The instability of Japanese national identity and the advent of the new Meiji state

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Introduction

What does it mean by being a normal state in Japan? If it seems to be extremely easy to answer, it would indicate most people were entrapped in a textbook perspective drawn by most international relations theory. As easily guess, Japan is keen to rearm their country just the same as other countries have been. Japan is disaffected with the Peace Constitution now that their sovereignty, they deem, was infringed by blocking their access to military force as a means of waging war. Japan thinks it does not make sense to have the Constitution enforced by GHQ, not the one that they made on their own. Even so, why do people think Japan’s argument does add up? That is because most international relations theory is based on the commonly held view that leads us to choose ‘black or white’ by enumerating several conditions that should be met to be a sovereign state. When it comes to a normal state, the widely shared concept of sovereignty—clearly cut territory recognized legally in the international society should be governed by an independent state free from arbitrary interventions by other states—becomes the yardstick. If the ideal is impeded, we come to suspect its sovereignty. Nonetheless, I argued the concept of sovereignty is ideal. The ideal cannot be a normal state for the most part. If so, there would be no demarcation between the ideal and the reality. (Then, the ideal loses its value.) As Krasner pointedly offers criticism by terming sovereignty as hypocrisy\(^1\), it is not rare to see that sovereignty is violated by a state or the international society. Then, it might be not that reasonable to assume that Japan is not normal. Japan is quite normal. However, Japan keeps agonizing over that issue. Then, it turns out that Japan is normal in light of the concept of sovereignty itself, but still not normal judging from ‘the ideal’ to which Japan is resorting. If we can grasp what ideal Japan harbors in their mind, we will be able to understand what it exactly means by being a normal state in Japan. It is not simply a matter of whether they become unfettered by the Peace Constitution so that they can rearm their country. A deeper layer is waiting for us to be dug up so as to know what Japan really wants.

The deeper layer will be untouchable if we stay in the sphere of the Japanese modern politics. In the first paragraph, I constantly made my argument, ignoring who is the subject that keeps complaining the lack of normalness in Japan as a sovereign state, as if Japan is the completely united one backed up by a clearly and widely shared Japanese identity. I said Japanese identity because the definition of a normal state cannot be made in the vacuum but closely related to their identity. (A normal state is obviously an identity. It seems tautology.) In this regard, tracing back to the origin of a Japanese identity becomes the first step. If the subject given the right to create an identity is one person, there might be no conflicts. If the subjects involved in that process were in harmony, or were given a firmly constructed ground called ethnies\(^2\), it may be a cinch. However, it was not the case for Japan. From now on, I want to show the origin of the instability of Japanese identity by looking back to the Tokugawa era. I said the origin of its instability which means this feature did not lose its effect going through the transition to the modern age. Quite the contrary. The one factor actually became the basis of Japanese identity, or to say more correctly, the core of Japanese identity. A diachronic approach will be taken in order to reveal how the instability has been exerted influence on the process of creating Japanese identity.

What really happened during the Meiji Restoration?

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Westernization must be the first thing that might come across people’s mind. Of course, it is not off the point. When Japan had been threatened by the Commodore Perry to open their ports, and thereafter when they resolved on reconstructing Japan, the West became arguably the touchstone. However, we should be careful not to be caught in a trap shown up here. The fact that people seizing power at that time in Japan thought the West should be the touchstone does not mean that the West became the ideal for them to pursue till the end. At no time was the West the ideal. Simply put, Japan just wanted to get a ticket to be accepted as an equal player in the international system working by a different rule called the international law. Should they succeed in making western countries sure that Japan is civilized enough to be an actor in the world, the position of the West as the touchstone would be degraded. There is no denial that Japan introduced western technologies, institutions and ideas at a rapid pace. But, we need to see a big picture, not being blind by the fact mentioned right before. When say Japan had their heart in chasing the West, the basic idea hidden behind that is that Japan was incorporated into the international system driven by the West. Incorporation has a nuance that Japan was able to be accepted as a member in that system by making them like the West at the expense of their own values, tradition, I mean, Japaneseness. Then, we can guess here. What happened during the Meiji Restoration was revolution. Mandelbaum, M. shares this line of thought:

The Meiji Restoration, which began in 1868—so called because it nominally restored the emperor to supreme power—was in fact a revolution. It transformed a traditional society, the economic and social relations of which resembled those of feudal Europe before the fifteenth century, into a modern state with an industrial economy, a formidable army and navy, and an efficient national bureaucracy; and it did so in the span of a few decades. This is the most remarkable accomplishment by any nation in modern history.

Yet, in my view, it was unlikely. Of course, it was likely that Japanese society had gone through so many reforms, but unlikely that Japan had been transformed to a totally different society akin to the West. Nor should it be overlooked that we tend to see the international society as the sovereign state system sharing the very same concept of sovereignty that is definitely originated from the West. Even English School scholars fully sensitive to functions of different institutions and ideas backing up that in each state do not take into account what path Japan went through and how differently in the transition period. A forerunner of English School, Bull, H. is also obsessed with the idea:

the international society to which non-European powers came to adhere was not one made in a Europe isolated from the rest of the world, but grew up concurrently with the expansion of Europe into other continents over four centuries, and was marked by this experience......Yet it cannot be denied that the role of the Europeans in shaping an international society of worldwide dimension has been a special one. It was in fact the European powers and not the powers of Asia, Africa, or the Americas that came to occupy a dominant position in the world as a whole. It was in fact their conception of an international society of juridically equally sovereign states that came to be accepted by

3 Japan needed to be escaped from the tributary state system either mentally or substantially. So, they dared to replace their own norms with the international law to be seen as a ‘civilized’ state in light of the western standard. See Suzuki, S. (2009). Civilization and empire: China and Japan’s encounter with European international society. Routledge., p. 141.

This mention is understandable given the concept of the international society he kept studying. According to him, the international society is an anarchical society wherein each sovereign state has interests in common and share common values taking responsibilities required to protect them. To flip over the reverse, it means the international society cannot work in the absence of consents of other states to the common interests, values and rules. However, as a matter of fact the reality has shown the international society is always dysfunctional. Not to mention IS, Brexit, annexation of Ukraine by Russia and so forth, fluctuations in the international society have constantly taken place. Then, I am wondering if we can confidently argue that all states are in harmony being tied with common interests, values and ideas in the international society. I am not saying the international society is impossible. What I am saying is that the international society might not exist as Bull, H. thought. The international society is not a normal state. To go further, the existence we regard as the international society may have a dissimilar function that I call a buffer zone. Common values, norms and institutions always work temporarily. Some people might say that even if those rules do not last that long, we keep being tied with that remaking the rules, showing we are exactly in the international society regardless of the strength of rules. Sometimes rules are loosened but at another time tightened. But, what should be focused on here is the mechanism itself that causes the dynamics. If sovereign states are soundly following the conditions of sovereignty, I mean, the same concept of sovereignty, there is no problem. As a rational actor, each state would be willing to take part in evolving the international society swimmingly, causing only a few errors but not that fatal ones. As we can see, the reality is not like that. Then, how about thinking by turning our eyes to the concept of sovereignty itself? Imagine that each state has a distinct concept of sovereignty as the ideal type. They would not be fully satisfied with the typical type of sovereignty served by the international society. Of course, states want to stay in the international society as members so as to mitigate crisis that might occur or get benefits that can be brought about by their participation. Even so, due to the different concept of sovereignty in each state, the possible function of the international society is nothing but a buffer zone in my view. To paraphrase, numerous ideal types of sovereignty are working in that zone wherein a plenty of conflicts occur and it is unavoidable. So, we have run through a so long tunnel to get this point; The Meiji Restoration was not a revolution, westernization, and incorporation into the international society dominated by the West. It was Japanization. In the strict sense, it was the path towards making their ideal type of sovereignty as a member in the international system.

