice of occupation, and freedom of marriage. However, is freedom really the core of society? In this context, I would like to discuss three points that concern me. Of course, these three points are interrelated, but I believe that unless there are major reforms in these areas, Japan will not be able to turn around from this twilight society and become a vibrant and competitive society again.

3-1-1 < Japan ranks 67th in freedom of the press ranking; journalism is exhausted >

The exhaustion of journalism in Japan can be highlighted in many ways. A ranking of 67th in 2021 WORLD PRESS FREEDOM INDEX by “Reporters Without Borders [RWB]” is not an easy number for many Japanese to accept, but it is one that must be taken seriously. In a way, it is even more serious than the ranking for the economy. Of course, there can be many arguments disputing this ranking. One could argue that the rankings are again based on Western values, and that it is pointless to compare countries with different cultural and historical backgrounds, or even that this is a form of cultural imperialism. However, in reality, Japan’s isolation has become so deep that such comments can only be heard as excuses. Japanese journalism (and even liberal arts academia?), which has been protected by the barrier of the Japanese language, is now facing a major challenge. We are now at a stage where we are even debating whether Japan really has the kind of journalism that can stand up to global standards.

Of course, there is a long history of journalism in Japan. However, there is a question as to how much they are able to conduct their activities as independent journalists, beyond the interference of their companies, and beyond the logic of the notorious “press club system”. We should all be aware that, at least in developed countries, the extent to which journalism functions as an information-seeker and an instituter of opposing views, rather than merely a transmitter of official information, is seen as a barometer of a society’s vitality. As an associate member of the Japan Foreign Correspondents’ Club in Tokyo for several years, I frequently attended press conferences, sometimes asking questions or making comments. I was struck by the free-spiritedness of the foreign journalists, their straight forwardness in the Q and A sessions. On the other hand, the Japanese reporters looked like a group of stenographers in the press conference room, merely tapping their computer keyboard as if it were a typical press conference, which is bizarre. It appears that journalists and viewers alike need to be reminded of the very important role that journalism plays in our society.

In modern society, journalism has been given a special role as the “guardian angel of freedom” for the entire society. This is journalism. This is only possible if there is an unshakeable

consensus on the importance of freedom in the society.

In the U.S., for example, this is thoroughly emphasized in school education, where, in addition to the separation of powers, the importance of the fourth power (journalism) and the legitimacy of its existence as an essential link between the holders of power and the general public is taught. The importance of this fourth power was emphasized by the Founding Fathers from the beginning. The Federalist Papers, a collection of the nation-building correspondence of the Founding Fathers, is a specific and thoughtful discussion of the separation of powers system in the founding of the nation. In them, the fathers convincingly argue that the key to making democracy work is to give maximum importance to free journalism. This 400-page Federalist Paper is still used as a required textbook for liberal arts freshmen across the United States, regardless of their majors.

In fact, there was a time when the origins of democracy, its spirit, and the importance of freedom of speech and journalism in making the system work were thoroughly taught in Japanese schools. In 1948, three years after the defeat of Japan, the Japanese Ministry of Education produced its own Social Studies textbooks for junior and senior high schools and distributed them nationwide. The title of this 400-page textbook, which was used until 1953, was "Democracy". Chapter 6 of the textbook, is titled as "The Awakened Voter," and in it the importance of freedom of speech and publication and freedom of the press is discussed with utmost zeal. (A reprint of this textbook was published by Komichi Shobo in 1995.) It is likely that the challenge of democracy and the educating people in the importance of journalism have been gradually forgotten in the bustle of Japan's rapid growth since the 1960s. This has led to the fragility of Japan's civic political culture today.

3-1-2 <Freedom is the key to innovative economic activity>

In the 1970s and 1980s, businessmen and MBA students from around the world came to Japan to learn about the Japanese way of management and the structure of the Japanese social system supporting it. At the same time many new graduates from Japanese universities who joined leading companies and were sent to American MBA programs spoke with a clear and strong pride about Japan's success.

The system that supported Japan's rapid economic growth was sometimes referred to as the "convoy system". Bureaucrats were in the center of this convoy, and each industry, company, and employee was highly networked and expected to produce results based on the principle of collective action. The pillars of a strong company were said to be a lifetime employment system, a seniority system, and a closed shop company union. The Japanese economy, supported by Japan's collectivist culture, was indeed a success. Around this time, Mitsubishi Estate bought the Rockefeller Center in Manhattan, New York, and Pebble Beach, a prestigious golf course in California. A quarter of the condominiums in Hawaii were

owned by Japanese.

