

# History and Diplomacy: Perspective From Japan

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## Abstract

In the post-Cold War 1990s, the outlines of a new international community characterized by a liberal international order based on rules began to appear. Many of Asia's emerging economies have been gradually drawn into participating in this liberal international order led by the United States. Whether we can join forces with these countries in sustaining this international order is a critical question for the future of international politics.

Japan's historical experience suggests that giving preference to military affairs over diplomacy will inevitably doom a nation. What is needed is diplomatic and strategic thinking capable of anticipating the major tides of world history.

## 1. Where Do We Stand?

History cannot be written merely by collecting pottery shards from dead ruins or gathering ancient writings; nor can history be conceived if we as the living generation abandon the vantage point of examining what we are able to read from the remnants of the past.

From the diplomatic archives of Japan as well as from the archives of many countries throughout the world, large volumes of new historical materials are coming to light today. Additionally, it is likely that large volumes of personal journals and private letters written by people who lived in those years will also come to light with the passage of time. The careful perusal and examination of new materials requires a high degree of scholarly precision. The world awaits the valuable contributions that will certainly be made by motivated historians of the future.

However, the lessons that will be gleaned from these materials belong to this age, for what is learned from the past is a reflection of the thoughts, interests and values of all the people who are living today. But that is not all. Our perspective is very significantly affected by the course of international politics as well. History is not written by historians alone; all members of the present generations have a part in the writing of history.

Humanity has its sights fixed on the future. In order to see the future, we look back to see the past. If there is a common future, certainly there is a common past that can be shared by all. The reverse is equally true. The past changes when the future changes, for the simple reason that history is always alive.

Where do we stand as Japanese living in the 21st century? In the realm of scholarship, the Marxian view of history that swept over postwar Japan has become obsolete. Thus, many young scholars today are approaching the vast volumes of newly uncovered material with no ideological

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constraint and beginning to engage in free and highly detailed discussions of what is unfolding before us. A new view of history is emerging that transcends the old postwar ideological and political framework that pitted the conservative and progressive camps against each other.

The question then is: What vantage point do we assume in looking at history?

The 20th century was a period of extreme confusion and turmoil in terms of ideology, economics, politics and military. The 20th century passed us by like a raging turbid river, so that even its protagonists were probably unable to capture a full picture of what was happening. Much like a child on a speeding rollercoaster, they saw little more than fragmentary images flying in and out of their line of sight. Fortunately for us, we now know the full story of how the century unfolded. And those living in the 21st century stand on the lessons learned from that period.

### **(1) The Prehistory of Western Hegemony**

The point of origin of the upheaval in the international order can be traced back to the Industrial Revolution that started in Britain at the end of the 18th century. The industrialized nations that gather today in G7 Summit Meetings have been the primary protagonists of international politics since the 19th century. However, the industrialized nations did not appear suddenly on the world stage. Their emergence was heralded by a certain prehistory, which is encapsulated in the history of international trade and mercantilism. From the perspective of Japan with its nearly 300 years of isolation, this is a history that cannot be readily and fully appreciated.

By the 16th century, Britain had already claimed its victory over the invincible Spanish Armada that previously monopolized the trade with the New World. Following this victory, Britain came to control the Atlantic and Asian trade from which it reaped enormous profits. Britain would soon establish itself as the hegemon of the seas once it had routed its rival nation, the Netherlands. Spain, the Netherlands and Britain (to be later joined by France), who previously were no more than nameless minor countries of Europe, very rapidly garnered immense power through trade. It is not the case that as would happen after the Industrial Revolution, these nations were able to realize revolutionary gains in productive capacity and overwhelming national power through the use of advanced technologies.

These European nations robbed and plundered their way through the treasuries of the New World and used the precious metals that they had seized to finance their trade ventures. They converted the New World and the islands of the Caribbean into massive plantations of sugar and cotton and bolstered their wealth and power by trading in these international commodities. Behind these successes stood the horrendous life of slavery to which the First Nations people of the American continent and African captives were relegated. The emergence of Europe on the global theater prior to the Industrial Revolution was made possible by the exploitation of slaves as a commodity and by trade in the commodities produced by these slaves. Thus, the seeds of Western hegemony germinated in the fertile soil of trade and slavery. The age of mercantilism from which Japan was far removed unfolded in this manner.

At the time, the Europeans had very little to sell aside from guns and woolen cloth and were captivated by the abundant wares of Asia that included tea, spices, cotton textiles and ceramic products. Although their entry into the Asian trade was often cemented through violence and the use of force, the territories that they initially were able to capture were limited in scope. All that they controlled were a number of trading towns on the coasts of the Indian subcontinent and Indochinese peninsula, several entrepôts in Taiwan, the Philippines, Malaya and Indonesia, and a few islands where spices were grown. The British and the Dutch found it particularly easy to penetrate the land and islands that are now Indonesia. Although Indonesia today ranks as the most populous member of ASEAN, it was sparsely populated and easily penetrated during the period of Western expansion.

The various kingdoms that were firmly ensconced on continental Asia were another story.

Many of these kingdoms were ruled by powerful monarchs who drew their strength from controlling the large river basins of the Eurasian landmass, which allowed them to reap the benefits of advances in agricultural development going back over several millennia. The immense volumes of water that flowed out from the snow-capped Himalayan Mountains and the Tibetan highlands fed the Indus, Ganges, Yellow and Yangtze Rivers that irrigated the Indian subcontinent and China. The spread of rice cultivation made it possible for these lands to support large populations. Over thousands of years, India and China fostered large populations and opulent dynasties. In Indochina, the Mekong River played a similar role in irrigating the rich soil of the entire peninsula. Though an island nation, Japan was blessed with abundant rain that facilitated the spread of rice cultivation. By the start of the 19th century, Japan could support a population of 30 million, placing it behind China and India as World's third most populous country. These Asian lands were ruled by powerful sovereigns who drew their strength from agriculture. Although Europe had gained immense wealth through trade, for the European sailors who arrived in Asia on sailships after making the arduous voyage around the Cape of Good Hope, the kingdoms of Asia were too substantial to swallow whole. This can be ascertained from the Japanese experience. The Dutch who had gone on a wild rampage in their quest of spices in Indonesia acted the part of obsequious merchants once they arrived in Nagasaki.

## **(2) From Industrial Revolution and Imperialism to a Liberal International Order**

In the 18th century, the Industrial Revolution that started in Britain completely overturned the previous international order. In the context of human history, this was a quantum leap that equaled the quantum leap generated by the agricultural revolution that preceded it by several thousands of years. Suddenly, Britain by itself was producing more than half of the combined output and wealth of the entire world. Others soon began to pursue the path of Britain. They included France, Germany and other European countries, as well as Russia, the United States and Japan. The industrial state had been born. The glory of China and India, the agricultural giants of the past, wilted before the supremacy that these industrial states now wielded. The power rooted in agricultural production had been completely overshadowed by the power born of industrial machinery. The emerging industrial states virtually divided the globe amongst themselves as they sought to expand their territories, and engaged in heated disputes and battles as each tried to extend the reach of its own influence and territorial control. The age of imperialism had arrived. The European countries divided the continent of Africa and then Asia amongst themselves. India formally became a part of British territories and took Queen Victoria as its sovereign. China, in the words of Sun Yat-sen, became a quasi-colony. Its territories north of the Amur River were annexed by Tsarist Russia and its prosperous coastal regions were eaten away by Britain, France and Germany. Following the Sino-Japanese War, China ceded Taiwan to Japan. The Indochinese peninsula and Indonesian archipelago were partitioned by Britain, the Netherlands and France. The United States occupied the Philippines as a result of the Spanish-American War. About the only countries in Asia that retained their independence were Japan, Thailand and Turkey.

