

# Beyond the Postwar Era

Ryoichi Imai

# Japan in 1990s

# 1990

- We can reasonably divide Japanese and the global time around 1990.
- The Berlin Wall came down in 1989 and the two Germanies were united in 1991.
- Soviet Union collapsed in 1991.
- In 1989, the Showa emperor died. The LDP lost the majority of the Upper House for the first time.
- In 1990, the speculative economic bubble burst.

# The Heisei Era

- On January 7, 1989, the emperor died, and the Showa era was over.
- The government immediately announced the new reign name of Heisei.
- The emperor's son, Crown Prince Akihito, took the throne.

# Continuity of the Imperial Institution

- During his months of decline, mass media intensively reported his vital signs: temperature, pulse, incidents of vomiting blood, etc.
- This violation of imperial privacy was a modern tradition invented at the time of the Emperor Meiji's death in 1912.
- The state sought to solidify the intimate link of the modern monarchs with the people.

# 自肅 “Self-Restraint”

- Officials urged people “voluntarily” to restrain every day activities of celebration (school field days and neighborhood festivals) during the emperor’s long final illness.
- Norma Field, a writer and scholar, has reported this atmosphere as “coercive consensus.”

# A still-powerful taboo

- Field also describes the still-powerful taboo on criticizing the emperor for his wartime role.
- The Nagasaki Mayor Motoshima explained that he believed “the emperor bears responsibility for the war.”
- He was shot by imperial defenders in a failed assassination attempt in 1990.

# Naruhito and Masako



- In 1993 Crown Prince Naruhito married Owada Masako, the daughter of a top-ranked diplomat.
- She was unusual as an imperial bride: a graduate of Harvard, seeking for an elite career path.
- The Prince had courted her for nearly seven years.



## “Waste” of an exceptional career

- Despite the massive media coverage of the wedding, the public response intrigued combined detachment and celebrity worship.
- Many young women lamented for her giving up an exceptional career.
- The elaborate wedding did not attract so much interest from public as the 1959 wedding of the father emperor.

# 1989 upper house election

- The triple punch gave a landslide victory to the Socialist Party, led by a female chairperson, Doi Takako.
  - The Recruit Scandal
  - The unpopular consumption tax
  - The sex scandal of the Prime Minister (Uno)



# The Sagawa Express Scandal



- Kanemaru Shin, the successor of the largest faction of LDP from Tanaka, was the puppeteer of the two consecutive prime ministers; Kaifu and Miyazawa.
- In 1992, Media reported that the Sagawa company financially supported politicians as well as underground powers.
- Kanemaru met crime family bosses to thank them for their help.
- He evaded taxes massively, and was discovered to hide one hundred kilograms of gold bars in his luxury apartment.

# 1993

- The opposition parties proposed a vote of no-confidence in Prime Minister Miyazawa.
- The proposal must have been only a symbolic protest.
- But suddenly, a politician named Ozawa Ichiro jumped on the reform bandwagon.
- The no-confidence proposal obtained majority, and Miyazawa resigned.

# Ozawa Ichiro

- Ozawa was a former Tanaka follower, and the Secretary General of LDP of a Kanemaru's puppet cabinet.
- He and his followers revolted and supported Hosokawa, who was the PM of the first non-LDP cabinet since 1955.
- He is a key player of the politics of 1990s and 2000s.
- He led DPJ as the secretary general in the historical victory of DPJ over LDP in 2009.



# Hosokawa Morihiro

- His paternal line stretched back to one of the Kyushu's most powerful daimyo clans, and was a maternal grandson of the wartime prime Minister Konoe Fumimaro.
- He organized a new Japan New Party in 1992.
- In 1993, he was elected by the votes of the representatives of the lower house as a prime minister, helped by Ozawa.
- Unfortunately his political coalition collapsed in 1994, replaced by a coalition including LDP and the Socialist Party.



Kumamoto Castle

# A Political Spectacle

- In 1994 LDP formed a coalition government with the Japan Socialist Party (JSP), and appointed Murayama Tomiichi, chairman of JSP, as PM.
- LDP and JSP Diet members had been working together to draft and pass legislation. They wanted to remove Ozawa's dictatorship.
- This alliance was surprising and troubling Japanese voters.

