

Policy Entrepreneurship and Elections in Japan

A political biography of Ozawa Ichiro

Takashi Oka

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Policy Entrepreneurship and Elections in Japan

Ozawa Ichiro is one of the most important figures in Japanese politics, having held the positions of Chief Secretary of the Liberal Democrat Party and, after defection from the LDP, President of the Democratic Party of Japan. Ozawa has distinctive ideas that set him apart from the average Japanese politician; he believes in the concept of the independence of the individual, as opposed to the importance of the group, and as a policy entrepreneur he has had a huge impact on political change, not only advocating but precipitating institutional change in a key political area – the election system.

Using extensive interview data from key players in the political arena, this book examines Ozawa's struggle to normalize alternation in office between two competing political parties – particularly significant given the results of the 2009 election, which handed over power to the Democratic Party of Japan – and how he has used his entrepreneurial talents to precipitate and carry out institutional change.

Not only a political biography, but also an in-depth analysis of the Japanese political and electoral systems, this book will be of huge interest to anyone interested in Japanese politics and electoral systems.

Takashi Oka is a journalist who received his PhD from St Anthony's College, Oxford in 2008.

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Preface

Ozawa Ichiro was a senior member of the Takeshita faction when I met him for the first time in October 1987. Takeshita Noboru was then one of three candidates to succeed Nakasone Yasuhiro, the outgoing Prime Minister. Mr Nakasone was expected to make his choice in the very near future, and Mr Ozawa had organized a press conference in the annex of the Akasaka Prince Hotel for Mr Takeshita to meet the international media. I attended the press conference in my professional capacity as Tokyo correspondent for *The Christian Science Monitor*, and remember being struck by the directness and frankness of Mr Ozawa's introductory remarks. Soon thereafter, Mr Takeshita received Mr Nakasone's recommendation to become the next Prime Minister, and Mr Ozawa became Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary in the Takeshita cabinet – a position roughly equivalent to Deputy Chief of Staff. Unlike most of his predecessors, Mr Ozawa agreed to meet informally with a group of us who spoke Japanese, and these meetings, generally at two-month intervals, continued throughout the Takeshita prime ministership, which lasted until June 1989.

Some years later, when I had retired from the *Monitor*, Mr Ozawa asked me to accompany him to Washington and to interpret for him during meetings with former President George H.W. Bush, Vice-President Albert Gore, House Speaker Tom Foley and other American officials. I also interpreted a speech he gave at the National Press Club. This led to my becoming Staff Director of the International Department of the New Frontier Party (Shinshinto) on its establishment in December 1994. After the party was dissolved and the much smaller Liberal Party was formed in January 1998, I worked for the new party, first in Tokyo, then as its Washington representative until October 2001, when I became a full-time graduate student at Oxford University (St Antony's College). My thesis, which was completed in 2008, was a political biography of Mr Ozawa from 1987 to 2007. In this book, I have extended the biography to September 2009, when his party, the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), won a landslide victory over the long-ruling LDP.

My motive for embarking on the thesis, which I subsequently turned into this book, was as follows: On one hand many of my Japanese colleagues regard Mr Ozawa as the very embodiment of the power politics characteristic of the Takeshita faction and its predecessor, the faction created and led for many years by Tanaka Kakuei, Prime Minister from 1972–74. On the other hand, there are also Japanese

of various backgrounds who look on Mr Ozawa as a genuine reformer who has worked to change the whole context and dynamics of politics in Japan. Personally, I found Mr Ozawa's advocacy of individualism strikingly unusual for a Japanese politician, and was curious to find out where and how the trait originated.

That is why, first in the thesis, and now in this book, I have posed my principal research question in the form of hypothesis and counter-hypothesis. Is Ozawa Ichiro a genuine reformer, a policy entrepreneur who uses 'critical junctures' as defined by John W. Kingdon to push forward the policies he advocates?¹ Or is he a power broker who cloaks himself in the garments of reform while he pursues naked power?

