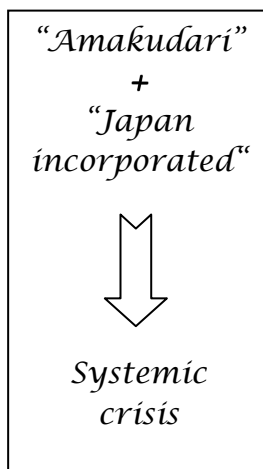


24th Annual Dokkyo International Forum; 2012 Dec 1st
Presentation summary

Japan's '3.11': Political and Social Impacts

- Can the Nation escape her historic blind alley? –



How to deal with "Post-Fukushima" and how Japan can cope with the deep systemic crisis she plunged into seems to emerge as the most challenging questions for the nation since the end of WWII.

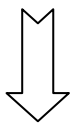
The way crisis management and disaster relief actions after Japan's '3/11' were conducted till today revealed what so long has been suspected but hardly anyone in the administration and among the political elites dares to admit: After a series of crises during the last two decades in finance, economics, politics – domestic, foreign and security, now the country finds herself in a deep *systemic crisis*. The great optimism that swept into society and politics after the epoch-making change of government in September 2009 seems vanished completely as far as trust in the political leadership of the new government party is concerned. "Amakudari" and "Japan incorporated", two vital aspects of Japan's amazing post war development, are going to isolate internationally what used to be the world's second economic power. There seems to be only one hope: People – not politicians and bureaucrats - will take the lead and build up the country, no matter who claims to be in charge in Nagata-Cho.

In Japan change usually is ordered, it seldom just occurs.

Japan's amazing resurrection out of the debris of WWII apparently could materialize because of the national and international democratic framework, provided and protected by the United States engagement in foreign and security policy. May be for the first time in her long history the deep rooted spirit of coherence and loyalty among Japan's citizens could develop and reach a considerable degree of perfection.

It was not disturbed and frequently contested like in those rough times of the country's "*Sengoku-Jidai*" ("Warring States Period") or during the hastily build-up of a militaristic empire following Prussian blueprints. During those peaceful times of the Cold War under the overall protecting American umbrella the Japanese got used to the warm atmosphere of a coherent society, trusting their leaders in business and politics, provided with lifetime employment and a domestic political framework that seems to guarantee a steady increase of personal welfare and economic outcome. Unconsciously this was attributed to the basic conviction that all this was possible because of the conservative belief in a leadership ability that increases the higher the person ranks hierarchically (and not the opposite, as one might presume: increasing leadership skill results in hierarchically higher ranking). Although there were quite a few challenges to that core belief during the past couple of decades - oil shocks, bursting of the bubble economy, financial crises, end of the cold war, just to name a few – but all these “writings on the wall” apparently were not penetrative enough to fundamentally erode that belief. Last year's '3/11' catastrophe obviously made the difference.

Peaceful times of the Cold War under the overall protecting American umbrella



warm and cosy atmosphere of a coherent society

So growing up in a societal environment where there always is already someone or some organization that can take care of exactly the very problem that you might encounter for the first time causes both, relaxation and helplessness. No wonder that under these circumstances it is natural that you must be told when and how to change. The Japanese society from ancient times grew up in this “protected” environment and functioned nicely as long as leaders were leaders in a true sense. That meant – at least in Japan's history – leaders are equipped with real competence to issues they are going to guide their entrusted ones. The system apparently works as long as the leader is living in a “leader's environment” which naturally goes along with more and better access to knowledge and competence than those of lower rank have. This is typical for feudal societies. Leaders in ancient times just had an easy access to knowledge and wisdom. But there will be a great danger of society erosion when leading ability and competence is assumed only according to a well accustomed liturgy without verifiable checking of knowledge and adequate scientific background. If those who pretend to have a saying but do not have the adequate scientific

background when leading someone somewhere the system is doomed to failure. This definitely is even more important the more complex and wide-ranging modern societies and their industrialization proceed.