The Industrial Revolution brought rapid changes to the global society and created distortions and reactions that had never before been seen. World history between the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century may well be depicted as a history of constant turmoil and bloodshed. There is little doubt that this period in time will be remembered as the most barbaric in human history—an age typified and punctuated by social disparity, communist revolutions, racial discrimination, colonial rule, the Great Depression, block economy, world wars, wars of independence and developmental dictatorships. On the other hand, a powerful force for a return to justice and human dignity took shape in the 20th century. Even as the 19th century order was crumbling, a new international order gradually began to emerge over a period of an entire century. The new international order became clear and robust in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century

so that it replaced the 19<sup>th</sup> order based upon the rule of jungle.

### **(a) Prohibition of War, Peaceful Conflict Resolution and Collective Security**

The first step was the acceptance of the obligation to pursue the peaceful resolution of conflicts and the prohibition of warfare. No century in human history can match the 20th century in the scale of carnage and death, for the technologies of the Industrial Revolution and beyond had been brought to bear on the battlefield. Many of the dead have since disappeared into the dark corners of history where none remembers them. The first and second world wars, which resulted in the deaths of tens of millions, exacted a particularly heavy toll. The most devastating of natural disasters include floods, earthquakes, tsunamis and contagious diseases. But there is no form of natural disaster that can claim tens of millions of victims. Short of an asteroid collision, no natural event can cause death on such a massive scale. The most fearsome calamity is the man-made calamity of war.

After the First World War, the war-torn and exhausted countries of Europe began to move toward building a fresh order that could deliver on the promise of the avoidance of war. Earlier steps for building a new international order had already been taken at The Hague Peace Conference of 1899. The embryonic form that emerged from the conference led by Russia contained such elements as international justice, humanitarian law and disarmament. The League of Nations, in whose formation President Woodrow Wilson of the United States played a leadership role, was enfeebled by the ironic rejection of the United States itself to join. Nevertheless, it did succeed in laying the future groundwork for a system of collective security. The Non-belligerency Pact, enshrined through the League's charter, worked to prevent war. In a period of shifting hegemony marked by rising American power and declining British influence, the tides of international cooperation could not be stopped.

Japan, Germany and Italy had a very different view of the quest for peace. For them, pacifism appeared to be no more than a cease-fire agreement reached among the imperial powers. From the perspective of these three countries that had achieved national unity at some time around 1870 and which were late-comers to the stage of industrial states, these efforts toward building a new international order smacked of a ploy designed to thwart the newly emerging industrial nations. The other European countries continued to hold on to the parts of Africa that had been allotted to them at the end of the 19th century. Moreover, the Ottoman Turkish Empire had been dismembered by Britain and France after the First World War, and the Middle East had been partitioned under the pretext of trusteeship. The three later-coming countries of Japan, Germany and Italy believed that the "law of the jungle" should remain firmly in place at least until they could properly prepare for the next total war and claim their own spoils.

Japan set its sight on China. Germany was focused on Central and Eastern Europe, and Italy was looking toward the Mediterranean. The Soviet Union would soon join this cold-blooded game of power politics and vie with Germany in dividing Central and Eastern Europe as well as Northern Europe. It is for this reason that all of these four countries either left or were removed from the League of Nations. The Soviet Union would join the Allied Powers following its invasion by Nazi Germany, while the other three continued to challenge the status quo and would eventually stand as the vanquished at the end of the Second World War. On the other hand, the five victor nations of the United States, Britain, France, Russia and China would come together to lead the process of erecting the potent United Nations.

It should be noted that prewar international pacifism looked very much like an agreement among imperial powers for maintaining the status quo. Colonies could not be protagonists on the stage of international politics and were objects that quite naturally remained dependent upon their colonial masters. Although the slave trade had come to an end, racial discrimination appeared to be a part of a natural order as described by the popularized false science of social Darwinism.



Colonized peoples were not guaranteed equal human rights and any claim to sovereignty remained trampled upon. While many of the industrial states had transformed themselves into democratic states during the first half of the 20th century, human rights and conceptions of human dignity were not yet understood to be universal values. That is, during this period, these were strictly regional values whose scope of application was circumscribed and limited to the countries of Europe and America.

### **(b) Self-Determination, Abolition of Racial Discrimination and Universalization of Human Rights**

The second step in the building of a new international order was self-determination by the peoples and nations of Asia and Africa. This process moved forward hand-in-hand with the abolition of racial discrimination and shared a common path with the universalization of Western values.

Colonial populations had been conscripted into the battles fought by their colonial masters during the First and Second World Wars. Although these people were beginning to demand their own rights, their voices were not yet powerful enough to shake the foundations of the international order. Both Gandhi and Mandela became lawyers and chose the courtroom as their stage for challenging the inequities of discrimination. Yet at this time, they too were unable to light the flame of nationalism in Asia and Africa. On the other hand, in prewar Central Europe, Nazi Germany, led by Adolf Hitler, was on a path to radical racism and eventually committed to the enslavement of the Slavic people and the extermination of the Jewish people, an exercise that would culminate in the genocide of six million Jews. The slave trade may have ended in the 19th century, but racial discrimination was certainly a real and tangible problem that continued to exist through the middle of the 20th century and to trigger great calamities for humanity.

After the Second World War, brightly burning torches of colonial independence began to appear in various parts of the world, and most of Asia and Africa had achieved independence by the end of the 1960s. Of particular note is the movement for India's independence led by Mahatma Gandhi. Based on a spirit of altruism deeply rooted in Hinduism, Gandhi's love for humanity once again affirmed that the human mind couldn't be ruled by power alone. The philosophers of Europe's Enlightenment were by no means alone in advocating that all men are inherently free and equal. Similarly, the philosophy that power does not exist for the sake of power alone but rather exists to be exercised for realizing the happiness of the people is not a Western monopoly. The ideas of liberty, human rights and democracy are supported by a deep sense of love for humanity that lies at their foundation. Gandhi argued that because Western values were essentially universal values, colonial rule was therefore evil. Gandhi believed in the power of his own words and committed himself to an unwavering code of non-violence that in the end achieved the independence of India in 1947.

In this context, America's civil rights movement should not be forgotten. Rosa Parks, an African-American woman riding on a segregated bus of Alabama, ignited the ire of a white man for "not sitting at the seats assigned to Negroes." But she firmly refused to give up her seat. It was the moment that marked the beginning of the end for racial discrimination in America. The death knell was sounded for a form of racial discrimination that was rooted in the system of slavery transplanted to the American continent by the British who were then the sovereigns of the Caribbean.