Prior to going back to the Tokugawa era, I want to deepen our thoughts on why and how the ideal type was shaped in Japan and what difference there was between the West and Japan. My assumption is as follows. In Europe, the concepts of a sovereign state and a nation-state were constructed separately, whereas in Japan the two concepts were introduced simultaneously. What this implies is that while European countries were able to focus on functional aspects of these concepts, in Japan both concepts of a sovereign state and a nation-state were introduced into their country at the same time, meaning that the two concepts came to be overlapped and could not be separated from the outset. In other words, for Japanese sovereignty was considered as a reflection of a nation state, I mean, Japanese national identity. Surely, Japan was forced to act like the West. They were in hurry to remake their country by absorbing the concept of sovereignty as well as a nation-state. The problem did not end there. Lacking a solidly constructed

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ground on which Japanese national identity can be made, resisting to fragmented national identities, Japan had to get all together as a Japanese national identity, concerning about the instability continuously. The logic I have tried to unfold is too superficial. So, I will go over a specific power structure worked in the Tokugawa era.

What really worked in a power structure of the Tokugawa era?

One of the frequently used terms in the realists’ perspective in international relations theory is check and balance. Basically, the notion is based on a sovereign state system. Regardless of each state’s magnitude, they are all the same in terms of functions of sovereignty. This principle worked in Japan throughout the Tokugawa era. Of course, we should be prudent in arguing this way. Shogun apparently was top-ranked in a hierarchical power structure that time. Sankin-kōtai or alternate attendance came to effect for the purpose of preventing each han from plotting a revolt. Umegaki, M. appropriately explains the power structure. “The stability of this authority relationship hinged upon the degree of what one might call calculated indifference on the part of the bakufu and the feudal domains toward each other.” Even if Shogun did not lose a rope tying up all feudal domains through Sankin-kōtai, the autonomy given to each han should not be overlooked in both of political and economic spheres such as rules, taxation, coinage and so forth. But, the main focus is not there. The point should be on what uniqueness of Japanese identity has. In this sense, one more thing needs to be added. That is the special position of Tenno or the Japanese emperor.

As widely known, Oda Nobunaga made the ground on which Japan was finally united ending the long war over the territory. Put the history of how he paved the way for that aside, we need to approach what he had to do at that time for getting legitimacy on his position. There might be no dispute over the term, the absolute monarch, when we call him, because it shows the great power given to him. Nevertheless, curiously enough, Nobunaga was not freed from the need to be granted permission from Tenno when, for example, mediation process is required. Yasumaru, Y. briefly sketches this mechanism:

Nobunaga was definitely the absolute monarch as strongly as he could make himself deified, but people who could accept this phrase “it is important to resolve on anything according to what Nobunaga says” as the obvious premise were warriors put under his direct control in a master-servant relationship at best. In order to fulfill his purpose over the all forces in society having diverse features beyond the relationship, Nobunaga had no other way than legitimization basing on the existing principle of the order. Occupying ‘the universe’ means that suppression by military prestige is exclusively combined with this kind of legitimization.

Seemingly, Nobunaga secured the universe in his own hands, but legitimacy was not automatically given to him, but had to be granted from Tenno, implying that transcendent powers were working away from his reign. Evidently, two separate spheres, the political one taken by Shogun and the authoritative one governed by Tenno were striking a balance. To be sure, Tokugawa Ieyasu was no exception. The agony he would get is shown from the Kinchu Narabini Kuge Shohatto (Court Noble’s Act) by which a new structure was settled in that when it comes to appointing a regent or a chief advisor to Tenno, the Bakufu’s recommendation became essential. Since Shogun was not given any other options than making a compromising point in that situation, obstructing Tenno’s attempts to imprint his presence on people by

narrowing the area over which Tenno can exert his influence acquired a great importance. What truly happened at that time does not betray our interpretation done this way as we can see from the fact that “since Tenno Komizuno’s march to Nijo Castle in 1626, until Komei Tenno march to Kamosa in 1863, almost for 240 years” Tenno got out of the Imperial Palace only two times. Be that as it may, Tenno did not lose his special status. Tenno was still considered as sacred and its pedigree received special treatment as noble ones. The closer their pedigree is to Tenno or Deity, the more prestige and self-respect they could get. For example, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, pressured by the social climate that put importance on Tenno’s pedigree, fabricated his lineage by arguing his Fujiwara titles so as to get a prestige as a leader connected to the imperial court. Although Bakuhu separated Kyoto and Edo judicially in order to limit Tenno’s clout to Kyoto and maximize Bakuhu’s leverage, the Imperial Palace did not lose the aura as a sacred place so that people kept craving for imperial title names and, besides, they thought that sovereignty is in fact on Tenno in spite of Bakuhu’s attempt to decrease Tenno’s influence. Moreover, through a marriage or an adoption of descendent from Tenno’s pedigree, people were keen to promote their status.

Then, I guess a slightly ‘distorted’ picture might be drawn from the puzzles I have gathered here. The triangular and hierarchical structure among Tenno, Shogun (Bakufu), and Daimyo (han) came to the fore. I said a distorted picture in the way that we cannot see a pivot by which centripetal force can work as strongly as Japanese identity is created making it settled on a solid ground. It was distorted now that the scene we brought is not like we have expected judging from the modern Japan where Tenno keeps his position as a national symbol. Fundamentally, Tenno was in the sacred place, Bakufu was top-ranked in a power structure, and Daimyo was given a great autonomy and considered themselves as a king in their domain, han. Each actor(s) had their own substantial and mental ‘territory’. And yet, the boundaries were not cut clearly like islands. They were separated but overlapped as well. Tenno remained in the sacred place thereby Japanese people would be able to be given a faint Japanese identity, however, unlike the modern one. The thing that should be kept in mind here is that Tenno got stuck in Kyoto too far from commoners’ residences which mean that Tenno arguably exists but was not like the reality for ordinary people. Commoners, especially peasants (the majority of commoner was peasants) could not leave their villages. Being tied with very strict status system, peasants lost autonomy, merely resorting to their owner. Their spacial imagination would be limited in han in which each person’s identity was created. Where they live, meet people, work and do everything is their han within which they come to imagine who they are. It can be said that han identity had the upper hand over ‘national identity’ that was enabled by Tenno. The former was stronger in terms of people’s identity. Shogun occupied the political sphere at the top. But, it does not mean Shogun was isolated in Edo, merely giving Daimyo a full autonomy. Under the high pressure from Bakuhu, Daimyo and commoners serving for their owner could strengthen their solidarity more strongly. Thus, it is not uneasy to imagine how hard it would be for Japan to create a Japanese national identity in the face of threats by the West, being urged to make it as rapidly as possible regardless of which path they have gone through. The dual structure of (a faint) national identity given by Tenno and han identity made in commoners’ living space met a crisis at the moment. To attest my interpretation, let’s dig up what happened in reality surrounding the issue.

**What really occurred inside and outside the Meiji government?**

To my thinking, the dual structure became the cause of the instability of Japanese identity. The resilience of han identity can be shown by zooming in on what happened within and outside the Meiji government.

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9 Ibid., p. 51. Details related to the tactics Tokugawa Ieyasu took to prevent Tenno’s influence from spreading widely over the territory as narrowly as possible can be checked in Ibid., pp. 50-51.


Looking at the Meiji era standing on the present position, we may become inclined to the tendency of cherry-picking episodes that back up the successful story of the Meiji Restoration, covering our eyes to the reality unfit to what we suppose ‘the reality.’ Given the impetus through which the Meiji Government cleared their own missions step by step, it seems reasonable to think that the Meiji government easily succeeded in making Japanese identity centering around Tenno. Not really. People in power could not swimmingly go forward owing to deep-rooted han identities. A strong centrifugal force brought about by fragmented identities based on each han kept working during the Meiji Restoration. Resisting to that force was an urgent task for people in power. Let’s pick up several episodes that can show how seriously han identities became obstacles when it comes to reforms.

