

Fostering Leaders to Spearhead the Redesign of Japan

Introduction

Yoshiyuki Kasai, Chair

Japan is now facing a deep crisis of survival. The paradigm of the US-Soviet Cold War, which structured the world order in the twentieth century, has collapsed, and the world today is groping its way into the twenty-first century. The primary cause of Japan's crisis and stagnation is that it does not have leaders with a broad vision, long-term outlook, and intuitive power capable in times like these of showing the way forward, enlightening people, and guiding them in the right direction. Adrift in an unprecedented world, a world without maps and nautical charts, all countries are facing the same problem to a greater or lesser degree. But it is especially critical in Japan.

The main reason for this peculiarly Japanese situation can be found in the history of Japan in the twentieth century. It began with Japan's defeat in the war and occupation by the US military. Soon afterward the world shifted to the US-Soviet Cold War, the unique system of the twentieth century, and Japan's position changed from being an occupied country to being an important member of the liberal camp and a center of production and replenishment in the Far East. The occupier-occupied relationship transformed into an allied relationship.

Japanese leaders, however, remained content with the halfhearted position of an occupied country and clung fast to this temperament. In view of Japan's crucial location at a meeting point of the US-Soviet power balance in the Pacific, and amid the deep-rooted pro-socialist, anti-US, and pan-Asian tendencies that had spread in Japanese academic and media circles, for the Japanese government this was the easiest approach to take. The pro-Soviet and pro-China camps took every opportunity and did their utmost to manipulate the media and schools, repeatedly trumpeting their anti-US and anti-capitalist propaganda. Superficially, they succeeded in creating the impression that the majority of Japanese wanted to remain equidistant and neutral.

In this atmosphere, the Japanese government judged that rather than taking responsibility itself and explaining to the Japanese people about the propriety of liberalism and capitalism, it would be much easier just to follow the wishes of the occupying force, the United States. And so it acted in this way. Accordingly, it was never explained directly to the Japanese people why Japan had to be a member of the liberal camp, and that position was never explicitly questioned even once. Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi did point to the essence of the biased media view, declaring that the silent majority would be his guide, but all of the other prime ministers of Japan have remained ambiguous and sought proof of their legitimacy only in election results.

It might appear as though Japan automatically sided with the liberal camp because the United States was its occupier in the past. But even if Japan had had a free choice, despite the vociferous propaganda of the pro-Soviet and pro-China camps and their lackeys, I believe that the Japanese people would have chosen the liberal road. Subsequent history shows that this was the only correct choice.

Prior to World War II, however, it was these same intellectuals and media who were now tossing out anti-US, pro-Soviet, and pro-Chinese propaganda who had been the ringleaders in fanning anti-British and anti-US sentiment among the Japanese public, leading the country into a ruinous war. After the defeat in the war, these people, who had inflicted the worst malfeasance on the Japanese public, cleverly disguised themselves as victims and placed the blame on the post-Meiji Japanese governments, bureaucracy, and zaibatsu. And without being judged either by the occupier or by the Japanese people, they continued to corrupt society with their anti-US and anti-establishment propaganda. Today also, as choices must be made toward a new world in the twenty-first century, they have not learned their lessons and continue to scatter fantasies about an East Asian community and so on and try to stir up the Japanese people with their railing against the Japan-US alliance, against the Trans-Pacific Partnership, and against nuclear power.

For Japan, establishing the alliance with America and siding with the liberal camp amounted to placing itself in a hothouse. Inside that hothouse, Japanese leaders avoided sharing the duties naturally expected of a responsible member of the international community, closed their eyes to the realities of the world, and ceased thinking. Leaving fundamental decisions of the state, centering on security, to the United States, they continued to seek justification for their management of national affairs only in the pursuit of economic gain.

Regarding domestic policies as well, there was no change in their ways of thinking and patterns of behavior. They evaded asking the people, as responsible members of the state, to fulfill their duties and make sacrifices. Rather than calling on them to swallow bitter but effective medicine, they kept on pandering to the public by proclaiming a rosy future and shelving issues, leaving everything inadequate and incomplete.