Two major events took place around 1990. These were “the end the Cold War” and “the collapse of the bubble economy”. The former led to the full-scale globalization of the economy. It was also a liberation at the international level enhancing a more liberal entrepreneurial spirit that was not bound by the existing social system. In the midst of this development over the thirty years, Japanese companies began losing their competitive edge. In 1989, fourteen of the top twenty companies in terms of market capitalization were Japanese, mostly banks and manufacturers. In 2020, none of the top twenty companies were Japanese, and Toyota Motor Corporation, which ranked 11th in 1989, is now listed as the top Japanese company in the 42nd place. (Statista.com The weekly Diamond) Rankings two through six are all held by IT giants, the so-called GAFA or similar businesses, which were not on the list at all thirty years ago.

It is clear that the global economic competition is now a race to create a platform or framework. The future of a society or a country is largely determined by its venture spirit and innovation mindset at least in the so-called advanced nations. This is the era we live in now. In this era, Japan is lagging far behind. This may have something to do with our lack of awareness of the spirit of freedom. The weakness of our ability to think freely in a free economic activity, or a market economy, is directly linked to the weakness of our economy.

Of course, there have been political leaders such as Prime Minister Koizumi who warned that we would not be able to win the new competition unless we broke away from the convoy system of economic management and heavy manufacturing and created an economic system that allows each individual to fully exercise their own venture spirit. But this warning did not penetrate the entire society, resulting in the relative decline of Japan’s competitiveness. Regulatory reforms have been slow to take hold, and the bureaucratic economic structure remains the basic structure of our society. Japan’s stagnation will continue unless the spirit and framework of economic activity and the society that supports it are rebuilt with the keywords of “freedom” or “liberalization”.

I would like to make one more point about the relationship between economic growth and freedom. The French philosopher and politician Jacques Attali said about Japan in his prophetic 2008 book *A Brief History of the Future* that “Japan’s GDP will go down to the fifth or lower in the world ranking by 2025 as Japan will still fail to create universal value: individual freedom is not its (Tokyo’s) philosophical ideal. Nor will it be able to attract enough foreign talent.” (P.162 *A Brief History of the Future*) Attali’s predictions and points are proving to be completely true. We must clearly confront this fundamental issue.

3-1-3 < The revival of education will not go far unless the banner of freedom is raised high with a dramatic change of Japanese word for education >

Many people feel that Japan's stagnation is closely related to education reform. The business community, which was responsible for Japan's rapid growth and is now worried about the sharp decline in Japan's international competitiveness, is also very aware of this. However, the revitalization of education should not be discussed in terms of simply putting pressure on students. The big banner and direction of the revival is what is exceedingly important. It should be talked about with the keyword "freedom". It is about internalizing the idea of freedom in each and every one of our future leaders. Of course, this is partly being attempted through measures such as critical thinking and the introduction of interactive classes nowadays. But unless we take a scalpel to the more fundamental issues, i.e., "freedom", we will never be able to recover from the lag in the internationalization of Japanese education. Here again, as in the world of politics and journalism, "Japanese" is a hindrance.

We must somehow free ourselves from the spell of the Japanese word for "education" and, if possible, discover and establish a new Japanese word that promotes freedom and spontaneity as a replacement for the word "KYOUIKU". If we can't do that, it would perhaps even be better to use the English word "education" without translation. "KYOUIKU" = "teaching and nurturing" was appropriate for Japan at the time, leading to Japan's advancement against Western civilization and even economic success with the convoy system until the 1990s. But this meaning is the exact opposite of its intrinsic meaning in Latin, which is *ex ducere*, or lead out. The word "education," or "KYOUIKU," has too much influence to be just a word, because Japanese people live their lives until around the age of 20 under this word. We need to think seriously about how much the word "KYOUIKU" is hindering the intrinsic educational activities of developing and nurturing free ideas.

