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To cite this article: Takashi Inoguchi (1997) The Japanese political system: Its basic continuity in historical perspective, *Asian Journal of Political Science*, 5:2, 65-77, DOI: [10.1080/02185379708434105](https://doi.org/10.1080/02185379708434105)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02185379708434105>



Published online: 02 Jan 2008.



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The Japanese Political System: Its Basic Continuity in Historical Perspective

Takashi Inoguchi*

Introduction

This article represents one of my efforts to put the key features of the Japanese political system in a historical perspective. It is an exercise of peering into the future by looking back: looking back neither to 1995, nor 1945, nor 1868; rather, looking back to the 16th century.¹ Two concepts are used to characterize the Japanese political system: political representation and economic competitiveness.

Political representation is defined as the fair and free procedure to choose political representatives with various social backgrounds in a multiparty setting within a national political context. Economic competitiveness is defined as the overall estimate of the strength of the nation in terms of its aggregate capacity, for example, for the commodity to sell, for scientists and engineers to innovate technology, for the national currency to achieve a more favourable exchange rate in an international context.² There are two comments to make on each of the two definitions. The definition of political representation focuses on procedure rather than performance. Instead of asking whether a political system can deliver something like safety, plenty and equality to the electorate through a certain mode of political representation, it asks whether the procedure of choosing political deputies is conducted properly or not. Furthermore, its scope is within a national border. In other words, the balanced representation of deputies within one political unit is asked in terms of a number of criteria like policy tenets, occupational categories, gender, age, socio-economic status and geography. One can call this the concern for "democracy in one country".

In a similar vein, but also partially contrasting, the definition of economic competitiveness focuses on performance rather than procedure. It is concerned with the degree of competitiveness not of a commodity, not of a business firm or sector, but of an economy *vis-à-vis* other economies in a global economic setting. Furthermore, it assumes that the competitiveness of the nation can be aggregated somehow. One can call this the concern for "strength in a nation-state system".

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It will be useful to recall Seymour Martin Lipset's requirements of democracy, legitimacy and performance. Political representation here defined seems to satisfy the requirement of legitimacy in a procedural sense. He includes more than the satisfaction of the concepts of legitimizing procedures such as national identity and integration. He also includes something far more than electoral procedures, which would accord a political system a fully-fledged legitimacy. He is primarily concerned with the varying degrees of performance of a political system for the electorate in such terms as per capita income, inflation rate and unemployment rate over a certain temporal span.

Having said this, I would like to characterize certain sets of values and beliefs widely accepted and practised in Japanese society pertaining to political representation and economic competitiveness, to legitimacy and performance, and to a pair of requirements that would need to be considered at a time of globalization.

Political Representation: Its Original Framework

It may cause some surprise to start by referring to a military leader who lived in the 16th century. But without locating his place in the history of the Japanese political development, the task of characterizing Japanese values on political representation would be far from sufficient. Oda Nobunaga was a military leader who embarked on unifying the country when it was divided by hundreds of military leaders in the latter half of the 16th century. He almost succeeded by ruthlessly destroying many medieval actors, such as Buddhist militants, merchant-city republics, petty feudal fiefdoms and his military contenders, with the latest military technology and strategy.³ But medieval interests and instincts died hard among most other actors and he succumbed to one of them when assassinated by his own lieutenant. His death symbolized the death of a nascent Japanese absolutism in early modern Japan. Thereafter, the road to absolutism was closed.⁴ Instead, what was to become a Japanese-style political system emerged. What are its basic features? There are three major features, namely consensus orientation, bureaucratization and pragmatism.⁵

Let us look, first, at *consensus orientation*. Naturally, I am talking about a very tiny percentage (1–3%) of the population called warriors. They were gradually deprived of land ownership and forced to settle in castle towns in the 300-odd governing units, which former warrior leaders ruled under a new Tokugawa shogunal framework. These 300-odd governing units, called *han*, were given autonomy of sorts. But it was constrained. The *han* governors were subject to intermittent harassment by the Tokugawa *bakufu* because of real or alleged misgovernment. Their autonomy was compromised by their having to use their resources for public works for the Tokugawa *bakufu*. It was also compromised by their not being allowed to conduct foreign trade, which was the monopoly of the Tokugawa. Nevertheless, autonomy was there, more or less. Thus, some hundreds to thousands of warriors became bureaucrats residing in the castle towns. Among their cadres, consensus was built on two issues. First, the *han* leader was normally not able to deviate from the cardinal principles of the *han*. Instead of rule by person, rule by principle or doctrine seemed to reign from the 17th century onwards.⁶ Absolutism was not there. Second, bureaucrats had to rely on common folk

to assist in their administration. Bureaucrats were very few in number. Their resources were limited. Furthermore, many of the bureaucratic cadres were newcomers to the territory they administered, their boss having been assigned his new territory by the Tokugawa and they had simply followed him. They had to listen to and rely on leaders of peasants and merchants for taxation, crime control and construction of public works. As a result, a much larger portion of the population was mobilized for governing than the 1–3% comprising the cadres.