In its essential form, a democratic system involves bringing the proliferating egoistic desires of individuals together as a national consensus and refining them. The foundation of democracy is moderation, by which everyone accepts majority decisions reached by parliaments formed through equal and general elections held under the rule of law as a national consensus. In Japan, however, the sophistry of left-wing intellectuals and their tacit supporters in the media have promoted a deformed style of democracy premised on the utmost acceptance of minority views and local egoism.

This means that majority thinking is ruled by minority thinking. It can only be described as a suicidal act of democracy. Specific examples of this pattern are the problems of the location of nuclear power plants, the location of US military bases, and the deployment of Osprey aircraft. Another manifestation is the open acceptance these days of such self-contradictory terms as “local sovereignty.”

Usually a country with this kind of identity crisis would be abandoned by the international community and would follow the path toward ruin. However, in the climate of “cold peace,” that is, the US-Soviet balance of power supported by nuclear deterrence, Japan’s irresponsibility was overlooked, because Japan’s membership was crucial for the survival of the free world. It was for this reason that Japan was able to achieve miraculous economic prosperity.

It’s better not to look at harsh realities; it’s better not to think about troublesome matters; leave international political decisions to America and devote ourselves to improving performance under rules set by America. For a while, this self-destructive approach produced ideal results.

Forsaking the need to look, think, decide, and act for itself and to take responsibility, Japan went on to achieve miraculous economic development. This paradoxical success story had no parallel in world history. Amid the extremely unique international political structure of the US-Soviet Cold War, it was a particular solution brought about by Japan’s special geographical location as a production, replenishment, and deployment base in the Far East. It was quite contrary to the general rule of seeking to achieve sustained success.

While Japan was still intoxicated by this success, the twentieth-century Cold War came to an end, and the world entered a transitional period of groping its way into the twenty-first century. The international political and economic situation changed, forcing countries to independently chart their own courses forward. Japan had lost its autonomy and self-dynamism (in other words, its “wildness”), so naturally, in these circumstances, its confusion is deep-rooted.

In this historical period of extraordinary change, Japan has to face up to the question of what kind of leadership is necessary to survive in a period of crisis and change. In ordinary times, you won’t make any major mistakes if you just project the past into the future and follow precedents. Quite understandably, bottom-up leaders will be selected in such times. This type of leader, skilled in administrative matters, easy to boss around from above, easy to serve from below, and easy to get along with for colleagues, can be found in all fields—political, administrative, and corporate. The precondition for such leadership is mediocrity.

In a period of extraordinary change, however, there are no precedents and no maps. It is impossible

to make forecasts. At such times, the group's survival depends on the leader's decisions. In times of change, leaders are required to be able to see the broad picture, to observe the summits of distant mountains, to point the way through uncharted wasteland, to take the initiative in clearing the path, and to compile new maps. For this purpose, they need to have qualities like intuition, action, and unshakable resolve.

There is a saying that goes, "In good times, don't forget the bad times." In the world of today, however, people have become accustomed to the good times and forgotten all about the bad times. The degeneration of leadership is a worldwide phenomenon. Unfortunately, though, it must be said that this phenomenon is most striking in Japan.

The world is changing fast. Human history has taught us time and time again that the survival of the fittest and weeding out of the unfit by catastrophes is a necessary condition for regeneration. At this time of change, in order for the Japanese people to respond properly and greet a new era, Japan needs leaders with the ability to respond to crisis. I believe the questions facing this committee are not only "What are the qualities of a leader in times of change?" and "How can such leaders be nurtured?" but also "How can we awaken the human resources lying dormant in our present society and get them to display leadership qualities quickly?" In other words, how can we create opportunities to turn nothing into something?

First of all, we must ask, what is the twenty-first-century world going to be like? Everyone asks themselves this eternal question, but no one can come up with a clear answer. The common axiom in any age and any situation, however, is to forecast the worst and prepare for the worst. And a clue to forecasting the worst can be found in modern history.

