

ARTICLE

The New Sovereigns

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Japan has had two constitutions in its modern era. The first constitution was the Meiji constitution, so-called because it was promulgated under the Meiji emperor (1889). It describes sovereignty as resting in the emperor. Succeeding the Meiji constitution is the Showa constitution, promulgated under the Showa emperor in 1946, still in effect. It describes sovereignty as resting with the Japanese people. I use this chapter to describe the new sovereigns.

What influences a new sovereign in his or her views? He or she is a member of a family. He or she will spend long hours in a work place. He or she may derive pride from the nation, but what about the government? He or she is aware that a world impinges upon them. We shall look at these influences.

Circumstances surrounding the new sovereigns have changed greatly since 1945, the year when the Japanese authorities surrendered unconditionally to the Allied Powers, bringing to an end a war which saw the destruction of Japan's cities, factories, and fleets, leaving the public without food, housing, awaiting epidemic. Today, Japan is affluent. It has one of the highest per capita national incomes among the major nations.¹ While the nation is wealthy, the new sovereigns point out, they are not. At least, they don't feel wealthy.

The new sovereigns have compared their life style to that of their European and American neighbors. They have discovered that they are least likely to be supplied with public water, have use of a flush toilet, have access to a sewage system. They pay the most for goods and services. Their living quarters are the smallest. Tokyo authorities have allocated only 2.8 square meters of public park land for each resident. The new sovereigns compare that to Chicago, where authorities have allocated 24 square meters.

Does scrimping on park space create revolutionary ardor? Each year for the past twenty years, the Prime Minister's Office has underwritten national polls in which 90% of the respondents describe their life style as middle class. Furthermore, they express grudging satisfaction with this life style. The new sovereigns may complain but they are not restive.

Japan, though, has problems.

The Japanese used to think of their island as crowded. No longer. Japan had a baby boom for two

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years shortly after the war and again in the seventies. But most of the time, Japan's birth rate has slide sideways or declined. In 1996, the Japanese population grew by 0.27%, the first annual increase in five years.² The Japanese are hardly replacing themselves.

Japan's death rate is also in decline. A declining birth rate and a declining death rate means that Japanese society is aging rapidly. The 1995 National Census revealed that 14% of the population was over 65 years of age. By 2018, the demographers have projected 25% of the population to be 65 years of age or beyond. All the advanced nations face aging problems but no nation faces an aging problem quite as severe and sudden in onset as Japan's.³ Who will care for these oldsters? Both young and old new sovereigns have a stake in the answer to this question.

Family

Japan was once an agricultural state: Until /1955, half its workers were farmers; The average size of the family was five members. In 1990, the size of the family fell 2.75 members.⁴ The Japanese family has become nuclear. Why is that?

The family used to be the workplace where father trained son to farm or run a business. Now, the fastest growing economic sector is the service sector. The 1990 census showed 65.5% of the workers to be wage earners. And they often have left the family to move to the cities where the jobs are available.

Women have become part of the work force. This has changed social attitudes. Marriage is no longer the only option. Divorce is becoming acceptable. More women than men attend college or university. That has made the women more selective in the choice of a mate, more dominant in a society in which the women outnumber the men by 3.3%.⁵ University attendance means better jobs, encouraging women to delay birth or put it off altogether. Educated women who do give birth rarely have more than one child.

Traditionally, three generations made up the Japanese family, with the eldest son responsible both for his parents' as well as his children's welfare. Three-generation living described 90% of Japanese families in 1960. Three-generation living described only 60% of Japanese families in 1990. What had happened?

The grandparents had chosen to live separately. Japan's wealth allowed companies to set up pension plans, the Public Health Ministry to make social security payments. The change-over from a manufacturing economy to a service economy has meant the grandparents could work part time for more years. After 1977, more people died in hospitals than at home, suggesting that home care by the eldest son's wife had also palled as a reason for continuing three-generation living.