I am grateful to many individuals who shared their insights and perspectives with me. First, I am deeply appreciative of Mr Ozawa, who is not naturally a patient man, but who consented to many interviews, formal and informal, before and during the writing of this book. Next, the late Lord Weatherill, whom I first met when he was a junior minister in the Heath government, guided me through the intricacies of British parliamentary procedures, then and during his nine-year tenure as Speaker of the House of Commons.

The greatest debt I owe is to the supervisor of this thesis Professor J.A.A. Stockwin, who helped me turn the idea with which I started into an acceptable thesis. He has the patience of several Jobs, and rescued me out of each conceptual and methodological hole into which I had dug myself. And I can never express enough gratitude to my wife Hiroko, without whose stalwart support, both moral and logistic, in sickness and in health, I would never have completed this project.

1 John W. Kingdon, 1984, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*.

Foreword

How politics is conducted in Japan has gone through a lengthy, painful, but nevertheless fundamental transformation over the two decades from 1990 to 2010. General elections held in August 2009 broke the half century of near monopoly of power by the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), and placed in power the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), which had come together as a single party a mere thirteen years earlier, attracting later accretions. The central figure promoting and organizing a reform agenda over these twenty erratic years of change, regression and further change has been a controversial, canny, manipulative, difficult, fallible, far-sighted strategist and political thinker called Ozawa. He has never become Prime Minister (though he could have been), and has therefore attracted rather less attention outside Japan than his rival, Koizumi (a different type of reformer), who was Prime Minister for five and a half years between 2001 and 2006.

In this, the first political biography of Ozawa to be published in English, the veteran journalist and observer of Japanese politics, Dr Takashi Oka, brings years of research experience to bear on the career of this most extraordinary of politicians. Dr Oka has had unusually frequent access to his subject, both in formal interviews and informal contacts, for instance over a long train journey conducive to the expression of frank opinions. He identifies a divide among Ozawa-watchers between two schools: first those, including much of the mass media, who see him as still mired in the old-style, money-centred politics of the LDP, and therefore essentially concerned to maximize his own power; and second, those who focus on his strategic thinking and intellectual qualities, especially his perception that Japan's political system was stuck in a time warp and that determined leadership was needed in order to lift it into new and creative modes of operation. He is inclined towards the second school, without entirely denying elements of the first.

The author's fundamental insight is that Ozawa has behaved as a political entrepreneur, seeking at each twist and turn of politics to direct the course of events towards his ultimate goal of reforming the system. He applies John Kingdon's approach that sees the process streams of problems, policies and politics intersecting and providing opportunities to realize entrepreneurial goals. Concretely, he focuses on Ozawa's goals of establishing alternating two-party politics, more or less on the model of British party politics (which ironically may now be diverging

from its own model), and taking power out of the hands of unelected government servants, placing it firmly in the hands of elected politicians who are motivated to implement concerted policy programmes, as well as reducing the power of vested interests. His supreme achievement here was a radical reform of the lower house electoral system in 1993–4, indicating, among other things, that Ozawa understands the importance of having institutional structures that do what they are supposed to do.

Another controversy concerns whether Ozawa's reform perspective has been rightist, or whether it could be described as progressive. Dr Oka shows that, while in the turbulent politics of the 1990s he took rather right-wing positions, in the 2000s he had moved towards the centre, especially on the issue of overseas despatch of the self-defence forces, where he came to emphasize the importance of UN resolutions and play down the aim of constitutional revision.

The Nissan Institute/Routledge Japanese Studies series was begun in 1986 and this is its 79th volume. It seeks to foster an informed and balanced, but not uncritical understanding of Japan. One aim of the series is to show the depth and variety of Japanese institutions, practices and ideas. Another is to make international comparisons and see what lessons, positive or negative, can be drawn for other countries. Currently, comparisons between how the British and Japanese political systems are coping with rather similar challenges are fascinating, a point that Ozawa has well understood.

