

ON THE POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF MODERNIZATION: THE WAY JAPAN HAS COME AND SEEMS TO BE GOING¹

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ABSTRACT

After the Meiji Restoration in 1868, Japan modernized itself on the Western model of constitutional monarchy. The modernization made the country richer and stronger, as it planned. However, it came with negative effects as well as positive effects. The negative effects were seen in its excessive moves to defend itself from the Russian expansionism, especially its resultant occupation of Korea and China, and subsequent expansionism by itself and the Second World War. In particular, limiting the Emperor's power as in Western monarchies and admitting the military's autonomy led to waging wars. On the other hand, the positive effects have been observed in the post-war era, when Western-style democracy was adopted with a new pacifist constitution. The country was rebuilt economically, and until recently placed second in the world in GDP figures (now third after China). Japan has been able to contribute positively to the world in the past decades. It is sincerely hoped that the country will keep up the good work in its positive contribution and internationalization/globalization.

Keywords: Modernization, constitutional monarchy, Japanese history, expansionism, democracy

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In today's world modernization entails Westernization in several senses—in adopting some sort of democracy in politics and capitalism in economy, for example. The Western model in modernization has been strong for well over a century in the world. Of course, there are positive and negative effects of modernization. In this short paper we look at Japanese history as an example where its positive and negative effects can both be seen.

I. THE WAY JAPAN HAS COME

In Japanese history, a major change occurred in 1868, the year of the Meiji Restoration, when Tokugawa Shogunate gave the ruling power back to the Emperor after the *Shogun* great warlords' being in the reigning position for several centuries.² After the start of the Meiji Period, the country looked toward Western countries for advanced political systems, military systems, etc. This was necessary, the leaders of Japan in those days thought, because faced with and threatened by the overpowering military might of Western countries toward the end of Tokugawa's Edo Period, Japan had no choice but to join the move of modernization. Apparently, "If you can't beat them, join them," was the idea. The leaders did not want to fall to Western powers as Qing dynasty China did. Japan's national policy in those days was "*Fukoku kyohei*," that is, "Enrich the country, and strengthen the military."

Unfortunately, the Western model of modernization included what might be called the medieval politics of the strong ruling the weak. The threat of Western powers toward the end of the Edo Period was real: for example, the American Commodore Matthew Perry with four ships (two with steam engines unknown to Japanese people then) visiting Yokohama near Tokyo in 1854 and demanding Japan to open up the country to foreign countries; in the Anglo-Satsuma War, the city of Satsuma (now Kagoshima) was set on fire by the bombardment by British ships in 1864, etc. Thus, the difference in the level of power and technology was obvious to Japanese leaders. Over a dozen unequal treaties with the USA and European countries were imposed on Japan. The lesson was that if you are not modernized and strong, you end up falling victim to unfair treatment or, in the worst case, occupation/ colonization.



American Commodore M. Perry's Visit in Yokohama, Japan

Meiji Period Japan worked hard to follow the Western model by modernizing, enriching and strengthening the country, and the efforts were effective. Too effective, in fact, so that it ended up joining the European colonizers and becoming an aggressor itself, giving hardships to Korean and Chinese people, and later to other Asian peoples. In the writer's view, it should have stopped at becoming strong enough to defend itself, but not strong enough to be an aggressor. This was a huge mistake.

The mistake became a kind of undeclared policy, and Japan increased its military power, beat Russia in 1905 in the Russo-Japanese War and stopped the Russian expansionism in Northern China/ Manchuria and Korea. At that time, Russia was trying to expand its territory not only in the east but in the west as well: the Ottoman Empire also experienced and suffered from Russia's expansionism then.³ In fact, Russia's expansionism was the greatest source of fear

² This change, however, was mostly in formality, and the substance did not change much, as will be seen below.