In 1972, in 1989, in 1995, pollsters asked Japanese of both sexes and over twenty years of age to compare and evaluate the functions of the family. Down-played was the family as a place to raise children, care for the elderly, or work to make a living. Highly evaluated in the 1995 poll was the lift one family member could provide another. Highly evaluated in both 1972 and 1995 polls was the family as a place to retreat from the pressures of the day (yasuragu). Highly evaluated in the 1989 poll was the family for providing privacy.⁶ Japanese like to travel and pollsters have discovered that they most often travel with their families. Finally, Japanese gather in families to celebrate holidays--both old style holidays (spring bean-throwing) and new style holiday (Christmas parties).⁷

Do these observations add up to a trend? I think so. The family is still vital: Its purposes,

though, are no longer economic, but psychological.

Work Place

In the typical new sovereign family, the husband will spend 9 hours forty minutes commuting or at work and 49 minutes on household chores. His wife, on the other hand, will split her work day more equitably: 5 hours 38 minutes in the office; 4 hours 41 minutes tending house. Other chores give her a work day of 10 hours 19 minutes. If she has a child, her work day increases to 11 hours 30 minutes. A son in his twenties will work longer hours than a father in his fifties. A daughter may work just part time. Even so, she, as well as her brother and her parents, will give to work their highest percentage of waking hours. Work is the core of Japanese society.⁸

Traditionally, Japanese managers have been reluctant to discharge employees and willing to let years with the company determine level of pay. These two traditions-- lifetime employment and pay by seniority-- have given the manager a work force made up of individuals whose strengths and skills he knows and can draw upon, a valuable asset for a company trying to compete in a changing economy. The weakness with an within-the-company labor market is the proclivity for the worker to look inward, rather than outward from which the real challenges to the company will inevitably come. The weakness with pay by seniority is that it lacks incentives: top pay may go to lukewarm effort, mediocre talent. As an employment system, pay by seniority is far more expensive than pay by the job.

These traditional practices functioned best when workers were young and the economy boomed. Now the workers have aged and the economy slowed down. A third of the large company managers say they will change to a talent-oriented employment system. Another third say they are studying ways to adapt traditional practices to current reality. Among the developed economies, Japan's work force is the oldest: 43 percent of its workers have been with their company over ten years.⁹ They stand to benefit most from the traditional practices. Yet they tell pollsters they are willing to change to an employment system where the job you do determines the wage you get. They are not willing to give up lifetime employment, though, since their age may preclude re-employment by another company.

Nevertheless, attitudes toward work are changing. Under traditional practices, managers demanded of their workers undivided loyalty, all-out effort, and unlimited time. They got it. The Japanese worker became notorious for his dedication. Now, though, workers are having second thoughts.

Some second thoughts are common to all workers.

"When do you feel most fulfilled?" is a question pollsters have asked Japanese workers regularly since 1975. "When lost in my work," has been the most popular answer until the nineties. Now this answer is on a downward curve. On an ascending curve are the answers, "Being with my family," "Playing sports," "Doing nothing."

"Are you willing to sacrifice free time for a higher salary?" A majority of the workers say no. "Are you willing to give up private time for work you like?" A significant minority say yes. "To which do you give preference--work or leisure?" Over the past two decades, workers who say both are

important have grown from 20% to 35%. And workers who give preference to work have declined from 36% to 21%.

Other second thoughts distinguish the older from the younger worker. For example, the older worker differs from the younger worker in his vision of a career. The older worker wants to work for one company, counting on experience in that company to bring him into white collar ranks if he started as a blue collar, greater managerial responsibilities if he has been a white collar all along. The younger worker cares not whether he works for one or several companies. He wants to develop a skill, perhaps a skill that will allow him to start his own company.¹⁰

What about workers' contribution to the company? In a recent poll, workers were asked¹¹ whether they thought about what they could do for their company. 62% said they did. 34% said not very often.

Do these observations add up to a trend? I think so. The Japanese work place is becoming a place for personal expression.

The Country

What do the new sovereigns think of their country? If asked to say something nice about its condition, a majority (63%) point out it is at peace. If asked to say something more critical, a majority (58%) talk of a strong trend towards irresponsibility and selfishness among its citizens.

When asked to be more specific, the new sovereigns say that Japan is orderly. Furthermore, it has a long history, a rich culture, and an advanced science. Its people work hard. It is beautiful. What are its weaknesses? Other nations don't think highly of it. Its social security networks are far from complete.

In Japan, are things getting better? Or are things getting worse? 24% of the respondents to a government poll say that Japan is faced in the right direction. 55% say Japan is faced in the wrong direction.