The civil rights movement led by Martin Luther King touched a chord in many American hearts. On the day that King delivered his "I have a dream" speech in 1963, the expanses of the National Mall in Washington, D.C. that stretches from the Lincoln Memorial on the west to the Capitol Building on the east were filled with people, and the crowds that could not be accommodated spilled over into Constitution Avenue and Independence Avenue that abut the Mall. The influences of Gandhi can be readily seen in reading the writings of King.

The ideals voiced at the achievement of America's independence had now become universal values. They transcended national borders, continents, races, cultures and religions and were ready to serve as guiding principles for the whole world. Western values were reborn as universal values. This was the juncture at which the Japan-U.S. alliance began to transition from an alliance joined merely to resist the forces of communism to an alliance characterized by universal values.

It is also worth reviewing Nelson Mandela's fight against apartheid. The expansion of British influence in South Africa followed the Boer Wars where earlier Dutch colonists (the Afrikaners) were subdued. When British influence in South Africa eventually began to wane, the Afrikaners re-asserted their rule, at which time the South African people came to suffer even more severe forms of racial discrimination than in the past. Mandela took a different path than Gandhi's non-violence and took up arms in the fight for independence, a choice that would earn him a life sentence in prison. By this time, however, apartheid was being severely criticized by the international community as contradicting the principles of international justice. Thus, South Africa already stood isolated in the world. Mandela's unbending will drew concessions from the South African government that eventually culminated in the abolition of racial discrimination. Being released after many years of incarceration, Mandela was elected president of South Africa in 1994. When his rights were restored, Mandela eschewed the path of vengeance and instead opted for the same road taken by Gandhi. He called for love and advocated the creation of an integrated multi-racial society.

### **(c) The Emergence and Collapse of Communism and Dictatorship**

The third step can be described as the rectification of social disparity. Industrial societies gave rise to stunning maldistributions of wealth. In free market economies, leaders of technological innovation are rewarded with immense wealth. This marked the dawn of the age of the newly wealthy. A similar process was found in Japan during the Taisho Era(1912-1926). In Europe, in contrast to the decadent and effete nobility, the emerging bourgeois class was frequently held in high regard for its austerity and fortitude. But below the bourgeois, the urban working class was relegated to a terrible existence. Human society requires a certain degree of cohesion. When extreme disparities become locked into place, those who have been pushed into the lower strata of society will either assert their rights or rebel against the social system. In many countries, labor unions were formed and governments accepted the challenge of establishing the welfare state. These are forces that remain very much alive to this day.

In other countries, violent rebellion became a reality. Communist revolutions took place seeking to push the reset button on social and international systems. Born of the turmoil of the First World War, the Soviet Union was the first country in the world to establish a one-party dictatorship of the communist party. While Marx had asserted that the revolution would occur in industrial states as they approached the end of their line, the Russian revolution in fact took place in a pre-industrial society and was driven by the ideal of creating an industrial state under the leadership of workers. Excessive idealism is prone to calamitous disaster as can be observed in such events as Stalin's purges, the famine in Ukraine, Mao Zedong's Great Leap Forward and subsequent famine, the Cultural Revolution and the Cambodian genocide perpetrated by Pol Pot. In each of these instances, millions or tens of millions of lives were lost.

Looking back from the contemporary vantage point, communism was perhaps the demonic offspring of socialism and a mutant form of developmental despotism. However, when it first appeared on the world stage, communism exuded a powerful ideological attraction. Consequently, the communist ideology made deep inroads into many Western countries. The Soviet Union had joined the Allied Powers during the Second World War. But once the war was over, it forcibly transformed the nations of Eastern Europe into communist states and faced off against the United States in the Cold War.

About half a century later, in a blink of an eye the Soviet system collapsed from within in an environment where social vitality had long been lost due to the suppression of freedom. Freed from the yoke of Soviet rule, the countries of Eastern Europe for the most part chose the path to democratic society. As for the countries of Central Asia that had been colonized by Tsarist Russia, these too achieved independence after the end of the Cold War. These transitions were not without cost or sacrifice. Azerbaijan is a case in point. Students and citizens who gathered to form a “human chain” demanding freedom and independence were shot and killed by soldiers in an incident that took many lives. In the national cemetery overlooking the Caspian Sea where all of the victims are today buried and memorialized, each tombstone made of black marble is etched with a picture of the fallen and crowned with a scarlet rose.

In Asia and Africa also, many of the developing countries that had attained independence in the postwar years chose the path of communism. Considering, however, that the priority objective for these developing countries was the achievement of self-determination and speedy industrialization, it seems that many opted for communism as a convenient vehicle for resistance against their colonial masters. On their part, the Soviet Union, China and other communist nations were more than willing to supply weapons and other forms of assistance to forces that were joined in battle with Britain, France and other champions of capitalism. Examples include Vietnam and Cuba. Reading the autobiography of Fidel Castro, one cannot help but take note of his gushing and passionate nationalism that stands in stark contrast to the total absence of theoretical pretense. In the end, neither President Mandela of South Africa did opt for communism, nor did communism take root in Sukarno’s Indonesia.

One is left with the impression that perhaps no one in the Third World actually read Marx with any degree of earnestness, with the possible exception of China as it clashed for leadership with the Soviet Union in the revisionist debate. However, I should quote the words of my Chinese friend who shared these thoughts with a laugh. “In postwar Japan, it seems you consider those who have read Marx to be intellectuals. But in China, as a result of reading Marx, we were left with no true intellectuals. After Mao’s Hundred Flowers Campaign, the bloodline of true Chinese intellectuals became extinct.” It appears that members of China’s intellectual elite are surprisingly awake and aware.

#### **(d) The Global Propagation of Democracy and the Emergence of the Liberal International Order**

Toward the end of the 20th century, the many political tides that had come together to form a turbid current finally began to take on the semblance of order following experimentation that had continued over an entire century. The outlines of a new international community characterized by a liberal international order based on rules began to emerge in the post-Cold War 1990s. What lied at the foundation of this structure were such universal values as liberty, equality and democracy. Much like a subterranean aquifer that reaches all the corners of the globe, these universal values are beginning to flow quietly in all directions.

Members of the former communist bloc were not alone in achieving democracy during the 1990s. Many Asian and African countries also joined the trend. With the exception of India, most of these countries had become dictatorships shortly after gaining their independence. Some had chosen communism, while others were ruled by military dictatorships. In the case of some others, a powerful national leader had evolved into a despot. Many of these nations were intent on advancing on the path to wealth and military might at double speed. All were engaged in a desperate effort to industrialize as quickly as possible and to translate this into national might. It is hardly necessary to cite the Soviet Union as an example, but in certain respects, the early stages of industrialization can often be traversed with greater efficiency and success under a dictatorial system. The fact is that in terms of forming a modern identity, achieving linguistic

integration, propagating education, building up the social infrastructure including railways, roads, communication systems, waterworks, dams, and gas and electrical utilities, fostering a modern military and promoting industries, autocratic regimes may make more speedy progress than their democratic counterparts.