Despite all this, *bureaucratic rule* was evident. Bureaucratic cadres were the governing élite. They were the most educated. They were not tied to landed interests. They were functionaries of a sort. They entertained the pride of being an élite corp working above self-interest, unlike those with landed or commercial interests. They believed in and acted on the belief of public interest as far as their spatial framework allowed them. Although these bureaucrats were to be deprived of their warrior class status after the Meiji Restoration took place in mid-19th century, a large bulk of them continued to serve the state as bureaucrats. In the 1880s, the Imperial Universities of Tokyo and Kyoto had a student body which was predominantly from former warrior class families. In the case of engineering school, their proportion was as high as 80%, while in law school, it was about 40%. Till as late as the 1920s, about one half of state bureaucrats were from former warrior class families. Because they were well educated and because of a new channel in the recruitment scheme, namely, school networks, they were favoured for the bureaucracy. Since 1945, however, class distinction has been substantially blurred and, in fact, has become politically incorrect even to mention. Hence, it is not known, today, what proportion of the bureaucracy, the more or less hereditary bureaucratic families form, but hereditary or not, bureaucratic rule has not lost its centrality after 1868 or even after 1945.

By *pragmatism*, I mean the orientation whereby the governing élite approaches its role in government. The governing élite is more at ease with action tailored to complex reality based on on-site monitoring. This has some resemblance to muddling through and piecemeal engineering rather than to architectural blueprinting and holistic engineering. Pragmatism resembles adhocism in some ways. What gives shape to their adhocism is their code of conduct as articulated in each *han*. It normally includes such principles as loyalty, frugality, forthrightness, modesty and pride. On-site monitoring brings the level of political representation higher than it would otherwise be.

Economic Competitiveness: Its Original Framework

When one discusses competitiveness, one needs to refer to a framework of competition. During the rule of the Tokugawa, from the 17th to the 19th century, the framework was competition among 300-odd governing units for their own survival. The Tokugawa imposed public works and other services on them when required. This often strained the purses of the *han*. Agricultural production had started to stagnate after one century of advancement since mid-17th century. As the commercial sectors were not fully taxed, the commercialization of products caused the governing units to stretch their rice-based finances, often making it difficult for them to sustain themselves. Commercial ports for

trade within Japan were often under the direct control of the Tokugawa and those dealing with foreign countries were monopolized by it except for those at which the Tsushima *han* traded with the Koreans, the Satsuma *han* with the Ryukyus, and the Matsumae *han* with the Ainus and the Russians. All these and other factors pushed development efforts to new heights in unexploited areas for rice production with the achievement of greater flood control, disease prevention and more labour inputs as their better outcomes. In other words, the 300-odd governing units had to reply on their own, oftentimes, human resources in a fairly competitive fashion. The reason for this was that once irregularities in finance or governance were reported, the Tokugawa was very prompt to punish the governing units concerned by territorial downsizing or confiscation. Thus, it should be clear that the framework of competition was well established in Japan among the 300-odd governing units. Out of this situation of competition emerged some innovative and industrial developments. It is somewhat like the competition of European states in the nation-state system. It is little wonder then that Japan and Europe each went through a period of feudalism and competitive struggle and that they both subsequently industrialized themselves earlier than many other regions.⁷ The framework changed twice: once in 1868 and the other in about 1985. The former was the framework of the nation-state system. The latter was the framework of globalization. The latter change would turn out to be more fundamental than the former.⁸

Three features easily stand out from Japanese economic thought during the period. First is the idea of self-reliance. Each governing unit had to sustain itself with basically meagre resources at hand. The unit had to be more or less autonomous, largely on the basis of rice production. In tandem with commercialization on a nationwide scale, the production of rice gradually fell in quantity, but the governing élite wanted to keep the rice-based system more or less intact because they feared that once the Pandora's box of commercialization was open, their status and power would be overwhelmed by merchants' money. Hence, the frugality of the bureaucrat's life.