# The Lost Decade

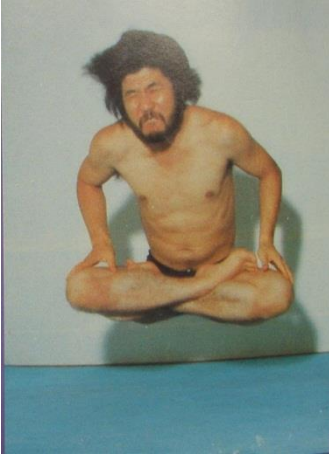
- The Bubble Economy burst in 1990.
- The economy showed a sign of temporary recovery in 1996.
- In 1997 Asia was attacked by the Currency Crisis, when Prime Minister Hashimoto raised the consumption tax (3% -> 5%).
- The economy collapsed again with a major crisis of the financial sectors.



# Disasters: Natural and Human



- In 1995 a major earthquake struck Kobe. More than four thousand people were killed.
- In the same year, a terrorist attack on the Tokyo subways with poisonous gas destroyed people's confidence in the nation's low crime rate and the safety of major cities.



# オウム真理教 Aum Shinrikyo



- It was a religious cult led by a charismatic yoga master, Asahara Shoko.
- In 1995, the Aum terrorists attacked the Tokyo subway and killed 12 passengers and injured hundreds.
- After his group was arrested by the police, it was revealed that they had killed local residents in Matsumoto city, Nagano prefecture in the previous year with the same gas.

# Political Transition

- In 1996 PM Murayama resigned. Hashimoto of LDP took over. The Socialist Party remained as a weakened junior partner.
- Soon the Socialist Party almost evaporated.
- In the last half of 1990s, LDP ran the government with its declining hegemony.

# The end of 20<sup>th</sup> Century

- In the upper house election, Hashimoto was defeated with his unpopular raise of consumption tax rate under the economic slump caused by the Asian Currency Crisis.
- Another LDP veteran, Obuchi took over.
- Obuchi stimulated the economy with aggressive deficit spending.
- He was popular, but died of a stroke in 2000.
- Mori took over. He was unpopular and resigned in 2001.

# Japan in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

# Koizumi Jun-ichiro

- In 2001, he was elected as the President of LDP by the popular vote of LDP members, and became PM.
- He pledged a dramatic “structural reform” of the economy.
- He remained in the position for 5 years and left with a significant economic recovery.



# “Structural Reform”

- Koizumi’s political goal was to privatize the Postal Saving system, because the money collected by the PS had been used to support inefficient, noncompetitive business.
- He presented himself as the enemy of those entrenched defenders (politicians and bureaucrats) of those inefficient industries.

# September 2005

- In August, Koizumi's PS privatization plan was rejected by the *Upper House*, due to considerable defection from his own party.
- He called for an election for the *Lower House* in order to confirm people's support on his reform plan.
- He put a group of newcomers ("assassins") in the places of representatives who opposed the PS privatization.
- The LDP won the landslide victory in September.



# Koizumi's Successor

- Koizumi was succeeded by Abe Shinzo, a grandson of Kishi Nobusuke, who revised the US-J Security Treaty in 1960.
- In 2007 voters became furious when they learned that the government had lost fifty million accounts of the Social Security Pension recipients.
- Abe resigned in September 2007, taking the responsibility for the miserable loss in the Upper House Election in July.



# The Divided Government

- Since July 2007, the political leadership of Japan has been divided into the LDP and the DP.
- Recent Polls suggested that the Democratic Party would win majority in the Lower House election in the next general election.
- The consolidation of a two-party system appeared possible.

# The Fall of the LDP

- Abe was succeeded by Fukuda Yasuo, who resigned in September 2008.
- Aso Taro was elected as PM then, but he is unpopular and the people's supporting rate remained very low.



Is being a politician a family business? - Fukuda is a son of a former PM, Fukuda Takeo. Aso was a grandson of Yoshida Shigeru.

# Change of Government 政権交代

- In August 2009, Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) defeated LDP in the General Election.
- The DPJ leader Yukio Hatoyama was appointed to be the prime minister (PM), whom Ichiro Ozawa supported as the party's secretary general.
- Yukio is a grandson of former prime minister Hatoyama Ichiro, who normalized the diplomatic relationship with the Soviet Union.



Hatoyama



Ozawa

# Government chosen by People

- This is the first time in Japanese history that people choose their government by themselves.
- In the prewar “constitutional government,” if a cabinet fell in a scandal, the emperor appointed the next PM.
- The new PM called a general election, and his party won.
- People just authorized the emperor’s appointment.