Ôkubo Toshimichi, one of the three great nobles who lead the Meiji Restoration, came from Satsuma han. This fact cannot be overlooked now that politicians were pretty sensitive to where they came from. Hopping to firmly establish the Emperor system basing on absolutism and bureaucratic dictatorship, Ôkubo Toshimichi suggested a long-term (about 20 or 30 years) plan for the government. Yet, for Inoue Kaoru who came from Chôshû, it was merely reflection of the Ôkubo’s arbitrary decision for his faction. For that reason, “there was no other room than drawing either factional conflicts or a check and balance theory.”Ôkubo’s political thoughts could not be purely accepted. On the other hand, when Ôkubo started to take the action to undermine the Finance Department, Kido Kôn was pushing his idea to promote Ôkuma, then the head of Finance, to Councilor. At that moment, Ôkubo did not or could not suppress Kido’s idea. Of course, it is not because Ôkubo was quite generous. The reason why Ôkubo sustained a more flexible attitude toward Kido was because Saigô Takamori had secured the right to command Satsuma troops and Shimazu Hisamitsu, the highest man of power in Satsuma, was ceaselessly criticizing the new government. Moreover, Ôkubo was not that popular among his fellow retainers in his han due to the fact that he is working in the imperial government. By contrast to Ôkubo’s position, Kido was getting supports from his han, Chôshû. Even if Ôkubo had a great plan for the new central government and Japan, he could not demonstrate his leadership freely lacking supports from his han. One more episode is here. It appeared that a big concern in Ôkuma mind was how to harmonize the fragmented government. Ôkuma always wanted Kido who is a head of Chôshû to stay in the cabinet. But, being dissatisfied with Ôkuma’s determination on the dispatch of troops towards Taiwan, Kido left the cabinet. But, Ôkuma did not stay calm. He contacted Inoue, because he knew that Inoue was intimate with Kido and finally succeeded in persuading Kido to get back to the cabinet. What has been shown from the several happenings treated above was that han identities were not yet eradicated and rather it became a huge obstacle for Ôkuma in leading the government, making him unceasingly careful for ‘han politics.’

This story is not confined in the inner circle of the Meiji government. Before the Tokugawa Bakufu was collapsed, each han was more like a state with a great autonomy within it. It was a strictly governed status system by Samurai who were given the right to kill commoners if their misdemeanors are found without a due judicial process. Ruled by their own rules, not to mention Daimyo and Samurai, commoners’ self-image could not help being constructed by based on han. But, let’s be cautious not to be embroiled in a mechanical way of thinking saying that as soon as the Meiji Restoration went into orbit, the institutions would be totally switched to the one fit to the imagination the Meiji leaders were harboring in their mind. Unless deep-seated han identities are replaced by a national identity, it is not that expectable to see that once new institutions are introduced into society, then a new society working basing on fresh ideas would come into being as if we push a button of on/off. That is, anticipating that there must be a transition must

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13 Umegaki, M. (1988)., p. 120.
14 Ibid., p. 67.
be more proper. Let me give you examples. As I mentioned above, for commoners the central government was too far away from where they live geographically and mentally as well like the Imperial palace to enable them to accept the existence as a source for their identities compared to han. Therefore, when the central government set to show their presence to local people in Japan, dominating Daimyo, the impression local people received was not positive, rather they felt threatened seeing their living space was fluctuating that evoked disbelief upon the central government. After Haihan chiken or the abolition of the han system in 1871, the today’s nomination, Hiroshima and Nigata ken demanded to restore their local administration worked under the Tokugawa governance. Officially established social powers also cannot be omitted. One of the social powers based on the local level, Saga Seikantō (佐賀征韓党) urged the Meiji Government to bring the feudalist system back so that the local autonomy is guaranteed.\textsuperscript{15} The members also criticized that people who came from four giant hans were controlling the government and centralizing power.\textsuperscript{16} At this point, Umegaki, M.’s assertion deserves attention.

> there was no single, coherent organizational opposition to the government, nor was there a single set of opposition goals. Thus the failure of one type of action could not lead to a change in methods even within one group, because no method or goal could elicit consensus internally, let alone externally. Furthermore, the residual domain identities discouraged the various samurai opposition groups’ interest in each other.\textsuperscript{17}

As shown above, opposition groups were not sharing the ultimate and common goal together, nor could they do so, because what they considered as a crisis came from the fact that their territory previously worked as ‘a state’ was about to be taken apart and to be united by force to the central government, strictly speaking ‘another state’.\textsuperscript{18} Thus, we can catch the point that due to their own han (or national) identity, the making process of Japanese national identity could not help but delayed.

Even so, it seems not sufficient to get rid of any doubts on whether it was truly a harsh process to get to a Japanese national identity, because apparently Tenno had been taken a special position by which chances were that Japanese people would be able to imagine that there is something related to Japaneseness, even if they did not know what it exactly meant. I hope we keep in mind that national identity was not strong enough to root out han identities or to have the upper hand in Japan, rather first and foremost han itself was the solid foundation on which people could imagine who they are, simply sensing that there is a national governance somewhere away from their living space. Should we focus on the role of Tenno when it comes to creating Japanese national identity, what matters is people’s sincerity towards Tenno beyond the level of rhetoric. Given the mechanism of national identity, it must be surely a natural process required to know what occurred surrounding that issue in question.

As I mentioned above, not sure whether all Japanese people got that one, but at least the fact that there was a faint identity as Japanese cannot be easily denied. Then, one question arises as to why a lot of institutions had to be established intending to make Japanese people accept the idea that Tenno is their king and a father as well. If the Japanese people already have respected Tenno sincerely from the beginning,


\textsuperscript{17} Umegaki, M. (1988)., p. 207.

\textsuperscript{18} According to Jansen, M. B. “After 1945 there came a flood of studies of domains and analysis of the ‘bakuhan state’; as three-quarters of the country were under daimyo rule, that meant that three-quarters of the country was no under direct shogunal rule. (Jansen, M. B. 2002., p. 50.)” In this regard, considering the new central government as another state as a metaphor would not be an exaggeration.
people in power should not have to rack their brains. As Kim, Y. H. says, during the Tokugawa era that had been sustained for more than 260 years, the image commoners had on Tenno was a less clear and unfamiliar one compared to either Shogun or Daimyo and it just impressed them that Tenno is the existence secluded in the imperial palace.\textsuperscript{19} Facing this situation, so many institutions were followed by the Meiji government. For instance, for a start, Jingikan or the department of worship was set up in 1868, the year of what is called the starting point of the Meiji Restoration. It suggested that the role of Tenno was decisive in rebuilding Japan as a sovereign state. Daikyō Senpu or the Imperial Edict on the Establishment of Shinto was issued in 1870. In 1871, divinity came to be given to shrines by reflecting its ranks and the Ise Grand Shrine occupied the zenith as the place for the national commemorative rites for ancestors.\textsuperscript{20} The Imperial Rescript on Education declared in 1890 is suggestive, because it shows that how seriously people in power had their hearts in integrating people under the umbrella called Japan by making Tenno reach the top so as to drive it as a centripetal force. Here, let’s pay attention to the Imperial Rescript on Education.

\textit{Our Imperial Ancestors have founded Our Empire on a basis broad and everlasting and have deeply and firmly implanted virtue; Our subjects ever united in loyalty and filial piety have from generation to generation illustrated the beauty thereof. This is the glory of the fundamental character of Our Empire, and herein also lies the source of Our education.}\textsuperscript{21}

Palpably, the history of Bakufu system and especially the impact brought about by han institutions were not given any room in the rescript, as if Japanese people have always been united, blessed with virtue implanted by imperial ancestors. What it reveals is the urgency and the necessity of educating people as Japanese and making them firmly believe that they have been taken care of by imperial ancestors from ancient times. Moreover, Shrine Merger Order was issued in 1906 so that each town has one shrine for the purpose of squaring each area for parishioners of a shrine with an administrative district and of making each shrine become a center of all activities done in an administrative district. To borrow Yamada, K.’s words, it was “institutional systemization of State Shinto.”\textsuperscript{22} It was expected that through making worships a routine, the concept of the state itself could be cultivated. In other words, it can be seen this way that Tenno and subjects, or the state based on virtue and municipalities were unified hierarchically so that Japanese national unification is accomplished. The huge efforts people involved in the Meiji Restoration as politicians poured into making the aforementioned institutions should not be underestimated. To put it simply, without those institutions, there would be no way to unify people as Japanese within the short period of time.