³ Many Turkish participants in ICAPA 2011 mentioned the incident of the *Ertuğrul Firkateyni* in their papers/ abstracts, which occurred around that time (in 1890). The writer is aware that Turkish people remembered

for Japan. Because Japanese leaders feared that Russia would annex Korea and Manchuria and expand into Japan, the Japanese government felt obliged to go into Korea and strengthen the country. It was a deplorable mistake that they ended up annexing and colonizing the country.

Incidentally, Russia's expansionistic ambition is still observable today, as one can tell from the recent moves in Crimea, Ukraine. From the Russian point of view, their national interests should be enhanced by their expanding into Ukraine today, and they would say that the situation was similar over a century ago: they had to expand in the east and west, they would say. The factor involved in Crimea now seems to be the high percentage of Russian residents in the region. Moreover, because their country is mostly in the North Frigid Zone, Russia wants wider access to the outer world, especially for their military or naval force, with more unfrozen ports in winter. Whatever their motive is, the Russian move is not admissible for the international community.

Going back to Japanese history, if Japan had stopped at winning over Russia and called its military back to the country, it would have been good for China, Korea and Japan itself, and Japanese action might have been appreciated. The way Japan took, however, was the wrong one, unfortunately. The decision that the Japanese leaders made back then was understandably not an easy one. After the Russo-Japanese War, which took a lot of resources, no reparations were gained. After losing a lot of soldiers and spending much national budget, this was really unsatisfactory or frustrating for Japan. (Sources say that the war budget constituted a large portion of the national yearly budget and that Rothschild in London helped by buying Japanese bonds then.) Thus, the country needed some way to gain resources somewhere outside the country and let off the heavily-taxed people's steam of frustration, though, as mentioned above, the Russian expansionism was the biggest source of fear for Japan and the reason for its sending military forces to Korea and China. Some better way should have been sought.⁴

how the people in the small fishing village of Kushimoto, Japan and the people of Japan acted at that time, and repaid the kindness by saving the Japanese people who were left behind in Teheran in 1985 during the Iran-Iraq War. This is a very moving story, and the writer feels very grateful to the people of Turkey.

4 The way the writer wrote the latter half of this paragraph may have been misleading in part: it may have sounded that Japanese leaders decided to annex Korea to gain resources, to gain money. That was never the primary reason, however. Japanese leaders knew, sources say, that more money would go into Korea than come out of the country: they knew that there would be a lot of money to be spent to build infrastructure there and to strengthen the country. Indeed, a lot of money was spent.

In fact, the first governor sent to Korea, Ito Hirofumi [sir name first here and throughout this paper with all Japanese and Korean names] was trying hard to delay the annexation of Korea. Of course, his policies were bad enough for Korean people and he made mistakes, such as the abdication of Emperor Kojong after the Hague incident, but he was not the worst choice among Japanese leaders for Korean people. All sources available in Japan indicate that he was against annexing Korea for a long time, whereas another powerful leader Yamagata

The victory over Russia made the Japanese military overly confident and perhaps arrogant. The necessity to seek natural resources faced with the oil embargo led the country to the wrong choice of waging a war against the USA and other countries in World War II and the defeat.⁵

The second wave of modernization after the war took place under the guidance of the American GHQ (General Headquarters), especially in the political system. The new, pacifist

Aritomo, more militaristic between the two, was for such moves, and there were other leaders who agreed with Yamagata. It seems that Ito was waiting for Korea to be stronger while he was delaying the annexation. For a long time, he believed that it was enough to have Korea under Japanese protection temporarily. His belief can be seen in his words to Nitobe Inazo, another Meiji period leader, given at the time of Nitobe's visit with Ito in Korea (Nitobe 1931, Chap. 27) [the writer's translation]:

There seem to be many who argue that Japanese people should be moved to Korea, but I am against this idea ... You know, Korean people are great. In its history, there were times when Korea was far more advanced than Japan. There is no reason to believe that the people cannot manage their country themselves. In people's talents, both peoples are equal to each other. What brought today's difficulties was not the people's faults but the political mismanagement. When the country is properly governed, the people would have no insufficiency in quantity or quality. Thus, it is obvious that Ito understood Korean people and respected them. It was very unfortunate and ironical that the assassination of Ito brought the annexation of Korea much earlier than he had planned.