The second feature is the belief in the value of producing something tangible, whether it be rice or umbrella or tatami mats. That was why they stuck to the rice-based system. They regarded service as something that should not be priced. They deemed traders to be unreliable, who could become subversive or become forces that would undermine the rule by bureaucrats.

The third feature is pragmatism. As technological progress, commercialization of products and nationalization of economic activities proceeded relentlessly, many governing units took advantage of the development. But compared with the Western powers that started to visit Japan in the 18th and 19th centuries, most of their achievements were so small that only those who did it most effectively were able to usurp power from the Tokugawa Government in the mid-19th century, namely the Satsuma and Choshu *han*, which were both located on the fringes of Japan, that is, close to the sea or ocean.

These basic features did not change fundamentally after 1868, or even after 1985. They, however, helped prepare the Japanese for industrialization in the 19th century and to propel Japan to new heights in the 20th century.

Political Representation: The Japanese Model

The Japanese ideas of political representation in much of the 19th and 20th centuries are essentially the same. They have three basic features: consensus-seeking, bureaucratic control and pragmatism.

Consensus was desperately needed in 1868, as the Meiji Restoration was engineered by those few governing units located at the fringe. Furthermore, their leaders were of lower ranks. In order to legitimize their power, they placed the Emperor above everyone else. By doing so, they placed themselves on a par with all others. At the same time, they tried to nationalize all the institutional set-ups.⁹ First, class distinction was abolished. The 300-odd governing units were replaced by 50-odd prefectures. National bureaucracy was staffed primarily by meritocratic recruitment. The Imperial Army was constituted by compulsory military service. Compulsory education was instituted free for all for six, and later nine, years. Radio and postal services were established to make Japan one nation. Needless to say, the Imperial Diet was instituted towards the end of the 19th century. Political parties flourished in the 1880s and 90s, and their influence was gradually channelled into government after some initial confrontations in these two decades. When political parties were first formed, they were, by definition, the Opposition. The Government had to co-opt them step by step, which the Government did patiently and persistently.

Bureaucratic control was made a key to the Meiji Government.¹⁰ Its critics rallied around political parties. The bureaucracy in each governing unit in the Tokugawa period was abolished and meritocratically recruited national bureaucracy was instated. Large numbers of bureaucratic cadres of those governing units which were obliterated for standing solidly by the Tokugawa Government against those who engineered the Meiji Restoration were forced to migrate to remote, barren places as punishment for their conduct. It took nearly half a century to see a fully-fledged national bureaucracy functioning. It went through three steps. First, the power of prefectural government was curtailed in the 1910s, when some of the poorer prefectures proved to be unable to finance their compulsory education effectively out of their own tax resources. The Central Government decided in 1918 to centralize financing compulsory education. Second, the power of ministries for war mobilization, mainly economic agencies, was seeded and a large bulk of their regulatory and extractive power was instituted in the 1940s. Third, the war recovery period coincided with a period of renewed industrialization, and economic agencies such as the Economic Stabilization Board, the Ministry of International Trade and Industry and the Ministry of Finance reached their apogees in the 1950s, 60s and 70s, respectively.

When one compares bureaucratic power with that of politicians, it would be clear that the former is more involved with public policy in Tokyo, while the latter is more concerned with the sentiments of the public in the politicians' respective electoral districts. There is no doubt that high-level politicians, amounting to, say, 5 to 10% of all parliamentarians, do display immense power whenever an occasion allows them to do so. But barring that, it is fair to say that bureaucrats have been a key factor in Japanese politics. Even after the institutionalization of elections, which conferred participatory powers to the populace in Japanese politics, this feature has remained the same. The

rise of what are called legislative tribes, *zoku giin*, reflects the rise, proportionately, of some policy experts among politicians in tandem with the retreat of the state and, thus, the relative decline of the power of the bureaucracy. Yet most of them work more as a guardian or parasite of special interests than as a policy articulator or planner.¹¹

The power of the bureaucracy is pronounced in Japan as it is not necessarily tied as solidly as in, say, France, to a triangular overlapping personnel network of business, politics and bureaucracy.¹² Japanese bureaucracy does not normally recruit bureaucratic élite aspirants from either business or politics. Though similar in terms of a bureaucracy-centred system, Japan differs from France in this regard. The United States is vastly different from Japan in that the American political system has many central institutions like the presidency, Congress; the courts, state governments, mass media, and so on.

