

Opening speech

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I have the honor of making an opening speech for the conference, and respectfully congratulate all those concerned on the 50th anniversary of the College of Social Sciences.

As a member of the organizing committee, I should like, at the outset, to provide a rough outline of the symposium. We chose neoliberal globalization as our general theme, believing this to be key to our understanding of the transitional period we now find ourselves in. We also believe it's essential for us to develop a common, critical awareness of what is occurring in East Asia under the influence of neoliberalism or neoliberal globalization.

Although opinions differ as to the time when neoliberal globalization first began to take a shape, its origins have generally been understood in terms of the many contradictions of capitalism discernible in the 1970s – already about a half century ago.

Globalization involves the increasing interdependence of socio-economic relations across borders, and also the compression of those relations in time and space, largely due to the IT revolution. Globalization has, also, brought about a structural change in the socio-economic relations of each state through neoliberal reconstruction. This shift is discernible in the reorganization of the post-bilateral world order, and, of course, East Asia is closely involved with this.

The committee has divided the symposium into 4 sessions: (1) Neoliberal Globalization, (2) The Transformation of Socio-Economic Structure, (3) Nationalism and Regionalism, and (4) Democracy and Civil Society, as you can see in the schedule for the symposium which you received at registration, and each paper that will be presented in these sessions is included as a handout.

The first session establishes neoliberalism as our main topic of exploration. This owes much to the fact that liberalism has always been closely related with capitalism.

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Liberalism has *co-evolved* with capitalism, continually adjusting to its polymorphic shifts. The first session considers the changing role of the state under Neoliberal Globalization, and includes my own cursory view of the genealogy of liberalism.

The purpose of the second session is to examine the actual conditions of current socio-economic relations. Ongoing globalization has brought about a transformation in traditional society which is discernible in changing urban-rural relations, changing forms of employment and the family, and a growing disparity or polarization in incomes. We think it's necessary, then, to make clear the contours of changing society to our consideration of the contemporary state.

The third session scrutinizes the dynamic of nationalism and regionalism. This is an important inquiry because social movement is a double movement of proaction and reaction, co-evolving inseparably with the changing configurations of ideology. Nationalism and regionalism have a dialectical nature in the sense that their configurations change according to the internalization of the outer world into domestic relations. There is an urgent necessity to develop some common recognition of solidarism because of the tendency toward reactionary revisionism or ethnocentrism that has accompanied the shift toward the neoliberal competition state.

Finally, the forth session tries to clarify the current civil movements to re-establish social capital or social safety-net in the super-aging society. This session also discusses the challenges we face in furthering regional cooperation in East Asia. This topic is important because some confrontations have arisen among the states of East Asia against the background of geopolitics and economic geography

Of course, the four sessions are closely interrelated with each other, and they are all tied together by our general theme of neoliberal globalization.

It may be necessary, I think, to consider the conditions of a socially just and sustainable development for future generations. Democracy is an unaccomplished work that needs to be constantly rebuilt in order for it to be passed on beyond generations and across bounded limits. In this respect, the globalization of social relations gives us a chance to imagine a new vision for a democratic world at the 70-year anniversary of the end of World War II. Indeed, this is essential in order to counteract the ongoing influence of neoliberalism and to replace neoliberal globalism with the globalization of peace and democracy at home and abroad.

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I hope the conference will be very fruitful in this regard, and that it enhances friendship and collaboration among us all. Once again, I bit you a very warm welcome to Kyoto, and to Ritsumeikan, and thank you for coming to participate in our symposium.