The word "education" was used as a translation of "education" in the early Meiji era or 150 years ago, and today it is completely established as a Japanese word. Therefore, it is extremely difficult to change it. However, unless we make a major decision to take a scalpel to this word, we will not be able to internalize the freedom of the Japanese people and reverse Japan. In fact, Yukichi Fukuzawa, the greatest ideological and practical leader of the Meiji Japan, expressed his concern about the choice of the word "education" 22 years after the Meiji Restoration. He said *"The word 'KYOUIKU' is not appropriate at all. It would be better to use the word development (発育). The main purpose of school is not so-called 'KYOUIKU', but the development of ability The system of education in our country completely negates this purpose."* 『文明教育論』 (*The Education of Civilization*, Yukichi Fukuzawa).

Fukuzawa, who was the leading figure in introducing and establishing Western civilization in Meiji Japan, seems to have already foreseen the profound problem of miss-translating the

most important modern Western word, education, into Japanese. If Fukuzawa were alive today, he would probably do everything in his power to change the Japanese translation.

3-2 The Second Flag: The Flag of Equality

The second flag that Japan should raise now is the flag of equality. Equality was the major flag of the American War of Independence and the French Civil Revolution, but with the birth of socialism, it came to be discussed in opposition to freedom. Modernization was a challenge by the citizens to the previous ruling class, and in that sense, it was a big step towards an egalitarian society. But freedom and equality are still in conflict at least at their conceptual level. Indeed, the economic aspect of freedom may be in sharp conflict with the economic aspect of equality. But does this mean that a liberal economy will inevitably create a society of ultimate inequality? I don't necessarily think so. I will discuss in the next section a case that equality was at least partially achieved — post war Japan.

3-2-1 < The post war Equality Gorbachev found in Japan >

Mikhail Gorbachev, the man who triggered the dissolution of the Soviet Union at the end of 1980's, during his first visit to Japan, is said to have called Japan "the most successful socialism in the world," probably because he discovered the very strong aspect of equality in Japan's capitalism economy. Of course, this reference to equality should be contained in parentheses, particularly when considering the perspective of the underprivileged in Japan. But it is true that many domestic and foreign commentators said the same thing from around 1980 into 2000. In fact, Japan's miraculous economic growth from the 1960s onward was driven by a large middle class, which was touted as a model of success. From an outsider's point of view, it was sometimes called "distorted capitalism" or "state capitalism," and it was often used by Americans and European business rivals as a basis for criticizing Japan. But even so, there is no disputing that the emphasis on equality in a capitalist economy was a key to Japan's economic success. Japan should take another look at this valuable historical asset.

At any rate, the world's image of post-war Japan has been that of a rare "equal society" within a capitalist system. At least that was the image that could be conveyed to the world until 20 to 30 years ago. In other words, it was the image of Japan that I still want to regain. We need to hasten our own vision of an equal society for the next era while there are still traces of it left.

3-2-2 < What Japan needs to pursue is thorough equality of opportunity >

As soon as we discuss the issue of equality, the debate turns to whether we are talking about equality of outcome or equality of opportunity. In a liberal economic system, it is

undeniable that spontaneity, reward, and competition are the driving forces of the economy. This is inextricably linked to the entrepreneurial spirit, and risk-taking is also a source of social vitality. As a result, it is inevitable that there will be successful people and disappointed people. The problem, however, occurs when this inequality is firmly fixed. This fixation is not conducive to economic development at all. In post war Japan, equality at the starting point has shaped the middle class. In particular, equal opportunity in education has created a strong middle class and supported economic development. However, the loss of this key strength has been rapid during the last couple of decades. Japan's future is bleak unless it regains equality of opportunity, especially in education.

It is well known that in Japan, there is a greater correlation than ever before between parental income and the number of students who go on to higher education, especially to so-called leading universities. The gap between families that can afford to pay for cram schools and lessons and those that can't is getting larger and larger. This is depriving young people of equality of opportunity. The skyrocketing cost of tuition at America's leading universities is becoming a major social problem — one of the major reasons for the strong showing of socialist Bernie Sanders in the US presidential Democratic primaries (the other being universal health care). The same kind of thing is happening in Japan.

Because of World War II, many Japanese lost their assets, and a kind of equal society emerged. This resulted in Japan's rapid economic growth, driven by the so-called "thick middle class". Many felt that the path to the future was even open to those from rural areas who were not necessarily wealthy. This was the vitality of this society as a whole. Today, that vitality is rapidly diminishing.

