CHAPTER ONE

Peace and Democracy in Two Systems
External Policy and Internal Conflict

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Ever since Japan’s seclusion was ruptured by the Western nations in 1853, domestic and international politics have been interwoven for the Japanese. Slogans used to mobilize succeeding generations convey this interconnection. Thus, the forces that eventually overthrew the feudal regime in 1868 rallied around the cry “Revere the Emperor and Expel the Barbarians.” The Meiji government (1868–1912) socialized citizens for Westernization, industrialization, and empire building under the slogan “Rich Country, Strong Military.” Militant expansionists of the 1930s and early 1940s, equally concerned with renovation at home and autarky abroad, paired creation of a domestic “New Structure” with establishment of a “New Order” overseas. They saw the solution to domestic ills in the creation of a broader imperium in Asia, which they glossed with the rhetoric of “Coexistence and Coproserity.”

Although Japan ostensibly pursued a low posture diplomatically after World War II, the intimate relationship between international and domestic politics remained central. Again, catchphrases capture this. Immediately after the war, exhausted Japanese were rallied—and frequently inspired—by an idealistic agenda of “Demilitarization and Democratization.” From the outset these ideals were recognized to be inseparable: destruction of the militarized state was essential to democratize Japan, and only the creation of a genuinely democratic nation could prevent the danger of future Japanese militarism. Once formal demilitarization had been accomplished, the enduring goal became to create and maintain “Peace and Democracy.” Even exhortations such as the popular post-surrender slogan “Construction of a Nation of Culture” (Bunka Kokka no Kensetsu) were understood to be synonymous with the paired ideals of peace and democracy. For example, when Prime Minister Katayama Tetsu addressed the first Diet session held under the new postwar constitution in 1947, he concluded with an appeal
to advance toward "the construction of a democratic nation of peace, a nation of culture" (minshuteki na heiwa kokka, bunka kokka no kensetsu).\textsuperscript{1}

These key terms—democracy, peace, and culture—were subject to reinterpretation in the years that followed, and culture, by and large, was uncoupled from the other two. Throughout the postwar period, however, a large portion of political policy and contention continued to be contained, like a crackling electric current, within the polemical poles of peace and democracy. These are not rhetorical ideals peculiar to Japan, but they assumed a particular vitality there. Peace became the magnetic pole for both legitimization and criticism of external policy; democracy served the same function for highly contested domestic issues. And postwar controversies over military and international policy almost invariably became entangled with internal struggles concerning power, participation, national priorities, and competing visions of fairness, well-being, and social justice.

Where the actual structures of postwar power are concerned, two additional and uniquely Japanese phrases command attention. One is the "San Francisco System," which refers to the international posture Japan assumed formally when it signed a peace treaty with forty-eight nations in San Francisco in September 1951 and simultaneously aligned itself with the cold-war policy of the United States through the bilateral Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security. To the end of the Shōwa period, which effectively symbolized the end of the "postwar" era for Japan, the country continued to operate within the strategic parameters of the San Francisco System, although its global role and influence changed conspicuously after it emerged as an economic power in the 1970s. The second phrase, coined to designate the nature of domestic power relations, is the "1955 System." Here the reference is to a concatenation of political and socioeconomic developments in 1955, including the establishment of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) which governed Japan uninterruptedly over the ensuing decades. More generally, "1955 System" signifies a domestic political structure characterized by an internally competitive but nonetheless hegemonic conservative establishment and a marginalized but sometimes influential liberal and Marxist opposition.

Like all fashionable political phrases, "San Francisco System" and "1955 System" obscure as much as they reveal. Both Japan's incorporation into U.S. cold-war policy and the triumph of the conservative elites were evident from the late 1940s, when U.S. policy toward occupied Japan underwent a so-called reverse course, in which emphasis was shifted from demilitarization and democratization to economic reconstruction, rearmament, and integration into the U.S. anticommunist containment policy. The real genesis of both systems is thus much earlier than a literal reading of the popular labels would suggest. Moreover, the domestic as well as international milieu in which the Japanese operated changed

constantly during the postwar period, and dramatically so after the early 1970s. From this perspective, it is argued, both “San Francisco System” and “1955 System” have an anachronistic ring when applied to the years after the mid-1970s or so. And, indeed, they do.  

Still, the two phrases remain highly suggestive for anyone who wishes to recreate postwar Japan as history. They reflect a worldview, looking both outward and inward, that was defined and described (and criticized) by the Japanese themselves. And, like all popular phrases that survive for more than a passing moment, they capture—certainly for Japanese analysts—a wealth of complicated and even contradictory associations. They are code words for the peculiar capitalist context, overseas and at home, in which postwar Japan developed. They are closely associated with the impressive international and domestic prosperity Japan attained between the 1950s and 1980s. At the same time, they evoke the internal schism and tension and even violence that accompanied Japan’s attainment of wealth and power. For Japanese, “San Francisco System” and “1955 System” vividly symbolize the intense political conflicts over issues of peace and democracy that characterized Japan’s emergence as a rich consumer society and powerful capitalist state.

Essentially, these conflicts pitted liberal and left-wing critics against the dominant conservative elites. At the peak of their influence in the 1950s and 1960s, these critics constituted an effective minority, capable of capturing popular imagination and influencing the national agenda. By the mid-1970s, though, the Left appeared spent as an intellectually compelling political force. Partly, the opposi-


tion simply had lost some of its most fundamental arguments: prosperity at home undermined the critique of capitalism, and economic superpower status abroad discredited the argument of subordination to the U.S. economy. Partly again, however, the anti-establishment critics had won some of their arguments or, more commonly, had seen their positions on social and geopolitical issues effectively co-opted by the conservatives. Despite polemics of the most vitriolic sort, postwar Japan never was split into completely unbridgeable ideological camps. The pro-American conservatives nursed many resentments against the United States, for example, while the liberal and leftist “internationalists” were susceptible to nationalist appeals. Schism in both camps, as well as accommodation between the camps, were thus persistent subtexts in the debates over peace and democracy. This ideological softness, as it were, helps explain the transition to the less polemical decades of the 1970s and 1980s. As the debates over peace and democracy receded, their place was taken by a rising tide of neonationalist thinking that stressed Japanese uniqueness and superiority. Although this late-Shōwa cult of exceptionalism had Japanese critics, it tapped a line of thought with strong left-wing as well as conservative roots.

Contention over global and domestic policies did not disappear in the last decades of Shōwa. Rather, it took different forms. Although Japan’s emergence as an economic superpower resulted in undreamed-of influence, it also created unanticipated tensions—not only with the United States and the European community but also within Japan. At the elite level Japan’s new capitalism spawned new contenders for power and influence within the conservative establishment. And at the popular level the almost catatonic fixation of the ruling groups on industrial productivity and economic nationalism stimulated citizens’ protest movements that eschewed doctrinaire ideologies and focused on specific issues such as quality of life, environmental protection, community services, and the like. Less sweeping in vision than the earlier “peace and democracy” struggles, such extraparliamentary activities represented a new kind of grass-roots democracy.

In these various ways, it can be said that Japan entered a new stage in the early 1970s. Yet the old military and economic imbrication with the United States symbolized by the San Francisco System remained at the heart of Japan’s external policy. The conservative hegemony—the bedrock of the 1955 System—continued to rule Japan, juggling more balls than in the past, bickering and backbiting within its own ranks, but in no real danger of being removed from center stage. And the great issues of peace and democracy, however muted by prosperity and national pride, remained just beneath the surface. Was the new superstate really democratic, really a constructive force for peace? In the 1970s and 1980s, as the old debates faded from the scene, these questions were asked from new perspectives by the world at large.

These broad areas of concern—the San Francisco System, the 1955 System, the conflicts within them and linkages between them, and the uncertain world that Japan stumbled into as an economic, financial, and technological superpower beginning in the 1970s—are addressed in the pages that follow.
THE SAN FRANCISCO SYSTEM

The intersection of “peace” and “democracy” in postwar Japan begins with the Allied occupation of 1945–52 and its evolution into the San Francisco System. Under the U.S.-dominated occupation, defeated Japan was initially demilitarized. The Imperial Army and Navy ministries were abolished. Former military officers were purged from public life, ostensibly “for all time.” Under the famous Article 9 of the 1947 constitution, Japan pledged to “forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as a means of settling international disputes.” What this meant, it was explained at the time, was exactly what it seemed to mean. As Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru put it, taking a colorful metaphor from the days of the samurai, under the new peace constitution the Japanese were prohibited from picking up even two swords in the name of self-defense.3

At this early stage Yoshida and his colleagues anticipated that for the foreseeable future Japan would fare best as an unarmed nation dedicated to restoring peaceful relations with the rest of the world, including China and the Soviet Union. Its security, the earliest scenarios went, might be guaranteed by the United Nations, or by a Great Power agreement, or if necessary by a bilateral agreement with the United States under which the main islands of Japan were protected by U.S. forces stationed elsewhere (possibly including Okinawa).4 This was not to be. The peace treaty signed in San Francisco in 1951 was in fact generous and nonpunitive, including no provisions for future international oversight of Japan. Under the Security Treaty with the United States, however, Japan agreed to the retention of U.S. military bases throughout the country after restoration of sovereignty and was understood to have committed itself to rearmament. The United States retained de facto control of the Ryukyu Islands, including Okinawa, which by then had become its major nuclear base in Asia, while “residual sovereignty” was acknowledged to lie with Japan.