Pragmatism is very pronounced in Japanese politics. An enemy yesterday is a friend today. One must integrate with yesterday's enemies so that one will face fewer enemies today and tomorrow. The Tokugawa Government spent much effort co-opting the formerly anti-Tokugawa alliances after the battle of Sekigahara of 1600. Similarly, the Meiji Government spared no effort to co-opt the anti-Restoration alliances of the 1860s through the 1920s. In their turn, the LDP (Liberal Democratic Party) Government vigorously sought to befriend the Opposition by adopting and legislating the top-priority policy of the largest opposition party for much of the period of 1955–93. Hence, the LDP *rapprochement* with the Soviet Union in the 1950s met with only moderate criticism from the Opposition. Similarly, the LDP's social policy weakened the Opposition's criticism in the 1970s. Japanese politics, therefore, is not only consensus-oriented but also strategically pragmatic in the sense of stifling the opposition forces by implementing the Opposition's platforms.¹³ In this, there is some flavour of the Chinese strategy of "waving the Red Flag in order to oppose the Red Flag" during the Cultural Revolution period of the late 1960s. In the milieu of party politics, these three features, placed in the historical conjuncture of post-war Japan, manifested themselves in the form of the LDP's one-party dominance. The LDP is often called a catch-all party in the sense that it seeks to capture the broadest segments of the electorate by focusing on the centre-right and beyond. The Downsian image of two major parties occupying segments of the centre in the political continuum side by side has not taken root very much in the post-war Japanese party politics. It was described by Robert Scalapino and Junnosuke Masumi as the one-and-a-half party system, meaning that the largest party, the LDP, was twice as big as the second largest party, the Socialist Party, in much of the two decades beginning in 1955.¹⁴ There were two periods when the LDP's one-party dominance seemed at a point of collapse or to be substantially undermined, that is, in the latter half of the 1970s and in the first half of the 1990s. However, the LDP survived both these ordeals. By the early 1980s, the New Liberal Club, a splinter party, had returned to the LDP's fold and the LDP increased its voting majority substantially in mid-1980s with its electoral strategy of capturing portions of both the right and the left through the slogan of "safety, security and stability".¹⁵ By the mid-1990s, the LDP had contained the expansionary mood of the New Frontier Party, encouraged new splinter parties to emerge, namely the Democratic Party and the Sunshine Party, and indirectly brought about a substantial reduction in the Social

Democratic Party's seats in the National Diet in the general election of October 1996. Although the LDP was short of a majority in the Lower House of the National Diet, the general election registered a step towards the LDP's one-party dominance again.¹⁶

In terms of division of labour between the bureaucrats and the politicians, the bureaucrats have continuously played a pre-eminent role in public policy formation and implementation. Bills are normally drafted by the bureaucracy. Parliamentary bills have to pass through many stages, two of the most important of which come under the scrutiny of the Cabinet Legislative Bureau, for legalistic underpinnings, and the Ministry of Finance, for budgetary underpinnings. All this does not mean that politicians do not play a role here. Rather, high-ranking and high-powered politicians, including the Prime Minister, often influence the direction and scope of policy more often and more decisively than has been noted in the past.¹⁷ No less important is the role of the *zoku giin*, legislative tribes nested in committees. Their power arose from committees and perks associated with their policy expertise. Their power expanded in conjunction with the rise of the LDP as a governing party, especially under Kakuei Tanaka's aegis, from the mid-1960s through the late 1980s. Yet one cannot fail to mention that their power is focused on guarding or sponging on the vested interests associated with their committee affiliation and policy expertise rather than on initiating and innovating public policy of more creative sorts. Hence, the old division of labour demarcated in the late 19th century, when the parliamentary system was created *de novo* in the form of prefectural assemblies and the Imperial Diet, dies hard even today. Politicians are basically involved with the electorate in their respective districts while bureaucrats are basically in charge of policy in Tokyo. Political parties used to be the Opposition by definition, and most politicians in Japan used to be members of opposition parties in the days when they were basically unemployed former warriors or excessively taxed landowners-cum-local notables, that is, during the period of early- and mid-Meiji political reforms. Politicians are expected to give attention to preferences of the electorates in their districts in most concrete or tangible forms. Hence, their frequent appearance at funerals, marriage ceremonies and anniversaries of business firms. Hence, too, their brokering jobs for the children of the electorate. And, most importantly, their attempts at securing public works for their districts.¹⁸