However, the industrial state is subject to rapid change, unequal distribution of wealth, and complex interactions of conflicting interests. After reaching a certain level of development, government intervention in the economy has a negative impact on efficiency by undermining the vitality of the private sector. Most importantly, in a vibrant industrial society, both the middle and working classes are keenly aware of their own interests and are politically awake and alert. A civil society seeking the rectification of economic disparities, the elimination of corruption and the establishment of fair rules is born and gradually matures. In the industrial state, democracy is inevitable. Asian growth of today is remarkable when contrasted to the stagnation that mires Europe and Japan. Their growth started in 1980s. And since the latter half of the 1980s, many nations chose proudly the path towards democracy.

The starting point in the democratization of Asian goes back to the Philippines in 1986. South Korea followed in 1987, and many countries have since walked in their footsteps. Taiwan also achieved democratization in the mid-1990s. During the 1996 presidential election, the first to be conducted under the democratic system, the prospect of an emergent Taiwanese identity was so worrisome to China that it conducted military exercises and fired missiles into the Taiwan Strait.

The firm establishment of democracy goes forward parallel to heightened awareness among the people and the maturation of civil society. The advanced democracies have a tendency to mechanically apply their own current standards to the efforts of immature democracies. Certainly they are free to voice their criticism of what they see to be shortcomings. However, there is no mistaking that the emerging democracies are firm believers in democracy. And as seen in the cases of former President Yudhoyono of Indonesia and former President Aquino of the Philippines, these nations are strongly attached to and take strong pride in their democratic histories.

The currents of democratization reached China at the end of the 1980s. Banned in China, the film *Summer Palace* eloquently portrays the atmosphere of freedom that Chinese students enjoyed those days. For some reason, the film is oddly reminiscent of Japanese students in the 1960s. But the door to democracy was slammed shut in 1989 when the students, calling for democracy, were slaughtered by the People's Liberation Army in Tiananmen Square. Having blocked the path to democracy, China is now burdened with the difficult problems of social and economic disparity, corruption, the human rights of ethnic minorities and the formulation of a national identity. The day of destiny when inevitably and at long last democracy does arrive is anticipated with fear and loathing.

### **(3) What the “American Century” Means**

The 20th century will be remembered as the century when warfare using industrial machinery that made slaughter on a massive scale possible was banned, and the century when the nations of Asia and Africa achieved independence. It will be noted as the age when Europe's colonial empires were dismantled and the age when racial discrimination was abolished. Finally, it will be remembered as the century in which communist dictatorships appeared and then disappeared. What lies at the base of these developments is the global proliferation of the belief and certitude in the principles that all are created free, all are created equal and all are endowed with inviolable human dignity. This is indeed the source of an extremely powerful political energy. What finally emerged at the beginning of the 21st century was a liberal international order and a rule-based international society established on the bedrock of universal values.

It was the United States that spread this philosophy to all parts of the globe in a manner that



was at times direct and even tactless. The principles of liberty, equality and democracy were rooted in the political thought of the European Enlightenment, nurtured in Britain, rendered into a sharply defined theoretical framework in France, and in turn provided the theoretical bulwark for America's War of Independence. The United States was founded on these principles as a nation of principles. Postwar America discarded the isolationism that it had espoused during the first half of the 20th century and accepted to carry a heavy burden while pushing forward on transforming the international order and spreading its values.

After the First World War and particularly during the 1930s, imperialism led by the European countries began to falter and the ideals of international pacifism put forth buds. This direction was challenged by the newly emerging nations of Japan, Germany and Italy. It was overwhelming might of the United States that ultimately vanquished the challengers.

Asia and Africa were engulfed in the flames of nationalism during the 1960s, a decade when many gained their independence. As a result, the member nations of the international community would quadruple, increasing from about 50 to nearly 200 by the end of the century. During this same period, the United States abolished racial discrimination by the state that had remained institutionalized within it and rendered universal the principles of liberty, equality and democracy. By the second half of the 1940s, the United States had already assumed the mantle of leadership in the West's faceoff against the Soviet Union. But it was only after the civil rights movement of the 1960s that the United States had evidence to prove that the principles that it advocated were truly universal principles that transcended all differences of race, culture and religion. In doing so, the United States graduated from being the leader of the West to being the leader of human society.

It was during the 1990s that the communist bloc long propped up by the Soviet Union collapsed. During the 50 years of the Cold War, it was the United States that had sustained the free world.

The United States did not fight merely for the purpose of expanding its sphere of influence. Nor did it fight merely in pursuit of its own economic interests. The battles it fought were joined with the righteous conviction that spreading its values to the world constituted a just cause. And it is for this reason that the 20th century has been called the "American century."

#### **(4) The Position Where We Stand**

Looking back over these developments, we begin to see the vantage point from which we the Japanese people can observe the course of history. What has emerged after the Cold War is a liberal international order lead by the United States. Many of Asia's emerging economies have been gradually drawn into participating in this order. Whether we can join forces with these countries in sustaining this international order is a critical question for the future of international politics.

We who live in this age must, while remaining true to the values that we believe in, learn the lessons of history. Those cherished principles are the universal values of liberty, equality and democracy. At the foundation of these principles lies an unwavering belief in the sanctity of human dignity and a deep love for humanity. If there exists a moral and ethical sentiment common to all humanity that stands above all differences in skin color, eye color, race, culture, political creed and religion, that is unencumbered by national borders and even transcends any temporal divide, it is the certitude that all human beings are free, equal and endowed with inviolable human dignity that none can transgress; it is the certitude that we cannot live alone and have to connect with many other people. This is what is meant by love for humanity. It is a reality that has been expressed in various forms in the history books and religious scriptures of the East and West throughout all ages. It is a reality that is inherent to the human spirit, a reality that exists before ever being expressed in words. We may call it our conscience.

We who live in this age can reject war, genocide, colonialism, racial discrimination, dictatorship of the communist party and other forms of developmental dictatorship. Our rejection is based on the lessons that humanity learned from the 20th century. The knowledge that our generation has of war, racial discrimination and colonialism is purely intellectual without any direct experience. At the same time, we have knowledge and experience of the universal principles and their practices upon which the 21st century must be built. Those are the principles of liberty, equality and democracy. And finally, we know that these principles are founded on unwavering certitude in the sanctity of human dignity and a love for humanity. This defines the position where we stand today, and this constitutes the vantage point from which we can look back on the history of the 20th century.

This position is not unique to the Japanese. As the nations of Asia and Africa continue to gain greater strength and review with pride their own long histories, many of them will look to the past from the vantage point of these universal values. The historians of these countries will no doubt write their histories from a global perspective in light of the histories of their own people in an attempt to rediscover identities lost during the colonial past, in light of the histories of entire regions that were partitioned and lost when the colonial powers re-drew national boundaries, and in light of universal values. This is the history that will be written in the 21st century. Simply put, history as it is written will continue to change.