J.A.A. Stockwin and Roger Goodman

1 Normal nation

Ozawa's challenge to exceptionalism

- 1.1 Introduction: Ozawa's *Blueprint* and three basic hypotheses
- 1.2 Methodology: policy entrepreneurship, historical institutionalism, process tracing and causal inferences
- 1.3 Changing the election system: Ozawa's major feat as policy entrepreneur
- 1.4 'Punctuated equilibrium' and Kingdon's critics
- 1.5 Historical institutionalism and its relevance to electoral reform
- 1.6 Political culture or rational choice theory
- 1.7 The Koizumi phenomenon and Ozawa's response
- 1.8 The DPJ's landslide victory and prospects for the future: 30 August 2009

1.1 Introduction: Ozawa's *Blueprint* and three basic hypotheses

One of the most basic tenets of the Japanese people's 'Who are we?' syndrome is that they are a people apart, separate from the Western nations, and even separate, except in the purely geographic sense, from Asia, from close neighbours like China or Korea. Almost all nations have a sense of being different from other nations – of being unique. But few have believed in or practiced exceptionalism to the degree that the Japanese have.¹

Ozawa Ichiro is one of the few leading Japanese to have challenged the assertion of exceptionalism. He has done so on the basis of a concept rare for most of his countrymen – the concept of the independence of the individual. 'I am a Japanese', he told me once, 'and I am not trying to get the Japanese to be un-Japanese. But I want my countrymen to be just a little less group-oriented, a little more respectful of their own individuality.'²

I define Ozawa as a policy entrepreneur whose primary goal during the past twenty years – 1989–2009 –was to make Japan a 'normal nation' – that is, 'a nation that willingly shoulders those responsibilities regarded as natural in the international community'.³ The 'normal nation' concept has been widely interpreted, both in Japan and in the international community, as a code word for Japan to revise its constitution, to drop the famous Article Nine giving up the right to go to war, and to have armed forces like any other 'normal nation'.⁴ I maintain that to Ozawa, 'normal nation' had quite a different meaning, at the root of which was his philosophy of individualism, of the individual having priority over the group.

2 *Normal nation: Ozawa's challenge to exceptionalism*

Every political reform he advocated and strove to realize during those twenty years was based on the assumption that it would enable the individual, both as a voter and as a politician, to exercise his intrinsic right to choose.

I call Ozawa a policy entrepreneur because he had a wide-ranging set of policies, based on his individualist philosophy, which he sought to achieve over the course of the past twenty years. The political scientist John Kingdon defined policy entrepreneurs as 'people willing to invest their resources in return for future policies they favour'.⁵ He was writing about Americans, from Presidents to legislators and civil servants, but his definitions and descriptions are applicable to non-Americans as well – to British reformers like Edward Heath and Margaret Thatcher, and, I maintain, to Ozawa and his flamboyant rival Koizumi Junichiro.⁶ Throughout the twists and turns of Japanese politics during Ozawa's long struggle to bring about political and institutional change, he never wavered. Finally, on 30 August 2009, Ozawa's party, the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) won a landslide victory, opening the way to what Ozawa hopes will be a new era of alternating government between two political parties, as is the case in Britain and the United States.

My arguments are based on three basic hypotheses: First, that Ozawa's ideas were rooted in the concept of the independence of the individual; second, that he was a policy entrepreneur in the sense defined by Kingdon: an advocate for the prominence of an idea, who wants to promote his values, or affect the shape of public policy;⁷ and third, that there was a causal link between Ozawa's ideas and their implementation, that he not only advocated but precipitated institutional change in a key political area – the election system. This change in turn induced changes in party systems, in the way both the long-ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the main opposition party, the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), were run. The powers of the Prime Minister were strengthened, as were those of the opposition leader, thus promoting the evolution of two major parties capable of alternating in power.

For each of these hypotheses, there is a counter-hypothesis. The first is that Ozawa's ideas, although couched in distinctive language, had been voiced in the media or in writings by others, and therefore could not be characterized as original. The second is that if Ozawa was a policy entrepreneur, he was one only in the first sense defined by Kingdon: that he wanted to promote his personal interests – in short, that he was a political boss or power broker. This view has long been and remains dominant within the media.