Economic Competitiveness: The Japanese Model

The three sets of beliefs stressed in relation to economic competitiveness are self-reliance, industrialization and pragmatism. These tenets took root firmly as the Japanese economy moved towards and underwent industrialization in the late 19th century. First, the drive towards self-reliance was instinctive.¹⁹ The coerced opening of ports and the country in the mid-19th century meant the absence of tariff autonomy along with the privilege of extraterritoriality for those foreign nationals. To get tariff autonomy back took half a century. During these decades, Japan had to live without tariff protection although it was not competitive in most products. To survive, therefore, Japan had to earn foreign exchange by exporting silk first, and then gradually silk and cotton products by World War I. The belief in self-reliance was most pronounced

in the practice of hiring foreigners. The Meiji Government employed for exorbitant sums of money a substantial number of foreigners, lawyers, language teachers, engineers and medical doctors. But it did so in order to absorb knowledge and technology from them. Once the learning stage was over, their services were terminated. Japanese nationals then took on the execution of those tasks.

Japan was fortunate in having some preconditions for such aspirations to come true. Literacy rate for the Japanese in the Tokugawa period was very high not only among warriors but among peasants as well. Buddhist temple schools helped them to obtain literacy.²⁰ Hence, a large labour force was available from the beginning for the modern sectors. Food was abundant for the population during the pre-industrial period. Rice was one of the major export items in the early Meiji period. Agricultural products like silk and, later, light industrial products like cloth were able to earn foreign exchange for buying foreign industrial technology. Energy resources were not abundant but they sufficed for a slowly industrializing Japan. Also, the Japanese did not welcome foreign direct investment. Rather, they borrowed technology from abroad and absorbed technological knowledge from employed foreign teachers. The Government was also keen to achieve self-reliance by first establishing public enterprises and then selling them to private firms and banks as initial investments began to bear fruit.

Self-reliance began to erode once the Government became enmeshed in the international turmoil of the 1930s and 40s. Its war mobilization plan went far beyond the capability of the country to support it, and the conduct of war destroyed completely the nation's self-reliance in terms of food and energy resources. Once vanquished, Japan's first priority was to ensure a steady supply of food and energy resources. Rice production was given priority and it went up dramatically in the late 1940s and early 50s. Coal and water power stations also received priority until the early 1960s, by which time Japan's industrial consumption of energy began to surpass the ability to supply it at home. Hence, a drastic shift to petroleum as a major source of energy came about in the early 1960s. This was also due to a significant degree to the advice of the US Government, which assured the Japanese Government of a constant supply of petroleum to alleviate the latter's worry of its inability to obtain it in the face of international turmoil.

Self-reliance sounds odd when Japan obtains some 80% of its food supply and about 90% of its energy needs from abroad. Yet, for all its historical periods, Japan has been endowed more or less sufficiently with food and energy resources except for the 1930s and 40s and from the 1960s onwards.²¹ Hence, the resilience of this kind of thinking even now. *Vide* the grudging liberalization of the markets for rice and other agricultural products with respect to the Uruguay Round of the GATT negotiations. *Vide* the resistance of manufacturing concerns to relocate themselves to overseas sites amidst the highly appreciated yen's exchange rate *vis-à-vis* the US dollar in the context of the irresistible tide of globalization and liberalization. *Vide* the disproportionately heavy representation in the big business peak association called Keidanren of heavy and manufacturing sectors like electricity power, petroleum, steel, automobiles, electrical and electronic appliances, manufacturing and precision machines. *Vide* the tireless endeavour to generate nuclear energy from plutonium which would be, according to

advocates of the scheme, multiple times more efficient than if it were based on uranium. And *vide* the heavily protected sectors of financial, distribution, and telecommunication services against the tide of liberalization.