# Failure of Hatoyama cabinet

- Mass media reported a scandalous fact that Hatoyama had been financially supported by his wealthy mother, who was a daughter of the founder of the Bridgestone Corp.
- In June 2010, Hatoyama resigned in order to apologize for the failure of his original plan to close the US Futenma base in Okinawa.

# Futenma Base Problem

- LDP government had reached an agreement with US to close the Futenma base and construct a new US Marine base at Henoko Bay along the east coast of Okinawa Island.
- Hatoyama announced his plan to close the US Futenma base, and transfer the US Marine to somewhere out of Okinawa.
- In June 2010, Hatoyama concluded that his cabinet was unable to find a replacement location of the Futenma base out of Okinawa.

# Upper House Election 2010

- Right before the Upper House election, Naoto KAN was appointed as a new PM.
- In the upcoming election of the Upper House, DPJ lost the majority, and the government was again divided.
- In the election, Kan revealed his will to raise the consumption tax rate from 5% to 10% to make the social security system sustainable.
- The result of the election forced Kan to abandon his original plan.





# Great East-Japan Earthquake

- On March 11, 2011, The east coast of Japan was hit by a huge earthquake, which killed more than 20,000 citizens.
- A tsunami destroyed the First Fukushima nuclear plant, and the local citizens were forced to evacuate.
- The initial poor management of the nuclear accident by the Kan cabinet was severely criticized by mass media.

# The Noda cabinet

- In august 2011, Kan resigned and Yoshihiko NODA was nominated for the next DPJ leader and PM by the vote of the DPJ members of the Diet.
- Noda pledges to raise the consumption tax to stabilize the social security budget, which was agreed on by the LDP and Komeito Party.



# The DPJ Troika (extra)

- Troika is a Russian carriage pulled by three horses abreast.
- Hatoyama, Kan, and Ozawa are called the DPJ Troika.
- They have alternately become the DPJ leader.
- The resignation of Kan symbolizes the end of the DPJ Troika.



# The Ozawa scandal (extra)

- In 2010, the former three secretaries of Ozawa Ichiro were prosecuted by the Public Prosecutor to the court, with the suspected inadequate booking records of the political activity funds.
- The Public Prosecutor abandoned prosecuting Ozawa, because the lack of enough evidences of conspiracy.

## Committee for the Inquest of Prosecution (CIP) (extra)

- CIP is a special committee to evaluate the decisions made by the Public Prosecutor.
- The CIP members are local citizens, appointed by lottery.
- Ozawa was prosecuted, based on the conclusion reached by CIP.
- In November 2012, however, in the second (and the last) trial at the Tokyo Higher Court, Ozawa was found innocent, which questions the authority of the CIP.

# Japan's Criminal Justice (extra)

- The Public Prosecutor has prosecuted only the cases very highly likely to be sentenced guilty.
- More than 99% of the accused have been sentenced to be guilty in the court.
- Therefore, mass media and people's voice tend to discriminate a citizen in trial, once s/he is prosecuted.
- Ozawa has been restricted in political activities in the recent years during his trial.