As anticipated, because of the military alignment with the United States, which Japan agreed to in order to regain its sovereignty, the Soviet Union refused to sign the peace treaty. Neither the People’s Republic of China nor the Kuomintang regime on Taiwan were invited to the San Francisco conference, but subsequently, contrary to its hopes and expectations, the Yoshida government was placed under severe U.S. pressure to establish relations with the Kuomintang and join in the containment of China. In the terms of those times the peace settlement at San Francisco was thus a “separate peace.” In the years that followed the


formal restoration of sovereignty to Japan in April 1952, these cold-war arrangements remained a central focus of opposition by domestic critics of the government and a source of friction within the U.S.-Japan partnership itself.\textsuperscript{5}

At the time the Security Treaty was negotiated and came into effect, U.S. projections for a future Japanese military focused on ground forces and were exceedingly ambitious. The Japanese were told they should create an army of 325,000 to 350,000 men by 1954—a figure larger than the Imperial Army on the eve of the Manchurian Incident in 1931, and larger than ever actually was reached in the postwar period. It was assumed from the outset in U.S. circles that Japanese remilitarization should and would entail constitutional revision. This assumption emerged in secret U.S. projections in the late 1940s, before the Americans actually began rearming Japan, and was first publicly emphasized by Vice President Richard Nixon in November 1953. For many reasons—including not only fear of economic dislocation and social unrest in Japan but also fear that the zealots in Washington would go on to demand that Japan send this projected army to fight in the Korean War—Yoshida resisted these U.S. pressures and established a more modest pattern of incremental Japanese rearmament. Privately, he and his aides agreed with the Americans that constitutional revision would have to accompany any rapid and large-scale military build-up, and they argued that such revision was politically impossible at the time. After all, only five years or so earlier the Japanese had seen a war—and nuclear weapons—brought home to them. This, indeed, was and remained the critical card: because of popular support for the liberal 1947 “peace constitution,” constitutional revision remained politically impossible in postwar Japan.\textsuperscript{6}

As counterpoint to the permissive agreements on remilitarization reached between the U.S. and Japanese governments in the early 1950s, Article 9 thus survived as an ambiguous but critical element within the San Francisco System. It was reinterpreted cavalierly by the government to permit piecemeal Japanese rearmament, but at the same time it was effectively utilized to restrain the speed and scope of remilitarization. Successive Shōwa-era cabinets repeatedly evoked the constitution to resist U.S. pressure not merely for large troop increases but also for participation in collective security arrangements and overseas missions. As Prime Minister Satō Eisaku stated in 1970, “The provisions of the Constitution make overseas service impossible.” Because revision of Article 9 would open the door to conservative revision of other parts of the national charter as well, especially concerning guarantees of individual rights and possibly also the purely

\textsuperscript{5} Nishimura, San Furanshisuko keiza i ryouaku; Dower, Empire and Aftermath, 369–414; Frederick S. Dunn, Peace-making and the Settlement with Japan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963); Michael Yoshitsuru, Japan and the San Francisco Peace Settlement (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).

\textsuperscript{6} I have summarized the official U.S. record in some detail in “Occupied Japan.”

\textsuperscript{7} John Welshfield, An Empire in Eclipse: Japan in the Postwar American Alliance System (London: Athlone Press, 1988), 250. This is the most detailed and useful source in English on Japan within the San Francisco System.
“symbolic” status of the emperor, debates over constitutional revision became the most dramatic single example of the intersection of postwar concerns about peace and democracy.

The text of the peace treaty was not made public until it was signed in September 1951, and details of the U.S.-Japan military relationship were worked out between the two governments only in the months that intervened between then and the end of the occupation in April 1952. Nonetheless, the general policy of incorporating Japan into U.S. cold-war policy was clear well before the outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950, and opposition within Japan mobilized accordingly. The political Left was factionalized in its analysis of these developments, but many of the basic principles that would underlie criticism of the San Francisco System in the years to follow were introduced by the left-wing parties and liberal and “progressive” (kakushin) intellectuals between 1949 and 1951. In December 1949 the Socialist Party adopted “Three Principles of Peace” for Japan: an overall peace settlement with all former enemies, opposition to bilateral military pacts or foreign military bases in Japan, and neutrality in the cold war. In 1951, after hard wrangling between the right and left wings of the party, the Socialists added, as a fourth peace principle, opposition to Japanese rearmament.

By far the most influential intellectual endorsement of these principles came from the Peace Problems Symposium (Heiwa Mondai Danwakai), a loose grouping of highly respected academics who first collaborated in November 1948 to issue a general statement on war, peace, and social justice signed by fifty-five scholars in the natural and social sciences. In a “Statement on the Peace Problem” released in January 1950 and signed by thirty-five intellectuals, the group elaborated on the three peace principles, warned that a separate peace could contribute to war, and emphasized the importance of avoiding dependency on the United States. The third Peace Problems Symposium statement, drafted largely by Maruyama Masao and Ukai Nobushige and published as usual in the monthly magazine Sekai, was issued in December 1950, after the outbreak of the Korean War and open commencement of Japanese rearmament. So great was the response that Sekai was said to have doubled its circulation.

The long third statement, signed by thirty-one intellectuals in the Tokyo chapter of the Peace Problems Symposium and twenty-one in the Kyoto chapter, dwelled on the flawed vision of those self-styled “realists” who adhered to a rigidly bipolar worldview and anticipated inevitable conflict between “liberal democracy” and “communism.” The United States and Soviet Union both came under criticism, while the cold-war premise of the emerging U.S.-Japan military relationship—the argument that the Soviet Union was committed to fostering world communism through military means—was rejected. Japan, it was argued, could best contribute to peaceful coexistence by adopting a strict course of unarmed nonalignment under the United Nations. The final section of the statement was devoted explicitly to “the relationship between peace and the domestic structure” and argued that Japan’s contribution to a world without war, as well as its best
opportunity to attain economic independence, could be most effectively furthered by promoting social-democratic domestic reforms that were guided by neither Soviet ideology nor American-style cold-war objectives. The language was guarded here, referring in general and quite idealistic terms to fairness in the sharing of wealth and income, creation of a mature level of democracy, and supplementing the principles of a free economy (jiyū keizai no genri) with principles of planning (keikaku genri). 8

These statements survived over the years as probably the best-known manifestoes of the Japanese peace movement. Neither then nor later was much attention given to undercurrents within them that seemed to run counter to a truly internationalistic and universalistic outlook. The famous third statement, for example, adopted terms faintly reminiscent of Japan’s pan-Asian rhetoric in World War II by praising the neutrality espoused by India’s Prime Minister Nehru as representing “the very essence of the Asian people’s historic position and mission.” At the same time, the statement introduced a subtle appeal to nationalism in arguing that neutrality represented “the only true position of self-reliance and independence for Japan.” Most striking of all, however, was the attempt of the Peace Problems Symposium intellectuals to nurture antiwar sentiments in Japan by appealing directly to the suffering experienced by the Japanese in the recent war. “In view of the pitiful experience that our fatherland underwent during the war,” the third statement declared, “it is only too clear to us what it can mean to sacrifice peace.” 9 From the perspective of Japan’s Asian victims, of course, such an appeal would seem shockingly parochial rather than internationalist. In the Japanese milieu, however, it tapped an almost instinctual strain of “victim consciousness” (higaisha ishiki) that cut across the political spectrum.

As the precise nature of the San Francisco System unfolded between 1951 and 1954, it became apparent to conservatives as well as the opposition that Japan had paid a considerable price for sovereignty. It now possessed a military of questionable legality and a bilateral security treaty that was unquestionably inequitable. “Preposterously unequal” was the phrase used by Foreign Minister Fujiiyama Aiichi in 1958, and when treaty revision came on the agenda in 1960, U.S. officials agreed that the 1951 Security Treaty with Japan was the most inequitable bilateral agreement the United States had entered into after the war. It also became painfully clear to the Japanese that the price of peace was a divided country—indeed, a doubly divided country in the sense of both territorial and...


spiritual division. The detachment of Okinawa from the rest of Japan turned Okinawan society and economy into a grotesque appendage to the U.S. nuclear strategy in Asia. Edwin Reischauer, ambassador to Japan in the early 1960s, later characterized Okinawa as "the only 'semi-colonial' territory created in Asia since the war," and the resentments generated by this territorial division persisted until the reversion of Okinawa to Japan in 1972, and even after. The spiritual division of the country was manifested in the political and ideological polarization caused in considerable part by the San Francisco System itself. As Yoshida put it, with another graphic military metaphor, this time from the Allied division of Korea at the end of World War II, the occupation and its cold-war settlement drew a "thirty-eighth parallel" through the very heart of the Japanese people. This was hardly a trauma or tragedy comparable to the postwar divisions of Korea, China, Germany, or Vietnam. It suggests, nonetheless, the emotional and politically charged climate of the years that followed Japan's accommodation to American cold-war policy.