Manufacturing matters in Japan far more than in the United States. "Manufacturing matters' is the ideology of Japan," many business leaders would say to their American counterparts. Not only is manufacturing important but also the whole set of manufacturing sectors must exist in Japan. The ideal is that Japan manufactures every major commodity from cloth to steel, from semiconductors to automobiles, from construction machines to bullet trains. It is called the "whole set industrialization". In a regional context, it resembles somewhat B.J. Habibie's idea of producing everything in Indonesia, from automobiles to commuter aeroplanes. Japan's "whole set" is thicker and wider, at least in the context of the 1960s through the 80s. From the 1970s onwards, Japan's manufacturing could not be confined to Japanese territory. It has spread abroad to North America, Western Europe, Pacific Asia and beyond in the last decade or so in conjunction with the globalization of economic activities and the market liberalization of many economies. Especially in Pacific Asia, Japan's manufacturing has built strong bridgeheads in several places in the region and penetrated local economies. This has led Walter Hatch and Kezo Yamamura to entitle their latest work, *Asia in Japan's Embrace*.²² This is tantamount to saying that Japan's whole set manufacturing has spatially expanded from Japan proper to Pacific Asia, more or less. Whether one is at ease with this expanded definition of the whole set manufacturing philosophy or not is another matter. One could argue that Japan's adherence to the philosophy of "manufacturing matters" has helped Japan to go to Pacific Asia and beyond. If that is the case, "Asia in Japan's Embrace" means Japan's philosophy of manufacturing matters writ large. To remain competitive, the Japanese have gone abroad.

Pragmatism is the third component of the Japanese belief in economic competitiveness. To remain competitive, pragmatism is indispensable. One cannot swim permanently against market forces. For example, in the early 1970s bathing sandals faced competition from Korea, Taiwan and Hong Kong as oil prices went up. Many sandal-producing factories closed down. A small number of them not only survived but also struck back at some of the Pacific Asian manufacturers by using automation and energy-saving devices to produce the goods and, by the late 1970s, were able to export them to the region. But in the 1980s, Pacific Asian products almost wiped out Japanese exports for the second time.

Another example is trade disputes and their aftermaths. Trade disputes have been taking place intermittently between Japan and the United States. What has happened after dispute settlements? In the United States, many steel concerns closed down. In Japan, many steel-producing firms folded up too, especially among subcontractors. But some major firms have survived. They have kept producing steel of higher added value and, no less importantly, they still employ many of their workers, though some are working in utterly different sectors from steel. The same firms have shifted their focus to more profitable areas.

Market friendliness and conformity were also vindicated in the dispute with the United States over semiconductors. In the 1995 accord, the target figures for the

American products' penetration in the Japanese market were provided by the Japanese semiconductor producers as a non-governmental sector's informed estimates. The Japanese government did not acknowledge them as its pledge.

Political Representation and Economic Competitiveness in the Coming Decades

How to foresee political representation and economic competitiveness in the coming decades poses a great problem since it has a lot to do with how to see the nature of further sustained globalization.²³ One school of thought argues that globalization in a broad sense of the word means, at the same time, the fragmentation of a traditional body politic, and that transnational coalitions may play much larger roles. The other school of thought argues that a large bulk of transactions conducted across borders, whether they are financial, security or technology-related, are done with due awareness of the primacy of the state, and that transnational coalitions, whether they are profit-seeking or not, would not marginalize the conventional establishment in running national politics.

It is not immediately clear that fragmented social groups are reducing the role of a traditional body politic to a marginal proportion. Fragmented social groups can be categorized into two types: relatively competitive and relatively non-competitive. According to the former school, the competitive groups go transnational and do not pay too much attention to national politics, now totally parochialized and unrepresentative of their interests. On the other hand, the non-competitive groups defend their interest uncompromisingly, taking advantage of their political over-representation in the absence of the competitive groups not fully embedded in a body politic. According to the latter school, the competitive groups retain their overwhelming power over the rest and their power at home is reinforced by the transnational coalition of which they are part. It is a world where the transnational coalition is in charge, with each body politic given a sort of subsidiarity to the extent to which that does not collide with the basic principle of global governance run by such transnational coalition. With this new dimension in mind, let me try to characterize political representation first, and then economic competitiveness in the coming decades.

Political representation in budgetary terms is seen as follows.²⁴ First, the Socialists, or Social Democrats, as they are now called, have joined the coalition governments and altered their erstwhile anti-US position. Their left-wing pacifism is now widely shared by the LDP-led right-wing nationalists, and the Socialists have moved closer to the LDP right-wing. Outbursts of pacifist sentiments on occasions of Chinese and French nuclear testings in 1995–96, and of anti-US sentiments harboured over years and triggered off by tough economic negotiations and by the Okinawa rape incident of 1995–96 are two recent major events vindicating this trend. Prior to the end of the Cold War, the Opposition did not have much room to influence foreign policy. Social Democrats are largely responsible for terminating Japanese grants to China for a year or so because of its nuclear testing. Second, another policy area where the Government and opposition parties are pushing the agenda and budgets roughly in the same

direction is social policy. Welfare, medical care, pension scheme and education have become unsustainable in view of the increasing longevity and the increasingly longer period of education. The persistency of this practice has overburdened the Government in terms of tax revenue and government expenditure. Third, those government spendings on public works and local government transfers have been kept very high for many years, largely to satisfy those non-metropolitan population.