**What does it really mean to be incorporated into the international system?**

Largely, two things matters here: the concept of a sovereign nation-state shared in Japan and the Meiji Restoration as the process of Japanization. Some people might think it is not a matter of the definition of concepts but of technical ones. Thinking this way, it seems there is nothing complicated. In the case of the concept of a sovereign nation-state, for example, it is sufficient to comply with the international law inasmuch as it becomes the sign by proving that the actor is civilized as fully as can read the grammar

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{19}] 김양희. (2006). 일본 우익의 사상적 기저로서의 신도 (神道) 고찰. 일본문화연구, 20., p. 304.
\item[\textsuperscript{20}] Ibid., p. 315.
\item[\textsuperscript{21}] Meiji Jingu Website. English Translated version of the Imperial Rescript on Education. http://www.meijijingu.or.jp/english/about/6.html#anchor
\end{itemize}
commonly used as the legal language, I mean, ‘the most reasonable language’ in the world. If an actor understands and follows the international law thoroughly, there is no problem. It is quite simple and very technical. A similar mechanism can be applied to the Meiji Restoration. If western institutions and ideas were smoothly implanted in Japan, then without doubt it should be evaluated as westernization. It is obviously technical too. As can guess easily, I am not for that stance. The slogan behind this logic appears “just do what the West has done.” If there worked a different logic and mechanism, it deserves reconsideration.

I want to begin with Fujita, Y.’s insightful historical interpretation with regard to Japanese reaction against the threat of the West. His main concept is a self-image. Comparing three countries, Japan, Korea, and China, he goes on to argue that unlike Korea and China, the former had a self-image as a minor power that made them focus on moral predominance rather than arming their country as the West and, on the other hand, the latter kept sticking to a self-image as the center of the world that made them interpret wars against the western countries arbitrarily like they can win whenever they want but they simply did not do their best, Japan lacked a self-image entrenched in Japanese society. So, faced by the need to work their own rationality due to the intrusion of the West, Japan thought there was no any option than making Japan stronger, which also shows the influence of their polity that had been colored only by the military rule. Of course, it is greatly intriguing in that according to each country’s self-image, a different type of rationality worked around anti-foreign sentiment and movement by which the way of reacting was chosen. But, the omitted is how scholars were deepening their thoughts on the anti-foreignism and interpreted western institutions and ideas and why they did that way. In Fujita, Y.’s point of view, the reason why Japan lacked a self-image should be attributed to a geographical factor now that dissimilar to China having a vast land and Korea contiguous with China, “under a national isolation policy Japan had no decisive information that would enable them to perceive their comparative magnitude.” It makes less sense to merely blame a geographical factor for their lack of a self-image. Rather than that, I assume that during the process of remaking Japanese national identity from one based on han to another one based on Japan as a whole, Japanese self-image could not help but fluctuate. As I mentioned above, the core of Japanese national identity is the instability which implies that at no time did Japanese national identity settle down on a firmly constructed foundation in Japanese history. If so, it is thinkable that Japan was given two options: Westernization and Japanization. The only condition given was to accomplish it as perfectly as possible. The reason is simple. To make their instable national identity stabilized, and simultaneously to react properly to the threats from the West, an extreme tactic might be inevitable. Therefore, they chose the latter, Japanization in my view. To be sure, westernization was the important part of the Meiji Restoration.

However, what matters here are the essence of Japanese national identity and its effects on the concept of a sovereign nation-state in Japan.

As I previously claimed in this paper, the relationship between Shogun (Bakufu) and Daimyo (han) was, so to speak, based on check-and-balance principle. Maruyama, M. also shares this line of thoughts. According to him, it can be presumed that since each han had their troops and was put under the circumstance wherein they were in strained relations competing each other over the fame in education and martial arts, they might be able to be swiftly accustomed to the principle working in the sovereign state system. But as can suppose easily and Maruyama, M. also does not go extremely with his claim, what it means by being familiar with western idea is not like they renounce their own original identity. It is just a

23 See藤田雄二. (2001). アジアにおける文明の対抗—攘夷論と旧旧論に関する日本、朝鮮、中国の比較研究—，御茶の水書房。
24 Ibid., p. 360.
matter of adjustment. What it means is that they might attempt to reinterpret introduced ideas from the west through their lens that would be colored by Confucianism. Maruyama, M.’s following argument is worthy of notice.

To sum up, by pushing the opportunity of transcendent normativity in the notions of Ten-li [or the laws of nature] and Ten-do [or the Way of Heaven] forward, the approval to the existence of the international norms sitting on all states and restricting its conducts would be comparatively smoothly achieved.26

What it connotes is the fact that Japan was not totally overwhelmed by western ideas, but would compromise them with their norms, belief and ideas that must be based on Confucianism at that time. By extension, it can be said that the room for thinking like the Meiji Restoration was Japanization was widened at this point in that Japanese national identity would be intact if it was allowed to select things that are considered as appropriate and fit in with their culture, moreover, as less as their national identity is not damaged. Then, let’s move on to see how Japanese scholars handled with that.

Sakuma Shozan, a renowned thinker in the Meiji period, did not blindly dismiss Western Learning. Through the process of reflecting the shocks and lessons he got from the Opium War, he came to believe that European natural science will be able to be learnt by mediating it in the doctrines of Chu-tzu.27

Yokoi Shōnan, an influential scholar in the Meiji period, set forth his view in 1950 that “the people of Japan should fight to the death to keep foreigners out.” However, after Perry Expedition, his stance came to be switched to a moderate direction. In Iryō Ōsetsu or On Receiving the Foreigners, “using orthodox Confucian phraseology,” he “proposed that intercourse be permitted with those countries which were honorable but that the rude manner in which Perry had presented his demands should be resisted with force.” Compared to the past, leeway was given under a certain condition that foreigners respect manners regarded as appropriate in light of Confucianism. In 1853, he sent a letter to Kawaji Toshiakira that says “The national policy used when we, Japan, deal with barbarians outside is that a country having moral justice is allowed to communicate and a country lacking moral justice is rejected, these two things are given.” To this remark, Maruyama, M. evaluates by saying that “it admitted normative restrictions of equality regarding a state’s action. Thus, it is already breaking bounds of the Chinese philosophy of kai [or Sino-centrism].” It is true. And more importantly to me, the terms and ideas through which he is interpreting the western ideas are clearly still Confucianism.

Yoshino Sakuzō, a political scientist and a thinker mainly in the Taisho period, keenly pointed out the fact that the Meiji government interpreted the principle of the international law focusing on the factors that were considered as compatible with Confucianism. The following mention given by him is full of significance.

26 Ibid., p. 190.
27 Ibid., p. 150-151. Maruyama, M. assesses Yokoi Shōnan in the following manner. “Believing the universality inhering in traditional saints’ Do or the path of duty, and reading it differently to the maximum in the circumstance of the period, [he tried to] extract positive meanings for the future. (ibid., p. 151.)” Yokoi Shōnan was not gotten stuck in the traditional doctrines of Chu-tzu, nor did he close a door connected to the western ideas. Rather, he was searching for the way of harmonizing them so as to work it beneficially for the future.
29 Ibid., p. 273.
31 Ibid.
“We have been considered foreigners as barbarians and animals. Yet, thinking deeply, they have been understood justice under the heaven and regarding us, they say they will have a relationship basing on universal justice. Thus, isn’t it appropriate to use their so-called the international law? Rather, should we exclude them, it would not only mean betraying the duty of charity and righteousness but we will be disdained by them.” (The new government) used to say like that. Given that it was not well achieved to discern between the laws and ethics, it is deemed that [the international law] was understood as the thing that is substituted with the late king’s justice.32

It becomes clear that even though Japan was definitely keen to introduce western institutions and ideas, it did not mean Japan was totally transformed to a new one similar to the West. If Japan would digest western institutions and ideas not as it is, but as they hope, not taking a scalpel to their way of thinking, then affirming that Japan was apparently westernized is irrational. To be sure, Japan took part in the international system, but not in the manner of what most western countries had done. When Japan began to join the international system, they used the international law, but did not become a member of the international society in terms of their mentality and identity. Taken together, I have to say that Japan was not incorporated into the international system. Japan used a buffer zone within the international system.33

Eventually, I can shed light on the uniqueness of the concept of a sovereign nation-state in Japan. As was clarified in this paper, the making process of a sovereign state and a nation-state was coincidently advanced in Japan, meaning that the two concepts are inseparable. More problematically, Japan was not given much time, because the western countries could not wait until Japan fully understands what is going on in the international system. So, to see the mechanism of the international system that is considered that only sovereign states are allowed to join, we can easily be aware of the fact that it does not matter whether a sovereign state succeeded in unifying a nation in its territory. Of course, if the area on which a sovereign state exerts its influence is shared with only one nation, there would be nothing better. But, even if a sovereign state failed to integrate nations living in its territory, nothing changes. There is no obstacle in joining the international system for sure. But, Japan had to become a sovereign state and a nation-state at the same time. Externally, a sovereign state was the basic and essential condition. Internally, Japan was too fragmented owing to han identities. As a result, the concept of a sovereign state in Japan came to be combined with that of a nation-state, suggesting that Japanese national identity came to be implanted to the concept of sovereignty as strongly as people in power are immersed in creating Japanese national identity.