In my argument that "Japan should pursue thorough equality of opportunity," I have focused on education, but of course there are many other aspects that need to be examined in more detail in terms of egalitarian social policy. Government now has to step in to re-establish the once-very successful egalitarian Japan. The time has come for politics to guarantee greater equality of opportunity. Equality of opportunity is now being strongly recognized even in the United States, the ally of capitalism. I would like to mention a little about the Sanders phenomenon that is emerging in this context.

3-2-3 < Consider the Sanders phenomenon. >

One of the interesting things about the U.S. is that although it is an economically liberal and capitalistically competitive society, there is sometimes a strong antithesis to the economic laissez-faire and social Darwinism. And the antithesis is based on the founding principles of the United States, which appear at key moments in history in an attempt to change the course of the United States. What is the founding principle of the United States? It is the banner of liberty, equality and benevolence, with an emphasis on equality, especially considering the

notion of “We are all created equal under God”. There are times when this can actually change a major political situation. While expanding its territory with imperialistic capitalism and eradicating the indigenous people, Lincoln emphasized “government of the people, by the people, and for the people” and promoted emancipation in the Civil War. In the post-war period, there have been several movements that have made groundbreaking advances in human rights and equality, such as the Vietnam anti-war movement, the civil rights movement for the liberation of blacks, feminism, and the LGBT movement. In contemporary America, the emergence of Sanders and female candidates such as Congresswoman Warren have shaken up mainstream American politics. All of them hold high the banner of equality.

On the one hand, there is the United States of the weak and the strong, the imperialist force-centered America, and on the other hand, there is the United States of democracy and human rights. It is a struggle between the idealistic America and the America Social Darwinism. We need to understand that the Sanders phenomenon is born out of another American tradition. In fact, in his speeches, Sanders often mentions the founding fathers. While Japan, which was said to be a middle-class society, has naturally moved toward a society where disparity is unavoidable under the name of neo-liberalism, the United States, the home of neo-liberalism, is showing a different trend. We should take this point into consideration when we think about the image of Japan’s future society and nation

3-3 The Third Flag: The Flag of Peace

Since the French Revolution, the flag of liberty and equality has been raised around the world, with different carriers. Sometimes violently, sometimes quietly, depending on the situation. The flag of liberty and equality will continue to flutter, subtly changing shape. In fact, almost all the problems of the human community have been, and will be, ultimately discussed as a question of these two ideals, a question of the struggle between and compatibility of freedom and equality. In other words, I believe that the life of Western modernity, which flourished in the 15th and 16th centuries, has not yet come to an end. If this is the case, then Japanese people, who have been outside the bounds of this Western modernity, at least at its birth, can only continue to carve out a history as a “supporting role” or as a newcomer under such a big flag, at best. Do we have no flag our own. no universal flag that we can raise high? I believe that there is another flag that Japan should raise as a universal flag in the future of world history. That flag is the “flag of peace”.

3-3-1 < Japan’s postwar success with the slogan “peace and money-making” >

Looking back on the 75 years of Japan’s post-war history, if we close our eyes to the last 20 years of the Heisei era, it has been a history of success. Especially in the 60’s and 70’s, Japan was the envy of the world as it marched headlong down the path of economic superpower. The slogan of this envied Japanese society was, frankly speaking, “peace and money-making”.

This was a bold change of direction from the pre-war policy of “strong nation, strong army.” The most important reason why Japan was able to break free from the spell of a strong military and build its position solely on the economy was because all the people unquestioningly shared the slogan of “peace” and focused all their attention on the economy. Japanese pacifism, which has been criticized as “unilateral pacifism” since around the 1990s, has taken deep root in society and has left a clear mark in world history. Postwar Japan reappeared in world history as a country that succeeded not through military might and prowess but through “economy and peace”. The fact that Japan has continued to uphold the national motto of peace to the uttermost is, in my opinion, a bigger flag for the world than the Japanese people realize. Through my work at the United Nations and my experiences in countries around the world, especially in developing countries, I have come to realize this. I have a feeling that it will become a big flag with universality, second only to freedom and equality, in the world of the future.