What's wrong? 76% of the respondents agreed with the judgement that the nation's policies didn't reflect the people's thoughts. And why was that? Two answers: the bureaucrats didn't listen; the people didn't study.

Pollsters gave respondents lists of matters being considered by the Japanese government and asked for comment. Three trends emerged. First, respondents see their most serious problems as economic: Prices are too high; National finances are in a mess; The nation is stuck in the wrong part of the business cycle. Second, respondents were greatly interested in the protection of the environment. 47% of the respondents thought the government should be doing more. Third, respondents don't agree on many matters. For example, 33% of the respondents thought the government was doing well with its social welfare ideas; 38% thought not. 25% of the respondents thought the government was doing well with foreign affairs; 28% thought not. 28% of the respondents thought the government was doing well in maintaining public order; 24% thought not. The new sovereigns have plenty to debate.¹²

Do these observations illuminate a truth? I think so. Before World War II, an elite ruled Japan. An elite still rules Japan. Among the public, though, there is an exasperation with this elite--an exasperation which suggests the public grows in its sense of being in charge.

Politics

Democracy has come to Japan slowly. In the Twenties, scholars and high brow journalists argued its merits. Not persuaded was the Japanese military which, by the Thirties, came to exercise ruling power. They saw democracy as subversive. In the mid-Forties, the United States and other Allied Powers demanded and got unconditional surrender of the Japanese to conclude World War II. They said they would occupy Japan until Japan had a government based on the freely expressed will of the Japanese people. Democracy, then, played with by the intellectuals, rejected by the military, came to Japan because of its defeat in war. Not an auspicious start.

The Allied occupation lasted seven years (1945-1952). What effect had it had on the Japanese people? In 1953, scholars at the Institute of Statistical Mathematics (ISM) began measuring Japanese national character through public opinion polls--a measurement they repeated every five years. These ten surveys show change in political values.

"Should a talented politician appear, the people will best serve the country if they stop arguing among themselves and leave matters up to him." In 1953, the ISM scholars posited this assertion and asked 2,254 respondents to agree or disagree. They discovered that 43% of the respondents agreed. By 1993, though, 68% of the respondents opposed leaving government up to someone else no matter how talented he might be. The 1998 survey shows opposition to leaving government to others, too.

In 1993, ISM scholars asked their respondents what they would consider foremost in setting long-range national policies. The options:

1. maintaining public order.
2. encouraging people to speak out when important policies are in the making.
3. stopping the rise of commodity prices.
4. protecting freedom of speech.

46% of the respondents wanted popular participation, double the percentage of those respondents who chose other options.

A decade passed after the Allied Occupation ended before the ISM scholars began asking respondents what they thought of democracy. In the 1963 poll, half of the respondents said, "[My view] depends on time and circumstance." 30 years later, though, democracy had increased in popular acceptance: 59% of the respondents called it, "good"; 33% said, "It depends"; Only 1% termed it, "bad."

What kind of democracy did the public want? ISM scholars asked 1,833 respondents to subscribe to one of two views describing the welfare state. Those views:

1. The welfare state protects the peoples' livelihood, allowing everyone to live without anxiety.
2. The welfare state benefits the lazy and is a loss to the industrious.

78% of the respondents supported the positive description.

In 1993, the ISM scholars recalled Aesop's fable about the fun-loving grasshopper and the hard-working ant. Having passed the summer in song, the grasshopper had no food for winter and was obliged to ask for a share from the ant, who had spent the summer working his fields. How should the ant respond? asked the ISM scholars. Refuse the grasshopper? Or help the grasshopper? 85% of the respondents said the ant should share his food.

Is society usually just? ISM scholars posed this question, too, in 1993. 62% of the respondents

said, "No, " or "Not very. " So much for Aesop.