The third counter-hypothesis arises from the second, and maintains that Ozawa merely rode a pre-existing wave of agitation for political change, from which he sought to derive personal benefits. For many years this wave was spearheaded by the Socialists, but it also erupted periodically within the LDP, as when, in 1976, Kono Yohei led a reform-minded group of younger LDP politicians into the New Liberal Club (Shin Jiyu Club).⁸

This book seeks to disprove each of these counter-hypotheses, while admitting that during the course of the past twenty years Ozawa has committed a series of mistakes and misjudgments, some of which he has himself acknowledged. To the

principal accusation against Ozawa, that he was only a political boss or power broker, I would say that if the accusers omitted the word 'only', they would come closer to my point of view, since most political leaders, however high-minded, are also bosses and power brokers.

The first chapter defines the typology of political leadership and explains why it is appropriate to call Ozawa a policy entrepreneur. Succeeding chapters follow Ozawa's career from his appointment as LDP Secretary General (1989) to the general election of 30 August 2009, showing how he acted as a policy entrepreneur in the major crises he faced. The Secretary Generalship was selected as the starting point because this position, outranked only by the Prime Minister, put Ozawa for the first time in a position to implement his ideas and policies, many of which he had voiced from his early days as a legislator.⁹

Ozawa's baptism by fire soon followed – the first Gulf War (1990–91). His reflections on the frustrating experiences of that war led to the writing of his major policy document, *Blueprint for a New Japan*, published in 1993.¹⁰ *Blueprint* proclaimed the need 'to build a society that truly values the individual. Japan must become a society in which individuals can act freely, based on their own judgment.'¹¹ Elsewhere, Ozawa has said, 'Individualism means the establishment of the ego. In other words, self-reliance. To have your own ego and apply it to all the details of living, you must also respect the ego of others. But in Japan it is considered a virtue not to have your own ego, or at least not to assert it.'¹² Also 'Think for yourself, reach your own conclusions, and take actions on your own responsibility'.¹³

Ozawa's reflections on the first Gulf War and on the end of the cold war led not only to the writing of *Blueprint*, but to his twenty-year struggle to normalize alternation in office between two competing parties. Ozawa had an early success in 1993, followed by repeated failures. Finally, in the general election of 30 August 2009, his party, the DPJ, and its smaller allies, won a convincing majority. Hatoyama Yukio, Ozawa's longtime friend and ally, became Prime Minister, and Ozawa himself was given the post he had held twenty years earlier – Secretary General of the ruling party. This time, the ruling party was no longer the LDP, but the DPJ.

1.2 Methodology: policy entrepreneurship, historical institutionalism, process tracing and causal inferences

Two concepts compose the analytic core of this book. The first is Kingdon's theory of political entrepreneurship.¹⁴ Ozawa is defined as a policy entrepreneur in the Kingdonian sense. The second is historical institutionalism – a broader concept, with diverse ramifications. I follow the definitions of Paul Pierson, Theda Skocpol and others who emphasize the importance of time sequences and of what they call 'critical junctures' to initiate institutional change and to create new path dependencies to supersede old ones.¹⁵

Both concepts are analyzed within the context of the three hypotheses which form the theoretical framework of this book. By using his entrepreneurial talents to precipitate and to carry out institutional change, Ozawa believed, he could

change the consciousness of the individual voter over time, thus promoting his major purpose: alternation in power between two major parties. As he wrote in *Blueprint*: 'The demands of competition will mean the emergence of two dominant parties that share similar fundamental goals for Japan's future'.¹⁶

In order to elucidate the process by which what had started as an idea in Ozawa's mind became the nuts and bolts of creating a new election system, I will use, where appropriate, process tracing, from which causal inferences can be drawn. George and McKeown define process tracing as 'the decision process by which various initial conditions are translated into outcomes'.¹⁷ King, Keohane and Verba explain this process as 'searching for evidence ... about the decisional process by which the outcome was produced'.¹⁸