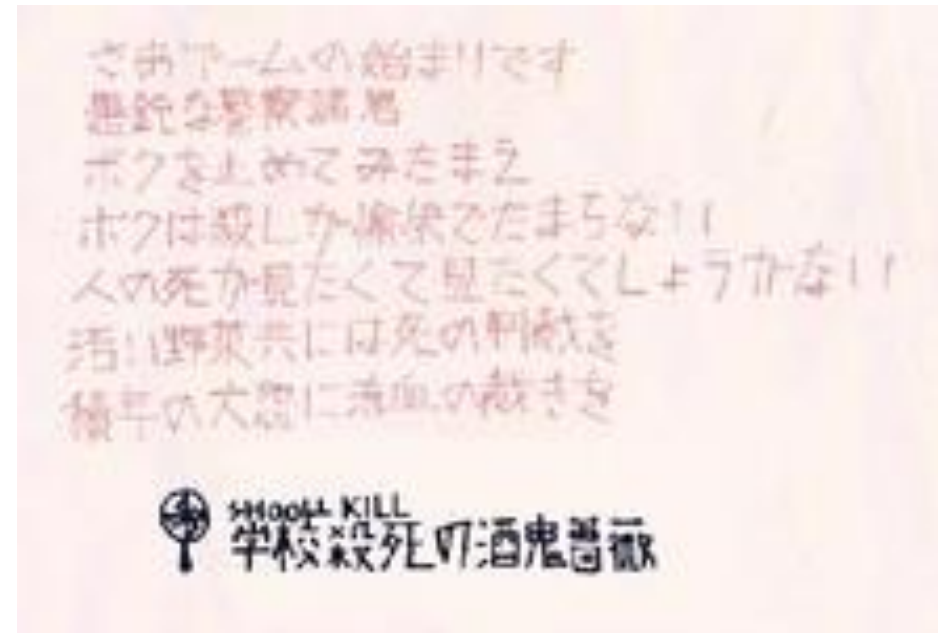
# New Social Trends in Japan

# 援助交際 (assisted dating)

- A social issue in 1990s was a new sort of young prostitution.
- Teenage girls made them sexually available to adult men for substantial fees.
- Researchers were shocked to find that those girls are normal, and not poor.
- Those girls were paid dating simply to buy expensive clothes and attract some attention and companionship.
- In the 2010s, the assisted dating is renamed as papa-katsu (パパ活), meaning “father hunting”.
  - Job hunting (就活), marriage hunting (婚活),
  - end-of-life activities (終活)



# Attention to Juvenile Crime



- In 1997 a 14-years old school boy was arrested for killing two children in his neighborhood.
- Mass media reacted with a call for a stricter laws for juvenile crime.
- But the incident of violent crimes by youth was much higher in 1950s and 60s.

# Ikeda Elementary School Massacre

- On June 8, 2001, a jobless man, Takuma Mamoru, attacked an elite elementary school at Osaka, and killed 8 pupils.
- He suffered from his father's violence in his childhood, failed in jobs, and had a grudge on the social circumstance surrounding him.
- He married a female activist of the anti-death-penalty movements, who sympathized with him in jail.
- In 2004, he was executed.

# Akihabara Case

- On Sunday, June 8, 2008, a 25-years-old man, Kato Tomohiro, attacked the pedestrians walking on the streets at Akihabara, Tokyo, and killed 7 with a dagger.
- He was a former dispatched employee of an automobile factory, and just laid off.
- He was insulted by the users of his favorite internet bulletin board, where he was complaining about job loss and his lonesome life.
- On the night of the disaster, many people on the internet bulletin board sympathized with him for his situation.
- He was sentenced to death by the Supreme Court in 2014.

# Foreigners in the labor market

- In 1990 the new immigrant law allowed ethnic Japanese a preferential right to return from overseas.
- Thousands of Brazilians took the offer.
- Other foreigners came to Japan illegally.
- Most migrant workers took jobs that native Japanese were unwilling to perform, in particular manual labor “3K”: dangerous (*kiken*), dirty (*kitanai*), difficult (*kitsui*).
- Most foreign workers work in essential jobs.

# Increasing “fear” of foreigners



- In 2000 the nationalistic Tokyo governor Ishihara Shintaro offered a startling statement of fear of foreigners.
- He revived an early postwar term for Koreans in Japan, and noted that in an earthquake, “third-country people” might take advantage of the confusion to harm Japanese people.
- The major opinion blamed him for his prejudice, but a significant minority shared his fears.

# Doubt on US-Japan Alliance

- US military facilities covered 1/5 of the Okinawa Island.
- Repeated kidnappings and rapes of teenage girls by soldiers sparked a series of strong protest against US bases.
- Japanese people had been persuaded that the alliance would protect Japan from the hostile communist regimes.
- But the Soviet Union collapsed, and the Cold War was over.

## Revisionist View of the US-Japan alliance

- The US protects the oil supply lines from the Middle East to the East Asia.
- Japan's Asian neighbors still expressed fear of Japan's rearmament.
- The American military presence works to “contain” Japan even while protecting it.

# The “History Recognition” Controversy

- In 1991 three Korean, former “comfort women” brought legal suit against Japanese government.
- The government continued to deny any official involvement of the military in setting up or supervising the brothels or in forcing women to work there.
- In 2013, the government finally admitted the military’s involvement with the sexual slavery system.
- In 2014, however, some evidences for the military involvement are found to be fake, and the media (Asahi Shinbun) apologize.



# The Nationalist Backlash

- These and other charges of war crimes sparked a nationalist backlash to condemn the “masochist” historical consciousness (自虐史観) that stressed the dark side of the Japanese past.
  - Denial of the Nanjing Massacre.
  - The Comfort women.
  - The WWII as a noble endeavor to liberate Asia from the western imperialism.

