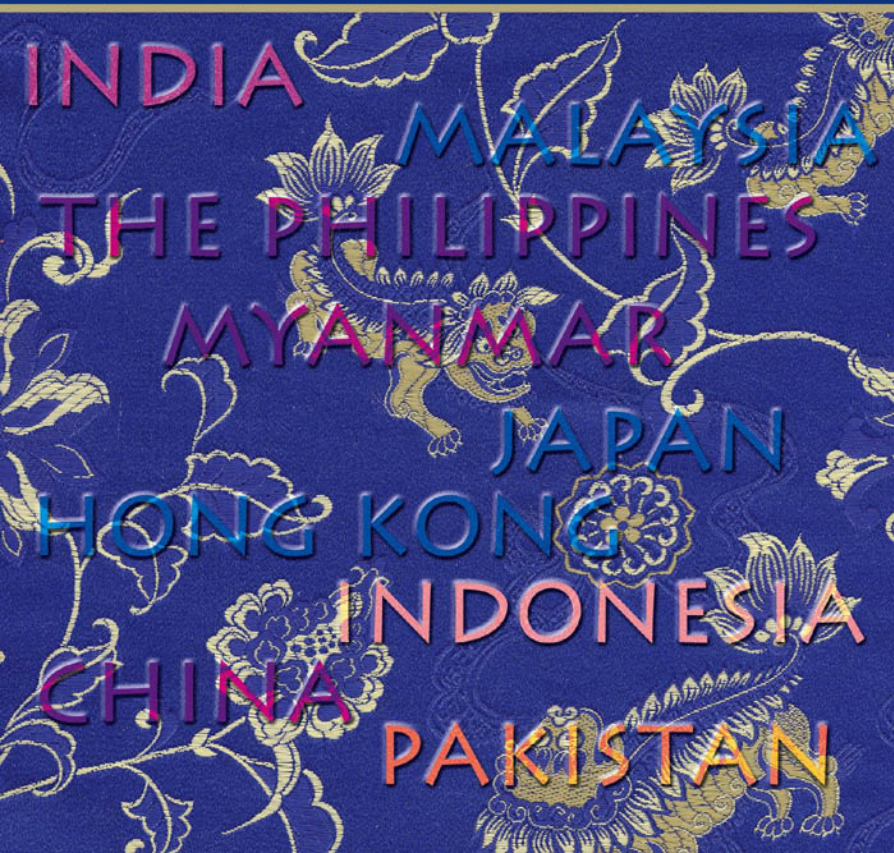
Federalism in Asia

Edited by
Baogang He Brian Galligan Takashi Inoguchi



12. Federal traditions and quasi-federalism in Japan

Takashi Inoguchi[1]

Japan has had a long tradition of quasi-federalism. In the late 16th century when the Period of the Warring States (1467–1573) ended, what prevailed was not the absolutism of the kind that determined the succeeding history of many Western European countries (Anderson, 1970). Absolutism, Japanese style, floundered mid-way when centralizing absolute power into one person, Nobunaga, who was assassinated in 1582. Nobunaga was a warrior who destroyed what he regarded as barriers and impediments to his military unification of the country. He not only defeated many competing warrior rivals but also crushed the Buddhist temples of Hiei mountain and the merchant republic of Sakai. He was about to usurp the power of the Emperor which had kept its nominal symbolic legitimacy and authority to rule Japan since the 7th century. Since then, first aristocrats (8th–11th centuries), then warriors (11th–mid-16th centuries) had ruled the country without diminishing the power of the Emperor. Nobunaga was open to foreign ideas, technologies, trade and religion. Thus, in 1575, Nobunaga used hundreds of guns in the battle of Nagashino in a way unprecedented in military history. Troops armed with guns systematically crushed the cavalry troops of his adversary. A similar military strategy, albeit on a much smaller scale, was used for the first time in Europe near Leipzig in 1725 by Gustavus Adolphus (Parker, 1996). After Nobunaga's assassination military unification was eventually achieved by his self-proclaimed successor, called Hideyoshi. Hideyoshi, a pragmatic ruler of peasant stock, compromised with his former competitors by allowing virtual autonomy in their domains. His military unification subsequently led to his military campaigns into the Asian Continent in 1592–98. His own death in Japan brought all the troops back to Japan.

Ieyasu then overwhelmed Hideyoshi's allies with two successful military campaigns. Ieyasu emerged as the founder of an early modern arrangement allowing autonomy to 300 odd domains while the Tokugawa government nearly monopolized power in defence, foreign commerce and intelligence. By 'early modern', I mean the preliminary period of modernity in Japan

which began in the late 16th century and ended in the mid-19th century (Ikegami, 1995). Ieyasu can be called the founder of modern political arrangements far beyond what he envisaged and executed because his arrangements were to become the basic foundation for federal and democratic arrangements from the mid-19th century onward. The period of Tokugawa rule (1603–1867) was not only noteworthy for its long peace, for which it is sometimes called the Pax Tokugawana, but also for its seeding and rooting of federal and democratic traditions in this early modern period.

PAX TOKUGAWANA AND DEMOCRATIC AND FEDERAL PREPARATIONS

Pax Tokugawana was noteworthy for its long peace. There was neither external war nor any major civil strife for more than two centuries (Hall, 1991; Jansen and Rozman, 1986). Only on two occasions, once in the mid-17th century to suppress a Christian rebellion in the Shimabara peninsula in southern Japan, and the other in the mid-19th century to suppress the Choshu domain for its anti-Tokugawa policy, did the Tokugawa deploy their troops. Shortly after the great battle in 1600 which led to Tokugawa's rise, Ieyasu and his successors carried out three policy lines.