What really came about in Japan after World War II?

Usually, we tend to see differences that might be made after a big historical event. That is, we take it for granted that a historical event that overwhelmed the world would have caused a fault line between the past and the present. It cannot be said totally an error. But the thing is, when it comes to Japanese national

33 Katsuj, N. unfolds an intriguing idea that resisting to the commonly held view that Japan was incorporated into the European international order, he suggests, basically, after noticing the predominance of the West, Bakufu wanted to avoid disclosing their (anticipated) defeat in order to protect their military glory at least on the surface. So, they determined to embrace the western institutions and ideas so that by making them as a firm foundation they hoped to reconstruct a view on the world founded on Japan. See 奈良勝司. (2016). 明治維新における自他認識の展開と国際秩序の転回. In 山下範久 & 安高啓朗. & 芝崎厚土. (编), ウェストファリア史観を脱離する. ナカニシヤ出版. Either way, the fact remains that Japan did not abandon their national identity by making it wholly similar to the West.
identity, actually the fault line we expected did not work. It may be ironic, but as explored above, the concepts of a sovereign state and a nation-state were overlapped in Japan through the process of making that and has been working as one, suggesting that unless Japan leaves the international system and choose the way of being isolating themselves from the world, they have to act as a sovereign state. It means they can cause a problem in the international system now that they own concept of sovereignty cannot be separated from that of a nation-state. In the space where only the logic of sovereignty can work and sovereign states implicitly agree with that, Japanese own logic will, in other sovereign states’ point of view, result in twisting the international system. Let’s see what happened in Japan after World War II so as to make this vague argument crystal clear.

On the whole, three factors reinforced Japanese unique concept of sovereignty; (1) Tenno’s status remained as a national symbol, (2) a lot of politicians who had worked and involved in the Meiji Government remained in the government, (3) since 1955, JIMIn-tō or the Liberal Democratic Party has been seizing power. The word that pops up in your mind first may be continuity. It is doubtlessly true that GHQ took the lead in transforming Japan into a right direction by targeting democratization, disarmament, punishment of war criminals and so forth. Nevertheless, a great divergence did not transpire under the occupation of GHQ in Japan. Therefore, we need to focalize on the hidden scenes behind that.

Tenno Hirohito was not dethroned after the defeat in WWII. How could it be possible? As can easily guess, Japan had no leverage enough to make things work this way. It was a joint work between GHQ and the Japanese government. GHQ was too concerned about whether their occupation would arouse Japanese people’s antipathy against US. Especially, given Tenno’s special status and roles in Japan, it seemed dethroning Tenno was quite risky. So, the compromising point they found was to make Tenno maintain his position as a national symbol void of any political power. To be sure, it would have been a happy deal for, if not all, most Japanese politicians involved in War. The responsibility of the war was completely imputed to the military faction by GHQ and a close ally of Tenno, reinforcing the image of peace-loving Tenno. To achieve this, the urgent task would have been to rack their brain to make a story that stresses the fact that in practice Tenno Hirohito was not for the War, but constantly hoped to stop the war as rapidly as possible. To exemplify, selected by Tenno Hirohito and court advisers, Prince Higashikuni Naruhiko was entrusted to form a new government. In September 44th, 1945, Higashikuni gave a message:

[what put an end to the war was] the gracious feeling of benevolence of His Majesty, who paved the way for the establishment of an eternal peace in order to save the people from hardships.

As Bix, H. P. demonstrates, rather in reality Tenno Hirohito was the very hindrance in bringing the war to end. However, in no way was Tenno Hirohito blamed for the war officially, nor was he abdicated.

It also cannot be omitted that purged conservative politicians came back to the spheres of national and local politics again in the early 1950. Why dis its story go on like that? Commanded by GHQ, the then prime minister Yoshia Shigeru launched ‘Official Position Qualifications Screening Board’ in June 1951, through which the politicians were able to jump at great opportunities to return to the political stage once

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36 “during late 1944 and early 1945, the palace officials and the senior statesmen accelerated their efforts to remove Tōjō and to wean the emperor away from his mistaken notion that it was possible to strike a decisive blow against the Americans and them move to a peace policy. (Ibid., p. 354.)”
again. Since that time, the returned politicians started to embark on awakening Japanese people to the importance of revising the Constitution.

Moreover, since 1955 to 1993, the Liberal Democratic Party had been taken the leading role in the Japanese politics by seizing power and up to date this phenomenon has been maintained. (Minshu-tō or the Democratic Party seized power only for 4 years from 2009 to 2012.)

At this point, we can think in the following way. During the Meiji Restoration, in the absence of a firmly constructed Japanese national identity, people seizing power already realized the significance of Tenno quite early on.\(^37\) Pivoting on Tenno, pressured by politicians to accept the idea of kokutai or the national polity, Japanese people began to (re)imagine their identity, rooting out their han identities as children of Tenno. After WWII, it was pretty apparent that unless the previous power structure is reformed, a great divergence cannot be expected in Japan. Yet, as seen above, the triangular structure, Tenno, politicians worked in the Meiji government and the Liberal Democratic Party inheriting the Meiji spirit, became intact even after the war. Then, it might not be unreasonable to think that the concept of a sovereign state and a nation-state were not damaged. In this regard, chances are that keeping their eyes closed to the ashamed history of Japan, they would set to idealize the Meiji period. This idealized image of the Meiji period came to be directly reflected to the concept of sovereignty in Japan in my view. Is it hard to imagine? Then, let’s move on to see what happened and happening in the Japanese modern political sphere.

**What really took place in the Japanese modern political sphere?**

It will be a good start to give episodes related to Yoshida Shigeru who is considered as a great politician and laid the foundation for Japanese politics which is called “Yoshida Doctrine.” According to Gao, B., since Yoshida Doctrine was established, Japanese nationalism was consolidated into economic nationalism that became the foundation of the modern Japanese identity.\(^38\) But to my thinking, an interpretation regarding that issue needs to be more deepened. That is, basically it appears that so called economy-first identity is a part of Japanese identity created by politicians in power so as to get supports from Japanese people facing daring economic difficulties after the war. It is just a product of a compromise to keep their position in the government. The most important thing to be considered here is what ideas they are sharing in the government, deep inside their mind. Even if politicians are for Yoshida Doctrine, neither does it mean they are indifferent to a glory of a Japanese nation, nor would they be able to be satisfied with economic accomplishments regardless of their nation’s fame in the world. Simply put, there is a huge possibility that economic nationalism would work inasmuch as politicians judge that can be a great means to turn a national glory back to Japan so that what they think ‘Japanese national identity’ comes into being. To attest my arguments, specific clues will be given below.

From now on, four former and current Japanese prime ministers, Yoshida Shigeru, Kishi Nobusuke, Nakasone Yasuhiro and Abe Sinzō will be a focal point. They were not arbitrarily chosen. Firstly, Yoshida Shigeru is known for the founder of Yoshida Doctrine that has been the Japanese mainstream political line. Due to the fact, people tend to underestimate Yoshida’s real face as an admirer of Tenno. I want to reveal the aspects here. Secondly, Kishi Nobuske took the first and brave step to revise the Japan-US Security Treaty in 1960. The thing that should be kept in mind is that He was not triggered to take the action like that by merely a pure pragmatism, but by his patriotism that was fundamentally based on his own idea that Japan has to regain a national pride by ‘normalizing’ Japan. Thirdly, Nakasone Yasuhiro’s sincere respect

\(^{37}\) See 야스마루 요시오. (2008). Yasumaru, Y. views that Tenno was in fact availed by the forces leading competition over power as “symbolic all-ness (ibid., p. 35)” so as to earn legitimacy and maintain their power.

toward Tenno cannot be disregarded in the way that he is the closest to the type of typical politicians of the Liberal Democratic Party in terms of a sincere mind of admiration towards Tenno. Lastly, through the process of understanding what Abe Sinzō is harboring in his mind, the big picture of Japanese modern politics will be able to be drawn. Considering the fact that the Liberal Democratic Party has been taking power since 1955, (except for only several years when the government was taken by the opposition party temporarily), focusing on Japanese representative political figures of the conservative party in Japan will not be meaningless.