The Earthquake creeps into politics and society

As time passes “3/11” produces various rolling balls in politics and society. After a hopeful start in *Nagata-cho* discussing a “grand coalition for national reconstruction” Japan’s political elite lost track of the sincere situation among the citizens. Right now, not only those who are in contact to or have relations to the people from those devastated areas, more and more civil movements all around Japan take note of the fact that the acting government does not really contribute to the improvement of the situation. What is even more noteworthy when thinking of the future of this country is the phenomenon that there still is no real “revolutionary” spirit to be detected. There is no strong drive for public uproar and calls for turning things upside down, imposing sanctions on those, supposedly responsible for the mismanagement, install effective and independent controlling of big power plants and so on. And this can be explained to a certain extend with the actual system of power structures in Japan. Widely-used in that context is the *Amakudari* System. As long as for instance top positions in business communities that have close relation to government agencies – for instance power plants, water supply facilities, highway construction firms, big infrastructure projects – are more or less reserved for retiring bureaucrats, independent responsible management aimed at best possible development for the respective service recipients will be hard to achieve.

*incompatibility
of
planned
society/economy*

with

*fair and
democratic
participation of
individual
citizens*

Japan back to the Future.

The reportedly unprecedented disaster of March 11th 2011 – in fact earth quakes and tsunamis of that dimensions have occurred several times in the past according to geologists records - reveals slowly but with striking perspicuity tragic insights in a political and societal environment that is totally overstrained. For the future of Japan questions like, how will be the energy mix after “3/11”, will there be elections in the near future and how good or bad are the survival chances of the “*Minshuto*”-Administration? Will the LDP have a comeback to power? All this is vigorously discussed in the country’s media. But the ultimate question for Japan, her

*clear cut and
honest
Subsidiarity
might be
THE
key for a bright
**Future of the
Nation***

future shape and role in the international community seems to be on a completely different level. Will there be a real change in Japan? It is as simple as that. The Fukushima disaster is about to disclose the critical limit of the persisting system of decision making and civic participation in it. This latent feeling of systemic crisis is about to be transmitted from the limited “Fukushima nuclear energy” complex to the general policy debate. Especially among academics and top journalists more and more are getting conscious about the deep rooted sociocultural conditions of many stalemates the country experienced in the last couple of decades. Japan’s internal state of affairs as well as the international way the country is perceived, is - to a great extent – due to the permissiveness of her population. As long as politics and the debate over it is seen by the general public as something filthy and not really of relevance to own individual interests, those who are engaged in politics have a free hand. People start recognizing that the official Japan, central and local governments, work too clumsy and just according to time wasting bureaucratic conditions when tackling all those nitty-gritty issues of the Fukushima accident. People now start their own movements to help and ease conditions for the victims. Young people for instance spend their holidays just to search through destroyed houses and look for things elderly victims might miss.

In a country where people are accustomed to wait until they are told to move this is quite revolutionary. It seems to be only a question of time until this kind of grasping the initiative to change things for the better penetrates politics in Japan. There are clear signals in front and behind the scenes in Nagata-cho that the next government of Japan will be again under – or at least with dominant partizipatin of - the “Grand old Party” LDP. Looking at the tense relation towards the P.R. of China and South Korea an LDP leader might be able to slowly fix those strained regional relations and, what is even more important from a global viewpoint, come to better terms with the alliance power USA. The idea of a Japan much more integrated among her Asian neighbors, finding her own way to manage domestic and foreign policy issues was the vision under former Democratic Primeminister Hatoyama Yukio. Unfortunately he failed completely. May be that vision had come too early. The next months will show whether the Fukushima “writing on the wall” are of sufficient

impact for a real change in Japan's way to practice her own democracy. How to interlink the country's traditional virtues, coherence, loyalty, responsibility with a Japanese genuine way of power sharing, check and balances, and participation will be the ultimate challenge for the wise men or women. History tells us, development in Japan takes time. Hopefully there is enough time for those in Japan that are just starting to engrave a new vision that makes policy to something everyone is supposed to participate in and decide on in responsibility.