

The background of the cover features several stylized, light green leaf motifs scattered across a pale yellow-green gradient. These motifs are simple, elongated shapes with small leaflets at the ends of short stems.

BEYOND THE RISING SUN

Nationalism in Contemporary Japan

Bruce Stronach

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CONTEMPORARY JAPAN

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Preface

The primary objective of this book is to give the reader an accurate picture of the extent to which nationalism exists in Japan today and the various ways it manifests itself. In the process of creating a definition of Japanese nationalism, it is also important to examine what effect nationalism will have on both the domestic polity and on Japan's role in the world. It is easy to say that nationalism exists in Japan, for it certainly does, but that statement does not tell us anything about what effect its existence has upon the institutions and policy of the Japanese state or what effect it has on the lives of its citizens. On yet another level, nationalism will also have an impact on Japan's actions in the international relations system. Because the old international order is in disarray and Japanese economic power is growing steadily, many people around the world are interested and concerned about the future role that Japan will play in Asia, in its relationship with the United States, in its relationship with Europe, in its relationship with international organizations and as a major donor of aid. Thus most of this book will be taken up with the relationship between these elements of nationalism to contemporary life and politics in Japan. But that original objective is not intended to be a simple academic exercise in defining Japanese nationalism. It is hoped that the reader will come to understand, rather than fear, Japan.

This book is not primarily concerned with the Japanese-American relationship, but it is written for an American audience by an American author who has lived and worked in Japan for many years. Consequently, although

it is not a main concern, the relationship forms a constant, if not always visible, backdrop to what is written here. For this reason, and because the book is an attempt to change the way in which Americans think about Japan, the first chapter is devoted to a discussion of how Americans have come to fear a nation that is at one and the same time a defeated enemy, a devoted ally, and a cultural borrower.

One last caveat needs to be made. A significant change in Japanese politics has taken place since the main body of this book was written. In the summer of 1993, some members of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) bolted from their party, causing the government to lose a vote of confidence. In the elections that followed, the LDP lost control over the government for the first time since 1955, and a coalition government was formed consisting of new parties formed by ex-LDP members and long-standing opposition parties. Consequently, two other coalition governments have followed. It is too soon to tell what will be the effects of the summer of 1993 on the Japanese political system. It may be that most of the standard books on Japanese politics will have to be rewritten. Because it is too soon after the fact, I have not made a significant attempt to rewrite this book in light of those events. However, it does seem that they will ultimately reinforce the main theme of this book: that Japan is progressing away from the type of nationalism that existed in the prewar years, and has been since the occupation.

There are three major reasons for this contention. First, political changes since 1993 have effectively removed the most conservative elements of the LDP from power while simultaneously giving power to those most supportive of democratic reform. Second, the nature of the coalition that now governs Japan decreases the probability that a unified consensus of political elites can control Japanese political, economic, and social policy as manifested in a "Japan, Inc." model of elite control. Third, the events of 1993 and 1994 have demonstrated that the Japanese public is willing to participate in the political system when necessary to stimulate democratic change.

A final note: the Western style of placing the given name before the surname will be used throughout the book.

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Introduction

The United States has every reason to rejoice in what has become of Japan since 1945. Its success is eloquent testimony to U.S. postwar policy, which during America's seven-year occupation was the most important factor in determining the contemporary development of the Japanese social, political, and economic systems. This is in great part due to the classic liberalism of those Americans who created occupation policy, General Douglas MacArthur not the least among them. American liberalism is based upon a faith in the rationality of human beings, their ability to conquer past mistakes by learning, and therefore to progress beyond the past into a better future. The idea that, given political freedom and an education, an individual can carve out of the world a productive and prosperous life that will make the world a better place for all is the essence of the American Dream. The concrete manifestation of this idealism was the attempt to graft American political values onto Japanese society.

In keeping with this liberal spirit, American policy makers believed that the people of Japan were *tabulae rasae* from which the nationalism and militarism of the past could be erased and written over with Lockean ideals of liberal democracy. They believed the Japanese to be a people as capable of reasoned, rational thought as any other, and once the repressive elite of militant nationalists was purged and the political system they created was destroyed, the Japanese people would learn liberal democratic political values and become, as a State Department policy paper phrased it in the

summer of 1945, a nation “properly discharging its responsibilities in the family of nations.”