Applying process tracing to Ozawa's efforts to change the election law so as to bring about single-seat constituencies (instead of the three-to-five-seat constituencies that had been the norm for over seventy years), we may say that the motive was to reduce and eventually to end the LDP's single-party dominance of political power. This would bring about a two-party system as in Britain or the United States. Both these countries have single-seat constituencies. That was Ozawa's theory, the premise from which he started. The causal mechanism operating in this case included, in turn, the passage of the single-seat legislation, compensatory actions to prevent the total elimination of small parties (such as reserving a certain number of seats for proportional representation), government subsidies to political parties based on their share of the vote, and laws to tighten anti-corruption regulations. The system prevailing in Germany for most of the post-war years served as a model for these anticipated changes.

1.3 Changing the election system: Ozawa's major feat as policy entrepreneur

Ozawa's major feat as a policy entrepreneur came early within the twenty-year timespan of this book. In 1993, after precipitating a general election by supporting an opposition motion to censure the LDP government of the day, Ozawa was instrumental in forming an eight-party coalition to nominate Hosokawa Morihiro¹⁹ as Prime Minister. From the very beginning, Hosokawa made clear that changing the election law was his foremost priority, and Ozawa, who presided over the council of party representatives constituting the coalition, worked furiously behind the scenes to obtain the required legislation. The process will be described in detail in Chapter 5.²⁰

Kingdon's theory of policy entrepreneurship is based on hundreds of observations and interviews over a four-year period with US legislators, their assistants, government officials, and academics. The theory evolved with the interviews. My focus is on one man, Ozawa, but as with Kingdon, my conclusions are based on observations and interviews not only with Ozawa, but with party officials, government officials, businessmen, academics, and journalists, as well as on a study of original documents from the Ozawa office and from Liberal Party and New Frontier Party headquarters.

Kingdon's theory featured three 'process streams' – of problems, policies, and politics, flowing through the political system. 'They are largely independent of one another, and each develops according to its own dynamics and rules. But at some critical junctures the three streams are joined, and the greatest policy changes grow out of that coupling of problems, policy proposals, and politics.'²¹

The first stream, problems, is endemic to any human endeavour. Kingdon was interested in the dynamics of how particular phenomena come to be defined as problems by government, party, or business organizations. 'This system responds to crisis', one respondent told Kingdon. 'That's what politics is all about.'²²

Applying Kingdon's definitions to the Japanese political process, a policy entrepreneur will use a 'critical juncture' to highlight a particular problem and force action on it. That, I maintain, has been Ozawa's principal role as a policy entrepreneur during the twenty years under consideration. As he wrote in *Blueprint*, 'We must have a government that takes responsibility for a fixed period of time, for clearly defined powers and policies'.²³

The second stream in Kingdon's definition is the policy stream. It is a 'community of specialists'²⁴ in policies – some specialists being in government, others in legislatures, political parties, think tanks, or academia. Ozawa's preoccupation with policy is unusual in a Japanese politician, and has attracted a number of senior policy-oriented officials to him, whereas most of his fellow politicians who became ministers relied on bureaucrats to provide the policies they introduced on the Diet floor.

The political stream, the third of the three streams Kingdon mentions, flows on independently of the other two streams – that is, under normal conditions. Kingdon is thinking here of such things as 'the public mood, pressure group campaigns, election results, partisan or ideological distributions in Congress, and changes of administration'.²⁵ While 'political' can be defined very broadly, Kingdon says that he uses the term employed by political practitioners in Washington, for whom 'political' factors are 'electoral, partisan, or pressure group factors'.²⁶ All three factors conditioned how Ozawa operated as a policy entrepreneur during this book's twenty-year time frame.

Kingdon described policy entrepreneurs as 'advocates for proposals or for the prominence of an idea. ... Their defining characteristic, much as in the case of a business entrepreneur, is their willingness to invest their resources – time, energy, reputation, and sometimes money – in the hope of a future return. That return might come to them in the form of policies of which they approve, satisfaction from participation, or even personal aggrandizement in the form of job security or career promotion.'²⁷ This description, I contend, applies to Ozawa.

