

III. Some Political Trends of Nationalism and Democracy in Contemporary Japan: from a View of the State Theory

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(1) Introductory Remarks

In order to argue about nationalism and democracy, it is first of all necessary to enunciate my conception of the state, even though in a cursory glance. For the state is inseparably connected with them, as is illustrated in terms of “nation (national) state” and “liberal democratic state”. Contradictory socio-economic relations are organized into a bounded territory by a political agency, and the territorialized relational entity is represented by the term of statehood, and nationhood is embodied as a personified totality.

The state is by definition a representative (*signifiant*) whose entity (*signifié*) is a territorialized ensemble of socio-economic relations. It is integrated by a variegated political apparatus supported by a physical force, and its cohesion in the form of statehood has been organized under each particular historical conjuncture. Statehood and nationhood are an expression of entity of the state with a particular constitution and constellation in its formation. Each term mentioned above are, however, disputable and equivocal (conceptual anarchy in semantics), because these terms entail always some ambiguity as an explanandum, even though they are usually used as an explanans. The difference is, in addition, caused by a variety of methodological approach to the object. Furthermore, the capitalist state has been obliged to

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be polymorphic and has to assume a *Familienähnlichkeit* (resemblance in diversity and deviation) in the conjunctural particularity of spatiotemporal conditions.

First, the state is presented as an expression of the articulated socio-economic relations demarcated by the boundary. The state is a representative (*signifiant*) of the existent (*signifié*) through an envisagement (*Vorstellung*) in whose process the socio-economic content of entity is abstracted. In addition, the concept of the state has a dual connotation due to the fact that the governing apparatus actually represents itself as the state. Although each representative is a reflection of the existent, it does not always reproduce itself as what it is, because representation is distorted by the ideology effect which has a function of its own in thinking and abstraction. Even though the state is a historical aggregate of socio-economic, politico-cultural relations and the relation itself is invisible as well as polymorphic, its configurations are inscribed in the form of the state. This is the concept of stateness.

Nation(national)state is a personified expression of the relational statehood. In addition, the capitalist state is an expression of the basic socio-economic relations articulated by the fundamental rule of capitalism, and is organized into the capitalist state by the state power. In short, a territorialized state is organized by the all-inclusive state power. Its polymorphism owes to a spatiotemporal condition. Particularity and pleomorphism origin from and are determined by the difference of articulation of the socio-economic and politico-cultural relations in history.

Second, it is necessary to present the concept of nationalism in relation to the nation and the people.

Nation means a multiply aggregate composed of consanguineous, regional, and associational relations in the statehood. This compound

population, territorialized in the state, is symbolically personified as a nation when it assumes a totality demarcated by the judicial-political moments. As the political agent of the nation-state is expressed by the term "people" in totality, the term of people and nation involves an interchangeability. Nationalism is a meta-ideology which is consciously or subconsciously a spiritual medium for an identification of the same belongings in contrast to the other nation and is a sort of imaginary beyond local neighboring relations. It was originally indoctrinated and inculcated by a political manipulation in the shadow of legalization and a supremacy of some dominant groups. Nationalism involves a "base value" of the society which enforces to accept as an ordinary thinking and practices.

Hegemony based on some dominant ideology plays an important role in formation of inhabitants into a cohesive entity as a nation. Nation (national) state, however, internally involves a centrifugal potential due to its composite of several nations, especially as is discernible in the federal (or confederal) state. This latent propensity becomes prominent in the phase of transformation of socio-economic relations which causes an inclusive-exclusive categorization of ethnic groups and inspires some connections with memory of the past politics, exemplified in irredentism. Although nation-state involves such contradictions, nationalism in the state remains to be the most cohesive element of the statehood, and its consciousness has been infiltrated at education and incessantly is penetrating itself into inhabitants through everyday practices. In these ideological effects, they consequently have a "common sense". These arrangements bring forth a sort of family resemblance. In addition, it is needless to say that national consciousness has been politically created in imagination. Nation (or national) state is generally a cohesive aggregate of some ethnic and civil elements which hold together the given

territorialized inhabitants as an aggregate in diversity.

Third, it is relevant briefly to mention about the concept and form of democracy. Although democracy is a multifaceted notion and has assumed a multiformity in time and place owing to the question who is *demos*, it, however, fundamentally means a rule by the people in the state, and formally appears as a liberal democratic configuration, at the very least in a normal capitalist state apart from the “exceptional state”. It is regarded as a most reasonable form for a social integration by consent, even though democracy is, and should be an unfinished and progressive in thought and form.