First came building and consolidating the policy line of *sakoku* (closing the country) (Toby, 1984). Ieyasu was apprehensive about possible reprisal from the Continent for Japan's Continental campaigns in the late 16th century. Chinese rulers changed from Ming to Qing meanwhile. The new Qing rulers ruled the largest Chinese empire since ancient times with Manchu, Mongol, Uigurs, Tibetan and Han all joining the ruling establishment. Portuguese and Spaniards were forbidden from entering the country and carrying out commercial transactions and proselytizing Christianity. Their colonizing ambitions were suspected. Only non-official Chinese and Dutch traders were allowed to use a small port, Deshima, at Nagasaki under the direct rule of Tokugawa. The entire Japanese population was forbidden from entering into commercial transactions with foreigners, who were in turn forbidden from entering the country. This policy line set the 300-odd domains and the entire population on the alert against foreign threats: military, economic and religious. Thus the mid-17th century Christian rebels at Shimabara were massacred and, in the mid-19th century, young men like Yoshida Shoin, who wanted to break the policy line in order to visit foreign countries, were executed. Those domains on the periphery of the country, which by virtue of their location had to handle external neighbours, were assigned the specific role of dealing with those

neighbours. Matsumae was assigned to handle Ainus on Hokkaido. Tsushima was assigned to handle Koreans. Satsuma was assigned to handle Ryukyuans. Why did the Tokugawa monopolize foreign trade into their own hands? Foreign trade brought with it new military technology and economic surplus, which, when combined, might be used to topple the power of the Tokugawa. The policy line of closing the country forced each of the 300-odd domains to strive to achieve political self-government and economic well-being within its domain. The military dominance of the Tokugawa, when combined with the policy of placing those domains which were hostile or unfriendly to the Tokugawa in the great battle of Sekigahara of 1600 in peripheral places far away from Edo (Tokyo), helped the long peace to be achieved.

The second policy line was to ensure autonomy for each domain as long as its loyalty to the Tokugawa was assured and its 'good governance' proved. To keep loyalty high and visible the Tokugawa made it a rule for the lords of domains to live intermittently at Edo (Tokyo) while the chief counsellor of the domain took care of domains. To foster good governance the Tokugawa set up the scheme of intelligence whereby violations of a certain set of rules, norms and practices (such as peasant uprisings against heavy tax, internal violent strife among leaders) were to be detected and reported to the Tokugawa. In extreme cases of such incidents, which took place very rarely, the Tokugawa interfered in internal matters by imposing such actions as resignation of lords, and reduction of domain size. Also the Tokugawa government assigned infrastructural building tasks to many domains, with corvé labour for infrastructural construction such as bridges and roads outside their own domains. Other than these two constraints, much was left to each domain. This second policy line resembles quasi-federal arrangements. To illustrate, let us examine what kind of policy was adopted in view of the budget deficits of domains. The Hirosaki domain in the northernmost Honshu islands used the policy of sending warriors-cum-bureaucrats to the countryside to farm land so that the domain purse would not be burdened; the Yonezawa domain in the northwestern Honshu islands adopted the policy of subsidizing lacquer tree planting and production so that lacquer products could make profits; the Tokushima domain in the Eastern Shikoku islands used the policy of developing the dyeing industry and its market in Osaka, just across the Seto island sea. In all this the general advancement of infrastructure such as roads, bridges, ports and customs was largely left in the hands of Tokugawa.

Other than this infrastructural development, however, much was left to each domain. The Hirosaki domain did reduce the domain expenditure substantially by trimming the size of its bureaucracy. The Yonezawa

domain did not trim its bureaucracy; it carried out its industrial policy but it failed because the domain ended up by purchasing most of the lacquer products. There were no large markets to which the landlocked Yonezawa domain could have easy access. The Tokushima domain was very successful in its industrial policy of dyeing by developing a huge market in Osaka (Ravina, 1999).

Domain economic policy differed very much, reflecting the differences in agronomical development and demographic change (Hanley and Yamamura, 1986). The Nagaoka domain, through which runs the Shinano river, the longest river in Japan, benefited from the agronomical progress in enabling delta areas to harvest rice. Up to the 17th century, lower stream areas were full of floods, tended to spoil rice with worms, and were thus not suitable for rice agriculture. Technology turned vast delta areas into rice paddies, which increased the size of population inhabiting delta areas. In contrast, the Satsuma domain, a southernmost domain, suffered from a land full of volcanic sand. It had to rely on sending warrior–bureaucrats into the countryside to farm land; it conquered the Ryukyu kingdom to the south to exploit Ryukyuan trade with China and Southeast Asia; it imported arms from foreign countries illegally to achieve its 'revere the Emperor; overthrow the Tokugawa' policy in the mid-19th century.

The above examples are meant to illustrate the degree of autonomy given to each domain to run its affairs. Decentralization was accentuated because the country was closed, because the national economy was being forged steadily, greatly affecting each domain in much the same way that globalization today profoundly affects each country, and because technological progress was basically slow, if not stagnant.

The third policy line of the Pax Tokugawana was 'democratization'. Two structural conditions existed. First, many lords and their bureaucrats were assigned from elsewhere to their domains as a result of the major political reconfigurations taking place intermittently in the late 16th and early 17th centuries. In other words, elites were strangers. Domain governments were a government of strangers vis-à-vis local peasants (Inoguchi, 1997). Second, the basically zero growth economy forced domains to strive for more product and less expenditure. What is called the 'industrious revolution' (Hayami, 1992) had to be engineered. Here democratization comes in. Domains must reflect on what peasants regarded as justice. Bureaucrats must tax people within a reasonable range. Bureaucrats must talk to people. Further, given the basically small size of domains' bureaucracy, those upper elements of non-warrior classes, that is, landlords and rich merchants, must be co-opted into street-level bureaucracy. In other words, bureaucrats must develop cooperative working relationship with the non-warrior population within the domains. It is not surprising, therefore, to

find that there were not a few philosophical writings during that period pointing to fledgling democratic ideas. For instance, Yamaga Gorui argues, 'A ruler's supreme power is derived from the masses under heaven, thus a ruler must not behave in a selfish manner. . . . It is with the people's support that a ruler emerges, and it is the ruler who establishes the state, thus the essence of the state is the people' (Inoguchi, 2005a). Akita Chiranki also argues, 'The ruler is like a boat and his subordinates like water. Water can carry the boat but it can also sink it' (Inoguchi, 2005a).

Democratization comes in also at the level of decision making. As already noted, warriors were transformed into bureaucrats and settled at castle towns. They developed what Ikegami (1995) calls 'honorific collectivism', as distinguished from honorific individualism, the ethos which shaped warriors during the medieval period. In the early modern period bureaucrats honoured the collectivity of a domain and acted accordingly. Decisions were collectively taken in the council of senior bureaucrats. Thus, when a lord acted in great dissonance with their collective decision, their institutionalized response was to lock a lord up in a confined area of a castle to prevent him from participating in politics. Absolutism was not born. Rather proto-democratic practice was observed in each domain (Kasaya, 1989).