1.4 'Punctuated equilibrium' and Kingdon's critics

Kingdon's concept of three fundamentally independent streams – problems, politics, and policy – is criticized by Margaret Weir from her viewpoint as a historical institutionalist. 'A historical perspective would show that these streams are linked in important ways over time. Policies from an earlier period can affect each of these streams at a later time. ... Earlier policies also provide politicians and policy-makers with analogies that they use to judge future policy options.'²⁸

However, Kingdon's theories about policy entrepreneurs largely disregard the factor of time, which is so important to historical institutionalists. Ozawa himself frequently cites examples drawn not only from post-1945 history, but from the Meiji era (1868–1912) and even earlier periods, in order to justify or to explain aspects of his programme for political change.

But Kingdon does underline the importance of 'punctuated equilibrium' – a concept which he borrowed from evolutionary theory in biology. He suggests that the process of agenda-setting goes on both through gradualistic evolution, as historical institutionalists claim, and through sudden, non-incremental change, i.e. 'punctuated equilibrium'. He writes: 'In my view, both gradualistic evolution and punctuated equilibrium seem to be at work in different parts of the process'.²⁹ He cites three instances, all from the United States, of 'punctuated equilibrium', that is, of 'public policy changes in very large leaps': Roosevelt's New Deal of the 1930s, Lyndon Johnson's 'Great Society' of the mid-1960s, and the Reagan reforms of 1981.³⁰

In Japan's case, the LDP's fall from power in 1993 and its much greater defeat in August 2009 exemplified 'punctuated equilibrium', although I would agree with Pierson that this was no mere 'snapshot event'.³¹ Although initiatives taken by Ozawa precipitated the event, at a deeper level it had been prepared for by political and sociological trends that had been going on for a long time.

A final question remains concerning the Kingdon theory. How portable is it? Can a theory developed by observing certain aspects and characteristics of American political culture remain valid after being transported to a very different political culture, one that does not share common roots in Judaeo-Christian or Graeco-Roman traditions? Certainly the question could have been asked during the Meiji era (1868–1912), particularly the early years. Those were the years when Okubo Toshimichi, Ito Hirobumi and other oligarchs known as *genro* (elder statesman) created a state that retained its Confucian roots, while energetically absorbing all that was thought to be useful to modernize, and in that sense to Westernize, their own society.

Today's Japanese are as much the heirs of the Meiji transformations as they are of their own earlier feudal or pre-feudal traditions, to such an extent that when I asked Ozawa for the origins of his emphasis on the primacy of the individual, he replied, 'But that is part of the common heritage of mankind'.³² Indeed, the whole point of Ozawa's 'normal nation' argument was that his people should complete the transformations begun during the Meiji era and become a society that was 'open, fair and free', as another of his political slogans said.³³ This is why I argue that Kingdon's theory is eminently portable and that Ozawa qualifies to be called a policy entrepreneur in the Kingdonian sense.

1.5 Historical institutionalism and its relevance to electoral reform

Ozawa's entrepreneurship can be viewed, not only in Kingdonian terms, but also through the prism of the 'new' historical institutionalism of the 1980s developed by Peter Hall, Theda Skocpol, Sven Steinmo and others. Their aim has been to

'demonstrate the existence and effect of historical legacies in the political processes and institutions of the present ... For them, quite simply, history matters; to understand the present is to understand how it has evolved from the past and to trace the legacies of that evolution'.³⁴

Hall and Taylor characterize historical institutionalists as being interested in how institutions produce what they call new paths – 'how they structure a nation's response to new challenges'. Many of them 'divide the flow of historical events into periods of continuity punctuated by 'critical junctures', i.e., moments when substantial institutional change takes place, thereby creating a new 'branching point' from which historical development moves onto a new path'.³⁵