Most fundamentally, the San Francisco System subordinated Japan to the United States in psychological as well as structural ways and ate at Japanese pride, year after year, like a slow-working acid. In official U.S. circles it was acknowledged frankly, if confidentially, that the military relationship with Japan was double-edged: it integrated Japan into the anticommunist camp and simultaneously created a permanent structure of U.S. control over Japan. Even passionately anti-Soviet politicians like Yoshida did not regard the USSR as a direct threat to Japan and reluctantly accepted the continued presence of U.S. troops and bases as an unavoidable price for obtaining sovereignty along with assurances of U.S. protection. The primary mission of U.S. forces and bases in Japan including Okinawa was never to defend Japan directly but rather to project U.S. power in Asia and to "support our commitments elsewhere," as one high U.S. official later testified. To many observers the argument that this U.S. presence also acted as a deterrent to external threats to Japan was less persuasive than its counterargument: that the external threat was negligible without the bases, but considerable with them. If war occurred between the United States and the Soviet Union, Japan inevitably would be drawn into it. At the same time, the U.S.


military presence throughout the Japanese islands established an on-site deterrent against hostile remilitarization by Japan itself. Subordination of Japanese military planning to U.S. grand strategy was another and more subtle way of ensuring long-term U.S. control over Japan. So also was the technological integration of the U.S. and Japanese military forces—a process of institutionalized dependency that actually deepened after the mid-1950s, when priorities shifted from ground forces to the creation of a technologically sophisticated Japanese navy and air force.

Early critics of the San Francisco System characterized Japan’s place within it as one of “subordinate independence” (jūzokuteki dokuritsu), including economic as well as diplomatic and military dependency. Although the phrase arose on the political Left, it was echoed throughout Japanese society—and at top levels in Washington and Tokyo as well. When U.S. planners in the Army, Navy, and State departments first turned serious attention to incorporating Japan into cold-war strategy in 1947, for example, they rejected not merely the premise that Japan could be neutral but also that it could ever regain an “independent identity.” In this fiercely bipolar worldview, Japan realistically could be expected to “function only as an American or Soviet satellite.” In November 1951, two months after the peace conference, Joseph Dodge, the key American adviser on economic policy toward Japan, bluntly told representatives of the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) that “Japan can be independent politically but dependent economically.” When Japan was forced to participate in the economic containment of China and seek alternative markets elsewhere, especially in Southeast Asia, fear that Japan was doomed to an exceedingly precarious economic future was palpable throughout the country. At this stage almost no one anticipated that Japan had a serious future in the advanced markets of the West. Thus, as we learn from “Top Secret” records of the U.S. National Security Council, in September 1954 Secretary of State John Foster Dulles “told Yoshida frankly that Japan should not expect to find a big U.S. market because the Japanese don’t make the things we want. Japan must find markets elsewhere for the goods they export.”

Such comments may be amusing in retrospect, but they remind us that Japan’s emergence as a global economic power came late and abruptly and astonished almost everyone concerned. It involved a great deal of skill and hard work, to be sure, but also a large measure of good fortune. In the long run U.S. cold-war policies abetted Japanese economic growth at home and abroad in unanticipated ways. In return for acquiescing in the containment policy, for example, Japan received favored access to U.S. patents and licenses and technical expertise, as well as U.S. patronage in international economic organizations. At the same time, despite American rhetoric about free trade and an open international economic

order, these remained ultimate ideals rather than immediate practices. In the early postwar decades U.S. policy actually sanctioned import restrictions by the Western European allies as well as Japan to facilitate their recovery from the war, and these trade barriers were tolerated longer in Japan’s case than they were in Europe. Also tolerated, until the early 1970s, was an undervalued yen exchange rate—that is, an overvalued dollar, which benefited Japanese export industries. Japan, more than Europe, also was permitted to retain tight restrictions on foreign exchange and capital investment that had been approved as “temporary” measures during the occupation. The closed Japanese domestic economy, which grew so rapidly in the late 1950s and 1960s and became a source of great friction between Japan and the United States and Europe by the end of the 1960s, reflected these protectionist policies sanctioned by the United States in the naive days when Japan was believed to have no serious future in Western markets—and when, by U.S. demand, Japan also was prohibited from establishing close economic ties with China. Although it is doubtful that the U.S. “nuclear umbrella” ever really protected Japan from a serious external threat, it is incontrovertible that the U.S. economic umbrella was an immense boon to Japanese capitalism.  

The Japanese economy also flourished within the San Francisco System in two additional unanticipated ways. Both the Korean War and the Vietnam War brought great profits and market breakthroughs to Japan. U.S. offshore procurements stimulated by the Korean War and thereafter routinized as “new special procurements” (shin tokuji) held Japan’s balance of payments in line through the critical years of the 1950s. The Vietnam War boom, in turn, brought an estimated $1 billion a year to Japanese firms between 1966 and 1971—the period now identified as marking the opening stage of economic “maturity” for Japan and the beginning of the end of America’s role as hegemon of the global capitalist system.  

At the same time, the constraints on Japanese remilitarization that stemmed from the early period of demilitarization and democratization and remained embodied in the constitution did more than merely buttress a general policy of go-slow rearmament. They also thwarted the emergence of a powerful defense lobby comparable to that in the United States. In the absence of a bona fide ministry of defense, the Ministry of Finance remained the major actor in shaping the postwar military budget. There was no Japanese counterpart to the Pentagon.


And despite a handful of large military contractors such as Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, there emerged no civilian defense sector remotely comparable to the military-industrial complex in the United States. Thus, contrary to the situation in America, the best scientists and engineers in postwar Japan turned their talents to the production of commodities for the civilian marketplace, rather than weapons of war. All this was critical to the economic take-off Japan experienced beginning in the late 1950s and the country’s extraordinary competitiveness in ensuing decades. And all this also must be reckoned an integral part of the San Francisco System.

THE 1955 SYSTEM

Like the San Francisco System, the conservative hegemony later known as the 1955 System had its genesis in the occupation-period reverse course, when U.S. policymakers began to jettison many of their more radical democratic ideas and reforms. A general strike planned for 1 February 1947 was banned by General Douglas MacArthur. Prolabor legislation was watered down beginning in 1948. The immense power of the bureaucracy—augmented by a decade and a half of mobilization for “total war”—was never curtailed by the Occupation reformers (beyond abolition of the prewar Home Ministry), and the financial structure remained largely untouched despite initial proposals to democratize it. Fairly ambitious plans to promote economic democratization through industrial deconcentration were abandoned by 1949. Individuals purged from public life “for all time” because of their wartime activities or affiliations began to be depurged in 1950, and by the end of the occupation only a few hundred persons remained under the original purge designation. At the same time, between late 1949 and the end of 1950 U.S. authorities and the Japanese government collaborated in a “Red purge” in the public sector, and then the private sector, that eventually led to the firing of some twenty-two thousand individuals, mostly left-wing union activists. In July 1950, in the midst of this conspicuous turn to the right, the rearmament of Japan began.15

The San Francisco settlement thus took place in a setting of domestic turmoil, when both of the early ideals of “demilitarization” and “democratization” were under attack by the conservative elites and their new American partners. To critics, rearmament and the “Red purges,” military bases and the gutting of the labor laws, the separate peace and resurrection of the old economic and political elites—all were part of a single reverse course that was simultaneously international and domestic in its ramifications. Japanese partisanship in the cold war

15. See Dower, Empire and Aftermath, and Masumi, Postwar Politics in Japan, for general political developments in the first postwar decade. The evolution of U.S. policy is closely documented by Howard Schonberger in Aftermath of War: Americans and the Remaking of Japan, 1945–1952 (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1989). I have dealt at length with the extensive presurrender legacies to the postwar state and society in “The Useful War,” Daedalus, Summer 1990, 49–70.
required the resurrection of the civilian old guard, and the old guard required the cold war to enlist U.S. support against domestic opponents.

With the exception of the brief Katayama interlude (May 1947 to March 1948), conservative leaders headed every Japanese cabinet of the postwar period, even before the reverse course was initiated. However, it was not until the third Yoshida cabinet, formed in January 1949, that the conservative leadership enjoyed a firm majority in the Diet. For Yoshida personally this proved to be an ephemeral peak of power and stability. The general elections of October 1952 saw the return to national politics of hundreds of formerly purged politicians, and by 1954 conservative ranks were severely factionalized. When Yoshida and his Liberal Party supporters were unceremoniously ousted from power in December 1954, it was not anticonservatives who did them in but rather a rival conservative coalition, the Democratic Party, headed by Hatoyama Ichirō. Hatoyama, who succeeded Yoshida as prime minister, was a former purgee with a record of support not only for Japanese aggression in the recent war but also for the suppression of dissent in the 1920s and 1930s. Also in the anti-Yoshida camp at this time was another future prime minister, Kishi Nobusuke, a brilliant technocrat who had been a leading economic planner in the puppet state of Manchukuo in the 1930s, a vice minister of munitions under Prime Minister Tōjō Hideki in 1943–44, and an inmate of Sugamo Prison from late 1945 to 1948, accused of class A war crimes but never brought to trial. The conservatives were unquestionably in the saddle, but so great was their internal fighting that they seemed capable of throwing each other out of it.