Actually, there is more to Ito's death than is usually known. Two things are prominent. First, the Korean hero Ahn Jun-Gun's bullets may not have killed Ito Hirofumi. He certainly shot at him, and at least one bullet hit him. However, Murota Yoshiaya, former House of Representatives member who was accompanying Ito on the trip to Harbin, testified that a few shots came from the second floor of the station building. He probably saw Ito's body when the doctors examined the body after his death, though it was not an autopsy, and he described how bullets ran through the body from the right shoulder downwards to the left side of the body. Also, years later a man named Roman Kim secretly told a few confidants that his father was the true assassin and after the incident his father had a "three-day and three-night celebration" over his success. The father seems to have been Kim Pyeong-Hak, according to Ohno (2003), a first-rate nonfiction work.

Second, it seems that some Japanese leaders were behind the incident. They seem to have given Kim Pyeong-Hak and another Korean activist the information that Ito was going to visit Harbin to meet the Russian Treasury Minister Vladimir Kokovtsov there. This must have happened because the visit was not announced publicly, but just known among government leaders. Or less likely, it could have been the Russian side who tipped off the activists. It seems those hardliners who wanted to get rid of Ito to push Korean annexation forward were hoping that the Korean activists would be successful.

We must conclude, then, that both Ito Hirofumi and Ahn Jun-Gun were victims of Japan's harsh policy. This was very unfortunate because Ito's death adversely affected the situation, and Ahn Jun-Gun could have played a more positive role in Korea's development later with his noble or idealistic thoughts. Apparently, Mr. Ahn was influenced by his French Catholic father, who must have told him about the French Revolution. There have been a number of Japanese who have found him respectable, including those who questioned him after the incident. The writer, for one, respects his ideas, though he believes that with more information, if he had known what Ito Hirofumi was doing to make things easier for Korea, he would have chosen a different path.

5 It should perhaps be noted that the US Occupation (GHQ) Commander Douglas MacArthur testified at the Tokyo Tribunal that the series of wars were defensive wars for Japan (Hando 2007). Certainly, the initial intension was defense against Russia, and then Japan was cornered by Western countries. However, the defense was excessive, in the writer's view.

constitution was written and promulgated, and the new democratic political system was established. People came to enjoy freedom of speech, which was a dramatic change from the situation before and during the war, when many communist and leftist thinkers were imprisoned and died.⁶

In the meantime, Japan has enjoyed economic development under the protection of the US-Japan military alliance. The industries revived after the war and developed remarkably from the 1950s through 1980s. One negative effect is the environmental pollution caused by industries, which was later controlled and overcome mostly in Japan.

One question was raised at the outset in the first footnote concerning the change to the position of the Emperor in the Meiji Period. We return to the question here. Toward the end of the Edo Period, as mentioned above, Japan was faced with Western powers that imposed unequal treaties and put its economy into confusion because of the exchange rate between gold and silver, heavy demands on silk threads by trade, etc., and caused troubles with conducts of foreigners (who did not understand Japanese customs) appearing very rude to samurai warriors, etc. Tokugawa Shogunate's apparent ineffectiveness in dealing with these matters caused the nationwide movement of "*Son'no jōi*" ("Restore the Emperor and expel foreigners"). The driving forces in this movement were those clans that had been treated as marginal clans: Satsuma (now Kagoshima), Choshu (Yamaguchi), Tosa (Kochi) and Nabeshima (Saga). They approached the Emperor, who had been marginalized for centuries, and persuaded him to give them permission to pull down Tokugawa from the reigning position. With the Emperor's support, they won over Tokugawa in the civil war and started the new government with the Emperor in the top position. Thus, this major political change was in a sense a power struggle started by the formerly marginal clans. It should also be noted that the majority of the people in the government were former samurai warriors, and coupled with the strong military they laid the fundamental tone of politics.