Forty-two years after the occupation, all of the goals that the United States had for a post-occupation Japan have been met. Japan was one of the United States’ strongest allies in East Asia during the Cold War, and it continues to be a key supporter of American policy in the region. Japan built an economy so strong that its development invigorated the rest of East Asia, making the region a preeminent center of international trade and finance. It has developed a military that is capable of supporting the United States when it is engaged in the region, capable of defending the home islands, and yet is not a threat to other states in the region. Finally, it remains tied psychologically to the United States by thousands of tiny threads, such as teacher exchange programs, sister city relations, and cultural consumption, that form an almost unbreakable bond. But why doesn’t the United States rejoice in the success of its policy and the success of its ally? After such a fruitful relationship, certainly the most positive and productive relationship in the modern history of occupations, why the continuing sense of crisis?

Although the American occupiers were thorough in their restructuring of the Japanese political system and the reeducation of the Japanese people, the Japan that emerged has never been able to assuage completely other nations’ fears that Japanese militarism was not dead but simply hibernating until the next spring of nationalism. The Second World War is now two generations distant, but memories remain vivid. Foreigners afflicted by past Japanese aggression are still very sensitive to any manifestation of Japanese militarism or nationalism. They fear that younger Japanese have no knowledge of the first third of the Showa era, they do not know what Japan was really like under the militarists, but they have not lost that inherent superiority toward other Asians that was a product of Japanese colonialism. Japanese people also justify their claim that they, too, were victims by nurturing memories of events such as the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the ABCD (American, British, Chinese, Dutch) encirclement. But they have much more difficulty remembering Japan’s acts of aggression in China, Singapore, and elsewhere.

It is ironic that, in the years following the occupation, the United States was the country least concerned about reemergent Japanese nationalism and militarism. The United States needed Japan as an ally and a trading partner during the Cold War, and that need forced policy makers to reverse the course of an occupation based on stern discipline, surveillance, and restrictions. In the words of one of the most important documents outlining Cold War policy in Asia, “[T]he maximum deterrent [in Asia] to the Kremlin in the post-treaty period will be a Japan with a rapidly and soundly developing economy, internal political stability and an adequate military capability for self-defense.”¹ Indeed, U.S. support for the redevelopment

of Japan was so strong that other Asian nations who were the victims of Japanese aggression have accused the United States of encouraging Japanese nationalism and militarism.

In recent decades, however, American pride in the development of Japan as a staunch ally and engine of Asian economic recovery has turned bitter. The Japanese thrust into the American economy and successive trade imbalances during the 1970s rekindled American fears of Japanese nationalism, militarism, and economic mercantilism. Early warning calls were weak but have lately become more strident. By the mid-1980s, the *New York Times Magazine* was running major articles with such titles as "The Danger from Japan" and "A New Japanese Nationalism," while *Newsweek* covered the Japanese "invasion" of America via the landing sites of Rockefeller Center and Hollywood. Today the most popular books about Japan produced in America have titles such as *The Coming War with Japan*, *Agents of Influence*, *Japanophobia*, *The New Competitors*, *Japan's Pseudo-Democracy*, and *Japan's New Imperialism*.

American scholarship on Japan also has undergone a revision. Academic and popular studies of Japan in the 1960s and 1970s tended to propagate the image of Japan as unique, homogeneous, unified, and consensual. In works like William Ouchi's *Theory Z* and Ezra Vogel's *Japan as Number One*, Japan was represented as a country to be emulated in its efficient organization, work ethic, and emphasis on "human orientation." Even those works that portrayed a negative image of Japan often did so by contrasting the overly unified, homogeneous "Japan, Inc." with the diversity and freedom of the United States. In the 1980s, however, American scholarship began to place much more emphasis upon the noncohesive and negative elements of Japanese politics and society such as conflict, racism, and nationalism. James Fallows, in his book *More Like Us*, questions the wisdom of following the Japanese example by highlighting the problems of Japan, but he is but one among many who are spurning Japan as a model for the United States. Writing on Japan has changed from the days when Ezra Vogel proclaimed *Japan as Number One*. Jon Woronoff's *Japan as Anything but Number One* now seems more appropriate to many.