Onto these three structural conditions was set the stage for modernization that was to guide the country in more open, more centralizing and yet more democratic directions.

MODERNIZATION BASED ON AND ACCELERATED BY EARLY MODERN LEGACIES

Japan was the first country in the non-West to pursue modernization at a fairly early stage. It was in 1868 that the stage for modernization was set with three distinctive prongs: dramatically opening the country, assiduously centralizing the state and steadily democratizing politics. First, opening the country was dramatic, ideationally replacing the Chinese-referenced Japanese order with the Western-referenced Japanese order overnight (Inoguchi, 2005b) and commercially accepting the humiliating and debilitating tariff non-autonomy, making the country vulnerable to foreign economic penetration when the country had no products that were sufficiently competitive in the international market. Second, centralization was steadily achieved: replacing the 300-odd semi-autonomous domains with 50-odd prefectures whose governors were appointed by the central government; setting up a meritocratically recruited civil service; setting a compulsory educational system whereby one standard Japanese language

was achieved and national identity was established; establishing the Japanese post service whereby national communications were realized; building the Japanese railway system whereby national transportation was realized; building a national police force; constructing conscriptive national armed forces; building local assemblies first and then the Imperial Diet with popular elections, with gradually decreasing qualifications attached to political rights and civil liberties associated with elections.

Third, there developed steadily if somewhat slowly democratizing politics. A parliamentary democracy with a monarchy was used to build a modern nation state. Local assembly elections were already realized in the 1880s; the Imperial Constitution was promulgated in 1889 and the Imperial Diet was opened in 1890. The qualifications attached to political rights and civil duties were gradually reduced. By 1925, universal suffrage for the entire male population more than 20 years old was achieved. In the same year the internal security preservation law was legislated, somewhat in contradiction to the famous Tocquevillesque dictum that universal suffrage and freedom of expression cannot go together. These moves that gradually strengthened centralization took place over three-quarters of a century after 1868.

At the same time, the early modern legacies of decentralized schemes were kept largely intact in different forms. Most critical was the Imperial Constitution, which allowed a high degree of decentralization at the highest level of the government (Akita, 1967; Banno, 2005). At its pinnacle stood the Emperor who was brought to Tokyo from Kyoto where, for centuries, the imperial power survived all the vicissitudes of history as a symbolic nominal actor which gave legitimizing power to whoever controlled Kyoto and the rest. The Emperor was accorded the highest power constitutionally, but under him were the array of actors whose authority derived from their equal and decentralized access to the ear of the Emperor. Thus not only those founding fathers of the Meiji Restoration (a military coup d'état engineered by bands of lower-class warriors largely from two peripheral domains subsequently consolidated by bringing the Emperor to Tokyo and pacifying the rest of the country militarily under the banner of 'rich country, strong army' and 'enlightenment and entrepreneurship') but also the army, the navy, the Privy Council, the House of Peers, the House of Representatives, major political parties, influential business leaders and all the bureaucratic agencies enjoyed their access to the Emperor, if only often indirectly. The Prime Minister was merely a *primus inter pares* whose cabinet could be constitutionally easily toppled by one dissenter from within the cabinet as well as by a strong dissenting voice coming from without the cabinet.

The semi-sovereignty accorded to each bureaucratic agency is another noteworthy aspect of the modern regime. It was as if old domains had been

replaced by new bureaucratic agencies. During the early years of the Meiji Restoration all the warriors lost their jobs and many of them had to find employment in the government. Their high level of literacy and supposedly high moral standards recommended them to such jobs. Given the extremely small numbers of founding fathers and their patronage, it often happened that each bureaucratic agency had some geographical biases derived from old domain affiliations. Thus, for instance, the army was dominated by the Choshu domain, the navy dominated by the Satsuma domain, the Accounting examination office dominated by the Nabeshima domain, the Police Agency thronged by the Higo and Aizu domains, at least until about the First World War. Decentralization during the early modern period in terms of domains remained in the form of decentralization at the highest level of central bureaucracy.

Third, the early modern legacy of democratization played an important role in modern Japanese political development. It was very positive. The introduction of local assemblies in the 1880s was not difficult when local notables, shouldering the bulk of tax revenues, wanted to voice their demands to the central government. Built on local assembly experiences, establishing the Imperial Diet in 1890 went smoothly. The development of political parties and newspapers was most remarkable in the 1880s and 1890s. All this led one noted historian to call the Meiji political regime 'the Meiji democracy' (Banno, 2005), a significant political development attesting to the steady progress of a fledgling democracy in terms of political participation (the introduction of limited suffrage in the early 1880s to universal suffrage of the male population by 1925) and contestation (from the development of political parties in anticipation of the introduction of parliaments, local and national, in the 1880s to the full-fledged party competition in the Taisho democracy in the 1910s and 1920s through the deepening of democracy manifested in the advance of a social democratic party, the Social Masses Party, in the 1930s). Banno calls the last the Showa 'democracy'.

The fact that Japanese democracy in a transition resorted to use of force at home and abroad at the height of its democratic participatory advances may vindicate the proposition that a fledgling democracy is not necessarily peaceful (Mansfield and Snyder, 2006). Yet the half a century development of parliamentary democracy from the 1880s to the 1930s was remarkably steady and smooth and seems to attest to the structural strength acquired historically from the early modern quasi-democratic experiences accumulated in many of the domains for more than two centuries of the Tokugawa era.

After briefly characterizing the Pax Tokugawana and its quasi-democratic and quasi-federal arrangements, we now turn to the discussion on the relationship between democratization and federalism as evolved in Japan's

early modern period. I argue that somehow the early Tokugawa period brought about the healthy tension between the centre and localities, that is, the Tokugawa government and 300-odd local domains. First, Tokugawa's military dominance was not supreme. There was no absolutism; rather quasi-federalism existed in early modern Japan. Outer domains tended to be large domains and potentially anti-Tokugawan. Tokugawa's ally domains, which tended to be small domains, were assigned to run Japan at the intermittently high level of decision making. Tokugawa's clans occupied the highest position for two and half a centuries. This configuration allowed quite a big space for autonomy for most domains. The Tokugawa government could not afford to be over domineering for fear of sparking anti-Tokugawa subversion.