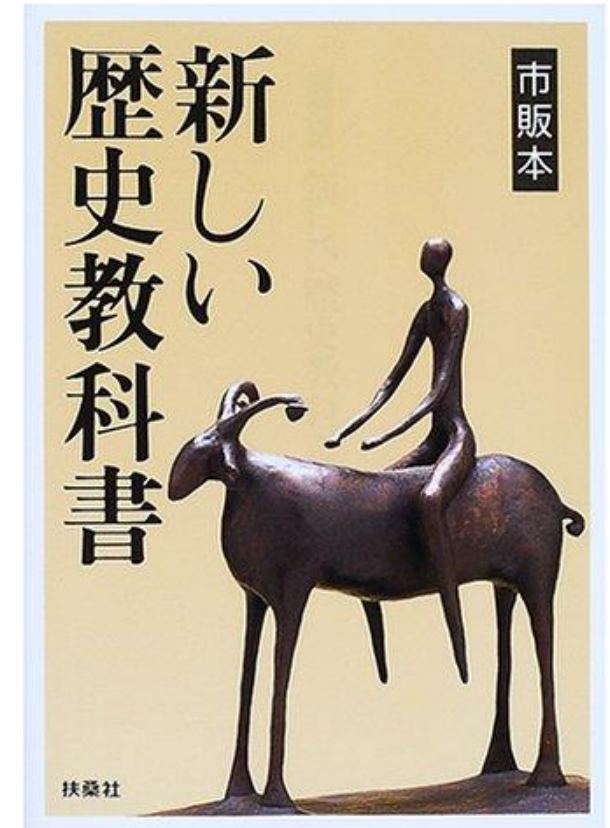
# Koizumi and Yasukuni

- PM Koizumi visited “officially” the Yasukuni Shrine on August 15<sup>th</sup> 1996, for the first time since he became PM.
- This visit was enthusiastically applauded by the internet right-wing opinions (ネットウヨ) such as 2-channel.
- He made five “unofficial” visits before this one, being cautious of reactions from China and Korea. He resigned in the next month.



# “The New History Textbook”

- In 2001, the Ministry of Education approved a new history textbook for possible classroom use.
- In that textbook, the authors took the narrow nationalistic approach to justify Japan's deeds during the wartime.
- With much of public and foreign criticisms, only a handful schools adopted it.



# THE FACTS

- In June 2007, a group of the revisionists posted an advertisement on the Washington Post, to claim that:
- *No historical documents have ever been found that positively demonstrates that women were forced against their will into prostitution by the Japanese Army.*
- PM Abe opened his view in accordance with THE FACTS.

[illegible]

# No Freedom of Expression

- In 2019, right-wingers and the right-wing mayor of Nagoya protested vehemently against the display of works criticizing Emperor Showa and a statue of a so-called comfort woman in a special exhibition titled "No Freedom of Expression" at the Triennale art exhibition in Aichi Prefecture.
- Right-wing activists protesting the "No Freedom of Expression" exhibition launched a recall petition calling for the dismissal of the Aichi Prefecture governor who organized the art exhibition, but the number of signatures failed to reach the number needed to hold a referendum on his dismissal.
- To make matters worse, more than 80% of the signatures turned out to be fraudulently substituted, resulting in a criminal case.
- On May 19, the secretary general of the signature campaign was arrested.

# Controversy on the Bloody Past

- Even in US, in 1995, veteran organizations prevented a full discussion of the use of the atomic bombs in a exhibition at the Smithsonian Museum.
- Japanese people are still taking part in the continued debate on how to balance the nation's pride with its unjust operation of the power in the past.

# Japan in 2010s and Beyond

# The Return of Abe

- In December 2012, LDP defeated DPJ in the general election.
- Shinzo Abe, the LDP leader, was appointed as PM by the refreshed Diet.
- The stock market positively reacted to the DPJ PM Noda's call for the general election in November, expecting LDP to win.
- At the same time, the Yen started to devalue.





# 3 Arrows of the Abenomics

- Abe announced that he would pursue a drastic recovery of Japanese economy through the following three channels (*arrows*).
  1. Monetary Policy to raise inflation expectation and finish the deflation regime that prevailed the last two decades.
  2. Fiscal policy to strengthen the infrastructure to protect the country against natural disasters (– skipped in the class).
  3. Growth Strategy to raise the economy's potential to increase employment.