Cynicism pervades the new sovereigns' attitudes towards political institutions, too. "Do you have faith in the prime minister?" asked Gallup pollsters in December 2000. Only six percent responded affirmatively. What about the Diet (national assembly) and the ministries? Less than ten percent of the new sovereigns trusted them. In what institutions did the new sovereigns have faith? The newspapers (46%); the law courts (29%); and the hospitals (28%).¹³

The World

How internationally-minded are the new sovereigns? A third say they would like to try living overseas. Two-thirds, though, say they would rather remain in Japan, which, they point out, is becoming more international, what with stores more and more carrying foreign-made consumer goods and sports teams having foreign players and TV channels inundated with bad foreign films. 85% say they would like to have foreign friends.¹⁴

75% of the new sovereigns profess an affinity for the United States. 48% identify with the European states of France, Germany, and Great Britain. 45% identify with China. Nevertheless, the new sovereigns regard themselves as Asians, believe in an Asian culture, put South Korea, China, and other East Asian countries top on the list of countries with whom to further cultural exchange.

Do the new sovereigns feel international responsibility? 82% accepted the government statement that Japan had become a big power and that conferred obligations upon it. And what specifically should Japan do? The five following statements gathered the most popular support:

- contribute to the maintenance of peace;
- contribute to development of a healthy global economy;
- support developing countries in their growth;
- work with others to maintain universal values such as freedom and democracy;
- help solve the world scale problems of the global environment.

Which of the five got the greatest support? Cleaning up the environment. Japan is very much aware that it has become the trash can for the Chinese and Russian Federation economies.

Do the new sovereigns feel internationally threatened? If so, what are they prepared to do about it? ¹⁵

Japan's constitution precludes war as an instrument of national policy. The United Nations, though, recognizes all nations to have the right to defend itself and so, Japan has modest self-defense forces: It has used them on UN peace keeping missions.

Japan also has a mutual security treaty with the United States under which Japan allows the United States to use bases on its territory for the defense of the Far East in return for a promise to meet threats directed at Japan. Currently, Japanese and United States officials discuss ways that Japan can assist the United States in its military missions yet not violate the no-war clause. The discussions have proved contentious, not among the officials but among the new sovereigns.

The new sovereigns divide into three groups. One group is made up of pacifists. They argue that Japan faces no threat and even if it did, it should not respond militarily given its recent history. They have not supported the defense treaty with the United States. They do not support Japan assuming a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council. Opposing the pacifists is another group arguing that Japan should become a " normal nation. " They want to de-fang the no-war clause,

forget about war guilt, do more with the US treaty, assume a permanent seat in the Security Council and an active role in world leadership. The third group finds itself between the pacifists and the mormalists. It is the largest group and it mostly supports the status quo.

Look at the results of a recent opinion survey on Japan's self defense forces. Pollsters ask, "What do you think of them?" Most respondents say, "I don't have a bad impression." Should they be increased? No, present levels are fine. What do the forces do best? 67% say help people caught up in a natural disaster. On what should the self defense forces concentrate in the future? Better disaster relief.

Is there a danger that Japan might get embroiled in a war? 22% of the respondents said there is such a danger. But 34% of the respondents said there is no danger. 39% of the respondents waffled (It isn't that there isn't a danger).

What would you do if Japan were attacked? Most respondents said they would find a way to resist. But only 6% said they would join the self defense forces and fight. 20% said their resistance would not involve weapons.

What is the best way to defend Japan? 68% of the respondents favored the statues quo: maintain the defense treaty with the United States, maintain the self defense forces; continue foreign economic assistance; be active in the United Nations.

What about trade? A majority of the Japanese responding to this question think Japan should open its markets. Such a move would better Japanese living standards, protect the free trade movement, better the balance with the Japan's trading partners, they said. What about international relations in general? 13% of the respondents said Japan should look out for its own interests, 64% of the respondents said Japan should accommodate its interests to world interests.¹⁶

Is there a truth hidden in this welter of percentages? I think so. Japan wants to have friends in a friendly world.