This turmoil set the stage for consolidation of the conservative parties a year later. In November 1955 Hatoyama’s Democrats and Yoshida’s Liberals merged to form the Liberal Democratic Party—which, like its predecessors, was neither liberal nor democratic and thus woefully misnamed. Over the ensuing decades the LDP retained uninterrupted control of the government, and this remarkable stability naturally became a central axis of the so-called 1955 System. The capacity for long-term planning that became so distinctive a feature of the postwar political economy was made possible in considerable part by this continuity of single-party domination. However, 1955 was a signal year in other ways as well, and it was this larger conjunction of political and economic developments that seemed to constitute the systematization and clarification of power and influence in postwar Japan—just one decade, as it happened, after Japan’s surrender. These related developments took place in both the anticonservative and conservative camps.

It was, in fact, the Socialists and left-wing unionists who moved first. In January 1955 Sōhyō—the General Council of Trade Unions, which was closely affiliated with the left-wing Socialists—mobilized some eight hundred thousand workers in the first demonstration of what subsequently was institutionalized as the shuntō “spring wage offensive.” From this year on, the shuntō became the basic vehicle for organizing enterprise unions in demanding industrywide “base up” wage
increases on a regular—almost ritualized—basis. That same month the left-wing and right-wing factions of the Socialist Party, which had formally split in 1951 over whether to support the San Francisco settlement, agreed to reunite. Reunification was finalized in October, but well before then, in the general elections of February 1955, the two factions together won slightly more than one-third of the seats (156 of 453) in the critical House of Representatives. Significantly, this parliamentary representation gave them sufficient combined strength to block constitutional revision, which required a two-thirds vote of approval in the Diet.

The LDP merger in November was in considerable part a response to this specter of a reunified and purposeful left-wing opposition. At the same time, it also constituted the open wedding of big business with Japan’s right-of-center politicians. Corporate Japan (the zaikai) not only played a decisive role in promoting the 1955 conservative merger but also mobilized the business community at this time as the major ongoing source of money for the LDP. The vehicle for assuring tight control of this political funding also was set up in those busy early months of 1955 in the form of an Economic Reconstruction Council (Keizai Saiken Kondankai) established in January and supported by all four major big-business organizations: the Japan Federation of Employers’ Associations (Nikkeiren), Federation of Economic Organizations (Keidanren), Japan Committee for Economic Development (Keizai Dōyūkai), and Japan Chamber of Commerce (Nisshō). Although some big-business funds were made available to Socialists, the vast bulk of contributions funneled through the Economic Reconstruction Council (96 percent in 1960) went to the LDP. Reorganized as the Kokumin Kyōkai in 1961, this consortium provided over 90 percent of LDP funding through the 1960s and 1970s.16 This consolidation and rationalization of the relationship between the zaikai and conservative politicians constituted two legs of the vaunted “tripod” on which conservative power rested over the ensuing decades. The third leg was the bureaucracy, which drafted most of the legislation introduced in the Diet and also provided a steady exodus of influential former officials into the LDP.

From a broader socioeconomic perspective 1955 also appeared to be, if not a watershed, at least a symbolic point at which lines of future development became clarified. Economically, the Korean War had wound down and as a consequence the previous year had been dismal for Japan, as conveyed in the catchphrase “1954 recession” (nijūgojūryōnen fukyō). Japanese missions to Washington in the waning years of Yoshida’s premiership privately expressed deep and genuine pessimism about the future prospects of Japan’s “shallow economy.” Contrary to these gloomy prognostications, however, 1955 proved to be a turning point for the postwar economy, and the popular phrases of this year captured this turnabout as well: “postwar high” (senso saikō) was one, “best year of the postwar economy” (senso keizai sairyō no toshi)

another. As it turned out, in 1955 the gross national product (GNP) surpassed the prewar peak for the first time, marking the symbolic end of postdefeat recovery. Indeed, the official Economic White Paper (Keizai Hakusho) published the next year heralded this accomplishment as signaling the end of the postwar period (mohaya "sengo" de wa nai). This upturn coincided, moreover, with the establishment of one of the most important of Japan's long-range industrial planning organizations, the Japan Productivity Center (Nihon Seisansei Honbu). Created on the basis of a U.S.-Japan agreement, with initial funding from both governments as well as Japanese business and financial circles, the center drew support from the ranks of labor as well as management and became the major postwar sponsor of technical missions sent abroad to study the most up-to-date methods of increasing industrial production. The formal wherewithal for exporting the products manufactured by these cutting-edge techniques also was obtained in 1955, when Japan was admitted to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). It was also in 1955 that centralized planning was significantly advanced through creation of the Economic Planning Agency (in July) and the issuance (in December) of a Five-Year Plan for Economic Independence.17

By many reckonings the advent of mass consumer culture also dates from essentially this same moment in the mid-1950s. It was in 1955, for example, that MITI announced the inauguration of a "citizen's car project"; heretofore, the vehicle industry had concentrated on producing trucks (especially for U.S. use in the Korean War) and buses and taxis (including many for export to Southeast Asia). With MITI's plan as a springboard the "age of the citizen's car" (kokumin jidōsha no jidai) commenced with the appearance of the Datsun Bluebird four years later. The "age of the electrified household" (katei denka no jidai) is said to have materialized in 1955, when housewives dreamed of owning the "three divine appliances" (sanshu no jingi)—electric washing machines, refrigerators, and television—and magazines spoke of the seven ascending stages of household electrification: (7) electric lights, (6) radio and iron, (5) toaster and electric heater, (4) mixer, fan, and telephone, (3) washing machine, (2) refrigerator, and (1) television and vacuum cleaner. For whatever one may make of the fact, Godzilla made his debut in November 1954 and thus stepped into (or on) the popular consciousness in 1955. It was also at this time that book publishers began to cater more explicitly to mass tastes. Nicely befitting the advent of a new age of mass culture, another popular slogan of 1955 was "the age of neurosis" (nourōsei jidai), a phrase sparked by several well-publicized suicides in midyear. As a popular weekly put it, claim-

ing one was neurotic had now become an “accessory” (they used the English word) of modern people.¹⁸

That the consolidation of conservative power coincided with full recovery from the war and the onset of commercialized mass culture may help explain the staying power of the new conservative hegemony. This durability was not immediately apparent, however, and the decade and a half that followed witnessed a series of intense confrontations over basic issues of peace and democracy. The fundamental lines of political cleavage within the 1955 System have been summarized as pitting a conservative camp committed to revising the constitution and protecting the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty against a progressive (kakushin) opposition committed to doing just the opposite: defending the constitution and opposing the Security Treaty.¹⁹ This summary is concise and clever, although it oversimplifies positions on both sides. The initial platform of the LDP did call for constitutional revision, and one of the first steps the new party took was to establish a Constitution Investigation Committee (Kempō Chōsakai) to prepare the ground for revision. At the same time, under Hatoyama and his successors the party also undertook to continue undoing “excesses” of the early democratic postsurrender reforms that lay outside the purview of the constitution—such as revision of the electoral system, abolition of elected school boards, imposition of restraints on political activity by teachers, promotion of “moral” and patriotic education, and strengthening of the police.

Concerning remilitarization, Hatoyama was more zealous than his predecessor Yoshida had been in supporting rearmament under the security treaty, but his reasons for doing so were by no means unambiguously pro-American. Rather, Hatoyama and his supporters desired accelerated rearmament of a more “autonomous” sort that in the long run would hasten Japan’s escape from the American embrace. Just as the Security Treaty was a double-edged sword from the American perspective—simultaneously enlisting Japan as a cold-war ally and instituting U.S. controls over Japan—so also was advocacy of accelerated rearmament double-edged to the more ardent Japanese nationalists. On the surface, this policy accorded with U.S. demands for rapid Japanese rearmament, and the conservatives were indeed ideologically receptive to aligning with the Americans in their anticommunist crusade. At the same time, however, nationalists in the Hatoyama and Kishi line also endorsed accelerated remilitarization to reduce military subordination to their Pacific partner as quickly as possible. Here, in any case, their aspirations were frustrated, for popular support could not be marshaled in support


¹⁹. Miyake et al., “'Gojūgo-nen taisei,'” 83, 88, citing Kamishima Jirō on the difference between the two camps.
of such a policy. The general public proved willing to accept slow rearmament in the mode established by Yoshida, with little concern about the sophistries of constitutional reinterpretation that this program required of the government's legal experts. As Hatoyama learned, however, just as other conservative leaders learned after him, to the very end of the Shōwa period, the public was not receptive to either rapid rearmament or frontal attacks on the constitution.