Political representation in terms of social groups is seen as follows. First, the centre-right has expanded while the left and centre-left have shrunk. The centre-right has been mildly split over issues of market liberalization, social policy and taxation policy. But it does not seem to be the case that two major parties are in the offing. Rather, one-party dominance seems to be under preparation for reflecting the preferences of national bureaucracy for a non-coalition government and of local electorates for a strong district representative enjoying multiparty or above-partisan support. Business used to be split somewhat on who — the LDP or the New Frontier Party — should be its political representatives, especially on issues of tax and market liberalization. Yet, business, too, has been moving towards support for the LDP much more unequivocally now than in 1996. The centre-right establishment is mildly cohesive, and it does not seem that the transnational coalition has prevailed over the centre-right establishment. Rather, the centre-right establishment has been more or less able to maintain its intensely national characteristics while accommodating the transnational capital's interests steadily but somewhat slowly.

Second, bureaucratic control has been relativized steadily when private business sectors and individual electorates have become much more doggedly self-assertive in terms of refusing further taxation and when globalization has made an intermittent mockery of bureaucratic regulation. Yet national bureaucracy does not seem to be ready to relinquish its power a bit as it is the only feasible agent making the body politic reasonably cohesive.

Third, time-tested pragmatism has been a force in muddling through the years of globalization and recession. But it does carry a somewhat doctrinaire kind of flavour when it comes down to issues of national self-reliance and identity. Its examples include the nuclear energy issue, the financial market liberalization issue and the Japanese modern history issue. These are testimony to the proposition that Japanese politics has not been reduced to a branch of some transnational coalition.

In terms of economic competitiveness, the Japanese model dies hard in Japan. Its three components — national drive, market conformity and the Government's role — are not lost in their entirety.

First, it is clear that the kind of Japanese drive that existed in the 1940s through the mid-1970s does not exist any longer. What does exist is a fall-back position in a sense. It has something to do with national identity and self-reliance. Yet, at the same time, one can easily notice the same tone when Japan seeks permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council: occupying an honourable place in the community of nations. This search for honour may be more restricted to political élites. But, politically, the national drive is resilient. And it has some bearings on economic competitiveness.

Second, market conformity seems to be somewhat compromised for the following three major reasons: (1) Japan's success in manufacturing has pushed it abroad in an

unprecedented fashion; (2) Japan's dodged resistance to a more wholesome financial market liberalization has slowed down recovery from recession; and (3) Japan's developmental momentum itself has become a thing of the past, more or less. Yet (1) much of Japan's success in manufacturing has been continued abroad, especially in Pacific Asia. As long as the Japanese model writ large is accepted, there is still much drive. (2) Japan's dodged or possibly futile resistance to a more extensive financial market liberalization may be seen as a time-gaining device just like the argument for the protection of the infantile sectors. (3) Developmental momentum requires technological innovations and capital savings. Japanese firms' registered patents acquired in the United States have been very substantial, second only to those of US business firms. Japanese savings have not substantially fallen. This fact has itself caused a major problem of delaying business recovery. Yet a large amount of savings can be rendered for more productive purposes than currency and interest rate speculation once time is ripe again. Needless to say, the changing demographic profile and associated saving rate pattern will make its momentum much milder. After all, despite all the economic problems facing Japan in the mid-1990s, income levels are still on the rise, the balance of trade registers a fairly large surplus, electorates pay a lower than average tax rate among OECD members, and consumers enjoy a higher than average income equality among OECD members. And, most importantly, in the context of the subject of political representation and economic competitiveness, the Japanese model should not be given a premature death announcement like Mark Twain's. It dies hard for its innate adaptability.²⁵