3-3-2 < Now the world needs a force to carry the banner of peace >

The importance of the peace flag is becoming more and more apparent in the 21st century. The ordinary people of the world are finally tired of the continuing cycle of violence. They are deeply suspicious of the old but still prevailing notion of international politics that ultimately only force and violence can solve problems, and they are seeking a fundamentally new common sense. This is my own feeling, having come into direct contact with people in developing countries and other parts of the world. Of course, the reality is that this is not yet the case, but many ordinary people feel that it is time to start moving to that direction. They are looking for political forces to move toward it. Fortunately, there are some signs of movement toward that direction.

Two years ago, I returned after few years as a visitor to the United Nations Headquarters and found that the PR section on the abolition of nuclear weapons had been greatly expanded in the exhibition area of the conference center building of the UN building. Of course, the sections on Hiroshima and Nagasaki had also been dramatically expanded. The Peace Memorial Museum in Hiroshima was renovated last year and is now visited by more people from all over the world than ever before. The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), of which the Japanese play a central role in the secretariat, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2017, and a further peace movement is underway. Of course, Obama’s visit to Hiroshima in 2016, the first by a US president, and Pope Francis’ soulful speeches in Hiroshima and Nagasaki late last year were also significant. In my view, Japan’s pacifism is now an asset, a selling point, more than ever.

3-3-3 < I think “Restore Japan” is a very good slogan >

The LDP’s catchphrase for the 2012/13 Lower House election, was “Restore Japan.” I’m sure

it's a favorite of Mr. Abe, who began his nine years administration with that catch phrase. However, it seems that the Japan that Mr. Abe wants to reclaim is quite different from the Japan that I want to reclaim. Mr. Abe is said to have been greatly influenced by his grandfather, former Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi, who of course was a member of the pre-war Japanese elite (cabinet member 1941-1944) and wanted to restore the pre-war ethos during his time as Prime Minister (1957-1960). Mr. Abe's slogan, "Restore Japan," is also known as "Break free from the postwar regime."

I would also like to restore Japan. But my "Restore Japan" involves bringing back the successful post war Japan of peace, an upgraded version of "peace and money making". It means refining the Japanese brand of peace, selling it broadly on the international political stage, and getting back on the economic path to becoming a first-class economy again. It means overcoming the lowest wages in the industrialized world, the lowest economic growth rate in the industrialized world, doing something with the alarming rise in the poverty rate, and reclaiming the postwar Japan that the world has admire of.

3-3-4 < Architects of Peace is Japan's new pride >

The continued decline of Japan in the international community is sad for the people living in Japanese society, but I believe it is also a great loss for the people of the world. Why? Because Japan has been a living witness of the political drama of the 20th century, dramatically playing out both the light and the shadow. Japan joined the ranks of modern societies 150 years ago, and while its subsequent history has had its honorable and miserable, in some respects it has offered hope to non-Western societies. Even after the war, we provided a model, as can be seen exemplified in Malaysia's Look East Policy. If this is the light side, the shadow side is of course Japan's militarization and defeat in the war.

The current constitution was born out of the light and shadow of Japan's past, but in fact it is not merely a reflection of Japan's tragic history, but also a reflection of the tragedy of the world in the 20th century. In particular, the Preamble to the Constitution was a political declaration of peace for the world in the name of the Japanese Constitution. It was a declaration of the world standard at that time, in common with the UN Charter and the UNESCO Charter. It is true that the current Constitution is written in an idealistic tone, but then again, the U.S. Declaration of Independence, which boldly proclaimed the rights of the people to equality, freedom, and the pursuit of happiness 250 years ago, is also very idealistic. But the American people are not going to destroy this just because the American reality is different. Quite the contrary, they promotes it at every turn, inside and outside the US. And the document has been used as a basis for action beyond the U.S. toward historical progress, which in turn continues to foster sympathy and respect for Americans. Indeed, Americans are confident people. They are proud in an intrinsic sense. But it is a pride in the universal ideals of their ancestors, and a deep confidence and pride that is supported by a sense that

they are (or should be) willing to put those ideals into practice and to accept some sacrifice on their part in order to do so.

Japan should take the initiative to make the pacifism of the Japanese Constitution a reality in the world, sometimes moving more boldly in that direction. I believe that this is the kind of international contribution that Japan which has played light and shade in the drama of the 20th century can make. I believe that our new pride will be born when we take the lead in promoting it tirelessly. Today's Japan needs pride based on unchanging conviction, not arrogance.