## **2. Assessing the Road Taken by Japan**

### **(1) The “Two Japans” and the Fissured View of History**

As students, our Post-war generation in Japan did not have an opportunity to learn about the history of modern Japan or the history of the modern world. Simply because, it was not included in the education programs. So I was made to suffer many difficulties as a diplomat. Is that really history education if it doesn't teach our children any modern history? It is inexcusable to send our children out into society without preparing them with knowledge, as it is they who will bear the weight of society in the future. University years are particularly important because this is when we spend the most time reading books. The youth are bubbling with social curiosity, and it is for this reason that university education provides an excellent opportunity for exposing our youth to the views and thoughts of a wide range of outstanding scholars. Scholars are certainly free to subscribe to political positions whatever they may be, but pushing their own partisan views on students is not a good idea. That contradicts the tenet of academic freedom and is tantamount to curtailing the future of students endowed with many abilities and possibilities. It is the prerogative of the students with their unconstrained intellects to choose the professors from whom they seek instruction. After entering the University of Tokyo, I chose to join the seminar of Professor Susumu Takahashi of the Faculty of Law and was assigned to read a thick book written by A.J.P. Taylor in its original language. In an age when the Marxian view of history still held strong sway, I discovered that there were other approaches to history that were no less profound and humane.

Why doesn't Japan provide education on modern history to their youth? The reason is that the Japanese have lived the postwar years in a constant state of tension between “two Japans.” History is directly linked to identity. Once an identity takes form, it takes three generations or roughly a century to change it. That is about the same time span required for completing a transition in our view of history. Throughout the postwar period, the Japanese archipelago was home to “two Japans” with two distinct identities.

The fissure in the Japanese identity can be traced back to the abrupt policy transition that occurred during the American occupation. This is a fissure that is closely tied to generational differences. During the early period of the occupation, the formulation of American policies on Japan was led by the New Dealers that populated the Government Section of the General

Headquarters of the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (GHQ). Their sights were set on preventing the resurrection of Japanese militarism and dismantling the military and economic components of the ability to wage war. Within Japan, these policies were placed under the slogan of “democracy and peace” and penetrated deeply the hearts of the young Japanese people of that age.

Those in their youth at the end of the war comprise the generation of Japanese who experienced firsthand the horrible misery of the Second World War in their most impressionable years. With no idea of what was happening, they were thrown into the maelstrom of total war, at the end of which two million soldiers and one million civilians had lost their lives. This was the generation that was suddenly forced to accept, with no understanding of the reasons why, the fate of a doomed nation and to pledge in their hearts that they would die for the country. And this was the generation that desperately struggled to convince itself that the death of loved ones was not without meaning. For them, Japan's defeat in the war was the moment when the great and righteous cause that they had endeavored so hard to believe in came crashing down. Why had their family members and friends lost their lives, and why had they themselves been forced to ruin their own lives? This generation could not find any convincing answers. What followed was a sense of extreme rage against the State. They totally rejected all that was prewar Japan, and embraced with all their heart the birth of a nation committed to absolute pacifism and democracy. For the members of this generation, 1945 became “year zero” and the year in which everything in Japan was reset. This creed was effectively passed on to the baby boomers born in the latter years of the 1940s, a generation that would grow up to lead the student movements of the 1960s and 1970s.

Almost immediately after the end of the Second World War, the world began to move gradually toward the Cold War. Following the visit of George Kennan, the U.S. State Department's Director of Policy Planning, basic policies on the occupation of Japan shifted toward a more realistic approach. This is because, faced with the Soviet threat, there was an urgent need to re-arm Japan and to re-build its economy. In particular, the rearmament of Japan became a reality with the start of the Korean War in 1950.

To restore the Japanese economy to strength, GHQ called back the former bureaucrats and military men of Imperial Japan and the *zaibatsu* captains of industry. Many of them had experienced the war as mature adults. In this context, it would be wrong to imagine that the radical young army officers of the Imperial Way Faction (Koudou-ha) who came close to instigating a revolution with their belief in the divinity and absolute authority of the emperor represented the mainstream in prewar Japanese society. To the contrary, there were many senior statesmen, intellectuals and business leaders who had breathed the air of freedom and liberty during the era of Taisho Democracy and viewed the perverse and unreasonable behavior of the military in the Showa Era with disgust. It may be that for these members of Japan's “old liberals,” the misery of defeat brought with it dawning lights that seemed to illuminate the darkness of despair. From their perspective, the rearmament of Japan and its economic restoration were no more than a means to restore Japan's strength. Moreover, from their vantage point, there was nothing normal about the era of rampant militarism when military men ran amok. Hence, it would have seemed to them that they were simply re-asserting their prewar identity that they had always maintained.

These two generations would bitterly and repeatedly clash on policies related to defense and foreign affairs. The generation that welcomed the dismantling of Japan's military machinery as an expression of the ideal of demilitarization was represented by the Socialist Party of the day, which was labeled progressive. On the other hand, those who supported rearmament and the Japan-U. S. alliance were represented by the Liberal Democratic Party of the day, which was labeled conservative. This clash was both generational and ideological, and was brought directly into the

debate on history. The former group had as part of its identity the total rejection of prewar Japan while the latter group represented a generation that had maintained an uninterrupted prewar identity, an identity that had been only temporarily disrupted when the nation was derailed by the forces of militarism.

The two Japans represented by these two generations were pushed into a framework of intense conflict between the conservative and progressive camps by the forces of the Cold War. With no logical room for compromise, the two camps co-existed while repeating their bitter clashes. As a result, Japan has been left with no modern and contemporary history to serve as a common framework for understanding the present.

The Japanese people did not get their sense of modern history from the postwar historians with their deeply colored ideologies. Instead, they turned to a popular writer for guidance. The view of modern and contemporary history as presented by Ryotaro Shiba, the noted author of historical novels, can be said to have formed what the Japanese people today have adopted as their view of history. It is a view that focuses on Japan's post-Meiji drive to modernization as a means to survive in an eat-or-be-eaten world, a drive that was pushed far off course by the tyranny of the military in the early years of the Showa Era. According to friends who are a few years my senior, as widely as his works are read today, Shiba and his books were not always accepted by literate or leftist society. That is, when he first began writing his novels, intellectuals scoffed that his writing was not worth reading, and for many years even the University of Tokyo Library chose not to add his books to its collection.

Those in their late fifties and early sixties who are now in positions of responsibility in Japanese society belong to the generation that came after the two generations discussed above. This is the generation to which I myself belong. By the time my generation was old enough to understand what was happening around us, war, racial discrimination and colonialism were more or less a thing of the past. Japan was already a member of the West, integrated into the Cold War structure and enjoying its accelerated economic growth. We are looking for a new view of history. My generation and the generation that follows are not ideologically bound by the Marxian view of history, nor do we suffer any identity crisis. It is purely for reasons of intellectual curiosity that we want to know the truths that the previous generations have not shared with us.

We have our own values, and we have a firm vantage point on history that is founded on liberty, equality and democracy—values that emerged victorious from the ideological battles of the 20th century. We share a strong awareness of the sanctity of human dignity. We are driven by a strong desire to protect our loved ones. We affirm Japan as it stands today, and we affirm the liberal international order of the postwar era. While we eschew taking positions based on ideology, we are in possession of intellectual honesty. It is now up to my generation and the generation of young Japanese that follows us to create Japan's view of history.