According to Dower, J. W., “it became possible to presume that the position of Tenno was rather elevated above politics in the Tenno democracy.” It is not a mere assumption. Right after the new Constitution came into effect in 1947, the then Prime Minister, Yoshida Shigeru sent a letter to his father-in-law, Makino Sinken, which indicated that “(arguably his [Tenno] spiritual role) ‘will be more expanded and his position will become more important and subtle.’” It comes as a surprise, because the day was considered as, and had to be a new start for the Japanese people to be reborn as citizens of the democratic state. However, the then Prime minister’s way of thinking appeared to be gotten stuck in the Meiji era. Moreover, the then Tenno Hirohito promulgated the new constitution on November 3, 1946 which was the 94th anniversary of the Meiji Tenno’s birth. It is not the end of the story. At the ceremony, “when Tenno came on the scene, the then Prime Minister, Yoshida, shouted three straight times ‘His Majesty Tenno, hurrah’”…. [Tenno’s youngest brother]“Mikasa considered that it is not appropriate to do such ceremony, which is rather suited for coronation, in the event that was held to celebrate that sovereignty was transferred to the people’s hand.” One more episode is here. Dower, J. W. draws the conclusion:

*Japan remained first and foremost a monarchy, and only secondarily and subordinately a democracy. This certainly was Yoshida’s position, and he conveyed this with great flamboyance in November 1952, a half year after the Occupation ended, by referring to himself as Shin Shigeru (“Your loyal servant, Shigeru”) while making a formal presentation to the emperor in his capacity as prime minister……To Yoshiida, public officials remained servants of the emperor rather than servants of the people.*

I wonder if people can think that Yoshida’s political spirit is in the modern democratic Japan. Harayoshi, H. also argues in this line of thought. According to him, “for Yoshida, ‘Tenno is a state.’ ‘Tenno is the progenitor of our nation, the head family.’ Moreover, it should be said that this idea regarding Tenno was the impetus of his political actions.” According to an article of Asahi newspaper that was issued in March 8, 1954, Kishi showed his desire to substitute a term ‘head’ for ‘symbol’ in the Constitution that says Tenno as a national symbol. Of course, Kishi asserted that he respects democracy and did not mean to change the fundamental idea that sovereignty rests with the people. However, against Kishi’s response, Yoshida offered criticism by saying “as of now, these words ‘a nation’s symbol’ are being used……when we heard this word, it is true that we felt very wired……[Even so], our respect and affection towards His Majesty

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40 Ibid.
41 Ibid., p. 518.
42 Ibid., p. 519.
Tenno and Her Imperial Majesty was not changed in any degree.46 I am sure Harayoshi, H.’s analysis is correct. In this sense, I assume that Yoshida was got stuck in the way of thinking made in the Meiji period, idealizing Japanese national identity that had taken place in that era by putting Tenno at the top. If the prime minister did not hesitate to conduct this way, it will not be an exaggeration to see that the concept of sovereignty Yoshida presumed would be closely connected to a concept of a nation-state, in the strict sense that of the Meiji state.47

Let’s move on to Kishi Nobusuke. In his memoirs, we can get some hints that show his stance regarding WWII and the current situation under the Occupation of GHQ.

> With regard to the defeat of the war, we have the responsibility to Japanese people and Your Majesty Tenno, but not to US……Some people say that the action we took was a war of aggression. However, in our point of view, we were pushed into the corner so that we had no other options than waging war. Since this way of thinking should be apparently left to future generations, I decided to engage in the trial.48

Given the several conditions I enumerated above that should be met when I argue that Japanese national identity is still based on the Meiji period, making that era as the ideal, at least in the political sphere. Kishi exactly met the conditions by claiming that Japan should not be blamed by what people consider the ashamed history and our future generations should not be daunted by winners’ arbitrary judgment. Referring to this interpretation, the history of the Meiji era is by no means flawed. Then, it is very fine in that legacy from the Meiji government will be given more room to be evaluated in a more positive way.

We need more clues. In 1954, Kishi is clarifying his idea regarding the Constitution in the wiring entitled “For a true independent Japan”

> We have to have the constitution made by our own hands so that a national pride and spirit is taken back. It is not merely a matter of the revision of Article 9 of the Constitution. It should be the constitution that expresses a national spirit and I firmly believe that its contents should be linked to Japanese soil and blood.49

Now, we can confirm the fact that the reason why Kishi was craving for revising the Constitution was not to normalize Japan by turning the right to rearm back to Japan, but for a national pride. His political actions cannot be separated from a strong nationalism that, to my thinking, is not freed from the Meiji spirit. Plus, for the purpose of suppressing a popular movement against the revision of Security Treaty that was supposed to be done in no time, the revised bill of Performance of Police Functions Act was submitted in 1959. The bill was not passed, but Kishi advocated his action by saying that Performance of Police Functions Act was enacted in 1948. The year “was the time when the Occupation reached the climax. The

46 Ibid., p. 67.
47 Curiously enough, the former prime minister Kishi Nobusuke who was the very person directly had been involved in and moreover had taken the lead in the pre-war militarism system in Japan answered to an interviewer’s question about Yoshida’s character in the following way: “On the flip side of the coin, [Yoshida] can be considered as a loyal servant of Tenno……his way of thinking is thorough regarding that issue.(原彬久. (2014). 岸信介証言録. 東京 : 中央公論新社., p. 123.)” I slightly changed a colloquial style to a literary style.
policy for weakening the police was pushed ahead, and as the reaction against the trend of totalitarianism, the protection of personal legal interests was being extremely argued. [In this regard,] it was thought that the right of the police needs to be reduced. The logic Kishi drew seemed that whatever the reason, we need to get rid of policies that were established during the Occupation of GHQ. He obviously put gravity on the national interest when faced to the need to choose one between the national interest and personal interests. In no way did he feel a sense of disharmony in introducing the law that worked in the Meiji period. All things considered, in Kishi’s perspective, the Japanese militarism can be justified given the then international situation, the responsibility for the war they waged is not to US or other countries invaded by Japan, but only to Japanese people and Tenno, turning a national pride back to Japan is the ultimate goal, and reinforcing a means for suppressing a popular movement as the Meiji government did is not a problem, rather is the thing that should be done so as to root out the policies established by foreign forces. It does not make less sense to argue that Kishi was living in the Meiji period in terms of mentality and his own political thoughts as well.

It is the time to pay attention to Nakasone Yasuhiro. Surprisingly, there are so many clues that show how sincerely Nakasone respects Tenno. He was by no means reluctant to make his mind open as a person admiring for Tenno with his true heart. Before giving the examples, for a start I want to focus on Nakasone’s political ideas. When Kaishin-tō or the Constitutional Progressive Party was formed in 1952, Nakasone took part in that party. So, referring to the party’s platform would be meaningful in that we can get some hints about Nakasone’s political ideas. I want to pick up several articles that, I assume, are related to Nakasone’s idea on the Japanese national identity.

1. Our party pours our efforts into protecting Japanese nation’s independence and self-defense, and realizing the rise of Asia and the world peace.

1. Our party pours our efforts into bridging the civilization of the East and that of the West, and the rise of the world culture.

Nakasone did not confine the Japanese role in the domestic affairs as far as we cast light on the party’s platform. However, what I can say is that despite of the ashamed Japanese history, there is no vestige that proves that members of the party took pains in order not to give other countries invaded by Japan during WWII the impression that Japan want to take the lead again in the world as a country having the duty for the rise of Asia and become a mediator of civilizations between the East and the West. But, I should not go so far just referring to the platform that is not the one made solely by Nakasone. So, let’s turn our eyes to other comments from Nakasone. In fact, Nakasone was for the suggestion that Tenno should be abdicated. Yet, we should not be misguided by that argument, not seeing the reason Nakasone gave when he claimed like that. The reason did not, of course, come from his belief that Tenno Hirohito should take the responsibility for the war. The suggested reason by him was to take a load off Tenno’s mind and to protect Tenno’s morality. Moreover, in his memoirs, it is shown that he considers Tenno as a transcendent existence.