Kingdon also uses the term 'critical juncture', as we have seen. His theory of 'punctuated equilibrium' is similar to Douglass North's concept of 'discontinuous institutional change' brought about by 'wars, revolutions, conquest and natural disasters'.³⁶ From Ozawa's viewpoint the Meiji Restoration (Meiji Ishin), which he almost always characterized as a 'revolution', was an outstanding example of 'punctuated equilibrium' (although he did not use this term), and exemplified the kind of sweeping changes that he hoped to bring about in the Japan of today. In this sense, North's concept of 'discontinuous institutional change' can be applied to the 'revolution through the ballot box'³⁷ that Ozawa has been trying to achieve – a revolution which, in the aftermath of the DPJ's sweeping election victory on 30 August 2009, is in the early stages of implementation.

When Ozawa and his close followers began the Liberal Party (Jiyuto) in January 1998, he said in his inaugural speech on 6 January 1998 that his goal was to complete the revolution begun by the 'nameless youths' of the early Meiji years who agitated for 'freedom and people's rights'.³⁸ These youths were soon stifled by the centralized bureaucracy put into place by the Meiji leaders and by their invocation of the supposed glories of a semi-mythological period of direct imperial rule, even as these same leaders were selectively introducing western institutions. There was a dichotomy at work here. Japanese exceptionalism was deliberately fostered by the *genro* (elder statesmen), as the Meiji leaders were known, who were also eager to show the Western world how the institutions they had created were both modern and compatible with Western culture.³⁹

Still, the cultural and intellectual climate of the early Meiji years was far more diverse than the restrictive state ideology being developed by the oligarchs. Ozawa was one of the few conservative politicians of his generation to laud the intellectual openness of the early Meiji years, and to criticize the increasingly heavy-handed clampdown that the *genro* imposed. His analysis of the militarism and aggressive behaviour of the years preceding World War Two led squarely back to the early Meiji period – a time, he believed, when two contrasting paths were open to Japan: individualism and liberal democracy, or nationalism and a reassertion of exceptionalism. Ozawa is not a scholar, like Maruyama Masao (see Kirsten, *op. cit.*) but his view of the Meiji period is somewhat similar to that of Maruyama.⁴⁰

The goal of his programme of radical political and economic reform, Ozawa told me,⁴¹ was to complete the unfinished democratic tasks of the Meiji revolution – that is, to carry out a revolution both of systems and of consciousness. He

acknowledged that post-1945 Japanese governments have brought about relative equality of distribution. But the cost, he continued, was a system of regulations both explicit and implied that severely restricted individual freedoms. In institutional terms, these restrictions went back not only to wartime regulations, as Noguchi Yukio demonstrated,⁴² but ultimately to the state created by the Meiji oligarchs, in which the authority of the 'o-kami' was unquestioned.⁴³ Ozawa wished to jolt the individual voter out of being satisfied with circumscribed freedoms so long as the government provided him with equality of distribution. To paraphrase North, Ozawa had to upset a particular pattern of path dependence that had prevailed for many years. 'We have to change a structure of state and of society dominated by o-kami, by bureaucrats, into one in which power is exercised by the people themselves.'⁴⁴ Only then, after a period of transition, would a new path dependence develop, as the new system fostered its own dynamics.⁴⁵

There was a contradiction in Ozawa's views which reflected the ambivalence of his generation towards their Meiji forebears. The genro he most admired was Okubo Toshimichi, the principal creator of the centralized, bureaucratic nation-state which took shape during the Meiji years. 'If he hadn't done that [created a centralized bureaucratic state], Japan could well have become a colony [of a Western power]', Ozawa has said.⁴⁶ Or, as Roger F. Hackett, biographer of Yamagata Aritomo, Okubo's successor as Home Minister, put it, 'The primary goal of the Meiji leaders was to develop the capacity to preserve the nation's independence, to gain enough power to prevent external encroachment'.⁴⁷ Before long, however, that power was turned against the 'nameless youths' Ozawa lauded in his inaugural speech,⁴⁸ arresting, imprisoning, and sometimes executing them. He does not justify these actions, but neither does he forthrightly condemn them.