In fact, what instigated those samurai warriors to the revolution behind the scene was the influence by Westerners. A prominent figure who is considered a hero toward the end of the Edo Period is Sakamoto Ryoma, who quitted the Tosa clan, travelled to various places in Japan and met various important people, orchestrating the revolutionary change. He had advanced, democratic ideas, had comrades, and somehow had enough money to do a lot of

⁶ One side-effect of this freedom, though, is the appearance of many new religions/ religious sects. One such religious sect, Aum Shinrikyo, committed terrible terrorist attacks using lethal Sarin gas in Matsumoto City and in Tokyo's subway in the mid-1990s. Democratic freedom has its price, though a worthy price.

activities, including buying a steam-engined ship. The money is usually believed to have come from the Satsuma clan. However, Satsuma was not the only source of money. A lot of money and new ideas about political systems came from Thomas Blake Glover, a Scotsman who ran business in Nagasaki as an agent of Jardine Matheson, formerly East India Company, affiliated with Rothschild. Mr. Glover also helped Iwakura Tomomi and others to visit America and European countries to learn about new political systems in the early Meiji Period. He was not the only Westerner who helped Japanese leaders then. Thus, those young samurai revolutionaries and important statesmen were under the influence of Western thought at an important stage for the country.⁷

Although the Meiji Restoration appears to have brought a major change to the Emperor's position, it turned out, as things developed, that his power was limited in the new political system as well after all. After the Restoration, the country was still unstable, with many former samurai warriors, unable to adjust to the new system, becoming very frustrated and rebelling against the new government. (In the new system, former samurai warriors became equal in position to other people formerly subordinate to them.) In dealing with the last and biggest rebellion led by the former Satsuma samurai Saigo Takamori, the military established its autonomy in making decisions in 1877. Also, in the Meiji Constitution, it was stipulated that the Emperor was in effect to transfer the rights to make decisions in ruling the country to the cabinet/government. Once decisions were made by the government, the Emperor did not/ could not object to them, even to those decisions to start wars. This practice continued till the end of World War II.⁸ After all, the Emperor's power was not stronger than it had been for centuries when *Shogun* great warlords were ruling the country by the Emperor's permission. Retrospectively, had the Emperor been given more power and the military not given autonomy, all those wars could have been avoided, considering the fact that both Meiji Emperor and Showa Emperor were against waging wars.

⁷ Some of the important people's pictures are given in the addendum at the end of this paper.

⁸ On this practice, the former cabinet minister Koichi Kido testified at the Tokyo Tribunal. In fact, Showa Emperor supported the Emperor Function Theory—which interpreted the country of Japan to be a corporation and the Diet, the Judiciary, the Emperor, etc. to be functions of Japan Inc., and importantly the sovereignty to reside in the people—rather than the Emperor Sovereignty Theory, which considered the Emperor divine and the sovereignty to be in the hands of the Emperor, according to the Grand Chamberlain (later Prime Minister) Kantaro Suzuki's notes (Hando 2007). It seems that because of this democratic belief as well as the practice from the Meiji Period, Showa Emperor followed the government's decisions to wage wars, which was very unfortunate.

II. THE WAY JAPAN SEEMS TO BE GOING

Now 70 years after World War II, Japan's prime minister is the conservative Abe Shinzo. He is firmly supported by the country's conservatives who constitute around 10-15 percent of the population, disliked by the 15-20 percent liberals, and condoned or accepted by the rest of the people. Simply, to many people Mr. Abe's Liberal Democratic Party seems to be a better choice, more reliable than the other parties. (The ruling LDP's support rate hovers around 50%.) The current mood was formed by China's increased expansionistic pressures that have been causing frictions between the country and its neighboring countries, including Japan.⁹