In attacking the conservatives the opposition essentially appropriated the slogan "peace and democracy" as its own, but exactly what this phrase meant was often contested among these critics themselves. As the intellectuals associated with the influential Peace Problems Symposium developed their "peace thesis" (heiwaron) in the late 1940s and early 1950s, it was argued that mobilization for peace must proceed through three levels: from the "human" (ningen) level, through the "system" (seido), and only on this basis to engagement in broad "international" (kokusai) peace issues. In the Japanese context this emphasis meant immersion in the "human" suffering of World War II (and, in actual practice, an outpouring of writings focusing on Japanese suffering in the battlefields abroad and under the air raids and atomic bombs at home). The Japanese "system" of overriding importance was to be found in the interlocking basic values enshrined in the new constitution, namely, people's rights, democracy, and pacifism. Finally, rooted in appreciation of these human and systemic values, the Japanese peace movement could move on to pursue basic goals conducive to the creation and maintenance of international peace. By the time the 1955 System was created, these goals usually were expressed as unarmed neutrality, backed by guarantees of support from the United Nations. In addition, inspired by two related events in 1954—the Bikini Incident, in which Japanese fishermen suffered radiation poisoning from the fallout of a U.S. hydrogen bomb test in the Pacific, and a spectacular grassroots petition drive against nuclear testing that was initiated by Japanese housewives and collected an astonishing twenty million signatures—by 1955 the Japanese peace movement also had come to focus especially keenly on the global abolition of nuclear weapons.

Maintaining the constitution was of course the bridge that linked defense of peace and pacifist ideals to defense of democracy, but the latter cause extended beyond constitutional issues per se. Phrased softly, the opposition also was committed to protecting the livelihood (seikatsu yōgo) of the working class, which undeniably was being squeezed in the concerted quest for rapid industrial growth. In more doctrinaire terms, the overtly Marxist opposition wished to destroy monopoly capitalism and bring about a socialist revolution in Japan. The latter agenda predictably was endorsed by only a portion of the anticonservative opposition; and, predictably again, it caused the Left to splinter in self-destructive ways that did not happen on the Right, where factionalism was less ideological and

more personally oriented. Thus, while the 1955 System began with a Socialist merger and the anticipation, by some, that in time a genuinely two-party system might evolve in Japan, in actuality the Left failed to hold together or grow. As early as 1958 the political scientist Oka Yoshitake already had characterized the new political structure as a “one and one-half party system.” Two years later a portion of the Socialist Party permanently hived off to form the less doctrinaire Democratic Socialist Party. By the end of the 1960s, after the quasi-religious Clean Government Party (Kōmeitō) also had emerged on the scene, it was common to speak of the political system as consisting of “one strong, four weak” (ikkyō shijaku) political parties.21

Before the opposition congealed as a permanent minority, however, it succeeded in mobilizing popular support in a series of massive protest movements that—like the earlier struggle against the occupation-period reverse course—dramatized the relationship between international and domestic politics. The first and most spectacular of these protests wedded opposition to revision and renewal of the Security Treaty (scheduled for 1960) to Kishi’s assumption of the premiership in 1957. That Kishi, Tōjō’s former vice minister of munitions, could assume the highest office in the country just twelve years after the war ended—and become, simultaneously, the symbol in Japan of the U.S.-Japan military relationship—graphically exemplified how far, and fast, Japan had moved away from the early ideals of demilitarization and democratization. In the end, the opposition drew millions of demonstrators into the streets and both lost and won its protest: the Security Treaty was retained and revised, but Kishi was forced to resign. In the process, a variety of concerned citizens were baptized in the theory and practice of extraparliamentary democratic expression.

This tumultuous campaign against the cold-war treaty and old-war politician overlapped, moreover, with the last great labor strike in modern Japanese history, which pitted workers at the Miike coal mine against an archetypical old-guard employer, the Mitsui Mining Company. The Miike struggle began in the spring of 1959 and in January 1960 turned into a lockout and strike that lasted 282 days and eventually involved hundreds of thousands of people. At Miike, the radical wing of organized labor confronted a broad united front of big business and the government, which correctly perceived the struggle as a decisive test for the future of state-led industrial “rationalization.” And at Miike, labor lost. The defeat of the miners in late 1960 smoothed the path for the heralded “income doubling” policy of the new Ikeda Hayato cabinet, which assumed power when Kishi was forced to resign in June.

The interplay of domestic and international politics resurfaced dramatically in the late 1960s, when massive protests against Japan’s complicity in the Vietnam War intersected with a wide range of domestic grievances. Indeed, in this struggle

21. Miyake et al., “‘Gojūgo-nen taisei,’” 83–84, 89–90, 117. The “four weak” parties were the Communists, Socialists, Democratic Socialists, and Kōmeitō.
the linkage of peace and democracy was recast in stunningly new ways. Under the influence of the New Left the anti–Vietnam War movement introduced a more radical anti-imperialist critique to the discourse on peace and democracy. Essentially, the late-1960s radicals argued that under the cold-war alliance Japan not only profited materially from the misery of other Asians but also contributed to the support of corrupt and authoritarian regimes outside Japan. Peace and prosperity for Japan, in short, were being purchased at the cost of war and the repression of democracy elsewhere. Vietnam and Korea were the great examples of this repressive profiteering for the protestors of the mid and late 1960s, especially after Japan normalized relations with the authoritarian South Korean government in 1965, under strong U.S. prodding—thereby contributing measurably to the ability of the Seoul regime to send troops to Vietnam in support of U.S. forces there. The radicalism of this critique lay in its attempt to think of democracy as well as peace in truly international and nonparochial terms, while situating the vaunted “income-doubling” policies of the 1960s in the specific context of the imbrication of Japanese bourgeois capitalism and U.S. imperialism. In the New Left critique, “peace and democracy” as the Old Left and liberals and ruling groups all imagined it was self-centered, self-serving, quintessentially bourgeois.

At the same time, the anti–Vietnam War movement intersected with highly charged domestic protests against the social and environmental costs of growth, the grasping hand of the state, and the autocratic governance of the universities. The latter, as the critics framed it, were turning into mere service organizations for the bureaucracy and big business. Antipollution movements centering on the mercury-poisoned community of Minamata and other tragic examples of environmental destruction peaked in the period between 1967 and the early 1970s. With them came a renewed appreciation of grass-roots democracy, exemplified in an impressive variety of “citizens’ movements” (shimin undô), “residents’ movements” (jimin undô), and “victims’ movements” (higaisha undô)—all legacies, each in its own way, of the 1959–60 street demonstrations and community protests against the Security Treaty and Kishi and in support of the Miike workers. The Sanrizuka struggle opposing forced sale of farmland to build the new Narita international airport was initiated by the farmers themselves in 1968. And the student struggles, which began with a five-month strike at Waseda University in 1965–66, reached a crescendo in 1968–69. At the peak of the student demonstrations more than 40 percent of the nation’s 377 universities were affected by strikes, and most of these campuses were under occupation. Although many of the grievances voiced by student protesters were directed at university affairs, the student radicals—like many other citizens in the late 1960s, in Japan and in Europe and America as well—immersed themselves in the broad gamut of domestic and international issues. And at their ironic best they cleverly captured the interlock of internal and external developments. One of the slogans of student radicals at the University of Tokyo, for example, was “Dismantle the Tokyo Imperialistic University”—neatly meshing the notion of a revival of prewar
autocracy (when the elite University of Tokyo had been named Tokyo Imperial University) with the argument that higher education in postwar Japan once again was serving primarily the purposes of an expansionist state.22

It is estimated that between 1967 and 1970 alone, more than eighteen million Japanese took to the streets to protest the war in Vietnam and demand the reversion of Okinawa to Japan. Uncounted others were involved in the university struggles and citizens' movements against the ravages of the growth-oriented state. As elsewhere, "people's power" entered the Japanese lexicon at this time as a legitimate and essential alternative to bourgeois parliamentary politics; and, as elsewhere, the theory and practice of "people's power" ranged from peaceful protest to wanton violence. By the mid-1970s the nationwide people's movement was moribund, but it left as legacies the memory and experience of grass-roots mobilization that could be evoked in more particularistic causes thereafter.

CONFLICT AND ACCOMMODATION TO THE EARLY 1970S

At the most conspicuous level the major controversies concerning military and international policy in postwar Japan involved left-wing criticism of the government's acquiescence in the San Francisco System. Almost all of the contentious issues of later years were encoded in the peace settlement—the separate peace, the Security Treaty and U.S. military bases in Japan, commitment to Japanese rearmament, detachment and semicolonization of Okinawa, entanglement in U.S. nuclear policy, and collusion in U.S. support of right-wing client regimes in the divided countries of Asia (China, Korea, and Vietnam). Inevitably, criticism of such government policies was inseparable from criticism of the United States. True to the early vision of the Peace Problems Symposium, the opposition position generally espoused an essentially nonaligned international role for Japan, although pro-Soviet and pro-Chinese allegiances also were conspicuous on the Left. At critical moments in the postwar debates opinion polls indicated that a large number of Japanese also supported the option of neutrality. Fifty percent of respondents to a survey in 1959 endorsed this option, for example, and at the height of the peace movement a decade later as many as 66 percent of Japanese questioned in one poll favored neutrality.23

It is misleading, however, to see the conservative and opposition positions on these issues as completely antithetical. Both sides were crisscrossed with schisms.