Ozawa also noted that the first generation of Meiji leaders was extraordinarily open in its willingness to give substantive positions to men of talent and ability, whether they came from Satsuma, Choshu or domains loyal to the Tokugawa.⁴⁹ The Meiji era produced leaders in science, medicine, education, literature and the arts, many of whom were individualistic and untrammelled by established norms. As this first generation passed from the scene, the bureaucrats began to take over. Ozawa's opinion was that as the first generation of Meiji leaders passed from the scene, the civil-military bureaucracy they had established gradually solidified into a machinery of government without any single strong leader. 'The military bureaucracy was eliminated in 1945, but the civil bureaucracy continues to wield power to this day', Ozawa said.⁵⁰

1.6 Political culture or rational choice theory

Blueprint showed that Ozawa regarded politics as sets of policies to be fought over in election campaigns. His particular policies arose from the conviction that the individual, not the group, was the basic unit of society, and that the individual had to be progressively freed from the tyranny of the group. Ozawa applied his philosophy not only to the political area, but also to the economic, where he sought to bring about the Friedmannesque reforms enacted by Ronald Reagan in the United States and Margaret Thatcher in Britain. In the social area, Ozawa was

more conservative, although he did argue, quite forthrightly, that women should have freedom and equality. He has consistently promoted women candidates ever since the first post-reform election of 1996. In the most recent election, that of 30 August 2009, more women have been elected to the lower house from the DPJ than in any previous election.

Ozawa's proposals, if carried out, would create a society that was closer to individualistic Western society than to the Buddhist, Confucian, and Shintoist roots of modern Japanese society. In fact, Ozawa's whole argument for making Japan a more 'normal nation' was a plea (again, without explicitly saying so) for Japan to become a nation that would be more recognizably Western, in other words, not exceptionalist.

Ozawa's viewpoint was similar to the political culture approach taken by Almond and Verba in *The Civic Culture*.⁵¹ Although these authors do not include Japan or any other Asian nation in their five-nation survey of political cultures, Ozawa, like all his Japanese contemporaries, is the heir of the revolutionary transformations wrought by the Meiji leaders. While there is controversy over the degree to which Western institutions and ideas actually took root in the minds of the people experiencing these changes, there is no question that the political, economic and social landscape of Japan was transformed during these years. Japan could easily have been a candidate for inclusion in Almond and Verba's survey as an example of a participant political culture, with some vestiges of a subject political culture, and Richardson does so define it.⁵²

Some scholars might argue the case for explaining Ozawa in terms of rational choice, or, as one of its practitioners calls it, 'positive political theory'.⁵³ Ozawa's opponents saw nothing but unenlightened personal self-interest in his 'normal nation' concept, regarding the term as window dressing for his effort to win back the power he had lost in a bitter fratricidal dispute within his own party. From such a viewpoint it would not be difficult to fit Ozawa's actions into a rational choice context. But although self-interest, enlightened or not, motivates many politicians, including Ozawa, to some degree, I do not rely on rational choice theory to explain this policy entrepreneur's policies and actions. Rather, I argue that Ozawa's emphasis on policy caused him to take actions difficult to rationalize in terms of self-interest alone.⁵⁴

One book based on rational choice theory and applicable to a political biography is *Analytic Narratives*.⁵⁵ Bates' contention that analytic narratives do not necessarily have to use rational choice theory was slashingly criticized by Jon Elster, who complained that as defined by Bates, an analytic narrative could only be an example of rational choice theory, because it was a 'deductive explanation of individual historical facts'.⁵⁶

My own approach to Ozawa's 'normal nation' theory is inductive, and follows in the footsteps of Almond and Verba to define Japan as a participant political culture, although Ozawa himself does not use this terminology. I argue that, in the wake of the profound institutional changes wrought after World War Two by the US occupation authorities, with the sometimes reluctant but more often enthusiastic collaboration of Japanese voters, Japan has become a participant political culture, although vestiges of the subject political culture remain – the second of the three political cultures posited by the authors.