Even if the government collapses with disgrace, there is Tenno as a transcendent existence

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50 Ibid., p. 73.  
52 Ibid., pp. 175-176.
in Japan. The secular society’s muddy water cannot reach Tenno. No, it should not reach.\textsuperscript{53}

Obviously, on the verge of Japan’s defeat in the war, Tenno declared that he is human being. Nonetheless, he still adhered to the idea that Tenno is a sacred existence, as though he is a person living in the Meiji period. I do not think it was simply a slip of the tongue. In his memoirs, his following remark allows us to make sure it was his sincere opinion. In April, 1986, when ‘the 60\textsuperscript{th} ceremony of Tenno Your Majesty’s reign’ was held,

\textit{in the Kokugikan [or National Sport Hall], as a prime minister I offered my congratulations and as soon as I said “Your Majesty, you have endured harsh times for so long” I burst into a rage of tears, because the days of catastrophes, recessions, disturbances, social unrest, war, a lost war, occupation, local tours, various kinds of political upheavals and diplomatic troubles that had occurred throughout Your Majesty’s reign for 60 years from Taisho to Showa went through my mind like a flash.}\textsuperscript{54}

In succession, he appeals his admiration for Tenno in the same tone.

\textit{Showa Tenno was the greatest Tenno among emperors of many generations in that Showa Tenno put Tenno scholarship into practice in person. As Yamamoto Genpō’s remark, he did not pursue personal interests and now that he did not have anything I think his personality was inexhaustible and shined widely like the sun.}\textsuperscript{55}

I strongly believe that at no time would nobody suspect that in Nakasone’s point of view, Tenno is keeping the same place as he did in the Meiji period. As became clear, although there were disputes over the role Showa Tenno took during the war period, for Nakasone, Tenno is close to either a flawless existence or a saint. So, once again I cannot help but cast doubt on the concept of sovereignty shared in the Japanese political sphere dominated by the conservative party for long. It cannot be a pure sovereignty simply putting importance on functional aspects in the international system.

Now, it is Abe Sinzō’s turn. For a start, it may be proper to begin with this episode for our better understating on Japanese national identity working up to date. On April 28, 2013, the Japanese government held a ceremony in celebration of the day of Japanese recovery of national sovereignty. In a hall, people including the Prime Minister Abe shouted three straight times in unison ‘His Majesty Tenno, hurrah.’\textsuperscript{56} Something may come across your mind. Yes, this scene is totally overlapped with what happened in the event held for promulgating the new constitution on November 3, 1946. The then Prime Minister, Yoshida, also did the same ceremony. Thinking what would trigger the two prime ministers to act like that, the answer seems to be in their own national identity and its continuity inherited from the Meiji period. The image of Japanese national identity or that of what it should be in Abe’s point of view must be a focal point here. Is it truly related to the Meiji period as I have emphasized several times? As a politician, Abe mentioned that the figures who influenced on himself the most are Kishi Nobusuke and Yoshida Shōin. In fact, Kishi Nobusuke’s name was placed on an A-class war criminal list due to his leading role in the

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., p. 358.
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., p. 368.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid.
militarism during the war. With regard to Yoshida Shōin, he laid the foundation of Sonnō Jōi or the principle of advocating reverence for the Emperor and the expulsion of foreigners and advocated Seikanron or the proposal to invade Korea. The thing that needs to be kept in mind is that Abe chose them as a politician. As I already explained Kishi’s political thoughts and his strong desire for turning a nation’s pride back to Japan, I want to sketch briefly Yoshida Shōin’s political stance. On the face of threat by US, the Bakufu was panic and inclined to the option of accepting what US requested to Japan. Meanwhile, Yoshi Shōin was planning to make Japan become a strong power in the world and at the same time deepening his thoughts on Tenno, and developed patriotism basing on Tenno worship. The leaders of the Meiji Restoration such as Itō Hirobumi and Yamagata Aritomo were moved by him and admired him so much that shows that Yoshi Shōin’s influence on the Meiji Restoration cannot be underestimated. In this sense, it becomes clear that the identity of Abe as a politician started from and soundly rooted in the Meiji period. For example, emphasizing the significance of revising the Constitution, he mentioned:

Japanese people have woven a history with Tenno together. Up to the present, Japanese people did not want to replace Tenno and they have lived with Tenno together. In a foreign country’s perspective, it is a mysterious history as well, and that is what I call the Japanese uniqueness in my view. I think this fact should be written in the preamble of the Constitution.

In Abe’s point of view, the society firmly united revolving around Tenno is the ideal. Setting the ideal implies that even if the reality itself is distant from the ideal, we have to strive to get closer to it. What becomes conspicuous is that the ideal Abe set was in fact what leaders of the Meiji Restoration had hoped to achieve. Now that Abe is the current prime minister, I want to draw a more specific picture of Abe’s political thoughts and ideals in the following chapter so as to understand the reality happening in the international society.

What does it really mean by being a normal state in Japan?

As a lot of authors treated right above stressed the right to use force, the concept of a normal state was too simplified and mostly discussed by limiting the scope to the security sphere. First and foremost when we talk about the definition of a normal state, each state’s national identity does not get into the picture, since the conditions to be a normal state can be met by following the international law and being accepted as a sovereign state that puts importance on the principle of non-intervention and respects for sovereignty. Basically, normalness is not compatible with uniqueness that is why the definition of a normal state is, I suggest, not overlapped with that of a national identity rooted in a specific country. In this sense, I do not think Japan want to become a normal state. They want to become ‘a normal state’ by considering the Meiji period as their ideal type. I want to provide one more example to back up my point.

In May 7, 2012, the Liberal Democratic Party announced the Draft for the Revised Constitution. There would be no better material that enables us to understand which ideals LDP’s members are harboring in their mind for Japan. Comparing the Present Constitution with the LDP Revised Constitution would be helpful in making their intention clear.

The Present Preamble:


We, the Japanese people, acting through our duly elected representatives in the National Diet, determined that we shall secure for ourselves and our posterity the fruits of peaceful cooperation with all nations and the blessings of liberty throughout this land, and resolved that never again shall we be visited with the horrors of war through the action of government, do proclaim that sovereign power resides with the people and do firmly establish this Constitution. Government is a sacred trust of the people, the authority for which is derived from the people, the powers of which are exercised by the representatives of the people, and the benefits of which are enjoyed by the people. This is a universal principle of mankind upon which this Constitution is founded. We reject and revoke all constitutions, laws, ordinances, and rescripts in conflict herewith.

LDP Proposed Preamble:

*Japan is a nation with a long history and unique culture, under a tenno who is a symbol of the unity of the people and which is controlled under a system of separation of the legislative, administrative and judicial powers subject to the sovereignty of the people. Japan has overcome the ravages of great war and many disasters and has taken an important place in international society. Japan pursues friendly relations with all nations under a philosophy of peace and contributes to world peace and prosperity.*

Japan as a nation under Tenno as a symbol of the unity of the people became the subject of the Constitution on the first line of the preamble in place of the sovereignty of the Japanese people. The sentences that reflected their remorse for the war as a defeated nation were deleted, instead it is inclined to strengthen and emphasize a nation’s pride. Axiomatically, LDP members are not targeting the future-oriented goal and, instead, they are giving their glances to the Meiji period and setting that era as the ideal-type.