Chapter 4: Breakthrough

< Citizens concerned about Japan's drift > .

As I mentioned in Chapter 2, data showing the decline of Japan is clearly visible in various areas. In this situation, many citizens are worried that Japan will continue to drift away. This is the general mood of Japan at the moment. Up until a few decades ago, Japan had a so-called Noblesse Oblige, a group of elite bureaucrats who took pride in their ability to lead the nation, sometimes with a spirit of self-sacrifice. In reference to the crisis of Japan, this lack of spirit within the Noblesse Oblige may be the biggest crisis of Japan.

The basic premise for changing this situation is that citizens will finally put an end to spectator democracy and become actively involved in voicing their ideas and committing to the country's new direction. But even in this case, it will be necessary to rally specific political forces. Given the fact that Japan has been stagnant for so long, this should be a new political force, not the ruling party called the Liberal Democratic Party that has ruled the country for almost 70 years. However, the opposition parties have not been able to raise a common flag and have largely been abandoned by the citizens. A new flag in the midst of a social ethos vacuum and political apathy blanketing the country must be a radical and significant flag representing Freedom, Equality and Peace.

It is natural that there are many hurdles in the way of uniting these opposition parties, and they have been unable to come together for years. The policy differences among the parties (and, of course, their personal likes and dislikes) are always highlighted when the time comes for them to come together, and they fail. This has been the situation in Japan since the collapse of the Democratic Party of Japan, which was in for only three years. In this context, I have proposed the new flag (Freedom, Equality and Peace) as the best symbol to rally behind. However, I am not presenting this simply as a "means" to rally the opposition parties. I also wish to promote mature democratic and parliamentary politics with a change

of government in Japan. As I have mentioned in detail, I believe that if we boldly implement measures based on this axis of unity, it will contribute to the future of the world as it is, shape a new pride in Japan, and ultimately enable us to take a major step toward the revival of Japan.

In terms of the three flags, the current opposition parties can largely be united in the concept of “freedom,” although they may have to decide whether to focus more on economic liberalism or ideological and speech liberalism. In the area of “equality,” the Communist Party and the Social Democratic Party will not be able to ignore this issue, but the other parties will also share a sharply different sense of crisis from the current ruling party in that the current economic situation in Japan has become “winners and losers” and something must be done about it. On the “peace” side, they may share the same general view of the importance of peace, but the current policy issue is the revision of the Constitution of Japan. This is where the opposition parties are divided in their stance.

With regard to constitutional reform, especially with regard to Article 9, which is a pillar of the idea of peace, it is up to us to treat it as a matter of principle, that is, to think of it largely as a political declaration, rather than getting into a legalistic debate, and to take the stance that Article 9 should not be changed now, but on the contrary, that the flag should be raised high in the world. In other words, the constitutional debate is not necessary now. It will be important to see if we can share the enthusiasm to push out peace as Japan’s “selling point” to the world, rather than taking a passive stance such as “I am against the constitutional reform debate under the current Prime Minister.” If we can share such enthusiasm, then the constitutional debate should be shelved, and the current Japanese Constitution, which is the most advanced manifestation of the spirit of freedom, equality, and peace, should be further reflected in actual policies and further enforcement, rather than revised. It is important to reflect it in our policies and to promote its enforcement. And I believe that this appeal will be understood by many Japanese people.

In any case, there is a longing for a political leader who is free from vested interests and “ties,” who flies a big flag high, who appeals with passion, and above all, who has a never-ending love for people.

Summary of this paper & my proposal

What we need is a new social ethos

- 1) In order to reverse 30 years of stagnation in Japan, a mere policy-level shift is not enough. A new, bigger flag must be raised to step into the ethos of society. Policy will come later.