Today there is the smell of fear in America, a fear born of uncertainty and the unknown. The elation over the passing of communism in the eastern bloc and the victory over Iraq lasted only a few short months before uncertainty over its own internal problems and the future of its role in the world began to cloud the horizon. Just when the United States should be attaining the peak of its power, it finds itself bogged down in an economic morass. Frustrated in its inability to extricate itself, it looks for reasons for what happened and who is to blame, and its attention is often focused on Japan.

Japan seems to be everywhere in the American consciousness. The various fiftieth anniversary celebrations of the war that made America the most powerful country in the world also raise the question of why Japan

seems to be winning the peace. Japanese acquisitions of land, buildings, factories, technology, and even sports franchises have put Americans, who were accustomed to being the economic aggressors, on the defensive against Japanese economic aggression. Whether the books are outrageously paranoid, such as Martin Wolf's *The Japanese Conspiracy*, or balanced and accurate, such as Clyde Prestowitz, Jr.'s *Trading Places*, the message is ultimately the same—the United States is in an important economic conflict with Japan, and it is losing. Americans look to Japanese economic success and wonder: How can they succeed when we are failing?

Fear is bred by America's uncertainty and ambivalence toward the Japanese. What do they want? For two decades they have been taught that Japanese are better workers, more productive, more sacrificing, more competitive, and more frugal. And that teaching has been accepted as gospel. But at the same time, Americans rebel against the possibility of taking second place to Japanese. Japan is still perceived by Americans to be more friendly than most of America's other allies (excluding Great Britain and Canada), but at the same time they are being told that it is the new national threat which will replace the possibility of sudden death from a Soviet nuclear attack with the slow and silent strangulation of the American economy. American presidents praise Japan as an ally in the United States' most important bilateral relationship, while the American Congress has for over a decade been sounding a call to economic war against that same ally. Who should be believed?

If the public is receiving mixed messages as to whether Japan is an enemy or an ally, the focus of its fear is even more unclear. Is Japan out to invade China and Korea again to reclaim them in the name of the New East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere? Is it developing a nuclear capability? Will it bring about a "Second U.S.-Japanese War"? Is it subtly trying to take over the Hawaiian economy so that it will become a de facto dependency of Japan? Is it trying to ruin the American economy in order to become the number one power in the corridors of world politics? Is it bent on taking away all of the markets for American producers so that it will be the richest country in the world? Is it trying to surpass the United States as an act of dominance by one who was for so long subservient to the American master? Or is it simply a passive and peaceful state that has fashioned a successful economic policy but with no intention of threatening or dominating others? Whatever Japan's goals, and whatever the United States's fears, the re-creation of a strong Japan and the fears that others have of it are often reduced to one simple concept: a new Japanese nationalism.

NATIONALISM

Although Japanese nationalism is feared, nationalism is one of the most fundamental elements of political culture in the modern world. It has

become such a basic component of modern life that it is hard to imagine individual people who do not think themselves to be part of a nation, just as it is equally hard to imagine a world that is not divided into nations. Nationalism is perceived by many to be a negative force in world events, but there are few who refute the idea of nationalism or their ties to their own nation.

Although there has been much talk since the end of the Second World War about going beyond nationalism, even today most people remain proud of their nation and their sense of nationalism. The Miller Brewing Company hopes to sell its beer by proclaiming that it is "made the American way." The French guard their language from foreign influences as if it were a sick child fatally exposed to infection. Nothing will anger a Canadian more than being told, "Ah, Canadian or American, there's really no difference, you're all the same," just as someone from Scotland or Wales would not take kindly to being called English.