23. See Kan in Hook, Peace and Change, 27, for the 1959 NHK survey. Welfield, Empire in Eclipse, 197, cites a 1968 Shikkan Asahi poll showing 66 percent support for neutralism; an Asahi shinbun poll in 1969 showed 56 percent support.
At the same time, on many critical issues the two sides shared, if not common ground, at least comparable skepticism concerning the wisdom of U.S. policies. Beyond the usual factionalism endemic to the Left, the unity of the opposition was undercut by all the familiar postwar traumas of the international communist and socialist movements—the repression in Hungary and critique of Stalin in 1956, the Sino-Soviet split that followed soon after, the Cultural Revolution in China and Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, the communist concerns with “Trotskyist” deviations that accompanied the rise of the New Left in the 1960s, and the acrimonious debates over “capitalist and imperialist” nuclear weapons as opposed to “socialist and defensive” ones (which came to a head in Japan in 1963, when the Left split on whether to support the Partial Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty). The conservatives, too, although relatively cohesive in their anticommunism, nonetheless bifurcated into so-called Asianist and pro-American camps. This split was openly signaled in December 1964 and January 1965, when LDP members coalesced around either the staunchly pro-American Asian Problems Study Association (Ajia Mondai Kenkyūkai) or the more Asia-oriented Afro-Asian Problems Study Association (Ajia-Afuriaka Mondai Kenkyūkai).24

Even the most obsequious supporters of the pro-American position, however—such as Satō Eisaku, who succeeded Ikeda in 1964 and held the premiership until 1972—never planted both feet entirely in the American camp. From the earliest moments of the San Francisco System a fault line of disagreement and mistrust ran between Tokyo and Washington. While the conservative hegemony disagreed internally on a variety of critical policy issues beyond the appropriate speed and scope of remilitarization—including what policy to adopt toward China, Korea, Vietnam, and a nuclearized Okinawa—from the time of the Yoshida cabinets there was general conservative agreement that the U.S. vision of a bipolar world was inflexible and obsessively militaristic. As a consequence, in tactical if not fundamental ways there often occurred a convergence in the positions of the political Left and Right vis-à-vis the United States. One of the more amusing early examples of this convergence occurred in the very midst of the creation of the San Francisco System, when Yoshida—the great Red-baiter and bête noire of the Left—secretly encouraged the Socialists to organize antirearmament demonstrations while John Foster Dulles was in Tokyo. For Yoshida and his conservative successors as well, the specter of popular opposition to U.S. policies was an effective, and indeed desired, bargaining chip.25

As a general rule, Japanese of every political persuasion desired greater autonomy and more genuine sovereignty for their country. They differed on whether


this goal was better attained within the Security Treaty or outside it; and thus, in
great confrontations such as the 1959–60 crisis over whether to revise the mutual
security pact, there was indeed no common ground where policy was concerned.
Both sides felt humiliation at the unequal nature of the original treaty. Whereas
the conservative mainstream focused on the removal of inequality, however, the
opposition argued that a more equitable treaty simply meant that Japan was
committing itself to a larger military role. Nevertheless, the nationalist sentiments
shared by participants on both sides of this struggle help explain the disintegration
of the opposition over the ensuing years. Nationalism was a bridge on which
leftists could sooner or later cross to join the LDP or even the extreme right-wing
advocates of an independent Japanese military capability. The well-known critic
Shimizu Ikutarō, who moved from being one of the most prominent intellectuals
in the Peace Problems Symposium and 1960 protests to being an advocate of a
nuclear-armed autonomous Japanese state a decade later, was but the most
conspicuous example of this exodus of former radicals into the conservative camp.
Even where dissidents of the 1950s and 1960s did not cross over to the other side,
moreover, in later years many turned their focus of opposition further inward to
concentrate on essentially domestic concerns.26

On a wide range of other contested issues the partial convergence in viewpoint
of the conservative leaders and their critics was more straightforward. Despite
their anticommunism, for example, many conservatives desired closer relations
with the two communist giants, or at least with China. Similarly, the large number
of U.S. troops and military bases that remained in Japan after the occupation, and
after the Korean armistice in 1953, aggravated almost everyone. On a related
issue, although the conservatives and their critics were in fundamental disagree-
ment over whether Japan should rearm, conservative politicians, bureaucrats, and
businessmen as a whole (with the exception of certain vigorous defense industry
lobbies) gave relatively low priority to defense spending into the 1980s. As a
percentage of the total general accounts budget, military spending peaked in
1954. As a percentage of the gross national product, defense spending as com-
monly calculated was less than 1 percent for a full decade before Prime Minister
Miki Takeo grandly proclaimed a “One Percent of GNP” guideline in 1976.27

Such points of partial convergence in the outlook of the conservatives and
opposition are easily extended. There was no fundamental disagreement on the
desirability of the reversion of Okinawa to full Japanese sovereignty, for example,
and eventually little disagreement on an early basic issue of contention: that
Okinawa should be returned nuclear free. Neither the government nor opposition
welcomed U.S. nuclear weapons on Japanese soil, and apart from a few conserva-
tive advocates of a Gaullist-style nuclear force de frappe, there was general agree-

26. For an extended critique of the conceptual shortcomings of the opposition as reflected in the
1960 struggle, see Takabatake Toshimichi, “Rokujū-nen anpo’ no seishin shi,” in Najita Tetsuo,
27. Welkfield, Empire in Eclipse, 364–68, 413; on Japan’s military industries, see 434–41.
ment that Japan itself should remain nuclear free. In December 1967, in response to a question in the Diet, Prime Minister Satō clarified this position as the famous “Three Nonnuclear Principles,” which held that Japan would not manufacture nuclear weapons, possess them, or permit them to enter the country. Also, although U.S. policy at the time of the peace settlement secretly had anticipated Japan emerging as a major supplier of war-related material to the anticomunist camp, weapons production was not emphasized in subsequent years. Earlier in 1967, when public criticism arose concerning military-related exports to Vietnam, the Satō government responded with the “Three Principles of Arms Exports” prohibiting weapons sales to communist countries, countries under arms embargo by the United Nations, and countries in or on the verge of armed conflict. Under the Miki cabinet (1974–76) the ban was extended to include all countries and cover parts used in military equipment.  

Although Left and Right remained in fundamental disagreement on the Security Treaty in general, until the end of the Shōwa period successive conservative governments took care to reiterate that Japanese self-defense forces were constitutionally prohibited from engaging in overseas missions or entering into collective security pacts. The latter position was explicitly meant to scotch any prospect of a NATO-type Northeast Asia treaty organization coupling Japan with the Republic of Korea and Republic of China. In addition, although LDP policy consistently called for constitutional revision, in actuality the conservative thrust in this direction tended to wither away beginning in the mid-1960s, after the Constitution Investigation Committee that had been created after the LDP was formed failed to come up with clear recommendations to revise the national charter. Although a majority of committee members did favor revision, it had become clear by 1964, when the group issued its report, that the public opposed this.

These points of tactical convergence help clarify the low-posture external policies followed by conservative cabinets ever since Yoshida’s time, as well as the sources of friction that always characterized relations between the Japanese and American managers of the San Francisco System. At the same time, they also help explain how, over the course of the 1950s and 1960s, the ruling groups succeeded in taking away much of the fire of the opposition. By the beginning of the 1970s many of the most contentious issues of external policy had been defused by a combination of policy changes and the effective use of symbolic rhetoric that


29. The committee was established in 1956, met from 1957 to 1964, and dissolved in 1965. Its final report made clear that a majority favored revision, but no recommendation was made and the cabinet did not forward the report to the Diet. The nadir of the movement to revise the constitution is commonly dated from this time. This situation changed drastically after the Gulf War of 1991, when U.S. and European criticism of Japan facilitated the conservatives in dispatching an overseas “Peacekeeping Force” under United Nations auspices and thereby invigorated the movement to revise the constitution.
associated the conservatives with restraint on issues of remilitarization. Complementary accommodations took place on the domestic front. The massive protests of the late 1960s against the environmental destruction caused by growth-at-all-costs economic policies, for example, were so successful that the 1970 Diet became known as the “Pollution Diet” because of the large number of environmental protection laws it passed. More generally, these developments coincided with Japan’s emergence as a mature bourgeois society, increasingly preoccupied with consumerism within and great-power status abroad.

The key moments at which hitherto inflammatory peace issues began to be detached from the agenda of public debate are fairly easy to identify. The aggravating presence of U.S. bases and troops in Japan was dramatically diminished between 1955 and 1960, when the so-called New Look (or Radford Doctrine) of U.S. strategic planners dictated that reliance on nuclear weapons made many overseas bases obsolete. Between 1955 and 1957 U.S. forces in Japan were reduced from 210,000 to 77,000 men, and by 1960 the number had dropped to 48,000. Simultaneously, the United States retreated from its extraordinary proposals to create a huge Japanese army immediately and began instead to direct military aid to creation of less conspicuous but more technologically sophisticated Japanese naval and air forces. Where the mutual security treaty itself was concerned, the failure of the mass protests of 1959–60 to block treaty renewal essentially marked the end of this as a meaningful issue. Attempts to remobilize protests against the next round of treaty renewal in 1970 were ineffective. After 1960 the Security Treaty remained a convenient target of rhetoric, but a practical fait accompli.