Second, domains were free to choose policy strategies in terms of economic development. Under the assumption of no dramatic technological innovations, domains increased gross domestic products (1) by increasing arable lands through good flood control and irrigation technologies, especially in delta areas, (2) by giving incentives to peasants through a scheme of more margins being kept in the hands of peasants once harvests were very good, which led peasants to work much harder than before (which is called by Akira Hayami (1992) 'the industrious revolution' in early modern Japan), and (3) by developing national economic markets centring on Osaka and Edo through building sea route and land route infrastructures, linking most parts of the whole of Japan without too high tariffs being imposed at domain borders. In other words, nation-wide commerce was practised and economic integration on a national scale was achieved steadily. Important was the fact that the degree of competitiveness and ingenuity made differences to the health and wealth of each domain. Quasi-federal arrangements in early modern Japan helped the population to grow and the national economic market to develop. Quasi-federal arrangements encouraged diligence and competition.

Third, within each domain many, if not most, domain leaders were strangers to the local peasants. Domain leaders kept their followers as their bureaucratic troops wherever they were assigned, which was not uncommon at a time of great political upheavals. Domain bureaucrats, therefore, had to treat peasants and merchants with care. They developed a consciousness of peasants' well-being as being one of the highest priorities. Here was the basis of quasi-democratic development in many domains. Class distinctions, warriors, peasants, artisans and merchants, were kept more or less strictly separate in early modern Japan. Warriors-cum-bureaucrats, however, had to treat the rest with care. Furthermore, their number tended to be large when labour productivity was not very high. Bureaucrats lived on harvests generated by peasants. Their number tended to increase slowly but steadily as

time went by since governing increasingly needed more manpower as the realm of policy expanded. Rich land-owning peasants and merchants were increasingly coopted to the governing corps of domains. Quasi-democratic development in early modern Japan was genuine and endogenous in many ways. Some of the basic conditions for the emergence of fledgling endogenous proto-democratization were there.

Laurence Whitehead (2002) argued that there were only three democracies which developed democracy endogenously: England, Sweden and Switzerland. In other words, so he argues, of all the 120-odd democracies that exist today, only those three did not have democracy imposed on them by outsiders. Salient among basic conditions for endogenous democratic development is, it seems to me at least, the structural need to develop a communitarian spirit in peripheral locales. Let me take up England and Japan for quick comparison in late 16th and early 17th centuries. Elizabeth I and Ieyasu were the key figures. In the late 16th century, England was a peripheral country in Europe. More importantly perhaps, Europe itself was peripheral to the Middle East, where the highest level of science and technology was generated. Japan was very peripheral to the higher civilization entity called China. England was troubled by foreign entanglements with the Vatican, Spain, France, Scotland and so forth. These foreign powers sometimes allied to aristocrats and local notables who represented themselves in a higher collective body called the parliament. Local collective interests were very strong in England largely because outside invaders and occupiers (the Normans) had to coopt local notables by giving away a significant amount of autonomy. The number of Normans was very small. The language they brought to England, French, affected English considerably. But for governing they had to rely on the inhabitants. England had to execute drastic disentanglements because otherwise they would have kept England divisive. Because England was divisive, Elizabeth had to build absolutism.

In Japan, Ieyasu took a similar and different path (Toby, 1984). Disentanglement was chosen by Ieyasu clearly because of the disasters brought about by Hideyoshi's continental campaigns in late 16th century. Ieyasu even went back to the traditional foreign policy line developed when Japan was defeated in Korea by China in the 7th century. That is the one of 'friendship with distance' focusing primarily on commercial transactions and cultural interactions. Thus Japan had no diplomatic relationship with China, for instance, between the late 14th century and mid-19th century. Ieyasu chose disentanglement by closing off the country from outside. Only commercial transactions at the port of Deshima, Nagasaki were allowed. What Ieyasu was apprehensive about had to do with illicit weapons trade conducted by some domains with foreign countries, and with Christian

missionary activities, both of which were suspected of being conducive to schisms and cleavages in Japanese society, engineered by traders and missionaries. What Ieyasu did was to close off the country from missionary activities and to conduct monopolistic trade with non-missionary-minded Dutch and Chinese merchants only. After all, Catholic missionaries from Portugal and Spain were allied with Catholic domain rulers in the late 16th century and early 17th century. Similarly some domains, especially in Japan's peripheries, which were located closer to foreign countries were suspected of smuggling weapons from foreign countries. Ieyasu's successors banned Japanese nationals from going abroad.

Unlike Elizabeth I, however, Ieyasu adopted quasi-federal arrangements instead of absolutism (Hall, 1991). This choice differentiated Japan from England. Once the country was sealed off from foreign influence by monopolization, the matter of governing had better be left to each domain, as long as each domain was not defiant towards the Tokugawa government. As summarized before, quasi-democratic development in early modern Japan started off in many domains. To summarize Japan's development, disentanglement took place; quasi-federal arrangements developed quite solidly; quasi-democratic development proceeded in many domains. In contrast, in England, disentanglement took place and in tandem absolutism was consolidated (Starkey, 2003). Localist traditions, in the form of class representation in the parliament, died hard. Religious entanglements were embedded with localist traditions and parliamentary representation, hence the establishment of the Anglican Church, headed by the Queen or the King. Its purpose was threefold: (1) to detach England from the Vatican, (2) to reduce antagonism between Catholics and non-Catholics in England, and (3) to disentangle England from the meddling by the Continent and to 'isolate', as it were, the Continent with the fog over the English Channel.