For all the movement away from nationalism in the postwar world, people still have a strong and abiding desire to seek the comfort of relatively small and well-defined groups. Foreign students may find the adventure of life in their adopted countries thrilling, but most inevitably turn to their compatriots to find relaxation in speaking the same language, telling the same jokes, eating the same food, and sharing the same values. The Olympics are an occasion for all to appreciate the skills of individual athletes from around the world, and yet it is always a showcase for the skills of national teams. Victors circle the arena carrying their national flag, and when a flag and anthem are not available, as was the case for the Unified Team in 1992, the organizers of this international event are thrown into consternation. Newspapers report the results in terms of medal counts per nation. Similarly, just as it appears as if the most integrated of all regions, the European Community, is about to take another major step toward unification, the peoples of those states suddenly hesitate because they are uncertain as to what will happen to their sense of place and belonging in a Unified Europe.

Nationalism remains a core element in our daily lives, but it is also perceived as an evil force. During World War I Europe burned to the ground and millions were killed in the name of nationalism. Hitler's Germany made nationalism a force that built concentration camps and gas chambers. Today nationalism is associated with racism as in the National Front movement in Europe. It is also associated with the terrible destruction of the Soviet empire and the eastern bloc. Americans once felt joy in the death of communism and the elimination of threat from the Soviet Union, but as the disintegration of the former empire leads to greater and more senseless bloodshed, American joy turns to disgust and revulsion.

In a sense the ambivalence that Americans feel toward Japan and its increased status and power is similar to their ambivalent attitudes toward

nationalism. Americans feel that nationalism in the United States is a positive force because they are responsible and can handle it, but they do not necessarily believe it is good when nationalism is demonstrated by others, especially Japan. Certainly there is a double standard when it comes to nationalism in America (or the West in general) and nationalism in Japan. Americans think nothing of their pride; they take it for granted. Americans who are not proud of being American are looked at askance as either politically dubious, immature, or simply not mentally sound. The symbols of the state and the state's connection to the nation abound. The national anthem is played at every major function, children pledge allegiance to the flag in school, celebrations commemorating past wars are ubiquitous, and "war memorials" can be found in every village and town.

Similar displays are not accepted in Japan, however. If the Education Ministry gives an administrative guidance to schools instructing them to show the flag and play the anthem at graduation and entrance ceremonies, the outside world sees it as nationalism. Japanese politicians who argue that Japan should reduce its dependence on the United States and create a more independent policy are seen as dangerous reactionaries. In fact, Americans do not trust the Japanese to handle nationalism because of Japan's past history as an aggressive, militaristic state. Just as an alcoholic cannot be trusted to take just one drink, so Japan cannot be trusted to display the slightest sense of nationalism.

Nationalism embodies all of the unarticulated and confused fears that Americans feel toward Japan. The very word has impact. Headlines such as "A New Japanese Nationalism"² or "Nationalistic Drift?"³ instantly grab a reader's attention and convey a sense of threat and forboding. One of the causes of American confusion concerning Japanese nationalism has been that the books, articles, and news reports that discuss Japanese nationalism rarely define what the term means. The word is simply left hanging in the air, a metaphorical sword of Damocles, implying everything but specifying nothing.

There are, however, common elements that are often linked to Japanese nationalism. The word is frequently preceded by the modifier "new." New Japanese nationalism itself has been used both as a description of increased nationalism among Japanese youth and as a way of connoting the rebirth of nationalism in the postwar world. Most often these two elements are combined to convey the picture of a youthful Japan, free of the fetters of war guilt and ignorant of either Japan's prewar history of militarism or the hardships of the war's aftermath, yearning to stretch its adolescent muscle. Nationalism is also a code word for swagger. Japan is beginning to throw its weight around and has a new pride in itself. Japanese have a new confidence in themselves and a new sense of place in the world. Nationalism is equated with the remilitarization of Japan. As Japan grows stronger, so does its need for a military force independent of the United States and

strong enough to guarantee its own security. However, it can also mean a military that is a threat to other countries in the world. Nationalism also is used as an economic term in order to brand Japanese as selfish mercantilists. In this perception they invest in the United States with the end goal of controlling the American economy. They trade with other countries only to build up huge domestic surpluses. They invest in other Asian countries and give foreign aid only as a means of building regional hegemony.