Notes

- 1 Keizai Kikakucho, ed. , *Kokumin Seikatsu Hakusho* (Peoples Livelihood White Paper) , Tokyo: Okurasho Insatsu Kyoku, 1995. In the 1995 edition, authors from the Economic Planning Agency have prepared some 190 tables, charts, diagrams and graphs to delineate popular living conditions. I have used them extensively in this paper.
- 2 Home Affairs Ministry survey released in August 1997. The population of Japan, as of March 31, 1997, was 125,257 061.
- 3 Koseisho, Jinko Mondai Kenkyusho, *Jinko Mondai ni Kansuru Ishiki Chosa* (Survey of Attitudes Concerned with Population Problems), Kosei Tokei Kyokai, 1996. In August 1997, the Koseisho published a simplified life expectancy chart for 1996, which revealed the average life expectancy for a Japanese male to be 77.01 years and the average life expectancy for a Japanese female to be 85.59 years. The Koseisho believes Japanese citizens live longer than the citizens of any other nation.
- 4 Home Affairs Ministry survey 1996.
- 5 *Livelihood White Paper 1195*, p. 103.
- 6 *Livelihood White Paper 1995*, pp. 98, 114, 130.
- 7 *Livelihood White Paper 1995*, p. 132-3.
- 8 For reasons readily imagined, NHK, the government broadcasting corporation, surveys in detail every five years how the Japanese citizens spends his time. I have taken these figures from a survey which NHK conducted in October 1995. NKH Hoosoo Bunka Kenkyusho, ed. , *Nihonjin No Seikatsu Jikan 1995* (The Japanese and their Waking Hours 1995), Tokyo (Nihon Hoosoo Shuppan Kyookai), 1996, pp.

- 111-150.
- 9 The United States has the youngest workers. Only 26.6% of its workers have been employed in their present company for the years or longer. Great Britain lines up with the United States in having a young work force. France and Germany line up with Japan in having an older work force.
 - 10 Statistics for this section on the workplace come from People's Livelihood White Paper 1995, pp. 67-90.
 - 11 I used a Prime Minister's Office opinion poll for this section of the manuscript. *Kore Kara no Kokudo Zukuri ni kansuru Yoron Choosa* Public Opinion Poll concerning Future Nation Building. Pollsters directly interviewed a national sample of 5,000 adults twenty years or older. 3,502 interviews were valid. The poll was taken June 20-30, 1996.
 - 12 Responses cited in this section are taken from a Prime Ministers Office survey, *Shakai Ishiki ni kansuru Yoron Choosa* (Public Opinion of Social Attitudes), conducted December 5-18, 1996. Respondents were twenty years or older, drawn from a national sample of 10,000 of whom 7,122 agreed to a direct interview.
 - 13 Yomiuri Shinbun, January 18, 2001
 - 14 For this section of the manuscript, I have drawn on a opinion poll of the Prime Minister's Office, *Gaiko ni kansuru Yoron Choosa* (Public Opinion Poll relating to Foreign Affairs). Between November 3 and 13, 1996, pollsters conducted face to face interviews with 3,000 persons over twenty years of age coming from all sections of the country. 2,105 of the surveys were accepted as valid.
 - 15 For this segment of the manuscript, I have drawn upon the Prime Minister's Office, *Jieitai-Boei Mondai ni kansuru Yoron Choosa* (Public Opinion Poll concerning the Military Forces and Defense Matters). Respondents were nationally drawn and over twenty years of age and interviewed face to face. 3,000 persons made up the sample. 2,114 interviews were accepted as valid.
 - 16 Question 18 of Prime Minister's Office poll conducted December 5-18, 1996, cited earlier.

新しき主権者

明治憲法は主権が天皇にあることを表記している。一方それに続く昭和憲法では主権は国民が有することを明言している。この小論ではこの新しき主権者の社会，政治上の価値観について考察する。

かつては家庭の主たる役割は経済にかかわるものであった。家庭は父親が息子に仕事を教え，やがて家計を担えるよう一人前に仕込む場であった。ところが今日では家庭の主たる機能は心理的なものに変化してきている。つまり家庭はプライバシーをまもり，一日のプレッシャーから解放されほっとできる避難所的な場になっている。

仕事に対する考え方も変わってきている。仕事はかつてはこの新しき主権者が一日中打ち込まなくてはならないものであったが，今日では余暇も同じように大切であると考え人が増えてきている。若い人たちは将来自分の会社をおこせるのに役立つ技術を身につけたがっている。

この国の欠陥はなんであろうか？それは，この国の政策が国民の思うところと一致していない点にある。調査結果では，1993年以降政治への市民参加が広く大衆の支持を得ていることが

わかる。80%の人々が日本が福祉国家になることを望んでいる。

この新しき主権者はどの程度国際的な視野を備えているであろうか。85%は外国の友人を持ちたがっている。