The contrast between the two countries in the modern period is no less striking. In England, democratic development proceeded first by getting the aristocratic voice better heard by the absolutist monarch. It was a backlash against the strong absolutism set up by Elizabeth and other sovereigns who were frustrated by the decentralized English political system, especially in view of the English vulnerability to the balance of power and religious influences from the Continent. As the Parliament expanded its recruiting base in tandem with the industrial revolution and its associated call for better representation, the relationship with the Continent changed: the Anti-Corn Law, a protectionist law, was repealed and free trade enabled England to benefit from it (McCord, 2005) whereas the Royal Navy kept a pre-eminent position in Europe by its offshore balancing policy until the late 19th century (Burne, 1990). All this deepened English democratic development steadily at home (Moore, 1966). In contrast, Japan resolved

to open the country and to centralize the political system from the mid-19th century without experiencing absolutism. Yet the drive toward centralization was constrained enormously.

First, government revenue was limited as its revenue depended primarily on landowners' tax and its tariff revenue was zero because Japan was denied tariff autonomy by Western powers from the mid-19th century until 1911. Japan's competitiveness was extremely low for agricultural and industrial products at that time. Second, the decentralized system changed its manifestation from the Tokugawa–domain relationship to the intragovernmental or interbureaucratic agency relationship. In the early modern period the decentralized feature was very strong geographically, whereas in the modern period the decentralized feature manifested itself at the highest level of the government, that is, in the form of quasi-autonomy accorded to each of the bureaucratic agencies and institutions, which enjoyed access to the Emperor in varying degrees. Centralization took place most saliently in the relationship between the central government and local governments. Governors were appointed by the central government, yet, ironically, most of the expenditure items, like compulsory education, were left to local governments. It was not until 1918 that expenditure on compulsory education was shouldered by the central government. Gaps in the quality of teachers revealed themselves embarrassingly from one prefecture to another.

Poor local governments paid teachers a poor salary. In the postal service the central government depended upon the donations from local notables to build post offices throughout the country as the central government did not have sufficient revenues in the formative years of the Meiji Restoration. This became one of the bases of local notables and local assemblies upon which political parties (which by definition were opposition parties for the half a century since 1868) built their political and electoral strength. The influence of designated postal offices which were built on the donations from private individuals is still being felt even after the devastating blows to the post-related vested interests of the postal privatization law legislated in 2005. The strength retained by the early modern-originating decentralized forces was one of the engines of democratization in modern Japan. After all, the Meiji government consisted mostly of former warriors-cum-bureaucrats striving for a rich country and a strong army during the formative half a century since 1868. Agricultural and industrial interests were only gradually being asserted politically. Their assertion accelerated democratization: political participation in the 1880s and 1890s in the first wave; normalization of political parties from mostly opposition parties to intermittently power-holding political parties in the 1900s through the 1920s; expansion of social democratic parties through universal suffrage (enacted in 1925) in the 1930s.

Much was changed by the Occupation by Allied Powers between 1945 and 1952 (Iokibe, 2005). Decentralization of power was one change. It is not a coincidence that the Occupation accelerated democratization. Decentralization or quasi-federalization goes hand in hand with democratization. Governors were not appointed any more. They are now popularly elected. At least one nationally funded university was established in each prefecture. An autonomous prefectural educational commission was established in each prefecture. But two impetuses accelerated a counterstrike in the direction of centralization. The Cold War forced further centralization as it led to having Self Defence Forces. More importantly, the deepening of the developmental state from the 1950s to the 1970s led to further centralization, with its instruments being target investments and subsidies to potential national champions in each of the industrial sectors. With the advent of global financial integration in the mid-1980s and beyond, however, the developmental state slowly but steadily gave in to the tide of globalization through the 2000s (Inoguchi, 2006a). Here decentralization is a key word. As important is 'government deregulation'. The tide of globalization is also a tide of decentralization and further democratization. I will advance this argument further by examining the postal privatization issue that highlighted the structural features related to globalization, federalization and democratization.

POSTAL PRIVATIZATION

Postal privatization has been prompted essentially by globalizing market forces (Inoguchi, forthcoming). Japan Post has been carrying out a number of diverse tasks including postal service, postal insurance and postal savings. Postal service has been strong only at home. Only from post offices at home can one use its overseas service. Unless the postal service is enhanced for worldwide services, its growth has its limits. Therefore a privatized postal service company is about to be born. Postal insurance and postal savings are areas where foreign companies have been eagerly awaiting further government deregulation to take place. Both handle a huge amount of money. What the postal savings register is the largest in the world. Much of postal insurance and postal savings has been closely tied to government spending as the government uses them as if they are government revenue. The weakness is that the government may not use such money most efficiently and effectively. Hence the imminent birth of privatized postal insurance and a privatized postal savings company. Privatizing and fragmenting the essentially mammoth state company called Japan Post is the first aim of the privatization law. While privatization will deepen and

the autonomy of these companies will be enhanced, the aim of the Japanese government is somehow to retain coordination with the government. One of the important aims of the coordination will be not to have those companies purchased by foreign capital beyond a certain level. So the private companies will be allowed to do business but they will not be allowed to create the kind of situation in which foreign capital dominates. To this end enhanced competitiveness will be encouraged. The relationship between the private companies and the government will be like the relationship between the Tokugawa government and 300-odd domains in the early modern centuries. It may be called 'quasi-federal practice in an era of globalization'. I will use my case to further develop my argument about quasi-federal practices and arrangements which are largely ignored by Western scholars.

The general election on 11 September 2005 ended in a resounding victory for the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (Inoguchi, 2006b). When the controversial postal privatization bill was rejected in the House of Councillors on 8 August 2005, Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi dissolved the House of Representatives right away, saying that, since the National Diet opposed the government policy of postal privatization, he needed to see whether the entire electorate would support him or not. The key campaign issue was deliberately and calculatingly focused on postal privatization. The issue of deregulation in one government sector was in a sense transformed into an issue of confidence in Prime Minister Koizumi. Having seen the sizeable opposition within the Liberal Democratic Party to the postal privatization bill, the largest opposition party, the Democratic Party of Japan, wanted to take advantage of the issue to thwart the bill. However, Koizumi confronted the opposition party by dissolving the House of Representatives and, further, fielding pro-postal privatization candidates in those districts which anti-postal privatization LDP parliamentarians represented and in the entire proportionate representation districts. Campaign-savvy Koizumi effectively stormed his opponents. Not only were many of the anti-postal privatization LDP parliamentarians expelled from the LDP but also many of them were crushingly defeated, along with the opposition party candidates. Postal privatization was legislated in the National Diet session following the general election in October 2005. What does this newly legislated law mean? It means government deregulation, market liberalization and globalization. It also means devolution of central government. Furthermore, it means the deepening of democracy in a sense. It is little more than a first step toward fully fledged deregulation and liberalization. Still it constitutes one of the major watersheds in terms of how to devolve a much overexpanded government bureaucracy, how to meet the steady tide of market globalization and how to meet the demands of an increasingly critical citizenry.