China's rise has been made faster by the current globalism, especially, of international trade or global trade, and now the country ranks second in the world in GDP figures, next to the USA, overtaking Japan a few years ago. Concerning the current globalism, it has been pointed out by specialists that only major multinational companies gain a lot of money, that the gap between the rich and the poor has widened, etc., on the negative side. It is true that the income gap has become conspicuous in Japan and elsewhere over the past decade and that some Japanese international companies have started to struggle because of the higher prices of their products, strategic errors, etc., notably such companies as SONY, SHARP, Panasonic, etc. Korea's Samsung has been a winner in electronics, though the company too has started to struggle in the past several months faced with fierce competition by Chinese electronics companies. As a country, China is the number one winner in this globalism, and much of its earned money has been spent for building up its military power. And that makes its neighboring countries worried, since it is trying to become as strong as the USA or possibly even stronger. It has been reported that China's high-ranking military officers are suggesting to the US counterparts that the two countries should split the Pacific Ocean in half, with the

⁹ There is another factor in the background of the current state of Japan's apparent tilt toward conservatism: since the end of World War II, the Japan School Teachers' Association has been basically communist, with member teachers following the ideology. (The membership rate is now below 30%, down from 86.3% in 1958, when they started recording the membership rate). They simply seem to denounce everything religious and patriotic. For example, they refuse to pay respect to the national flag or national anthem. Surely, it was wrong for the military to use Shintoism and add nationalistic tones to it as a means to rule the country in a fascistic manner, though Shinto(ism) itself is not fascistic or dangerous. Communism is really idealistic, and it is wonderful to pursue total equality, etc. However, given that human beings are what they are, it is necessary to use greed or avarice to a certain degree in order to make things better and move ahead, as in capitalism, though some socialistic element to mitigate inequality is necessary there. It is also wrong to deny or suppress religious beliefs. The current mood in Japan is in a sense a backlash against the self-denying historical view that has been taught in school.

western half to the west of Hawai'i coming in the "care" of China and the eastern half the US. That kind of assertive attitude is really worrying, coupled with its militaristic behaviors such as its fighter jets flying into Japanese territorial zone and locking on/ radar targeting Japanese fighter jets that have scrambled for defense, its submarines going underwater through Japanese waters without coming up to the surface or notifying Japanese authorities, as international laws require, etc. Of course, it is very good that through global trading more people in more countries can enjoy a better life, though somehow the income gap is widening.¹⁰

Given such an expansionistic attitude of the neighbor, (half of) Japanese people's support of Mr. Abe's LDP would be understandable. Of course, not everything Mr. Abe does is supported by the people, and we worry about his conducts.

In the summer of 2015, Mr. Abe sought to revise the law concerning the country's self-defense forces to allow them to be dispatched overseas to defend Japanese citizens and its allied forces, and he succeeded in the face of oppositions. He also seems to be looking for chances to reform the country's pacifist constitution "in order to express its position in its own voice." While he maneuvered to push the revision of the self-defense force law through the Diet sessions, it would not be easy to gain enough support for the constitutional reform either in Diet sessions or in a referendum. Now Japanese people are faced with terrorist threats overseas. The need for protection of fellow Japanese overseas is beginning to be felt by Japanese citizens. The country needs to walk on a tight rope, keeping a balance between its defense needs and pacifist responsibilities.

Now, addressing a very different issue, the writer would like to discuss the ageing of the Japanese people and the population decrease, two sides of a coin, which is related to the internationalization or globalization of Japanese society. With the lowering of the birth rate, Japanese society is going through a gradual change. There are fewer children than before, and the average age of the population is rising. There are more retired people. As of 2015, the percentage of the people over 65, who live on pensions, is 24.1% of the population (the total population as of Oct. 1, 2012—the time of last national census—is 127,520,000). That is, just about one out of four persons is receiving pensions and not working generally. Of course, there

¹⁰ In this connection, the French economist Thomas Piketty has addressed the right question in his research (*Capital in the Twenty-First Century*).