Modern history shows that about once every century, as an extension of the conventional wisdom existing until then, the world experiences a period of major change and transformation before moving on to the mechanism of the next century. Following the turbulence of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, the absolute monarchism of eighteenth-century Europe transformed into the so-called Vienna system of European sovereign states, namely, the Concert of Europe dominated by five powers—Austria, Britain, France, Prussia, and Russia. This led to a new period of peace and the golden age of nineteenth-century Europe.

The peace achieved by the Concert of Europe gave rise to unlimited optimism and economic prosperity in the nineteenth century. As the end of the century approached, however, a *fin de siècle* decline and breakup of values occurred. In addition, deflation became rampant as a result of surplus production capacity brought about by industrialization in Germany, America, and Russia. It became impossible to maintain the nineteenth-century Concert of Europe structure.

What was the cause of unemployment? Who brought about the unhappiness? Britain thought the cause lay in the industrialization of Germany, America, and Russia and pointed its finger especially at Germany. Germany, meanwhile, thought that the cause of unhappiness lay in the imperialism and egoism of Britain, the hip country at that time, and anti-British sentiment grew worse. The cosmopolitan air of the nineteenth century rapidly turned into nationalism and patriotism, leading to a 31-year period of major change that began with World War I and the Russian Revolution and ended with World War II. After passing through this blast furnace, the world shifted to a new twentieth-century structure.

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, when European prosperity reached a peak, Japan abandoned its policy of seclusion and, amid a trend toward the colonization of Asia by European powers, realized the Meiji Restoration, a national independence revolution aimed at avoiding colonization. And as a result of the speedy construction of a new state and policies to enrich the country and strengthen the military, just 37 years later Japan miraculously defeated Russia, a European power. Japan was the final player to emerge in the nineteenth-century European world.

Japan's success in abandoning the policy of seclusion and rapidly building a modern state was thanks to leaders who were truly able to open their eyes in emergency times. They risked their lives and devoted themselves to the task of nation building. The revolution that they achieved in such a short time and with such amazing results knows no precedent in the world.

The process by which the stagnant nineteenth-century world transformed into the twentieth-century world took 31 years, beginning with World War I, passing through the Russian Revolution, and ending with World War II. After the transitional phase ended in 1945, the complete destruction suffered during this period created postwar reconstruction demand, and the new weaponry technologies that had been invented were converted into new consumer products after the war, spawning new markets. Deflation retreated, and the conditions for new economic growth were laid.

The vanguard of this new age, however, was not to be Europe. The invention of nuclear weapons had changed everything, shifting the world from the era of European powers to the twentieth-century structure of "cold peace" maintained by the mutual nuclear deterrence capabilities of the United States and the Soviet Union.

During this period Japan, which had emerged victorious in the Russo-Japanese War, exhausted its national and spiritual strength and descended into a state of semi-shock. Without any leaders to speak of, Japan was sucked into this period of worldwide historical change. That is the tragedy of the bottom-up pattern of crowd-pleasing leadership. A typical example is Fumimaro Konoe (prime

minister in 1937–39 and 1940–41), who pandered to the runaway emotions of the masses, got swept along, and brought the country to ruin.

The latter half of the twentieth-century was characterized by miraculous economic development and sustained peace over a long period. But what made these features possible was the theory of deterrence based on the unimaginable destructive power of nuclear weapons. The two superpowers, which both possessed enough destructive power to completely annihilate the other from the face of the Earth, divided the world into two blocs. Staring each other in the eye with the readiness to stab at any moment, they created a balance of power in which everything in the end was settled peacefully. In other words, they maintained a “cold peace.” As long as the US and Soviet nuclear umbrellas were soundly maintained—that is to say, as long as nuclear weapons remained under the control of the two superpowers—the world was at peace.

The twentieth-century system ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s, and the search began for a new framework for the twenty-first-century world. Naturally, the miraculous economic prosperity of the liberal-bloc countries created surplus production capacity and brought about deflation. The world is now at another turning point. But unlike the transitional period in the last century, in the twenty-first century it has not been accompanied by destruction. As the United States and the Soviet Union were staring at each other with their mutual nuclear deterrence capabilities, the latter imploded, so the Cold War came to an end without any of the destruction seen in the past. As the surplus production capacity of the liberal camp remained unsolved, the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries collapsed, and world demand contracted. In times of change up to and including the last century, the destruction caused by war served as a surplus-adjusting function. In the face of nuclear deterrence, however, there was no room for this function to work at all.