## **(2) Japan's Strategic Mistake**

The 20th century was a period of very rapid and radical changes in thinking. Changes in the mode of thought result in changes in how we assess actions and behavior. Thus, there is no one left today who would say that "enhancing national prestige" and "rich country, strong army" describe the values by which the Japanese people live. Japan today stands by the liberal international order that hoists the banner of liberty, equality and democracy. We are free to examine our past from our own vantage point of the generation.

The Meiji Restoration may be lauded for various great achievements. But rapid industrialization and the victories in the wars with China and Russia certainly would not be numbered among them, for they were no more than the result of a greater achievement. What was so distinctive about the Meiji Restoration was the establishment of the equality of all people and the elimination of social classes. This had such an amazing and electrifying impact on



Japan's population of 30 million.. Japan's rapid modernization was driven by the pent-up energy of the people that was released by the promise of equality. The institutionalization of democracy followed in rapid succession, including the establishment of the Imperial Diet, the creation of a judicial system and the realization of universal male suffrage. It was indeed the release of the people's energy made possible through accelerated democratization that supported the advances of Meiji Japan.

This brings us to the question: Where and why did Japan make its strategic mistakes?

The Meiji government was ruled by a cadre of elder statesmen in a system that may well be compared to a small business managed by its founder. However, as Japan grew and expanded as a modern nation, the elder statesmen gradually left the scene and the role of political leadership came to be played by modern groups and forces. When the strength of the "transcendental government" dominated by elder statesmen ebbed, three modern organizations began to vie for leadership. These consisted of the Imperial Diet, the military and the bureaucracy. Standing near the center of power, the three would engage in extended battle. The first to claim an advantage was the Imperial Diet and its political parties. Memories of this period have faded, but it should be remembered that during the era of Taisho Democracy (period of Taisho Era (1912-1926) under Emperor Taisho when political party system with universal suffrage took roots and started to flower in Japan), Japanese diplomacy led by Foreign Minister Shidehara was committed to international cooperation and arms reduction. It was a time when the party government was able to reduce the forces of the Imperial Army by several divisions and compel the Imperial Navy to accept the terms of an international agreement on naval reduction. However, the public eventually grew weary of the constant fighting between the political parties of the Seiyukai and Kenseikai. Taisho Democracy finally collapsed, abandoned by a disgusted public that had run out of patience.

By the early years of the Showa Era (1926-1989) under Emperor Showa, the Imperial Diet had been weakened and political parties had lost their previous power. It was at this juncture that the military stepped in to increase its influence in Japanese politics. It should be noted that the military was not acting on any right or authority grounded in the constitution, but was simply overstepping its bounds to brazenly force its way in. Early Showa Japan was dragged along by the military and ultimately pushed into the Second World War where it chose the United States as its enemy. The curtains were lowered on the Empire of Japan with defeat in the disastrous war.

It is meaningful to examine the reasons why Japan allowed itself to be overtaken by the military, an issue that is of significance in considering the principle of civilian control in contemporary Japan.

The first reason pertains to systemic and institutional problems. To facilitate the modernization of the military, some principles had been installed in the system of government. For instance, the military had been guaranteed the independence of its command authority, and the posts of Army Minister and Navy Minister were reserved for officers in active duty. These seemingly innocuous measures would later be abused by the military in its quest for power. The independence of command authority was instituted to put an end to meddling by political activists or military people that was rife during the *bakumatsu* period immediately preceding the Meiji Restoration, and to foster a professional attitude in the military. Thus, in its original form, the independence of command authority implied the non-interference of the professional military in political and diplomatic affairs. As for the appointment of officers in active duty to the posts of Army Minister and Navy Minister, the original purpose here was to spur the modernization of the military by eliminating the influence of Aritomo Yamagata and other members of the Choshu clan. With this intent, a system was created to shut out the retired generals coming from the Choshu clan from the cabinet posts of Army Minister.

The original intent of these measures was subverted as the military became increasingly

politicized. Here was an organization that even at the end of the Second World War had ten million men under its command. This massive military machine held diplomacy in utter contempt, was overconfident of its power and appropriated the instruments of national policy for its own purposes. The independence of command authority became a shield to stave off the political control of the military. Thus, by yielding the exact opposite result as was originally intended, this principle in effect accelerated the politicization of the military. The system of appointment of active service officers was abused by the military as a tool to withdraw ministers from the cabinet that did not comply with its wishes and undercut and destroy such a cabinet.

The second reason can be found in the weak and limited powers assigned to the prime minister under the Meiji Constitution. During this period, cabinet ministers, including military ministers, were drawn from the bureaucracy. In many instances, ministerial posts were filled by individuals who would be serving as vice-ministers under the present system of Japanese government. Overall the bureaucracy wielded overwhelming power, which meant the government was hobbled by rampant sectionalism. Okinori Kaya, who served as Finance Minister in the Tojo Cabinet, cynically reminisces that meetings of the senior ministers were no more than a gathering of amateurs engaged in small talk.

The prime minister did not have the authority to instruct the Army and Navy to cooperate or coordinate between themselves. He was not in the command line. It is reported that even Prime Minister Tojo, himself a general of the Imperial Army, was unable to issue a single instruction to the Navy. The Kwantung Army stationed in Manchuria acted as it willed without any regard to the wishes of the central government or the emperor. In many instances, Tokyo was left with no other option but to endorse as fait accompli the progression of the state of affairs in China. The sloppiness of military planning and coordination by Japan's Imperial Army and Navy in the period between the war with China and the Pacific War will certainly be long remembered in the military annals of the world. Dazzled and deluded by the early victories of Nazi Germany, the Imperial Army ran around in confusion trying to decide whether to move north to fight the Soviet Union or to drive south to capture the resources of the British and Dutch colonies. The Imperial Navy on its part made the fateful decision to engage the United States in a war that it had no prospect of winning. If asked whether the two forces were acting under any common or integrated strategy, the answer would have to be a resounding no.

The most serious problem was that the Meiji Constitution did not invest the prime minister with sufficient power and authority to unify the will of the nation. Hitler concentrated all the powers of government in his own hands through his political genius. As a result, Germany underwent a "nuclear explosion" with an evil genius at its core. On the other hand, placed in the midst of a dynamically changing international environment and headed by a weak prime minister, the Japanese government failed to control the military, to unify the will of the people and stood idly by as the nation awkwardly underwent a "meltdown."