The new move by China, i.e., starting the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), seems to indicate that the country is taking a shrewd step in controlling neighboring countries or gaining support for what it does by the power of money. It is certainly the country of Sun Tzu (*The Art of War*). Refer to Pillsbury (2015) for China's secret long-term plans.

are a certain percentage of people who still work after 65; for example, the writer's retirement age is 70, and he is planning to work till that age. And the census data says that the people who are in the category of working age population, 15 to 65, constitute 62.9%. Since this category includes high school and university students, the real working population will be less than 55%, though a lot of university students work part-time.

There are a lot of adjustments to be made in this kind of situation. One problem is the possibility of the pension system going defunct, and that calls for the reworking of the whole pension system. While the retired are on the increase, the working people are on the decrease, which is a serious problem. Also, the health insurance system needs reworking. Now the people over 65 pay a certain amount of health insurance premium for the national health insurance, and over 75 the amount of payment is minimal. However, this cannot go on for long, and Japan is at the point where the country has to choose a path from a few different options ranging from a high-tax complete-care system like those in some countries in Europe to a lower-tax minimal-care system, somewhat like the one in the US. Probably Japan will settle somewhere in between.

Re. the population decrease, the total population of Japan is projected to be down to less than 120,000,000 by 2025, and to less than 90,000,000 by 2050. Because less population means a smaller work force, thus a smaller economy and less importance in the world, the Japanese government is trying to increase the birth rate by looking into child care benefits and child care facilities, and is also considering the option of increasing immigration. Although Japan is not really an open society, there are nevertheless quite a number of people from foreign countries living in Japan as temporary or permanent residents, or even as Japanese citizens after naturalization. Recently, there was news about a Chinese man, Mr. Lee S., who has worked in Tokyo for 28 years since he came to Japan as a student, and received Japanese citizenship recently. What made news is his move, two months after naturalization, to become a candidate for the Shinjuku ward council in Tokyo. He says that he wants to speak for the foreign residents who make up 10% of all the Shinjuku residents and to "build a bridge" between foreign and Japanese citizens. The writer welcomes such a move. Also, in a different aspect, another piece of news that surprised people was the selection of Miss Universe Japan 2015: Miss Ariana Miyamoto, born between a Japanese mother and an African-American father. This is the first time that a "half" or "double" person has been chosen, but it tells something of the future of Japanese society. Although foreigners constitute only 2 percent of the population of Japan now, the society is gradually changing. Since an ageing society becomes rigid and

less dynamic, immigrants would make the society more varied, dynamic and interesting. Hopefully, Japanese society will be a more open society where foreign visitors and immigrants as well as Japanese citizens will be able to enjoy life.

CONCLUSION

In this paper we have looked at Japanese history, where both positive and negative effects of Western-style modernization can be seen. Following the European examples, Japan strengthened its military and became an aggressor and colonizer. Yet, limiting the Emperor's power too much as Western countries did to their monarchs and giving autonomy to the military seem to have led to the aggression and war waging by the country, against the Emperor's will. Here we see an example where collective wisdom is not necessarily superior to one wise person's wisdom. On the other hand, after World War II it became a pacifist, democratic country with freedom of speech. The writer finds it fortunate to be born in post-war Japan rather than pre-war Japan. It is sincerely hoped that Japan will remain a peaceful country that will be more open to foreign visitors and immigrants.

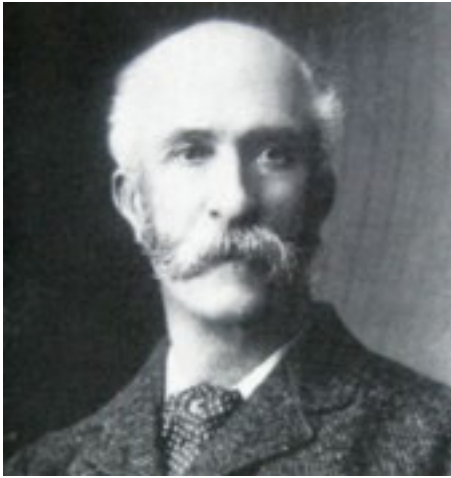
ADDENDUM



Commodor Matthew Perry



Sakomoto Ryoma



Thomas Glover



Iwakura Tomomi

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