Japan Post was created in 1871. Nowadays it has three key functions: (1) postal communications, (2) postal savings, and (3) postal insurance. Although the modernizing Meiji government wanted to establish a modern postal system, financing the whole operation was not easy. The barely modernizing government lacked revenue sources other than tax on land from landlords, who bitterly resisted the government's efforts at taxation and who sometimes opposed the government's bureaucratic authoritarianism violently, demanding the opening of local assemblies and a national parliament (Banno, 1972). A compromise was struck. What it did was to allow some local notables to acquire a post office master's title in exchange for the offer of space and the establishment of a post office building. They were allowed to put a number of the benefits from postal business into their own pocket. They were also useful to the government in mobilizing and cementing support in elections once local assemblies and the Imperial Diet were opened in the 1880s and 1890, respectively (Ministry of Post, 1992). Even in the 1970s and 1980s, the Liberal Democratic Party was able to count on this post office directors' network to mobilize local votes remarkably effectively (Hirose, 1993).

Through the Japanese Post the government was able to achieve a number of its goals. First, postal communications improved remarkably throughout the country, which had been separated into 300-odd domains. Second, the government was able to seed the local basis of its power, counting increasingly on local notables. Third, the government was able to siphon money to the government purse through postal savings and postal insurance from each and every part of the country. Japan Post had about 13 000 local offices for most of its 135 years. Postal savings and insurance gave the population easy and ubiquitous access in Japan. The modernizing government which desperately needed revenue sources for its modernization found the scheme most effective. The government used the scheme for its infrastructure building purposes in the form of another budget scheme of the government. Without a solid industrial basis until some time after the First World War and without tariff autonomy until 1911, the government needed such a scheme to meet its state-led developmental ambitions. The government did not want the country's financial resources to be diverted into the private sector and was quite determined on this matter especially because its manufacturing sectors were kept poorly developed by the denial of tariff autonomy imposed in 1858. The negative reaction to this liberal trade period of Japanese economic development in 1858–1911 reinforced the determination of leaders to endogenize Japan's industrial capacity in terms of capital and technology and to protect industrial and financial sectors from foreign competition.

The key scheme of Japan Post since 1871 was to use people's savings as state revenue sources for national infrastructural and industrial development

and other priorities. Japan Post is the world's number one bank in terms of the amount of savings held. The government has been able to use a vast amount of those savings for the business of the state, but the scheme has become somewhat dysfunctional on a number of fronts. First, Japan Post's predominance has prevented a huge amount of money from flowing into private financial markets; instead it circulates within the government itself. There has been a strong view articulated that a more efficient use of this vast amount of money should be devised.[2] Second, the government priorities of infrastructural and industrial development, such as hydroelectric dams, ports and new bullet trains, have ceased to be the highest priorities and yet the vested interests of the Ministry of Land and Transport have been privileged to spend a great deal of the money.

Pressure has been mounting against what is called the investing and lending programme, the size of which amounts to about half of the ordinary budget. It served the needs of the developmental state in so many splendid ways, but it is now not quite so useful. Why build a new airport amidst rice paddies, and why build a fishery port when fishermen amount to no more than ten families? Third, the government deficits have accumulated to an astronomical degree for the last 15 years, while the Japanese economy experienced one of its longest periods of stagnation. Most of the tax hike initiatives have been killed off or at least stymied for the last 25 years. The two tax hikes in the 1980s and 1990s resulted in the resignation of prime ministers shortly after tax hike legislation. Popular resistance has been very strong. One obvious target for trimming the government is Japan Post, as it employs the largest number of government personnel after the Self Defense Forces (the police are employed by prefectures).

Going more deeply, the Japanese government sees the need to change its expenditure pattern that has much to do with demographic decline (Matsubara, 2004). In 2005, the population started to decrease. While longevity has been on the rise, the number of senior citizens (those who are 65 years old and older) has been increasing, so that they constitute nearly one-third of the entire population. Senior citizens receive a pension and use Medicare, but do not pay much tax. Younger citizens do not necessarily marry in their twenties. They do not produce their children at a rate which will maintain the same level of population. They calculate that marriage costs a lot, as does having children, which often costs a job as well for younger females, since many still believe that children must be taken care of by their mothers without much government help.

In terms of tax revenue, the visible decrease in the size of the productive population (say, 25–55 years old) vis-à-vis senior (65 and older) and younger citizens (25 and under) means that tax revenues have been stagnant for a long time. The prolonged business stagnation of 1991 to 2006 has

resulted in a huge accumulation of government deficits. The steady increase in social policy expenditure for the last 25 years, in tandem with the increase in the number of senior citizens, has become so alarming that trimming it has been carried out step by step, yet trimming itself has caused great distress to senior citizens and has been unpopular to the electorate as a whole.

In terms of social policy implementation, it is important to note that much of it rests on the shoulders of local governments. They handle implementation on behalf of the central government and yet local governments do not enjoy much of their own tax revenue sources and are dependent on the transfer of money from the central government. To make things worse from the perspective of local governments, the central government increasingly adopts the scheme of jointly shouldering expenditures in a number of areas where local governments have to bring in their own resources along with the transfer from the central government, even though local governments do not have much tax revenue of their own. Hence local governments have been increasingly vocal about the need to empower them, demanding the shift of taxation authority from central to local governments. A number of equations must be solved, for example: kinds and locations of taxing authority, size of administrative units (central, subnational, grass roots), size of the transfer to local government from the central government, and kinds and locations of policy, planning, implementations and monitoring.