Creating a more rigorous definition of Japanese nationalism is central to the calming of American fears about Japan. Nationalism does actually mean all of the above concepts and more, but unless it is clear what type of nationalism is being discussed in each context, the word becomes meaningless. What follows is an attempt to create a clearer definition of the major types of nationalism that exist in contemporary Japan.

Since modern nationalism began in the early nineteenth century, the very heart of a political culture has been associated with "a strong sense of national identity which large numbers of individuals have been able to share."⁴ In order to clarify the arguments made in this book, a distinction must be made between the associated concepts of "state" and "nation." The concept of "the state" may be understood in one sense as the coercive and legal power of government and its institutions to command compliance from the population over which it rules. A state is a purely political concept and is made up of both the machinery of the state, the laws, and the institutions of a political system, as well as the people who run it at any given point in time—the government. A state may incorporate within its territorial jurisdiction one nation or several nations. The concept of nation, in its most fundamental sense, is social and psychological. The nation is a large group of people who perceive themselves to have a common bond based upon a common ethnicity, language, history, set of behaviors, and values. The existence of this group is not dependent upon living within one country or having a government and a state. The first and foremost component of nationalism is the individual's acceptance of identity as a member of the national group.

There may be many other groups, such as family, neighborhood, town, state, trade union, church, school, and/or company, with which the individual identifies at the same time he or she identifies with the nation. One of the most important differences between these groups and the nation, however, is that the nation almost always incorporates within it the desire for self-rule, for sovereignty. The concept of nation does not refer to the relationship between ruler and ruled, between government and citizen, but rather to the bonds among the people leading them to seek to govern their own affairs.⁵

The nation is of great importance to the state because when the nation is unified under the state, it has an increased ability to rule. When there is a strong sense of national community, the power of the state is magnified

because the nation will be willing to obey its commands and to work and sacrifice for it when necessary. Think, for example, of the simple act of paying taxes. In a state that does not have the support of its nation, it will be close to impossible to collect taxes without significant coercion. Because of this, states have always tried to transfer the loyalty and identity that individuals feel toward the nation to the state. All the means of socialization—the schools, media, church, parents—are a part of this connecting of the nation to the state, so that the two become inseparable in the citizen's mind through concepts like “fatherland” or “motherland.” Although all states attempt to increase loyalty and support by identifying the nation with the state, this is not to say that the nation cannot exist apart from the state.

The nation and state are most closely linked in the concept of the nation-state. The nation-state denotes a people who inhabit a known and limited territory, have an economy, and control the government and state that rules it all. This is perceived as the natural condition of the world, that all peoples are divided into nations that have the right of self-rule. Although this may appear to be an ancient law of human existence, in fact it is very much a result of the French Revolution and trends that emerged in the nineteenth century. The world has been divided into nation-states only since the mid-twentieth century.

Nationalism and the actions of nation-states continue to have significant impact on the contemporary world, yet there are various competing definitions for this important concept. This is especially evident in writings on Japan, a country to which the concept is often ascribed, but rarely with much clarity or consistency. The task of this book is not so much to find the “correct” definition of nationalism as it is to find one that is appropriate to Japan and then to apply it consistently. Nationalism has some universal characteristics, but it must also, by its very nature, have different components unique to each nation. Nationalism is the ideology most fundamentally defined by the characteristics of the nation in which it is manifested.

Sociocultural Nationalism

Four specific definitions of Japanese nationalism will be used in this book, no one of which is mutually exclusive of the others. The first is a psychological phenomenon by which individuals define themselves as members of a group. Some have called it ethnic nationalism; others have called it cultural nationalism. Here the term *sociocultural nationalism* is used because in Japan nationalism is first and foremost the psychological sense of belonging to the group. Japanese nationalism conforms most closely to Max Skidmore's definition.