The antinuclear movement in Japan began not in 1945 but in 1954. Until the latter part of the occupation, reportage and public remembrance of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were forbidden. It was the irradiation of Japanese fishermen by an American nuclear test in the Bikini Incident of 1954, and the death of one of the crew, that precipitated the postwar movement against nuclear weapons—and, on the Left, against nuclear energy. Even while resting comfortably under the U.S. nuclear umbrella, the conservative government did not hesitate to associate itself with antinuclear policies. Thus, the Japan Council Against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs (Gensuikyō), founded in 1955, initially was supported by the LDP as well as parties and organizations on the Left and fell under Communist Party control only in the 1960s. In 1961 the LDP aligned itself with a new antinuclear federation, the national Council for Peace and Against Nuclear Weapons (Kakkin Kaigi). And in December 1967 Prime Minister Satō’s “Three Nonnuclear Principles” were effectively introduced to suggest that the government shared the ideals of the popular antinuclear movement. Along with Article 9, the prohibition on arms exports first announced in 1967, and the “One Percent of GNP” ceiling on defense expenditures proclaimed in 1976, the Three Nonnuclear Principles be-

came popularly identified as one of the four “symbolic constraints” on Japanese
temilitarization. The government's ability to partially co-opt the antinuclear
movement was further enhanced by an insular strain in the movement itself. To
many Japanese, Hiroshima and Nagasaki became emblematic of World War II
and thus symbolic of the unique suffering of the Japanese in that conflict. They
became, that is, a way of remembering Japanese suffering while forgetting the
suffering that the Japanese caused others. Such “victim consciousness”—already
noted in the earliest statements of the peace movement—meshed well with the
emerging neonationalism of the ruling groups.

Okinawa and China, two of the most blatant symbols of subordinate indepen-
dence, were detached from the peace agenda between 1969 and 1972. By the end
of the 1960s the United States had become persuaded that reversion of the
Ryukyus to Japan was both feasible and wise. The development of interconti-
ternal missiles reduced Okinawa’s importance as a forward nuclear base. Pressure for
reversion within Okinawa and throughout all Japan was becoming irresistible.
Perhaps most interesting, the discrepancy in living standards between Japan
proper and semicolonized Okinawa was becoming so conspicuous as to pose a
potential serious embarrassment for the United States.31 Thus, in the Satō-Nixon
communique of November 1969 the United States defused this issue by agreeing
to return Okinawa to full Japanese sovereignty by 1972.

Where China was concerned, Washington’s unexpected rapprochement with
the People’s Republic in 1971 embarrassed the Japanese government, which had
long adhered reluctantly to the containment policy. Nonetheless, it paved the way
for Japan’s own restoration of relations with Beijing, thereby removing one of the
most galling features of the San Francisco System. China, obsessed by its tensions
with the Soviet Union, accompanied its embrace of the United States and Japan
by renouncing its previous expressions of concern about Japanese rearment
and the U.S.-Japan military alliance. This Chinese volte-face was also a severe
blow to the Japanese peace movement, which hitherto had argued that Japanese
remilitarization under the Security Treaty was a destabilizing factor in Asia.
Moreover, the agony and madness of China’s Cultural Revolution, which became
apparent to the world a few years later, by indirection further discredited the Left.

By 1972 the Left thus had lost hold of many of its most evocative peace issues:
U.S. bases in Japan, the Security Treaty, nuclear weapons, arms production,
Okinawa, and China. A year later, with the armistice in Vietnam, the last great
cause that had provided a modicum of common purpose among the opposition
was removed. The average citizen turned inward, to bask in Japan’s new interna-
tional influence as an economic power and become consumed by material pur-
suits, exemplified in such mass-media slogans as “My Home—ism” and “My
Car—ism.” Concerned citizens redirected their “citizens’ movements” or “resi-
dents’ movements” toward particular grievances. The violent wing of the New

Left turned its fury as well as its tactics of armed confrontation (the so-called geba, from gebaruto, the Japanese rendering of the German word Gewalt, "force") inward to engage in theoretical disputes and self-destructive factional violence (uchigeba). Beheiren, the broad-based and charismatic People’s Organization for Peace in Vietnam, which had effectively reconciled many of the Marxist and non-Marxist protest groups between 1965 and 1973, disbanded in January 1974. No comparable coalition—eclectic, populist, both humanitarian and radical, nonviolent, genuinely internationalistic and individualistic in outlook—ever took its place.

THE UNCERTAIN SUPERSTATE

In retrospect it is apparent that the early 1970s marked a major turning point in Japan’s position within the international political economy. It is from this point that we can date Japan’s emergence as a truly global power—and the corollary and irreversible decline of U.S. hegemony. At the time, however, this transformation of power was by no means clear. On the contrary, the 1970s were a traumatic decade for Japan’s elites, marked by a succession of crises. Twenty years of slavish adherence to the U.S. containment policy were rudely rewarded by the “Nixon shock” of July 1971, when the American president unexpectedly announced U.S. rapprochement with China. One month later the Nixon shock was recharged with the “dollar shock,” as two decades of low-posture Japanese neomercantilism seemed thrown into jeopardy by the unilateral U.S. decision to reevaluate the yen-dollar exchange rate. Already in the late 1960s the United States had begun to withdraw the economic umbrella that sheltered Japanese protectionism at home and economic expansion abroad. The 1971 dollar shock accelerated this process, and in 1973 the yen was allowed to float. This floating exchange rate coincided with the “oil shock” of October 1973, which brought an end to Japan’s remarkable period of high growth rates and dropped the country into its most prolonged postwar recession. Production levels did not return to the 1973 level until 1978—just in time to be confronted with the “second oil shock” of January 1979. The scale of the 1979 shock was registered in a $25 billion shift in Japan’s balance of payments from a $16 billion surplus in 1978 to an $8.6 billion deficit in 1979. Whereas the annual growth rate had been an extraordinary 10 to 11 percent between 1955 and 1970, in the 1970s it dropped to somewhat less than 5 percent. Concurrent with all these traumas, the country’s quiet penetration of U.S. and European markets suddenly crackled into controversy, like a string of firecrackers that stretched through the 1970s and 1980s as well: over textiles in 1969–71; steel, television sets, and electronics beginning around 1977; automobiles from the turn of the decade; semiconductor chips and computers from the mid-1980s; purchase of U.S. properties from the late 1980s.32

Despite the stronger floating yen (which made Japanese manufactures more

32. For a general contemporary overview of the Japanese economy in the 1970s, see Daniel Okimoto, ed., Japan’s Economy: Coping with Change in the International Environment (Boulder: Westview Press, 1982), especially the contributions by Gary Saxonhouse (123–48) and Hugh Patrick (149–96).
expensive abroad), Japan’s penetration of foreign markets continued inexorably. And despite the end of abnormally high annual growth rates, the now-massive economy still grew enormously each year under the more normal rates. Still, it was only in 1979 that the exaggerated phrase “Japan as Number One” appeared on the scene, shocking Japanese and non-Japanese alike, albeit in very different ways. Japan was not number one. It was still a distant second to the United States in overall economic capacity, but every conventional index indicated the gap was closing rapidly. By the mid-1980s the United States had become the world's largest debtor country and Japan the world’s great creditor. It was now a financial, not just “economic,” superpower. In the closing years of the Shōwa period the “spin-on” military applications of Japan’s advanced civilian technologies made it clear that, even without a military-industrial complex, Japan’s technological accomplishments had made it a potentially significant military actor worldwide.33 Neither structurally nor psychologically were the Japanese or anyone else in the world fully prepared to cope with such rapid, fundamental, and almost entirely unpredicted changes.

In this milieu, conflict over international issues was drastically transformed. Whereas controversy through the 1960s had focused primarily on military and peace issues, economic competition now dominated the scene, and nation-state tensions became far more engrossing than domestic confrontations. Neither in the 1970s nor in the 1980s, however, did the rise of Japan, growing economic strength of Europe, disintegration of Soviet power, and relative decline of a stumbling but still powerful America result in a clearly defined new global order. What existed, on the contrary, was closer to global disorder—and in this situation the most intense conflicts took place within the rickety old San Francisco System. The major disputes occurred, that is, among the capitalist powers and especially between Japan and the United States. Within Japan itself, policy-related conflict became increasingly detached from the public arena and more concentrated among the conservative elites, where expanding international involvement was accompanied by a proliferation of competing interests in both the corporate and bureaucratic sectors.34 As internal conflict shifted to and expanded among these vested interests, it became less visible. The highly technical nature of international trade and finance—and, indeed, of many new military developments as well—also inhibited wide-ranging public debate. Specialists and insiders now controlled the terms of public discourse.