The third reason relates to the collapse of command authority within the military. The supreme command authority supposedly belonged to the emperor, but the Imperial Army's continental policies were based on arbitrary decisions made by subordinate officers. The assassination of Zhang Zuolin, and the Manchurian Incident were both unauthorized intrigues planned and carried out by the Kwantung Army. Zhang Zuolin was a local warlord in Manchuria, opposing increase of Japanese influence and he was frustrating the ambitious Kuang tong Army. His assassination was a plot by Colonel Daisaku Komoto. After the Manchurian Incident, the Imperial Army controlled the whole Manchuria, and even the forces stationed in Korea ignored the instructions of Tokyo to march across the border. Manchuguo was established later as an "independent" nation from China. General Kanji Ishiwara have much to answer for their acts. After a few years of stability following the Tanggu Truce, the military took the initiative again. Starting with the conquest of North China, it moved on to the Shanghai Incident that would

transform the war with China into full-scale war. It was a foolish strategy indeed. On the one hand, Japan had entered into the quagmire of war with China in the south while remaining exposed to the massive threat of the Soviet military on the north. On the other hand, the invasion of China would assuredly earn the enmity of all the Western countries that had substantial interests in China. Ishiwara opposed expanding southward on the grounds that Japan needed to brace itself for the Soviet threat on the north. General Akira Muto (then director of the third division of Imperial Army Staff), who argued in support of the North China offensive, is reported to have told to General Kanji Ishihara (then director-general of the first division of Imperial Army Staff), "I am simply copying what you did in Manchuria." Ishihara was chased off Imperial Army Staff. And after the war, Muto would be hanged as an A-class war criminal.

One would expect a very different procedure in decision-making than what actually occurred. In preparation for reporting to the emperor, one would expect meetings of related cabinet ministers, including the foreign minister, to have been convened for the purpose of carefully reviewing the grand strategy, related diplomatic policies, fiscal conditions and the anticipated impact on the economy. Only after completing all of these procedures would concrete operational objectives be established and handed over to a professional military for execution. In present-day Japan, the prime minister would gather all related cabinet ministers to a National Security Council meeting before reaching a decision on foreign policy. Having reached a decision, the prime minister would then issue a general order and the Self-Defense Forces would act to realize the concrete operational objectives that have been identified. In Japan of the early Showa Era, diplomatic strategies were distorted to fit the operational objectives that had already been established by the professional military. When decision-making on national strategies is monopolized by the military, as it was in prewar Japan, fissures appear in the will of the nation, diplomacy retreats into the background and the economy fails. An existential crisis is all but unavoidable.

The fourth reason traces its origins to the politicization of the lower echelon of army officers. The Japanese public was exhausted by the series of major events and developments including the lifting of the gold embargo, the Great Depression, the division of the world economy into blocs and the Tohoku Region's agricultural crisis that almost lead to starvation. The public had lost patience with the political parties and their incessant partisan fighting and was ready to pin its hopes on the military that exuded an aura of integrity, modernity and rectitude. During this period, the middle to lower echelons of army officers included many who hailed from impoverished villages. There was a growing sense among these young officers that Japan needed to undergo fundamental social reform, a fact that made them particularly susceptible to politicization. The Taisho Era was the era of the parvenu or overnight millionaires. Worsening social disparity had set the stage for an explosion of popular anger in the event of any major economic downturn. The ideology of the Russian revolution also had an impact on society. And the military itself had become rife with an undercurrent of insubordination that found expression in a willingness of junior officers to challenge and supplant their seniors. A case in point is the assassination of General Tetsuzan Nagata, renown cool-headed strategist by a fanatic lieutenant colonel, Aizawa, in his own office in 1935. Acts of terror, rebellion and failed coup d'etat were repeated. The May 15 Incident (1932) plotted by the young navy officer that took the life of Prime Minister Inukai ended in failure, and the February 26 Incident (1936) engineered by young army officers of the Imperial Way Faction was suppressed brutally. Notwithstanding these outcomes, the acts of terror and uneasy atmosphere caused by the failed coups perpetrated by the military effectively augmented the voice of the military within the government.

Attention to diplomacy, fiscal policy and economy was pushed into a neglected corner as the military gained greater political power. On the global stage, however, the eat-or-be-eaten environment of the 19th century was gradually beginning to give way to the liberal international

order that would emerge in the second half of the 20th century. Within the Japanese government where the military was becoming increasingly powerful, the path of international cooperation advocated by Foreign Minister Shidehara was laughed at and the energies of the government were concentrated on the question of how to fight and survive in the eat-or-be-eaten age of total war. Thus, the narrowly defined military objective of acquiring resources to ensure the nation's ability to engage in long-term fighting usurped the position of Japan's overall strategic goal.

It can be surmised that the Japanese military at this time was unaware of two key developments. First, it did not comprehend the expansion of American influence with its strong ideological component. The Meiji government had established modern Japan with the use of force as exhibited in the Battle of Toba-Fushimi and elsewhere. Given this background, modern Japan probably had little difficulty understanding the eat-or-be-eaten imperialistic order as practiced by Britain and France, or European power politics rooted in the Westphalian system. On the other hand, President Wilson's advocacy of international peace and the idealism of the Open Door Policy in China were probably very confounding for the Japanese.

Today, we know how the League of Nations developed into the United Nations, and we know that free trade buttressed by the freedom of the seas is the foundation of Japan's prosperity. But the prevailing sentiment in Japan at the time was to dismiss American idealism with all its talk about peace and distaste for channeling its immense resources into military might. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that Japan simply did not understand what America was talking about. What the United States was endeavoring to preserve in Asia under the Washington system was not the balance of major powers' interests that had been hammered out after the end of the First World War nor the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. Its true interest lied in putting into practice the new international order that it had hoisted as an alternative to the shenanigans of the Old World. Prewar America in its dealings with Europe presented itself as isolationist, but not so in Asia where it frequently adopted the face of active interventionism with new ideology grounded in its constitution and its declaration of independence.

The United States is given to diplomacy marked with strong elements of ideology, but its approach has none of the dogmatism of the Soviet Union. Instead, the policies it advocates are directly linked to its own identity that is based on its founding principles. As the United States gained power, its founding principles gradually became the reality in international politics. This process continued without interruption throughout the 20th century and did not stop with such accomplishments as the United Nations and free trade. Eventually, the United States would overcome its own internal racial discrimination, an achievement that would push it to the forefront of global leadership in the true sense.

Ever since the Meiji Restoration, the soul of those committed to eliminating class differences and transforming Japan into a nation state had been deeply affected and instructed by the ideals of the French revolution and the principles enunciated in the American War of Independence. Particularly revealing is a poem written by Munemitsu Mutsu, renown foreign minister at the time of Sino-Japanese war in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, during his young years of incarceration. Entitled "Reading the Universal History," the poem contains these lines. "Strife and turmoil upon six continents and three thousand years of rise and fall, No holy wars ever found on the globe, You only see the slaughterhouse world of eat or be eaten. Reading through these dark chapters, one finally arrives at a beacon light that brings shimmering hope to the eye, This is none other than the chapter of American independence." The Meiji thinker Chomin Nakae was impressed by the similarities between the philosophies of Rousseau and Mencius.

However, what really moved Japan were the words of Otto von Bismarck, the Iron Chancellor of Germany, spoken to the Iwakura Mission during its 1873 visit to Berlin. Addressing the mission members who were studiously examining international law as if it were the golden rule imbued with absolute authority, Bismarck said that what international politics required was not



law but power. Spoken shortly after the Prussian unification of Germany that followed the defeat of France, the nemesis that had repeatedly humiliated the Germans since the Thirty Years' War of the early 17th century, Bismarck's statement captured the minds of many Japanese for many years to come and effectively anchored their thinking in the 19th century.