The advanced capitalist state is essentially based on the principle of “market freedom” which is a matrix of the capitalist state. The capitalistic nation (national) state is constructed on such articulation of these socio-economic relations by political power, whose configurations are inscribed in the given politico-social system with some domestic particularities (stateness). This means that the capitalist state assumes a diversity in formation of state and its government.

Forth, globalization is a general concept of evolutionary process in which interdependency of political system and socio-economic relations are further connected across and beyond borders. This process is not straight forward, but an intermingled movement of tendencies and counter-tendencies as is discernible in a coined word “glocalization”, or in a composite of antonymous words “fragmegration.” Globalization results in an interdependence beyond borders, and therefore involves the propensity to dislocate the contradictions in a vertical and horizontal dimension. Global syndrome of populism is assumably an expression of counter-ideology against globalism, positively or negatively. It should be emphasized that the state is not hollowing out, but remains a core entity in the internal integration and international relations.

From these cursory remarks mentioned above, I will try to elucidate the formation of nationalism and its foundation of Japanese liberal democracy in a historical retrospect, and, then, try to detect the political trends of contemporary Japan in relation with the ongoing neoliberal globalization.

(2) Persistent Effects of Traditional Political Culture

Nationalism has a multifaced feature, because it is basically an amalgam of civil and ethnic elements. It functions as an element of cohesion among the people in an affinity with democratization and liberation movements, at least in history of Western Europe. Its composition spatiotemporally assumed a diversified character according to historical construction of the statehood and has intrinsically a proactive or reactive appearance according to the given conjunctures. Especially, particularity of mores and religious rituals are inscribed in nationalism which is also connected with some ideology. As nationalism is not an independent ideology, but has only a relevance in case that nationalism connects with other ideology, for example, liberalism.

In any contemporary politico-social conditions, there is unavoidably a path-dependency inherited from the past, and a consciousness of it is positively or negatively connected with an estimation of extant situation as well as the image of future. Nationalism has a propensity to call for a legacy of a nation, especially in phase of social transformation. It shows a complex aspect as democracy does. In this context, it is necessary very briefly to glance at the formation of nationalism in Japan.

From a modernist (or constructivist) view of nation and nationalism, their formation was a political product of the centralized government in the time of “trans-Atlantic bourgeois revolution” by which scattered socio-economic

relations and political regimes of feudalism were integrated into a cohesive entity as a nation-state. Democracy in its incipient phase was closely related with a rising nationalism. This explanation is also relevant to the formation of modern national polity in the Age of Meiji Era of Japan. But, its construction and consolidation were fundamentally different from liberal democratic ones. Nation-state building in Japan commenced from above in response to a sense of crises among political leaders towards trends both within and without, caused by a frequent internal peasant revolts and the impact of expansion of western imperialism into the East Asia illustrated by the Opium War in China (1840-42).

After the battle over the hegemony among progressives and conservatives, dominant political leaders embarked to build the burgeoning nation-state in resort to a pseudo-constitutional regime and a theological polity which was ruled by the divinized emperor. He was fictitiously authorized as a descendant of the Sun god. Its political essence clearly appears in the three fundamental prescriptions of the body politics: Meiji Constitution enacted by the Emperor, Imperial Mandate to Soldiers and Imperial Rescript on Education. The political mystification by the state Shintoism was resonant with a folkloric narrative and traditional rituals (lingering residual of primordial social substratum) supported by an autogenous attachment to homeland, for an agrarian village community was maintained by a various animism, especially worship to the physical nature and religious observance as a local ceremony. These socially domesticated culture and practices were co-evolved in a reverberation with the state religion. Empathy toward the authoritarian-theocratic polity was encouraged by manipulation of national symbols: national flag in appeal to visualization, national anthem in acoustics, and domestic history in intellectual indoctrination. And it was unavoidable to integrate national language in

replace of local dialects in order to institute a national education system based on emperor-typed theocracy so that a common belief value and legal norm might be infiltrated throughout the boundary, along with a unification of tax and military system. Pseudo-constitutional polity was based on these substrata in political culture and a semi-feudal landlordism domination in politico-economical (re)production system. Under this authoritarian semi-feudal regime, industrialization from above was forcefully promoted into a national prosperity based on labour power from the rural areas. This authoritarian regime bred a consciousness of politics as a given in an absence of relativization of government and regime among the people. Invocation to these elements of nationalism indoctrinated from above led the polity into a “garrison state” and eventually into an imperialistic invasion to the Asian-Pacific areas in the time of imperialism.

