

A Perspective for Japan: Fukuzawa Yukichi's "Theory of Civilization", 1875

WOLFGANG SEIFERT*

Fukuzawa Yukichi a jeho „Teorie civilizace“ z roku 1875: Perspektiva pro Japonsko

Abstract: This paper discusses the thought of Fukuzawa Yukichi, probably the most influential Japanese intellectual of the late nineteenth century, with particular reference to his attempt to develop a theory of civilization. For him, the civilizational approach was a framework for reflection on Japan's situation in the world after the great changes of the 1850s and 1860s. He saw the preservation of national independence and the reform of Japanese society as primary goals, but they necessitated extensive learning from the experience and achievements of more advanced societies, especially those of Western Europe and the United States. However, he did not advocate a purely imitative Westernization. Japan's distinctive identity and autonomous international stance were to be maintained. To clarify the reasons for transforming Japan in light of Western models without capitulating to them, he outlined an evolutionary conception of social change, understood in terms of an advance towards civilization. That kind of progress was not only a matter of technical and organizational development; it also involved the mobilization of whole peoples. On this basis, Fukuzawa articulated a more democratic vision of Japan's future than the road subsequently taken by the Meiji government.

Keywords: Fukuzawa Yukichi; Japan; civilization; nationalism; Meiji renovation; Westernization

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Preliminary Remarks

If Japan is to be brought back into the international discussion about earlier and contemporary transformations of societies, we must also pay attention to Japanese analyses and diagnoses of the times. In the context of international cultural and intellectual exchange, the Japanese experience of a specific road to modernity, together with its indignant interpretations, is particularly relevant – not least since influential Western theorists, such as F. Fukuyama, have been proved wrong about the global, democratic and market-oriented convergence of societies moving in that direction. Chinese modernization is currently perceived as the main counter-example, but often discussed without proper awareness of the historical background. Adding Japan to the picture helps to contextualize the Chinese transformation that began much later. And reflections on the Japanese case should take note of arguments and programmes that throw light on the whole trajectory, even if they were not – or only in part – confirmed by later developments. A classic example of that kind is Fukuzawa Yukichi's (1835–1901) *An Outline of a Theory of Civilization*, published in 1875.

* Prof. Wolfgang Seifert, Emeritus Professor of Japanese Studies at the University of Heidelberg. E-mail: seifert@zo.uni-heidelberg.de

The following discussion will distinguish between the concepts of transformation and social change. The latter refers to ongoing alterations, more or less significant, but not affecting fundamental economic and social structures, whereas the concept of transformation denotes relatively rapid and thoroughgoing change of such structures. That leaves open the question whether the transformation is triggered by internal processes or by “blows” coming from outside, e.g. natural disasters or wars. Concrete analyses of transformative changes will also raise the issue of radical discontinuity or underlying continuity across a concatenation of events. This is often controversial, and calls for sociological as well as historical approaches.

Notwithstanding the varying interpretations of modern Japanese history (since 1850 or thereabouts), there can be no doubt that developments during the decades before and after 1868, as well as those beginning in 1945, constitute transformations in the sense defined above. Here I will deal with an interpretation of the upheaval preceding and following the *events* of 1868. The work in question articulated a comparative perspective on Japan and the West (primarily Western Europe, but with some references to the United States), as well as a long-term historical analysis of his compatriots’ understanding of their own society and some suggestions for a better grasp; it was, to put it another way, both a diagnosis of the times and a programme for Japan’s future course. Fukuzawa also had something to say on China and Korea.

As Jóhann Árnason observes in the editorial of this issue, “the changes to Japan’s internal structures and to its relations with foreign countries opened up new perspectives for comparative analysis. Japanese adaptation of European institutions, practices and ideas gave rise to parallel as well as contrasting developments.” Eisenstadt’s impressive exploration of such adaptive processes has shown that this approach is fruitful. We should, however, not draw only on subsequent historical and sociological research, foreign and domestic, but also on accompanying analyses and policy proposals by actors and observers of the transformative process.

The present sketch is based on the methodological premise that concepts and paradigms of political thought and social philosophy are important for the understanding of the two transitional phases (1853–1890 and 1945–1952) in the almost 170-year long modern history of Japan.¹ It is also assumed that within the dynamics of social change, social conditions do not only give rise to specific ideas; such ideas can also, especially when they develop into ideologies, shape the course of social change. Such an impact of new thought is undoubtedly exemplified by the work of Fukuzawa Yukichi, however diverse later opinions on his ideas may be. He was neither a social scientist nor a historian, but a journalist who developed his own social philosophy, and he was influential not only through his books and newspaper articles, but also as the founder of a private educational institution. If we take with Mitani for granted that the political tradition of a country is shaped on one hand by professional politicians and on the other by political amateurs, the “active *demos*” that also becomes a political subject, Fukuzawa’s role consisted in enabling and guiding the amateurs. He saw himself as an intellectual leader of efforts to solve Japan’s most urgent problems and to safeguard the independence of the nation [*kokuminteki dokuritsu*; see *Mitani 2016: 85–86*].

¹ Historians and historical sociologists disagree on the exact dating of modern Japanese history.