The Japanese military of the early Showa Era was oblivious to a second significant development, which was the rising tide of self-determination that was beginning to sweep across the colonized peoples of Asia and Africa. Prewar Japan had a group of thinkers and ideologues that were popularly referred to as pan-Asianists. In hindsight, these thinkers were in their own way groping to find what in later years would take concrete form in Asian and African movements for national self-determination.

Before Japan began acting like a member of the imperialist countries, many among the Japanese expressed anger toward racial discrimination and believed that Japan should stand in solidarity with the peoples of Asia. Also, many Asian revolutionaries were drawn to study Japan as the Asian success story in modernization. Those who travelled to Japan include Jose Rizal, the poet hero of the short-lived independent Philippines that followed the Spanish-American War; Phan Boi Chau who came to Japan with hopes of resurrecting the Nguyen Dynasty that had been destroyed by France; Rash Behari Bose who sought asylum in Japan and married the daughter of the famed Nakamura Restaurant following the attempt on the life of the British Viceroy of India; Sun Yat-sen, Liang Qichao and others from China; and Kim Ok-gyun and others from Korea intending to learn from the Meiji Restoration to modernize the Joseon Dynasty. Many Japanese people supported these visitors and their activities. Furthermore, Shumei Okawa was criticizing European and American aggression into Asia, and Kametaro Mitsukawa had already published in 1925 his scathing criticism of racial discrimination in America in his book, *The Negro Problem*.

At the time, however, there was an overwhelming difference in national power between the Asian countries and the Western countries that had already undergone the industrial revolution. Thus, the slogans for an Asian restoration through solidarity with the Asian people were not realistic and had very little chance for success. Ultimately, the Japanese government would opt for an opposite course of action. Joining the club of Western imperialist powers, Japan would thereafter continue to expand through the exercise of force. However, in their origins, Japan's Asian policies differed fundamentally from the mercantilist and colonial models of Europe that were designed to realize the immense potential of gains through trade. In search of profit, the Dutch and British had established expansive monoculture plantations in their colonies and used slave labor to produce and trade international commodities such as sugar and cotton. But this mindset did not exist in Japan. Instead, Japan's first forays into Asia were driven by the quest for national security. The immediate objective was to ensure a strategic depth against the southward incursions of Tsarist Russia. The thinking was that Japan could effectively defend itself against most of Europe and America through naval power. For Russia alone, a land battle conducted on the continent was a real possibility. It is for this reason that Japan's continental management began on the Korean Peninsula.

Taking advantage of weakened European influence in Asia after the First World War, Japan presented China with its 21 Demands, which served to ignite Chinese nationalism. The Wilsonian principle of national self-determination triggered the March 1st Movement in Korea. However, Japan did not realize that this movement would one day spread to the whole of Asia and Africa and develop into a tidal wave of self-determination that would change the course of history.

As international relations became increasingly tense in the 1930s, Japan became obsessed with the nightmare of total war on a global scale. Under these circumstances, the whole nation was dragged along by the military that insisted on the necessity of acquiring resources in preparation for war. The Manchurian Incident was an early manifestation of this process. The quest for resources would become even more clearly expressed in the southward advance into

the mainland of China and the southern campaign that engulfed French Indochina.

Pan-Asianism would never become the Japanese government's guiding principle in the conduct of the war. While it may be true that some Japanese believed in the "liberation of Asia," this was never a part of government policy. As for the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, if it had been announced in peacetime, it may have included a message that would resonate with Asian peoples placed under colonial rule. But as it were, its announcement during war was far from timely and was denounced as wartime propaganda by the Allied Powers with whom Japan was already at war. And for the Asian people caught in the crossfire of the Japanese military and the Allied Powers, Japan did not look like a liberator and had the appearance of a new ruler aspiring to replace the Europeans.

Having been defeated in war, Japan immediately lost all the adjacent territories that it had ruled and was thus spared the difficult experience of liquidating its colonies. In a certain respect, this lack of experience lowered Japanese sensitivity to Asian and African nationalism even in the postwar period. After the war, the United States moved quickly to grant independence to the Philippines. Of the five major victorious powers comprising the United States, Britain, France, the Soviet Union and China, the two countries of Britain and France embarked on the postwar period with their immense colonial empires intact. But that would soon change. The dispatch of Britain and French troops to counter the nationalization of the Suez Canal ended in failure. France would suffer the disasters of the Algerian War of Independence and the Vietnamese War of Independence. Britain would relinquish India, and in Africa it would continue to be burdened by the Rhodesian problem until the very end. Russia continued to wield influence over the countries of the Caucasus and Central Asia that it had colonized under Tsarist Russia, but this came to a close with the end of the Cold War. There is little doubt that if Japan had not fought the Pacific War, it would have maintained its status as a timeworn imperial power and had to expend a great amount of energy on coping with fiery independence movements.

### 3. Conclusion

What patterns do we see when looking back to Japan in the 20th century from our contemporary vantage point? The newly born nation of Meiji Japan was intently focused on surviving the eat-or-be-eaten age of imperialism. In particular, it had a palpable fear of the southward advance of Tsarist Russia. With this in mind, Japan chose to join the club of European imperial powers, including entering into an alliance with Britain, and claimed victory in the Russo-Japanese War. Thereupon, it endeavored to extend its sphere of influence on the Korean Peninsula. Observing the exhaustion of the European powers in the First World War and the Russian Revolution, Japan began to increase its influence in continental China.

After the First World War, Japan stood in opposition to the tide of international cooperation that had gained significant momentum. Instead, it joined hands with emerging powers that were advocating against the status quo and opted for the path of fighting against the European colonial powers on the Asian battlefield. During this period, Japan was unable to foresee the future emergence of a liberal international order based on universal values that the United States was already beginning to advocate, and made the fateful decision to enter into direct war with the United States, a war that it had no possibility of winning. For the Japanese people of this age, it was beyond imagination that the United States subscribed to a political creed at odds with that of the European colonial empires, that it had an aversion to colonial rule, and that it would eventually abolish racial discrimination in line with its own stated creed and philosophy.

However, Japan's greatest oversight by far was its failure to foresee the tidal wave of Asian and African nationalism. A mere decade or so after Japan's defeat, the entire international order would be recast with the Asian and African rush toward independence and the collapse of the European colonial empires. The racial discrimination that the Japanese were once made to suffer was also

laid to rest.

Predicting and anticipating global trends and tides primarily through the eyes of diplomacy is the first step in strategic thinking. Giving preference to military affairs over diplomacy may win battles but will lead to defeat in war. Power and might are necessary elements in diplomacy. However, no matter how powerful in military terms, prioritizing power over diplomacy will inevitably doom a nation.

It cannot be denied that one of the causes of Japan's mistake was the fragile relation between the government and the military under the Meiji Constitution. Military interests are narrow and confined. What is needed is diplomatic and strategic thinking capable of anticipating the major tides of world history. Defeat unavoidably awaits those who pursue only the narrow concerns of the battlefield. Postwar Japan must endeavor to establish a good relationship between the government and the military in the true sense. Seventy years after the end of the war, Japan has now finally acted to formulate a national security strategy and create a National Security Council headed by the prime minister. We should bear in mind that this progress was made possible by the lessons learned from history.