# Reinterpretation of the Article 9

- Article 9 of the Constitution has long been interpreted by the government as
  - limiting Japan's use of force strictly to self-defense, and as
  - banning the use of collective self-defense.
- In 2015, Abe proposed a new interpretation to allow the use of collective self-defense, without revising the Constitution.
  - Abe also submits to the diet a set of security bills based on this interpretation.
- However, almost all the constitutional scholars condemned his reinterpretation, and urged the government to withdraw those security bills from the diet
- The bill including the new interpretation passed the diet in 2015.

# Background 1:

## The Gulf War 1990

- In 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait and took over a crude oil-related facility. The U.N. Security Council asked Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein to withdraw, but he refused.
- A multinational force including the United States attacked the Iraqi army. Japan was asked to join the multinational force, but it refused on constitutional grounds. Instead, Japan gave \$13 billion to the multinational force.
- The war ended after a month-long battle and Iraq withdrew from Kuwait.
- Kuwait praised the cooperation by naming the countries participating in the multinational force, but the list did not include Japan.
- A realization arose within the government that international cooperation cannot be based on money alone, but requires human contribution.

# Background 2:

## The Iraqi War 2003

- In 2001, New York City was hit by a major terrorist attack by al-Qaeda led by bin Laden.
- As a countermeasure, the United States launched a military strike on Iraq in March 2003. At that time, a multinational force similar to that of the Gulf War was organized, but Germany and France did not take part in the attack .
- The fighting ended after two months, with the multinational forces occupying Baghdad and capturing Saddam Hussein.
- Japan supported the multinational force's military attack, but, as in the Gulf War, did not use military weapons on constitutional grounds. Instead, the SDF was dispatched to support water supply activities.
- However, since the SDF was not allow to use force, they were protected by the Australian Army and other forces that participated in the multinational force, which embarrassed Japan's government.

# Populism

- Currently, populist politics is prevalent worldwide.
- Examples:
  - Brexit
  - Rassemblement National (Former Front National) led by Marine Le Pen
  - Chauvinist regimes in Central Europe
  - Donald Trump, USA

## 4 major claims of populist politicians

1. The economic disparity among the people has increased due to globalization and increased immigration.
2. In order to improve the economic condition of the people, the public sector should be downsized.
3. Government needs to increase the purchasing power of the people by cutting taxes.
4. In economic negotiations with foreign countries, government should protect domestic industries by restricting imports.

# Populism in local politics in Japan

- In urban area, progressive parties was supported by majority of voters in 1970-1980.
- In the last 3 decades, urban voters have become more conservative and underestimated income redistribution in favor of neoliberal policies.
- They tend to believe in the popular story that prolonged slump in the Japanese economy has been caused mainly by public sector inefficiency and protection of vested interests in the name of income redistribution.

# Populist local leaders

- HASHIMOTO Tohru
  - Governor of Osaka Prefecture and then Mayor of Osaka City)
  - Founder of the 維新 Restoration party.
- KOIKE Yuriko
  - Governor of Tokyo Prefecture
  - Founder of the Party of Hope
- KAWAMURA Takeshi (Mayor of Nagoya city)
- TAKASHIMA Soichiro (Mayor of Fukuoka city) ?



# HASHIMOTO Tohru

- In 2008, a lawyer and TV talent, Hashimoto Tohru was elected to be the governor of the Osaka prefecture.
- In November 2011 he defeated his political enemy Hiramatsu in election, and became the mayor of Osaka city.
- His policy to suppress public employees, teachers, labor unions, and local interest groups, is supported enthusiastically by majority people in Osaka.
- The Restoration Party, led by Hashimoto, took more than 50 seats in the Diet in the 2012 Lower House Election.
- He says, “What is needed in today’s politics is dictatorship.”



# KOIKE Yuriko

- Born in 1952.
- Graduated Cairo University in 1976.
- Worked for TV for 1979-92.
- Elected for the Lower House from an Hyogo election district. Changing parties very often.
- Worked for the Abe cabinet as the Minister of Defense in 2007.
- Retired from national politics and won the 2016 Tokyo gubernatorial election, running without the LDP's endorsement and defeating the LDP's nominee.
- In 2017, founded the Party of Hope, joined by the most members by the Democratic Party.
- The Party of Hope lost the general election in October 2017, which shattered her ambition to dominate the national government.
- In 2000, she was re-elected as Tokyo governor in the second term.