“Globalism” was coined as a slogan to characterize the post–Cold War world and break out of this deadlock. One side of the bipolar US-Soviet setup had disappeared, so the next structure was one of unilateral rule by the victor, America. This is the starting point of globalism. Since there was no destruction-triggered adjustment, the only way to achieve differentiation from others was to go beyond national borders and tap cheaper labor forces. It was only natural for capital to go global. Behind the banner of globalization, American capital transcended national borders and spread to Eastern Europe, Asia, and China with the aim of achieving differentiation on the cost side. Other Western countries and Japan followed suit, leading to a further expansion of surplus production capacity, and now we have the worst global deflation in the history of the world.

Capital can easily cross national borders, but workers cannot. Languages, manners, customs, and cultures continue to have a regional flavor. In other words, sovereignty remains part and parcel of

territory, nation, and national culture. This duality, by which capital has globalized but sovereignty has not transcended national borders, is the characteristic and issue of the twenty-first century. Constituent members of the state are individuals, and similarly, as before, constituent members of the international community are sovereign states.

In these circumstances, what shape is the world going to take in the twenty-first century? No one can give a clear answer to this question. But if I may be so bold as to make a guess, I would speculate that it will be an era in which regional groupings are formed by sovereign states sharing the same values, geopolitical conditions, customs, and cultures. In place of the United States and Soviet Union, world peace will be maintained by the balance of power among the multiple regional groupings thus formed. And amid the expanded nuclear deterrence, I imagine that the competition and fight for survival among these regions will function to adjust production surpluses. Since nuclear weapons slipped their way through US-Soviet control and have proliferated, the establishment of a balance of power has become more complex than before. The European Union should be seen not as the vanguard of global society, as many Japanese like to believe, but as a first step toward regional integration steeped in egoism. In addition, China is greedily and egoistically pursuing expansion under its system of state capitalism. The Trans-Pacific Partnership, which the United States is promoting as a counter to these forces, is likely to become a key player of the twenty-first century.

Whatever the case, the leadership required today will need to have a perspective of the world in the twenty-first century, be aware of the role of sovereign states in this world, and fulfill a role in promoting the factorization of sovereign states sharing values, geopolitics, and indigenous culture. Our task is not only to address the long-term development of such leaders but also to immediately awaken dormant abilities so as to ensure that we do not get left behind in the moves to shape the twenty-first-century world, which have already begun.

Proposal

We continued our studies and discussions for nearly a year and a half, always remembering that the mission of this committee was to breath air once again into people's souls and sensibilities, which have been blotted out in the bustle of prosperity, and as quickly as possible to foster leaders capable of guiding Japan with their sights set firmly on the world of the twenty-first century. This report is a summary of our investigation results. Rather than taking up one of the numerous leadership theories flooding the world, the report defines the type of people who, in the difficult circumstances engulfing Japan at present, would serve as leaders spearheading the redesign of Japan in as universal a manner as possible. Harboring a sense of crisis, the report proposes ways of fostering such leaders.

Chapter 1 of the report looks at the current problems relating to leaders in Japan. Chapter 2 clarifies the premised concepts of our committee. Chapter 3 examines the image of the "good leader" required in Japan today. And in light of investigation results, Chapter 4 devotes many pages to methods of producing "good leaders." Instead of relying only on rules of thumb, we offer specific proposals backed as far as possible by objective and scientific methodology in the form of demonstrational case studies.

We reached our conclusions after many hours of discussions. Ultimately, though, it must be said that the solution lies in the supply of educational opportunities in the broad sense, including the family and society. We should engrave in our minds the basic principle that leaders will not be produced without the rebirth of education. Every one of us should tackle this issue thoroughly and without delay as a long-term policy of the state.