Notes

- 1 See Takashi Inoguchi, "The Pragmatic Evolution of Japanese Democratic Politics", in Michelle Schmiegelow (ed.), *Democracy in Asia* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag; and New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), pp. 217–31; "Asian-Style Democracy?", in Takashi Inoguchi, Edward Newman and John Keane (eds.), *The Changing Nature of Democracy* (Tokyo and New York: United Nations University Press, forthcoming in 1998); "Tanegashima Tokitaka kara Plaza Goi made: Nihon seiji no shikumi no hensen (From Lord Tokitaka of Tanegashima to Plaza Accord: A History of the Japanese Political System)", in *Gakushi kaiho* (November 1997), pp. 104–14.
- 2 Seymour Martin Lipset, *Political Man* (New York: Doubleday, 1960). See also Takashi Inoguchi and Edward Newman, "Introduction", in Inoguchi, Newman and Keane, op. cit.
- 3 As for the revolutionary nature of his military strategy, see Geoffrey Parker, *The Military Revolution: Military Innovation and the Rise of the West, 1500–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).
- 4 Perry Anderson, *From Antiquity to Feudalism*; and *The Lineage of Absolutist State* (London: New Left Books, 1974).
- 5 See Inoguchi, "The Pragmatic Evolution of Japanese Democratic Politics", in Schmiegelow, op. cit. For more detailed accounts of this history of the Tokugawa period, see the multi-volume *Nihon no Kinsei* (The Early Modern Period) from Chuo korosha.
- 6 Kasaya Kazuhiko, *Shukun oshikome no kozo* (The Lord Stripped of Power) (Tokyo: Nihon keizai shimbun, 1989).

- 7 Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System* (New York: Academic Press, 1974).
- 8 Banno Junji, *Kindai Nihon no Kokka koso* (Envisaging the Modern Japanese State) (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1996; Masumi Junnosuke, *Gendai Nihon seito shiron* (A Historical Treatise on Modern Japanese Political Parties), 8 vols. (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1968–86).
- 9 Banno Junji, op. cit.
- 10 Nakamura Takafusa, *Kindai Nihon keizashi* (A Modern Japanese Economic History) (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1988).
- 11 Inoguchi Takashi and Iwai Tomoaki, *Zuku giin no kenkyu* (A Study of Legislative Tribes) (Tokyo: Nihon keizai shimbun, 1987).
- 12 Takashi Inoguchi, "Malaise dans la bureaucratie japonaise", *Le monde*, 29 June 1996.
- 13 Takashi Inoguchi, "The Political Economy of Conservative Resurgence under Recession: Public Policies and Public Support in Japan, 1977–1983", in T.J. Pempel (ed.), *Uncommon Democracies: The One-Party Dominant Regimes* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), pp. 189–225; Inoguchi Takashi and Kobayashi Yoshiaki, "Dareno tameno seisakuka" (Public Policies for Whom?), *Shukan Toyokeizai rinji Kindai keizaigaku shirizu*, December 1989, pp. 57–63; Kobayashi Yoshiaki, *Gendai seiji katei no kenkyu* (A Study of Contemporary Japanese Political Process) (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1996).
- 14 Robert Scalapino and Junnosuke Masumi, *Party Politics in Contemporary Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961).
- 15 Takashi Inoguchi, "The Legacy of a Weatherwise Prime Minister", *Japan Quarterly*, Vol. 34, No. 4 (October–November 1987), pp. 363–70.
- 16 Takashi Inoguchi, "A Step towards One Party Predominance: Japan's General Election of October 29, 1996", *Government and Opposition*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (Winter 1997).
- 17 Nobuta Tomohito, *Kantei no kenryoku* (The Power of the Prime Minister's Office) (Tokyo: Chikuma shobo, 1996).
- 18 See Inoguchi and Iwai, op. cit., for politicians' time allocation to district activities.
- 19 Cf. Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *The Technological Transformation of Japan: From the Seventeenth to the Twenty-first Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).
- 20 Ronald Dore, *Education in Tokugawa Japan* (London: Routledge, 1964).
- 21 Yasuba Yasukichi, "Nihon keizai shi ni okeru shigen, 1800–1940" (Natural Resources in Japanese Economic History, 1800–1940), *Shakai keizai shigaku*, Vol. 62, No. 3 (August–September 1996), pp. 1–22.
- 22 Walter Hatch and Kozo Yamamura, *Asia in Japan's Embrace* (Sydney: Cambridge University Press, 1986).
- 23 Inoguchi Takashi, *Sekai hendo no mikata* (Global Changes: An Analysis) (Tokyo: Chikuma shobo, 1994 — an English version will be available in 1998 from Macmillan).
- 24 Inoguchi and Kobayashi, op. cit.; and Kobayashi, op. cit.
- 25 The tone of this article has some similarities with that of Samuel Huntington, *American Politics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), in that both stress having continuity in terms of high adaptability.