Nationalism involves a group's perception of itself as distinct from others, and the awareness of its members as components of the group. It also involves the group's

desire to protect and preserve its identity and to enhance its power and status as a nation. It is this that leads nationalism often to become territorial, to develop an attachment to a certain land as home. It is the perception, or the belief, that is important. Many factors may serve as the explanation for "nationhood," including common culture, language, historical experiences, religion, and the like. The important factor is not whether the explanation is correct, but rather that the group believes it to be true.⁶

Sociocultural nationalism does not depend upon the existence of a state, but rather the sharing of a similar cultural history, the sharing of similar social values and behavioral norms, and especially the ability to communicate. In the words of Karl Deutsch:

It is a collection of individuals who can communicate with each other quickly and effectively over a wide range of localities and diverse topics and situations. In order to be able to do this, they must have complementary habits of communication, including usually language and always culture as a common stock of shared meanings and memories and hence as a common probability of sharing many similar perceptions and preferences in the present and near future. Members of the same people are similar to each other in regard to some of their habits and characteristics and interlocking in regard to other habits.⁷

Nations are most often conceived of in conjunction with their political control over a state—the nation-state—but nations can exist and do exist without states.⁸ The Kurds and the Palestinians are both nations that have existed for some time without a state of their own, regardless of their desire for one. Other nations, such as the nations of Native Americans living within the United States, are content to exist without a state. Whether or not the stateless nation desires to create a nation-state, nations and state can exist separately. In sociocultural nationalism, it is the consciousness of the individual's relationship to the others in the nation, and not his or her relationship to the state, that is important. To paraphrase an example from Deutsch, one French person may be a Marxist and another a Democratic Socialist, but both will have more in common with each other and a much greater ability to understand and communicate with each other than would the Democratic Socialist with a citizen of Sweden or the Marxist with a citizen of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Self-Determined Nationalism

The second type of nationalism is concerned with the nation's relationship to the state and can be summed up by the term *self-determination*. It is the struggle by a nation to take control of its political destiny and to create a state by which its territory and economy can be securely held and governed. This form of nationalism is best exemplified by the national liberation movement of the decolonization period, but it has been mani-

fested in three different ways: unification, decolonialism, and Westernization. Germany in the nineteenth century is the best example of unification. The German nation suffered a long-standing political and economic disunity in conjunction with a proud cultural heritage, common history, and linguistic unity. For hundreds of years there had been attempts to pull all of the various German-speaking political entities into one unified whole, but this desire was not achieved until the French Revolution and the successes of Napoleon's national army showed the Germans the way. The power of the nation-state apparent in France's easy victory over Prussia and the lesser Germanic states, and the resultant reorganization of the Prussian military, were forces in German unification, but equally important were philosophic and cultural trends. Hegelian organicism created a rationale for the submission of the will of the nation to the good of the state, while Schlegel's *Bildung*, and Germanic romanticism in general, taught Germans that they could regain their idealized past. Thus the German people conceived of themselves as a nation, desired their existence under one state, and had the means to forge the nation-state in the face of formidable opposition.

Nationalism in the third world has been to a great extent a result of colonialism. Great powers brought the concept of nationalism to the colonies, and it was through both the teachings of the colonial masters and the desire to rid themselves of foreign rule that peoples without a strong common bond fought to create a "national" state. It is easy, for example, to imagine an Indian civil servant sent to London for his education writing a tract in English calling for the creation of an Indian nation-state based on Leninist principles. In the case of native peoples attempting to overthrow colonial domination, nationalism takes on three dimensions: the removal of the colonial government, its replacement with a unified national government, and the creation of a nation where none existed before. Whether the first was achieved by revolution or evolution, the other two dimensions often proved more difficult to attain. The colonial creation of administrative territories that encompass a mosaic of groups with no common unity has left a legacy for third world states of conflict for control of the state by various groups within the "nation" and attempts to create a nation with no historical basis.

Westernization combines elements of both unification and self-determination. Some peoples, although not directly colonized, were forced to create modern, Western nation-states from traditional political organizations by the threat of Western domination. Early Japanese nationalism is a prime example of Westernization. Although the elements of nationalism existed in the Tokugawa period, the oligarchic elite of the Meiji Era consciously forged a unified nation as a means of strengthening the state vis-à-vis the foreign powers. They knew it was a case of either emulating the West or