Isolated individuals and groups continued during this period to try to offer alternative visions beyond unbridled capitalist competition and (a new term for the 1980s) “technonationalism.” They emphasized such global issues as the north-


34. See Pempel, “Unbundling of ‘Japan, Inc.,’” for an analysis of this diversification among the ruling elites. This is generally seen as marking the end of the 1955 System. This same theme permeates many of the articles in Pyle, Trade Crisis.
south problem of growing disparity between rich and have-not nations, the social exploitation and distortions caused by multinational corporations in less developed countries, the depletion of global resources by economic powerhouses such as Japan and the other advanced industrialized countries, and the continuing intensification of the nuclear arms race. Where Japan itself was concerned, they pointed out that remilitarization was accelerating amidst all the hubbub about economics, which was entirely true. During the last decades of Shōwa the often-mentioned “symbolic restraints” on Japanese militarization all were violated in one way or another. Prime Minister Satō’s famous Three Nonnuclear Principles, for example, were misleading from the start. Contrary to what they proclaimed, nuclear weapons apparently were brought in and out of Japan by the U.S. military as a matter of routine. Furthermore, the LDP coupled the Three Nonnuclear Principles with a less-publicized “Four Nuclear Principles,” which included dependence on the U.S. nuclear “umbrella” and promotion of nuclear energy for peaceful use.

The critics also pointed out that the heralded “One Percent of GNP” restraint on defense spending was deceptive. In the first place, by NATO-style calculations, which include military retirement benefits and the like, Japanese military spending generally exceeded one percent of GNP. More important by far, 1 percent of a huge and constantly expanding economy was itself huge and constantly expanding. Thus, for most of the postwar period the rate of annual increase in Japan’s real military expenditures was the highest in the world. Moreover, in 1987 Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro, an astute player with symbols, deliberately breached the one percent guideline. Four years earlier, at the urging of the U.S. government, Nakasone also had terminated another of the vaunted symbolic restraints on Japanese remilitarization by jettisoning the embargo on export of weapons and military-related manufactures. The United States desired to gain access to advanced Japanese technology in developing its “Star Wars” (Strategic Defense Initiative) dreams, and Nakasone’s compliance opened the door to an absolutely uncertain future for Japanese activity in advanced weapons systems. Criticism of such developments by the remnants of serious opposition, however, made scarcely a ripple in popular consciousness.

35. In 1976, the year the “1 percent of GNP” ceiling was first singled out as a formal guideline, Japan’s military spending ranked seventh in the world—after the two superpowers, China, West Germany, France, and Great Britain. Its military budget was more than triple that of South Korea, far greater than that of any of the Warsaw Pact powers, and far greater than that of neutral powers such as India, Sweden, and Switzerland. Japan’s 1976 military budget was almost 14 times that of 1954. For Britain over the same period the increase was 2.5 times, for France roughly 5 times, and for West Germany a little less than 7 times. Welfeld, Empire in Eclipse, 366–69, includes useful tables of these expenditures.

36. Publishing houses such as Iwanami, which includes the monthly Sekai among its periodicals, continued to address these issues with a rigor reminiscent of the earlier period, and scholars such as Sakamoto Yoshikazu remained devoted to “peace research” in the broadest sense. See Sakamoto, Shinpan: Gunshuku no seiyōgaku (Tokyo: Iwanami Shinsho, 1988). For critical evaluations of the course of
The decline of intense public debate on such issues reflected an erosion of democratic ideals and practices at a time when Japan was, in fact, being called on internationally to offer a new vision of national goals and responsibilities commensurate with its new power. Indeed, there almost appeared to be a correlation between the rise to global eminence and decline of political idealism. Japan had become a prosperous superstate by mobilizing its population and resources resolutely behind productivity and economic nationalism, and its accomplishments drew understandable admiration and envy from throughout the world. The line between mobilization and regimentation is a fine one, however, and the Japanese state of the 1970s and 1980s also appeared to many observers, especially abroad, to have stepped over that line. In part, this perception reflected the partial success of the conservative hegemony in perpetuating the occupation-period “reverse course” and steadily undermining what were called the “excesses” of early postwar political idealism. Once “democratization” was replaced by economic development as the overriding objective, most Japanese had little choice but to become socialized to corporate and national goals. As time passed, such regimentation was sweetened by the material rewards of prosperity and hardened by nationalistic appeals. The emergence of a mass consumer society created an ethos of “middle-class” homogeneity and contributed immeasurably to depoliticization (or preoccupation with personal and local matters). Global eminence, in turn, nurtured not only legitimate feelings of national pride but also more ominous attitudes of exceptionalism and racial and cultural superiority.

In theory both Japan’s emergence as a global power and the rapid growth of consumerism and middle-class ideologies should have stimulated an increasingly cosmopolitan outlook at all levels of society. In many respects, a broader supranational attitude did materialize: “internationalization” (kokusaika) was perhaps the most overworked catchword of the 1980s. The opposite, however, occurred as well. Insular, nationalistic fixations became stronger side by side with the intensification of international contacts. This apparent paradox is not difficult to account for, for the pride that Japanese felt at being called “number one” was compounded by fear and anger at the negative response of other countries to Japan’s suddenly awesome competitive power. As foreign criticism of Japan’s economic expansion mounted—emerging in accusations that the Japanese practiced “adversarial trade” or “neomercantilism” or “beggar-thy-neighbor” capture of markets, for example, or that domestic “nontariff barriers” and “structural impediments” made the Japanese market unfairly difficult for outsiders to penetrate—a defensiveness bordering on siege mentality developed in many circles. Mistrust and tension that had been latent within the old San Francisco System

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erupted openly. Strains of “victim consciousness” that had always existed across the political spectrum were drawn to the surface. War imagery became fashionable on all sides, albeit now in the post-cold-war context of “economic war” among the capitalist powers, especially the United States and Japan.\(^{37}\)

In these circumstances, pride-inspiring and fear-inspiring at once, many Japanese began to turn inward and argue that the differences between the Japanese and other nations, races, and cultures were greater than the similarities and that Japan’s contemporary accomplishments derived primarily from these unique characteristics—more so, that is, than from more general factors such as unanticipated historical opportunities (like war booms), global circumstances (such as the decline of the United States for reasons fundamentally having little to do with Japan), external patronage (notably the U.S. economic and military umbrella), transnational market mechanisms, rational (rather than cultural) policy structures and decisions, and, indeed, the consolidation of power in the hands of a competitive and diversified but still remarkably close-knit hegemony of business leaders, bureaucrats, and conservative politicians. Eventually this insular and usually narcissistic preoccupation with so-called traditional values took on a life of its own in the mass media—primarily in the runaway genre of writings and discussions devoted to the uniqueness of “being Japanese” (Nihonjinron)—but from the outset such introversion was promoted as a clearcut ideology by the conservative leadership.\(^{38}\) In 1968, for example, the LDP showed its hand clearly in this regard when it attempted to turn centennial celebrations of the Meiji Restoration into an occasion for repudiating the most liberal ideals of the early postwar period. “We have forfeited the inherent form of the Japanese people,” the party lamented in an important statement, and to rectify this loss it was desirable to reaffirm the great values of the Meiji era and bring about “the elevation of racial spirit and morality” (minzoku seishin to dogi no kōyō).\(^{39}\)

The conservatives never lost sight of this goal, and the closing decades of the postwar era saw them advance steadily toward it. They proved themselves masters of symbolic politics, and most of the controversial neonationalist developments of late Shōwa reflected this ideological fixation on recreating a traditionalistic “racial spirit” that would counterbalance the purportedly corrupting influences of excessive internationalization. In numerous ways the government assumed an increasingly active role in romanticizing the patriotic and public-spirited nature of

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37. Kenneth Pyle has summarized the range of opinion on Japan’s world role in two useful articles: see “Japan, the World” and “In Pursuit of a Grand Design: Nakasone Betwixt the Past and Present,” in Pyle, Trade Crisis, 5–32.


39. The full text appears in Asahi shinbun, 17 Jan. 1968, 2. The LDP also defined “the inherent form of the Japanese people” (Nihon kokumin no hozen no sugata) as consisting of “human love and public duty, love of the motherland and racial spirit, defense consciousness, etc.” (ningenai to kötokushin, sokokurai to minzoku seishin, bōei ishiki nado).
Japan's prewar imperial and imperialistic history. The corporate sector, on its part, made brilliant use of group pressures and "family" ideologies to reassert not merely the primacy of the group over the individual, but also the primacy of the family writ large (the corporation and the state) over the real nuclear family. Collectivist and consensual values were promoted as the antidote to individualistic democracy and the ideals of principled dissent.

The postwar period ended on this discordant clamor, with fanfare about "internationalization" mingling with paens to "racial spirit" and "being Japanese." The juxtaposition of external and domestic concerns was familiar, but the contradictions between opening outward and turning inward, cosmopolitanism and exceptionalism, were unusually blatant. What this contradiction boded for the future was unpredictable. In every way, however, it seemed a far cry from the earlier and more visionary era when large notions of "peace" and "democracy" had defined the parameters of political consciousness.