However, we should not be misguided by just looking at LDP, believing that Japanese national identity is on the firmly constructed ground and all Japanese people are for that concept. That is definitely untrue. As I have constantly argued, the essence of Japanese national identity is in its instability. Although people in power always had to find ways for creating Japanese national identity and making it as a centripetal force in Japan, some forces always came out to the fore that shook the ground of Japanese national identity. In the Meiji period, han identities were the obstacles in blooming Japanese national identity. Under the Occupation of GHQ, a defeated nation identity impeded politicians seizing power to achieve their desires to bring a national pride back. In the democratized Japan, the peace state identity always blocked LDP’s way to normalization of Japan. That is, Japanese national identity has never been stabilized. To focus

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60 Referring to NHK poll, Kang, K. J., argues that although until 1954 ‘the revision to Article 9 for rearmament or having the army’ were actively supported by Japanese people (in 1951 76% of respondents consented), since the political movement for revising the Constitution got started from 1950s, only 37% of respondents came to support that in 1956 (康慶子. (2013)., p. 71). In this regard, she emphasizes that Japanese people’s desire for keeping the Peace Constitution intact was created by politicians carving for pushing the revision ahead. See 康慶子. (2013). 일본 국민의 호헌적 평화의식 형성 과정 고찰. 한
more on the current situation in Japan, while politicians’ own concept of a normal state which connotes plainly not only a sovereign state but also a nation state is working and has to be working in the nation level. Japanese people’ own concept of the peace state identity tend to expand its effects over the international level. Their units of movements are different. By that I mean, Japanese national identity is still facing the risk of fragmentation. Even if LDP’s active movements for revising the Constitution and right-wing organizations for reinforcing their conservative political thoughts and pushing it ahead in the congress are causing a big concern in Japan and the international society and making the reality distorted by drawing people’s attention only to a part of Japanese national identity which I say the ideal-type sovereignty, in practice Japanese national identity is in its instability.

Here, let me make myself clear. All things considered, Japan is making their national identity by idealizing the Meiji period. As I repeatedly claimed, its own concept of sovereignty cannot be separated from that of a nation-state. That is, when it comes to sovereignty in Japan, it is not like the pure one widely shared around the world, but like it is assuming that the Meiji era is the ideal and it should be reflected to the concept so as to become ‘a normal state’. I call this phenomenon the advent of the new Meiji state.

Prior to suggesting my idea with regard to the new Meiji state, let’s broaden our horizons to the international level first. Pyle, K. sees the current Japanese diplomatic policy like “throughout the whole period of the Japanese contemporary modern history for 150years, whenever the structure of the international governing system changes, Japan revived their advantages by changing time after time their foreign policy according to the changed international order.” It appears that Pyle, K.’s analysis is based on structural determinism, giving no room for Japan to make their own agenda regardless of a change of the international system. To my thinking, we do not have to try to find a great meaning from that aspects Pyle, K. mentions. Rather, it is enough and more proper to see that at least Japan cleverly uses the international system as a buffer zone as a space for exchanging words with other states and for preventing conflicts from occurring in advance or mitigating it. What are decisive are not a structural but actors and the power structure in Japan. Should politicians seizing power be only concerned about benefits they will be able to get by adjusting their foreign policy to the international system and its change, the prime ministers’ visits to Yasukuni Shrine does not make sense. Their visits did not start yesterday. The then prime minister Takeo Miki made a personal visit to Yasukuni Shrine in August 15, 1975. Thereafter, finally Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro for the first time made an official visit to Yasukuni Shrine in August 15, 1985. On December 26, 2013, the first year of Abe’s second term, he at last visited Yasukuni Shrine and worshiped. Obviously, a series of Japanese prime ministers’ visits to Yasukuni Shrine caused a stir either in Japan or over neighboring states and it is not beneficial for Japan. It is unfit not only to Pyle, K.’s structural deterministic framework but to the realists’ analytic framework as well. Soeya, Y.’s analysis deserves attention here. According to him, Japan does not have the national strategy, but only agendas. Within the framework based on the Peace Constitution and Japan-US Security Treaty, the diplomacy of Japan worked by an ‘invisible hand’. However, in his framework, the deeper layer working in the modern Japanese

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61 For more information regarding right-wing organizations especially in the Abe Cabinet, See 정미애. (2016). 일본의 보수· 우익 정치세력-제 2 차 아베 내각을 중심으로. 일본연구, 67(단일호), 129-152.
63 Even though the Cabinet Legislation Bureau judged that the prime minister’s official visit to Yasukuni Shrine is against the Constitution, he carried out his plan.
64 See 소에야 요시히데. (2013). 전후 일본의 외교 현실과 미들과의 구상. In 문정인 · 서승원.
political sphere is out of sight. What if all movements of politicians in power reach the critical mass and Japan is finally transformed to the new Meiji state? Of course, it will not be an easy task given the existence of the counter-ideal type of Japanese identity called the peace state identity. Even so, there is something that cannot be explained by the notion of an ‘invisible hand.’ In my view, it is not a matter of an invisible hand, but of the invisible ideal-type sovereignty.

The symptoms of the new Meiji state can be found in the following ways: (1) Japanese politicians’ (conscious/unconscious) idealization of the Meiji state, (2) the new Meiji state as a phenomenon. These two layers are working.

Regarding the first one, I have explained above picking up writings that reveal the prime ministers’ political thoughts and their real dreams. (a) They deny the ashamed Japanese history that occurred after the Meiji Restoration. Then, they can purify the Meiji period, only stressing the bright sides of that time. (b) They put incredibly great gravity on Tenno as a national symbol and the existence of unifying a Japanese nation. Tenno had never been conspicuous throughout the Tokugawa era, but in the Meiji period Tenno became a father of a nation. Politicians taking the lead in the Japanese modern political sphere are having the same desire that the status of Tenno is more strengthened. (c) They reinterpret the past so as to turn a national pride back to Japan. The so-called Meiji spirit is emphasized such as innovation, national prosperity and military power and so forth.

The next is about the new Meiji state as a phenomenon. I hope you can imagine like that. On the left side, there is the han system. On the other hand, on the right side, there is a democratic Japan. In my perspective, the new Meiji state can be placed on the middle right. The point can be the yardstick. And then, to see a vertical line, on the upper side, there is the unity of a nation and on the bottom side, respects for individual rights. I assume that the new Meiji state is getting closer to the upper side. Put this picture aside, to clarify my argument, politicians in power want to drive Japan to the point that I just mentioned. They want to speed up by pursuing Japanese nationalism (as the leaders of the Meiji government tried to root out han identities and to admire Tenno as a father of a state), hoping to become a sovereign (normal) state (as the leaders of the Meiji government was urged to achieve that goal). If the hidden and real ultimate goal that LDP members are harboring in their mind is to achieve these three factors, Japanese nationalism, a sovereign state and (re)armament, these aspects are totally overlapped with what the leaders of the Meiji government were keen to accomplish. Similarly, the Meiji government and the new Meiji government do not postulate the ashamed history of Japan. In the case of the Meiji government, they really have yet to have the memories. In the case of the new Meiji Japan, they have to and want to make the war period veiled from the Japanese people’s sights and (or) reinterpret it in order not to damage the image (or the ideal) of the Meiji government. Then, it can be seen that the two governments are greatly similar. Therefore, when people in power assert the importance of becoming a normal state, we will be able to understand their assertion by replacing it with the new Meiji state.

**Conclusion**

Nowadays, a normal state became a buzzword in Japan. So many people and scholars eyes’ were gathered around that notion. However, the ordinarily heard conclusion regarding the notion was that Japan wants to become a normal state by revising the Peace Constitution so as to rearm Japan again as other normal states can do. A normal state was made a pair of militarization. So, I got started to study what a normal state really means in Japan by looking back to the Tokugawa era in order to grasp the image of Japanese
national identity. That is because it seemed a normal state is definitely related to a national identity, not a technical term at all. My founding showed that actually the reason why Japan is eager to be a normal state is because their national identity was not rooted in the firm ground. Basically, there were two keywords: continuity and instability. The former became possible by people in power constantly pursuing making a Japanese national identity and the latter occurred by han identities in the Meiji era, a defeated nation identity during the Occupation of GHQ, the peace state identity up to date. Moreover, when said Japan was incorporated into the international system, I wanted to rethink the notion of incorporation that lead me to the founding that actually Japan was not incorporated to that system but just tried to join a buffer zone within it. Plus, at that moment, the concept of a sovereign state and that of a nation state were created simultaneously, meaning that when politicians in power argue to bring its sovereignty back to Japan, the concept cannot be a technical one or the one widely shared around the world. It must be overlapped with the concept of a nation state, a nation state that was formed during the Meiji period, which implies that the Meiji period became the exact ideal for politicians. Unless Japanese national identity is stabilized, this phenomenon will not disappear. That is why LDP members created the ideal-type sovereignty, making the Meiji period as their ideal to pursue. In this regard, if I am asked like “what does it really mean by being a normal state in Japan?”, my answer would be, as you can guess, the new Meiji state.
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