In terms of the health of local government budgets, local governments have been encouraged to merge among themselves to create larger entities so that administrative and personnel expenditures might be trimmed (a large part of which has to do with the relative number of local assemblymen, bureaucrats and servicemen who carry out social and educational policy tasks). Of the 3232 local governments which existed only a decade ago, mergers have left only 1821 in 2006. Emerging on the horizon in tandem with this fast development is the idea of creating from seven to ten regional administrative units by merging four to eight prefectures in each region, Hokkaido, Touhoku, Great Kantou, Tokyo, Chubu, Kansai, Shikoku and Chugoku, Kyushu and Okinawa. Competition is strong among adjacent prefectures in terms of which prefectural capital city should be granted the status and privilege of a regional capital city. This competition in turn speeds up the merger of local governments (Asahi shimbun, 2005).

Furthermore, in parallel with the administrative regionalization initiatives, a scheme has been introduced to elect Lower House members on the proportional representation list on a regional, not national, basis. While those lower house members elected on a 'one person per district' basis represent some 1500 local governments more directly, those lower house

members elected on the proportional representation list basis would represent not only national concerns and priorities but also regional ones. The scheme for the latter representation runs closely in parallel with the idea of designating a regional capital city.[3]

At the level of the central government, the administrative reform carried out since 1995 has produced a scheme of merging bureaucratic agencies into a dozen major ones and setting up nine smaller ones. The major bureaucratic agencies includes Welfare, Health and Labor; Education, Science, Sports and Culture; Internal Communications and Affairs; Land and Transport; Agriculture, Fishery and Forestry; Environment; Treasury; Economics and Industry; Foreign Affairs; Justice; Defence; Police. The smaller agencies include Postal Privatization; Science and Technology; Equal Opportunities; State Security; Okinawa and Northern Territories; Administrative Reform; Financial Service Sector; Economic and Financial Policy and Cabinet Legislation.

The thrust of the administrative reform is (1) slimming of personnel and budget size, (2) clearer separation of bureaucratic routines and policy initiatives on some priorities leading to the much sharper and stronger functional division of labour between bureaucratic agencies and the Prime Minister's office on matters to be strategically envisioned and implemented (Shimizu, 2005). The latter includes postal privatization, scientific innovation and gender equality. Also coming to the forefront in policy discussions are official development assistance (now under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), intelligence (now under a committee of cabinet members) and defence (the Defence Agency was elevated to a Defence Ministry, as a result of which national security has become one of the responsibilities of the Defence Ministry; for now, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs retains its strong responsibility for national security).

POSTAL PRIVATIZATION GOES WITH GLOBALIZATION AND DEMOCRATIZATION

The implications of postal privatization for the prospects of Japanese quasi-federal practice are simple. Once Japan Post is privatized, competitive and fragmented situations are created in the market. If the precedents of privatization of mammoth Japanese state companies give any hint at the prospects of postal privatization, the Japan National Railway was, perhaps, a good example. It was split into regionally divided private companies which must work in close coordination for transporting operations with each other and yet compete immensely to get profits. The Japan Telephone and Telegraph was split into regionally and functionally different companies

which must work competitively with other private companies but which must coordinate somewhat with sister companies if only because they must remain competitive in terms of technological innovation and service provision. Since quasi-federal practice is being envisioned in other areas as well, such as administrative, electoral and educational institutions, postal privatization is more likely to constitute part of the greater pressure for the quasi-federalization of the Japanese society and politics.

In this section I focus on the two contexts of globalization and democratization in relation to postal privatization. Globalization is defined here as the two-way process of fragmenting the national economies into much smaller subunits and re-integrating some of those subunits with other similarly vibrating subunits in other national economies into the global economy (Rosenau, 2002). The level of technology in communications and transportation has made an astronomical advance in the last quarter of the 20th century, which has been a key driver of what is called globalization. Those areas which have not kept abreast of these advances in terms of technology and sustaining infrastructure and services tend to lag behind and become marginalized, while those which have on the whole kept up with these advances tend to flourish. This process is called fragmentation. Fragmentation takes place in nationally organized territorial states. Re-integration takes place in linking those places that have kept abreast with the tide of the era across nation-states. These are the two faces of the globalization phenomena. Since areas that have kept pace with the tide of globalization are in close contact when they are geographically adjacent, regionalization is bound to take place (Katzenstein, 2005). In efforts at expanding markets, regionalization takes place because open and free trade links spots closely.

Kenichi Ohmae (1996) was the first author to point to the primordial importance of regionalization. *Beyond the Nation-State* discusses how Japan divides itself into a few regions, at the same time connecting with other regions in adjacent countries of East and Southeast Asia. Ohmae saw the emerging trend as early as the early 1990s. Ohmae talks about regionalization at two levels: at the sub-national level and at the sub-global level. He envisaged the tide of globalization as facilitating economic transactions, for example, between Naha and Amoy, between Kitakyushu and Busan, between Kobe and Tianjin, between Niigata and Vladivostok, between Inchon and Qingdao, between Dalian and Shanghai. In other words, the hegemonic role of the territorial sovereign state is envisaged as breaking up. The decline of the role of the sovereign state is accompanied by the functional quasi-integration of sub-national units bringing about the creation of sub-global units, here and there. In tandem with the creation of sub-global units which is sometimes called regionalization, administrative and political

units are gradually collated. In other words, a very loose, open and weak form of federalism is being forged at various levels. This is the message from Kenichi Ohmae. He was very prescient in light of the evolution that has been taking place very fast in this part of the world.

Democratization is facilitated by privatization. Postal privatization gives rise to the reduction of the power of the sovereign state to a certain degree. By 'a certain degree' I mean that the power of the sovereign state retreats somewhat and puts itself at the mercy of global market forces, on the one hand (Strange, 1996) while on the other hand the sovereign state tries to compete with global market forces and thereby tries to retain its strength by way of shaping the spirit and design of a company as well as legislating the rules affecting such a company. Postal privatization is a complex process. At the first stage the three key functions of the old Japan Post will be separated into three companies, each dealing with postal communications, postal savings and postal insurance, respectively. In all areas, market forces are bound to increase. The dominance of the sovereign state in Japan was reinforced by the idea of state-led developmentalism (Johnson, 1982; Inoguchi, 2006a), that is, the idea that the government should be a primary designer and player in shaping national economic development on the basis of its own capital, technology, labour, rules and institutions. Yet the heyday of state developmentalism is clearly over. Non-governmental forces have been steadily increasing. Privatization permeates not only business but also politics.[4] With the recession of state developmentalism those bureaucratic agencies that claimed to guide national economic development have visibly lost their authority and power in politics. The days are gone when the Economic Planning Agency, Finance, International Trade and Industry were regarded as the flag carriers of national economic advances and management.