(3) Formation of Nationalism in Japan

The previous war and defeat of Japan caused a ruinous destruction, and the subsequent military occupation under the Allies (although the fact is an exclusive administration by the US military) happened to make a sort of “revolution” in Japanese politics and its base values. The power core (*Machtkern*) was under the allied powers and reform was forcefully promoted by “indirect” military administration with recourse to the pre-war bureaucratic apparatus. The occupation policy was contrasted to the case of “direct” administration in Germany. The fundamental reformation is, however, discernible in democratic principles of the Japanese Constitution which keeps its original sentence intact without any change in words from its passage to the present. 3 major principles of the Japanese Constitution (popular sovereignty,

fundamental human right, pacifism) is not pronounced separately, but integrated in the spirit of the right to live in peace. In this vein, it is not strange that progressives aspire to conserve the present Constitution in confrontation with conservatives who have an incessant inclination to amend it. But, the military was built into the leadership of American army in the era of “Cold War” and “Hot War” in Korea and Indochina. Governing party has been enforced liberally to interpret the Constitution in need to response to military alliance with the US, and has appealed to residuals underlying in basic values of Japanese traditional culture. These tendency and counter-tendency in ideology and movement are a major political issue which has intermittently appeared in a political terrain of Japan.

Japanese nationalism is strongly based on an ethnic element. Therefore, it involves the tendency that patriotism has been equated with a conservation of the inherited value. In these traditional contexts, as an abstracted concept of the state has been fictitiously contrived into a “existent,” nationalism appears as a statism (*étatisme*). Although conservative party in Japan usually appeals to the ethnic element of nationalism, Japanese people strongly shares also a pacifism. Given these conditions, there has been underlying a confrontation between a human right vision, strongly connected with a pacifism, and authoritarian statism in the contemporary Japanese politics.

The state project to reconstruct the Japanese economic structure after the War was a “catch up” typed development state, and labour power for a construction of its infrastructure and industry was a part-time-farmers in their off-season and the most of their sons and daughters had to go major urban area to work as an employee. Under these conditions, Japan enjoyed a high economic growth in a “belle époque”.

According to the framework for comparison of democratic regime

epitomized by R. Dahl, the Japanese one belongs to a type of polyarchy. There is, however, a need to recognize the difference of configurations of political forces and political culture for a comparison to another statehood. In this respect, a naturalistic-ethnic element has been embedded in the substratum of Japanese social orders. These components are effective for a political mobilization and (re)production of socio-economic relations. The development state of the post war Japan during Fordist-Welfare regime was associated with economic liberalism which characteristically has been based on an ethnic nationalism. Patronage system has been routinized at the neighborhood and enterprises including farmers' cooperatives. These economic organizations have been used to mobilize a popular support into election. People also generally have approved the developmental policy in expect of its "trickling down" effect brought by economic prosperity, and governing party generally has successfully performed these policies in a discourse of "national interest".

(4) Liberal Democracy and Globalization

It is necessary to consider the relations between liberal democracy and the capitalist state before enquiring into some notable contemporary appearances in Japanese politics.

Liberalism is an axis of capitalism and both is inseparable as a hegemonic vision. It has, however, changed its configurations in response to transformation of socio-economic relations as is discernible in a different designation, exemplified in "social liberalism" and "New Deal Liberalism", or "interest group liberalism" and so on. Put differently, liberalism has amenably co-evolved or has co-vibrated with the development of capitalism and has been shared as an inter-subjective base value. Capitalist state is founded on an

artificial articulation of political and socio-economic relations, for it is based on freedom of thought, government by consent in politics, and freedom to pursue a profit by *homo economicus* including a fictitious legal person. Embedded liberalism is a dominant policy orientation in a belle époque of the Atlantic Fordism. The crisis of governability, however, appeared in the 1970s, as is discernible in a pretext of an overloaded government. This crisis entailed a potential to induce a legitimization crisis in politics. In these contexts, neoliberalism emerged as a response to contradictions inherent in the capitalist state. State project to reconstruct the given socio-economic relations and neoliberal alteration of governing policy appeared in accordance with the advices by the (inter) transnational authorities.

Although there has been a controversy in theorization on globalization (*mondialisation*) (e.g., hyperglobalists, skeptics, and transformationists), there is a common agreement that it means a further development of interdependence in political and socio-economic relations across and beyond the boundaries. The contemporary neoliberal globalization is in progress and is not one-dimension, but multi-dimensional movement as is mentioned above. Its policy of “re-regulation of regulation” according to the market fundamentalism (3E principle: economy, efficiency and effectiveness) has been set not only in (re)production system, but in social relations. The discourse for a reconstruction of the socio-economic relations has also an ideological effect. A syndrome of populism around the world has emerged in these contexts. Brexit (Euroscepticism) and Trumpism are another expression of neopopulism. In these contemporary trends, democracy is said to be in an ordeal.