- 2) The days when Japanese people could simply ignore politics are over. In the end, it is politics that will change the reality of Japan.
- 3) There are two types of politics: big politics and small to medium-sized politics. What Japan needs now is big politics that will trigger and promote a social consensus and create a new social ethos in Japan.
- 4) The banner of politics is raised by political associations, or in modern times, political parties. The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) has contributed to the success of postwar Japan, but its role is over. The emergence of a new political force is essential to reversing the decline of Japan over the past three decades.
- 5) Japan should reaffirm the importance of freedom in the broadest sense of the word, that it has supported the prosperity and happiness of postwar Japan, and that it will be the trend of historical progress in the future. However, it should be confirmed that liberalism is not the same as economic neo-liberalism, but rather that further deepening freedom of thought and expression, liberal education, etc. It will open up the future of Japan.
- 6) There are zigzags in history, but the world of the 21st century is a world of further globalization. Narrow-minded nationalism has no future in the long run. Further globalization will proceed with freedom as its keyword, and Japan should make a significant contribution to this trend. In this case, freedom is first and foremost individual freedom of thought and expression, and freedom from absurdity and discrimination. It is a freedom based on the premise of human equivalence.
- 7) Briefly, I believe that the banner of the modern Enlightenment - the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity - is not dead. In particular, I believe that the ideals of freedom and equality are still at the core of our politics. In other words, modernity is still valid. I think that Japan should think more deeply about the idea of freedom in particular. I believe that this is absolutely necessary for Japan's economic and social revival.
- 8) As the world becomes more and more diverse, it is important to clearly identify a core philosophy and establish that philosophy as a social consensus. Then follows specific policies based on that philosophy. That is what is needed right now.
- 9) It is essential for Japan today to share the universal modern ideals of freedom and equality with the people of the world, not just to keep them as ideals, but to realize them in reality in the world and especially in Japan, and to establish the political power to do so.

A flag of Peace

- 10) Japan is a country that has played a major role in the political drama of the 20th century, carrying the culture of the Orient on its back, being one of the first to step into modernization, and experiencing the lights and shadows of that modernity. It is a country in which peace as a philosophy and ethos has lived on for many years. This is an asset of Japan and an asset of world history. In a world where the politics of violence and force cannot be overcome, this asset of Japan is precious. It is an asset that needs to be further nurtured in the world. The people of the world will welcome Japan's

elevation of this idea of peace. At the same time, it will be a new pride or meaning of existence for the Japanese people.

- 11) In addition to the two core ideals of modernity, liberty and equality, Japan should raise “peace” as its third flag. We must do our utmost to spread this flag of peace by all possible means, and it will surely become the pride of the Japanese people in the 21st century.

Current political situation in Japan and future actions

- 12) In spite of its name, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) has not been accompanied by the substance of either freedom or democracy (equal resonance). It started out with a good cause, but in practice it has gradually become a skeleton, a party in name only. Since the name is convincing and universal, the LDP will not give up this name even though its inner reality has been hollowed out. It is my view that hollowing out has reached its limit.
- 13) Nonetheless, the name is still valid. This name is still valid because it directly expresses the key concepts of modernity, freedom and equality, and these key concepts are universal. It is still valid today, and no universal key concept is likely to replace it in the foreseeable future. This is why, in the last 30 years of political change in Japan, the party that has been in power. We should not under-estimate the importance of names and slogans particularly in the political world.
- 14) Of course, half of the ideals of freedom and equality, i.e., equality, have been expressed by the Japanese Socialist Party in the political history of postwar Japan. However, the lack of expression of the other major idea, “freedom,” is fatal. In the current opposition parties, the Constitutional Democratic Party, the Communist Party, the Japan Restoration Association, The Komeito, The Reiwa Shin-Sen-Gumi, the Democratic Party For the People, and the Social Democratic Party, there are no words that directly express the further development of freedom, which is the biggest theme for Japan today and in the future. This will be fatal when it comes to rallying the people to formulate a new social ethos, social ethos at least I envision.

Liberty, equality, and peace as common flag

- 15) The idea that a political force with the banner of freedom, equality, and peace should emerge from the current opposition forces is, of course, based on my essential belief in the absolute importance of that banner in Japan today. At the same time, however, I also believe that this flag is feasible in terms of the political situation, i.e., from the perspective of realistic give-and-take among the political parties. As for the banner of freedom, I think it would be possible to bring all political parties together if they agreed to define freedom in a broader sense rather than that of so-called neo-liberalism. Regarding the banner of equality, they should agree to focus thoroughly on equality of opportunity. And with the flag of peace, there may be differences of opinion, but I think the argument that this is Japan’s asset, and at the same time a flag that can differentiate

Japan from the current ruling forces, is persuasive. I believe that this is possible, especially if it is backed by the desire for peace that still remains strong among the Japanese people.