National economic development has become largely a matter of business. The business of the state used to be business. But the business of the state now places its emphasis on designing and monitoring norms and rules pertaining to each policy area in forms that are congruent with the ones internationally agreed and practised (Inoguchi, 2006b). Also the government has to place enormous emphasis on its own transparency and accountability (Transparency International, http://www.transparency.org/). With these and other changes, democratization deepens. Japan is not an exception.

CONCLUSION

Japan presents a uniquely Asian way of federalization. The contour of Japanese history for the past 500 years enables one to realize that Japan has

two traditions, unitary and federal, in its political arrangements. The early modern period pushed forward its federal direction while the modern period intensified the unitary direction. The argument of this chapter is that the still uncertain mix of these traditions that is in the making, in meeting the two major challenges of what might be called the post-modern period, the deepening tide of globalization and the steady accumulation of critical citizens, presents a fascinating picture of federalization, Asian style.

Conclusion one is that the quasi-federal arrangements remained resilient after 1868 despite the Meiji Restoration's strong aspiration to become a unitary centralized state. To the West, Japan has given the overtly simplified picture of a centralized unitary state largely because Westerners have tended to focus their reading on the modern period since 1868 and especially the post-World War period since 1945 (O'Dywer, 2005). Their horizon has not gone back to the early modern period during which many of the key features of the Japanese political system we are accustomed to take for granted were shaped. This is clear from key Western writings on Japanese politics. They take it for granted that Japan, as they understand it, 'started' only in 1868 or in 1945. This is unfortunate. This tendency has reinforced the image of Japan as being a unitary and centralized state embarking on the path of modernization and industrialization. The image of a modernizing authoritarian state was impressed on the minds of many Westerners. As a matter of fact, the Imperial Constitution prescribed a fairly decentralized picture at the highest level. The monarch sat at the top, but very many had access to the ear of the Emperor. First of all, the Prime Minister was a *primus inter pares*. One cabinet minister's dissent could easily topple the government. The Imperial Army and Navy were directly responsible to the Emperor. So was the Privy Council. So were a bundle of senior statesmen.

Second, each of the bureaucratic agencies of the central government were almost sovereign. They enjoyed their own autonomy in much the same way as the 300-odd domains enjoyed their autonomy in the early modern period. There are two gatekeepers to force compromises with their autonomy. One is the Cabinet Legislative Bureau, an agency which checks a legislative bill drafted by a bureaucratic agency in terms of whether there are inconsistencies of the bill with all the existing laws and the Constitution. The other is the Ministry of Treasury, which checks the bill in terms of whether its budgetary implications can be accommodated or not by state finance. Needless to say, other gatekeepers did exist, as described above. In the early period immediately after 1868, it was not uncommon to find that some ministries retained some geographical features. After all, the Meiji Restoration started as a military coup d'état of small bands of warriors-cum-bureaucrats drawn largely from the two peripheralized domains of

Choshu and Satsuma. The former took in the Army, the latter the Navy. Prime Ministers were more or less alternated between them in the early years. The major anti-government armed rebellion originating from the former reduced the power of the latter in subsequent years. This almost explains why Choshu has given birth to many Prime Ministers in modern Japanese politics. Any geographical features attached to bureaucratic agencies, however, were more or less lost by 1945.

Conclusion two is that all the emphasis on authoritarianism reinforced by such drivers as the strong aspiration to achieve a strong army and a rich country cannot hide the undercurrent of quasi-democratic arrangements originating from the early modern period. Shortly after successfully suppressing the major anti-government rebellion in 1876, the government moved ahead to heal the wounds of local notables from their heavy tax burdens and of former warriors-cum-bureaucrats for their having no jobs, by announcing the opening of local assemblies, the establishing of political parties and the promulgation of a Constitution. The government realized painfully but very clearly that, without mobilizing the support and resources from below, the government could not achieve much of what it wanted to achieve. The tradition of decentralized and quasi-democratic arrangements worked well in the government's establishing modern parliamentary democracy under the monarch. It was assiduous and agile also in such tasks as co-opting landowners for taxation, giving bureaucratic positions to local notables in the postal service and giving job opportunities as policemen and soldiers to jobless former warriors-cum-bureaucrats. Democratization went on more or less continuously from 1876, first, with democratic participation (1880s and 1890s), second, with democratic contestation (1900s to 1920s) and democratic consolidation (1930s). The rise of military dictatorship and authoritarian politics in the wartime period did not hide the continuous democratic practice through the 1930s.

Conclusion three is that, in the postmodern period, the relentless tide of globalization and the emergence of increasingly critical citizens pose two major challenges. Japanese political arrangements have to mix the two traditions in a most calculated way, as in the revival of the early modern arrangement of the relationship between the Tokugawa government and 300-odd localities. The prospect for Japan's quasi-federalization is not dim. Rather, it is very strong. One of the manifestations of the Japanese approach of mixing the traditions is examined in the initial phase of the legislation of postal privatization and associated politics. Bureaucracy reduces its power. Politics is given more space. Meeting the challenge of globalization requires astute calculation and agile action. Otherwise, increasingly critical citizens, now bereft of state developmentalism's networks, can act violently against the government, with their instinctive

apprehension that the tide of globalization destroys the fruits of their democratic achievements. The summer–autumn of 2005 showed that citizens can be persuaded, even when the medicine is bitter, at least in the short run.

NOTES

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2. This is best represented by Heizo Takenaka, a Cabinet member of the Koizumi government. It is also succinctly articulated by the United States Government in its annual list of requests to the Japanese Government.
3. The general election on 11 September 2005 was the first general election, the campaigns in which reminded one of this parallelism.
4. How globalization has an impact on democracy has been examined on the basis of the 18-country (nine from Asia and nine from Europe) cross-national survey of 2000. See Inoguchi Takashi (2004). The results are moderately positive, although more empirical examinations are necessary to have stronger results. See also Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson (2006).

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