The widespread emergence of populism is closely related with a neoliberal reconstruction of the capitalist system. Its eruption involves a growing inequality in income under a remodeling in employment system and working

conditions since the mid-1970s, and global syndrome of populism has been closely related with a neoliberal globalization of socio-economic relations, because globalization is nothing more than a process of condensation of time and space in political and socio-economic relations across the nation (national) state. This is the displacement of conflicts and contradictions into time and space, that is, a postponement of the ongoing burdens to the future and transposition to other nations in a reproduction system in global scale. Syndrome of global populism is a reflection of counter-tendency to a neoliberal globalism, and its connection with a particularity is disposed to inspire a heartland attachment in mentality.

<attributes of representative government> Indirect democracy has a two-sided feature : populist and popularistic in representative democracy. The former means “the government of the people, and by the people”, and the latter “for the people”. This is an intrinsic and unavoidable aspect of representative government, whether by parliamentary system or presidential one. Democratic movement is a dialectic one with a relative unity in oppositions of direct participation and indirect government. Considering these attribute of the representative democracy, it is unavoidable and concomitant in political movement that populism arises in the period of transition. But it should be distinguished between populism in general and the contemporary populism in particular. Although political appearance of the latter is multifarious including the social democratic populism, right-wing populism has been generally designated as a neopopulism. It is briefly characterized by its negative rhetoric: exclusionism in disguise of nationalism and authoritarianism in name of democracy.

Identity politics is a process of de-identification and re-identification (or de-construction and re-construction) of the given discourse within a framework of

dominant base value. It is also generally a mutual resonance of consciousness from below and political strategy from above. One of rhetoric of neopopulism has a binary epitomization of social categories into a difference between people (common persons) and establishment (elites). This is exemplified in an anguish politics from a productionist view. This simplistic dichotomy leads to repulsion and abhorrence to dissents and immigrants, and demands an elimination of emigrants from abroad. In this respect we should recall the experience of identarian democracy which called for a pseudo-democratic authoritarianism in opposition to a principle of liberal democracy.

(5) Declining Tendencies of Liberal Democracy and Oppositions in Japanese Politics

There has been a tendency toward an authoritarian statism in place of liberal democratic regime. It can be ascertained in the decline of liberal constitutionalism. This state project is justified in the name of national security and war against terrorism associated with the need to respond to the state of emergency. Proclamation of need to prepare for emergency initially arises from a response to immediate problem, then accrues more enduring form through reinforcing institutional change and exceptional measures, and further takes hold in social life. This is prone to be forgotten, but to be a real experience in history. Especially, there is growing a risk of manipulation of mass media by the state power.

In the context of a synopsis mentioned above, next consideration is on a brief view of the contemporary political movements of Japan, in relation with some discernible appearances of socio-economic reconstruction under the globalization.

While there are certainly many problems, including the construction of competition state to which Japanese politics is facing, there emerges a critical issue concerning the problem of national security provoked by the conditions of East Asia and the threat of terrorism. Agitation of national emergency is an effective and familiar means to rearrange the social orders and to mobilize the popular emotion into a social integration aroused by the dominant party. A critical phase of the politico-ideological dispute has intermittently risen around the Japanese Constitution: conservatives intend to amend it and progressives to conserve it. Amenders (revisionists) have in substance reconstructed it by a liberal construction without any amendment of it under some constraints of the Constitution. This was due to the need to keep pace with the development of the US world strategy. In this context, the right of collective defense was legalized a few years ago, although it had been traditionally regarded as unconstitutional. In addition, resort to a coercive military pressure is claimed to be an indispensable means for a security policy, in the pretext for an enforcement of military defense and against terrorism. Advancement of military alliance will accelerate a subjugation to a hegemonic power through the military technology and its introduction into industry. These policies should be critically put on the board from the view of justifiability rather than legitimacy, because even though some policy may be legitimate according to the previous treatments, there is the case that it is not justifiable.

First, the tendencies toward authoritarian statism has emerged in these years, which is apparent in enactment such as security law, anti-conspiracy law and the rising petition for emergency law and so on. This means the emergence of surveillance state in response to security crisis and austerity in the wake of neoliberal socio-economic reformation.