# YAMAMOTO Taro

- Born in 1974, dropped out of HS in 1991.
- Acting in many TV dramas and movies when young.
- Retired from show business in 2011, and started activities against nuclear power plants
- In 2013, elected from the Tokyo district to the Upper House.
- In 2019, Yamamoto founded a new party “Reiwa-Shinsengumi” to call for anti-austerity fiscal policies, the abolition of the consumption tax, and scholarship repayment waivers.
- Two severely disabled candidates were elected to the upper house of the Diet, but Yamamoto himself did not win.
- In the June 2000, Yamamoto ran for governor of Tokyo prefecture, challenging Tokyo governor Koike, but lost the election.



# The NHK Party

- The NHK Party was founded by Takashi Tachibana, a former NHK employee, in an attempt to legally abolish the obligation to pay NHK broadcast subscription fees.
- Japanese citizens are required by law to sign a subscription contract with NHK whenever they install a television set. In practice, some citizens refuse the contract even though they have a TV set at home. Currently, owners of PCs, smartphones, and tablets are also considered to obligated to sign a subscription contract with NHK.
- The NHK Party's ultimate goal is to "scramble" NHK broadcasts so that only those who pay NHK subscription fees will be able to watch NHK.
- The party leader won one seat in the proportional representation electoral district for the 2019 Upper House election.



# 参政党 Sanseito, Party of Do It Yourself!!)

- Sanseito is a right-wing populist party founded in 2020 and won a seat in the 2022 Upper House election, acquiring more than 2 percent of the votes.
- The party promotes COVID-19 misinformation and anti-vaccine propaganda.
- The party is against same-sex marriage, including civil unions. Sanseitō was one of the only parties in the National Diet to oppose the LGBT Understanding Bill.



Sohei Kamiya,  
founder of the Sanseito

# Japan in 2020s



令和: In April 2019, the government announced that the era name, would change on May 1, to "Reiwa".



Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga, who was in charge of this government announcement, won the LDP presidential election in the following year, after Prime Minister Abe's resignation, and became prime minister on September 16, 2020.

# Kishida Cabinet

- Prime Minister Suga's political stance of focusing on economic recovery and neglecting corona control was criticized by the public and the media, and his approval rating dropped.
- In September 2021, Suga resigned as a result of the defeat of the LDP-endorsed candidate in the mayoral election in Yokohama by the opposition party's candidate.
- The new prime minister was Fumio Kishida, who appeared to be breaking with the Abe and Kan administrations under the banner of "new capitalism."





# Assassination of Abe

- On July 8, 2022, two days before voting in the lower house election, former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was shot and killed by Tetsuya Yamagami while on a tour in Nara Prefecture for his Liberal Democratic Party candidate.
- The suspect Yamakami told police, "My family was destroyed by the Unification Church. He stated that he was looking for an opportunity to assassinate former PM Abe because he believed that he was the one who contributed to the Unification Church's growth of power in Japan.
- In fact, a video of former PM Abe giving a video speech in support of the Unification Church at its world convention has been released on YouTube.



# 統一教会 Unification Church

- The Unification Church is a Christian cult founded in South Korea. Originally, the founder of the Unification Church, 文鮮明 Moon Myung Moon, was strongly supported by Abe's grandfather, Kishi Nobusuke.
- Kishi supported the Unification Church because the Unification Church was strongly anti-Communist.
- In the 1980s and 1990s, the Unification Church caused social problems through psychic sales and by taking exorbitant amounts of donations from the families of its followers.
- Brainwashing of students at universities was also a problem.
- However, the Unification Church was relied upon in the election campaigns by many members of the Liberal Democratic Party.
- Therefore, the tightening of regulations on their activities did not proceed.

# New Policies

- In 2023, Japan is the chairing country of the G7 meeting, and as if to accommodate the G7, PM Kishida has advanced several policies.
  1. PM Kishida himself visited Ukraine and met with President Zelensky to clarify Japan's support for Ukraine with regard to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. President Zelensky flew in to the G7 meeting in Hiroshima in May.
  2. In order to clarify Japan's stance on sharing values with Western industrialized nations, Japan enacted the LGBT理解促進法 Law for the Promotion of LGBT Understanding. The law's "unfair discrimination" condition on prohibited discrimination was intended as a concession to conservatives who opposed the law's ban on LGBT discrimination.

# New Immigration Laws

3. The foreign technical internship system is expected to be abolished, and new legislation is being prepared to allow foreigners who have acquired skills to work in Japan on a long-term basis.
4. Meanwhile, the Immigration Law has been amended to allow the Japanese government to deport foreigners who are in the process of applying for refugee status – Deportation has been suspended if the immigrants are still applying for refugee status.

# The Forgotten Politician

- Shigeru Ishiba, elected from Tottori Prefecture, was Shinzo Abe's greatest rival. In the 2012 LDP presidential election, Ishiba finished second but was appointed Secretary-General by Abe to promote party unity.
- In Abe's 2014 cabinet reshuffle, Ishiba became Minister of State for Regional Revitalization, a field he excelled in, but resigned in 2016 and held no major roles thereafter. As Abe's administration maintained high approval ratings, Ishiba was increasingly seen as a "past politician."
- When Abe resigned in 2020, Ishiba placed third in the subsequent LDP leadership race behind Yoshihide Suga and Fumio Kishida.
- In 2021, after Suga's resignation, Ishiba did not run but supported Taro Kono. During Kishida's three-year tenure, few considered Ishiba a likely next prime minister.

# Ishiba Cabinet (2024-)

石破茂

- In 2024, following Kishida's resignation, Ishiba came second to Sanae Takaichi in the first round of the LDP leadership vote.
- While many expected Takaichi to win, key figures rallied behind Ishiba in the runoff, leading to his victory over Takaichi as LDP president.
- He was subsequently elected Japan's 102nd Prime Minister in the Diet's vote.



# Ishiba's Policies

- Shigeru Ishiba, originally a defense policy expert and a member of the defense-focused parliamentary group, is known for his strong opinions on defense issues.
- Representing a rural area (Tottori Prefecture) with a declining population, he often criticizes Tokyo's over-centralization and advocates for regional development.
- Ideologically, while expected to be right-wing, his rivalry with Shinzo Abe and Abe's successor Sanae Takaichi has positioned him as relatively left-leaning and liberal. He has expressed cautious support for issues like female or matrilineal emperors and optional separate surnames for married couples.
- In foreign policy, he prioritizes the Japan-U.S. alliance while respecting the development of political and economic ties with China.

- Yuichiro Tamaki, a former Finance Ministry official, was first elected as a Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) member in the 2009 regime-change election.
- After navigating the DPJ's turbulent period, he became the leader of the Democratic Party for the People (DPP), one of the DPJ's successor parties, in 2018.
- Tamaki rose to political prominence during the 2024 general election. The DPP, advocating for income tax cuts by raising the minimum taxable income, tripled its seats, becoming a pivotal player in the Diet.
- His slogan, "Increase take-home pay," strongly resonated with voters under 40, who felt burdened by rising social insurance costs. However, this policy is rooted in the traditional income tax cut approach of the former Democratic Socialist Party.



玉木雄一郎



- Renho, born in 1967, was a gravure idol in her youth. She was first elected in 2004 as a Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) candidate. When the DPJ formed the government in 2009, she gained prominence as a key figure in the new administration's high-profile "budget review" project to cut wasteful spending.
- In the 2010 House of Councillors election, she was re-elected in the Tokyo constituency with a record-breaking 1.7 million votes. Around this time, she was approached to run for Tokyo governor but declined, marking the peak of her career.
- She served as leader of the Democratic Party, a successor to the DPJ, for one year starting in 2016, but faced relentless attacks from right-wing groups questioning her dual citizenship with Taiwan (Republic of China).
- In 2024, she ran for Tokyo governor but finished third behind emerging populist Shinji Ishimaru. Her defeat was seen as the beginning of a retreat for ethnic and gender diversity movements and feminism in Japan.



蓮舫

- Shiori Yamao, born in 1974, played the lead role in the musical Annie as an elementary school student. Expected to enter the entertainment industry, she wisely chose academics, graduating from the University of Tokyo's Faculty of Law and becoming a prosecutor. In the 2009 regime-change election, she won a seat as a Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) candidate.
- She gained fame in 2016 for quoting the viral phrase “Japan, die, for making me fail to get into daycare” during a parliamentary question session, symbolizing the career aspirations of highly educated women. However, in 2017, her popularity plummeted when an extramarital affair with a male lawyer was reported. Tragically, the lawyer's wife died by suicide, and Yamao herself divorced, losing the support of a forgiving husband.
- After a period of electoral losses, in May 2025, her candidacy for the House of Councillors election as a popular Democratic Party for the People (DPP) candidate was announced. However, online criticism immediately surged, holding her accountable for the affair. On June 10, she failed to adequately defend herself at a press conference, leading the DPP to withdraw her candidacy. Her downfall is seen as an episode emblematic of the shifting landscape of Japanese politics.



山尾志桜里