Second, a propensity toward authoritarianism is recognizable in the

arbitrary resort to dissolution of the Diet by an exclusive prerogative of the prime minister. The aim of it stems from the purpose to make an absolute majority in parliament under the system of parliamentary cabinet (a single representative system). This is nothing more than a hollowing out of parliamentary democracy, because its principle is based on a canalization of public opinion into parliament and on a further development of democracy through a deliberative discussion in this organization. This principle is based on an assumption that society is not monistic, but pluralistic in social categories and in individual thought and opinion. In this respect, an arbitrary resort to dissolution of Diet may lead to a sort of plebiscitary dictatorship under a commercialistic image of politics and a populist expectation caused by a discontent and anxiety. These trends also derive from the need to speed up a fast decision making and its execution in response to the ongoing globalization.

Third, anxiety and vexation with the contemporary conditions generally involves an ambivalent vector in movement and thinking. They involve a reform in a contradictory propensity: one is a search for an alternative to the given regime, another is conservative reform in the hope of trickle-down effect. This unstable atmosphere also connects with exclusionary nationalism in the competitive state. It is, however, worth to recall a significant notice: "no nation that oppress another can ever be free." Petition demanding a military coercion can produce blow back effects that increase a coercive element in a vicious spiral. Regarding that nationalism is both side of the same coin, it is necessary to turn a positive sense of nationalism into a clue of internationalism through a mutual relativisation of each nation (national) state in a relational point of view. In other words, it is demanded to democratize the negative nationalism in view of prospect for a developmental democracy. We should

recall that the ascent of nationalism in the era of bourgeois revolution involved the seeds of democracy. In view of the present globalization, the idea of democracy could be developed into the global one in scale and degree.

(6) Some Concluding Remarks

As is generally known, a belle epoch based on a Fordist-Welfare regime collapsed in the wake of neoliberal project across the world, and consequently, one of domestic policy issues has been about the method of how to respond to a demographic problem in an era of a declining birth rate and aging population. Another is to search for the growth strategy alongside of national security. In these historical conjuncture, the politics of consensus has been in a drift for alternatives.

Governing party at least gained a majority of parliamentary seats in the last general election, supported mainly by a single-member district system (glaring disparity between a ratio of absolute supporters and the number of seats in the Diet) and by the failure to select a common candidate for an election strategy among the opposition parties. The result has re-affirmed that attitudes of electors as a whole is in the swing of the pendulum, and that neoliberal market fundamentalism has been dominant as a basic value, even though it is not positively approved.

Developed capitalist states have, internally and externally, a propensity to delay and displace their inherent contradictions and antagonism in space and time through a transformation of liberalism in history, as is mentioned above. These contemporary tendencies have brought about a repercussion exemplified in an exclusionism and isolationism around the world. Given these tendencies, the battle line in Japan will be, henceforth, drawn along

reconstruction of the Constitution in a nebulous constellation of the world, especially in trends and relations with East Asia and the foreign strategies of the US.

In current Japanese politics, the real or imagined threat of North Korea and competition with China will be more emphasized as a critical problem concerning the means of how to gain the hegemony in Asia, and the governing party have used them as the most effective strategy for consolidation among the people by an appeal to the strategy of economic development and the state of emergency. Given these the contemporary conditions, it is relevant to call in mind the basic principles of the Japanese Constitution.

The essential principle of the Constitution is a declaration of basic human rights. Especially the right to live in peace is recognized as the right of rights, because the war and violence destroy other human rights. This means that a forfeiture of the right is a loss of other fundamental rights as well as holloing out of democracy. Regarding this principle as an assumption about a “positive pacifism” instead of negative one, it is necessary to reconsider the declaration of pacifism manifested in the Constitution in the time of trial and an ominous creeping oblivion of history as is apparent in revisionism of the pre-war Japanese experiences. It is impossible to envision the positive pacifism without “trusting in the justice and faith of peace-loving peoples of the world” (Preface of the Japanese Constitution). It declares that “We desire to occupy an honored place in an international society” in an appeal to the right of living in peace. The spirit and principle should not be just treated as a rhetorical phase for a fig leaf.

In view of the public in peril and tragedy of common goods, this report concludes with a comment that it is necessary to reconstruct the public and personal autonomy fortified by the development of democracy and that it falls to

the task of political theory to provide some positive prospect for democratization based on a realistic analysis. "War of all against all" should be replaced with "Peace for all against war". Although this phrase looks hard to realize, disregard of this hope will lead to abandon the progressive betterment in a passive acceptance toward the given conditions. In this regard, nation-state is still theoretically and practically an indispensable spring-board for democratization at home as well as its developmental extension at international scale.