Many later commentators have described Fukuzawa as the thinker and activist who most consistently advocated the "Westernization of Japan" and tried to further it. But in Fukuzawa's own opinion, "Westernization" (or "Europeanization") did not mean a blind acceptance of models, with the aim of becoming "like the West". For him, the whole set of institutions, practices and ideas prevailing in Western Europe (often with the addition of the United States) represented "Western civilization". When he spoke of "elevating the level of civilization" in Japan, he meant that Japan should adopt and develop a modified version of this set. His motivating concrete goal was that Japan should become an independent, sovereign, modern national state, with a population conscious of itself as a nation. That could only be achieved if several conditions were fulfilled. They concerned institutions, practices and ideas in political and economic life, and not least changes in public consciousness. Only in that way could "civilization" in Fukuzawa's sense make progress. To put it another way, the adaptation of Western models has a specific role to play in the modernizing process. Fukuzawa is concerned with the survival of Japan as a politically independent unit while entering the "modern world of states", then shaped by the West.

In this paper I would like to show how the – probably – most influential Japanese intellectual in the second half of the nineteenth century described his society, which social and political structures he criticized and what kind of social consciousness he criticized, and how he tried to show his compatriots out of the apparently insoluble dilemma of constrained collective modernization and autonomous action of individuals. The most systematic expression of Fukuzawa's ideas and arguments is to be found in his two main works, *An Encouragement of Learning* (*Gakumon no susume*, 1872) and *An Outline of a Theory of Civilization* (*Bunmeiron no gairyaku*, 1875). Here I will limit my discussion to key statements of the second work, and thus not trace Fukuzawa's thought beyond 1875. I will try to stay close to the text and therefore quote lengthy passages. The intention is to outline a distinctive view of "civilization" and to clarify the ideas meant to explain the ongoing social transformation and Japan's situation in the world to Fukuzawa's contemporaries. As will be seen, the concept of "civilization" plays a double role: it is an instrument to be used to gain knowledge of society and to indicate a perspective for a "modern" Japan.

Fukuzawa's 1875 book – published a few years after the restoration of the *Tennō* as a political ruler and at the same time the highest religious authority – was unusually widely read. This was due to its rich content and its principled reflection on Japan's problems and perspectives, in the middle of the far-reaching reform process initiated by the new government.² The book continued to attract interest during the first half of the Meiji period (1868–1912), and some of the problems identified by Fukuzawa are still relevant for non-Western societies. They can also serve to stimulate comparative political thought. As for the solutions that Fukuzawa proposed and submitted to public discussion, opinions are very divided, and sometimes linked to particularly polarizing controversies among Japanese scholars.³ That also applies to the historian of ideas and political scientist

² Among the reforms before 1875, the most significant step was probably the centralization of control over the roughly 300 domains (*han*), previously ruled by hereditary lords (*daimyō*), by conversion into prefectures (*ken*) and at the same time reducing them to a much smaller number.

³ Here I cannot discuss the reasons why Fukuzawa's thought and political role have again become controversial in contemporary Japanese debates. In recent publications, the connection to Maruyama Masao's thought and

Maruyama Masao (1914–1996), who was one of the most important interpreters of Fukuzawa's thought.

Fukuzawa began to learn English in 1858, after mastering Dutch.⁴ In 1860 he was a member of the first Japanese mission to the United States, and in 1862 he functioned as official translator for Japanese delegations visiting France, Britain, the Netherlands, Prussia, Russia and Portugal. In 1867 he visited the United States for a second time, again as a member of an official delegation. In 1868 he renamed a private school which he had founded ten years before; he now called it “Keiō gijuku”, and it became in due course one of the oldest and most prestigious private universities in Japan. His observations in Western countries were first recorded in *Seiyō jijō* (*Conditions in the West*), published in 1866–1867; some 250,000 copies were sold, including illegal reprints. In 1872 he began to publish his *Encouragement of Learning*, at first as a series of seventeen brochures; each of them was sold in roughly 200,000 copies. There was a great demand for informations about the West; Fukuzawa's books satisfied this curiosity, and to a significant extent, they shaped the Japanese image of the West. Among intellectuals, that image had already begun to change, not least as a result of political discourses guided by an immanent critique of Confucianism. During the second half of the nineteenth century, Japan was – through both trade and diplomacy – much more directly confronted with the West than it had been through dealings with Portuguese missionaries after 1542 and Dutch traders after 1636; consequently, the wish to become a “civilized” country in the Western sense was of growing importance.

Civilization and Its Stages

Fukuzawa was the foremost interpreter of the Western concept of “civilization” in Japan. He translated the English term *civilization* as *bunmei* 文明, and this solution was soon widely accepted. The word already existed as a concept of Confucian thought and referred to “a state in which the Way is properly practised and culture flourishes” [Watanabe 2012: 327]. From the late Tokugawa period until the 1890s, the translation *kaika* 開化 and the composite expression *bunmei kaika* 文明開化 were also used [Watanabe 2012: xiv]. But in the English edition of Fukuzawa's work, as in most of English and German literature, Chinese concepts such as Way and its Confucian origins are unfortunately left unexplained.

Fukuzawa's work is directed against a widespread but superficial understanding of “civilization”, adaptable to both positive and negative judgments. “Civilization” was made responsible for new phenomena and sometimes rejected for that reason; for example, Torio Koyata, a high-ranking military officer, saw it as follows: “I devoted myself single-mindedly to the reform of the military. I thought that once we had a unified imperial army, we could educate the people in the military arts ... and by so doing maintain the independence of our nation in the face of foreign threats. Yet quite beyond any expectation of mine, the winds of what is called ‘civilization’ (*bunmei kaika*) began to blow, creating a great uproar throughout the land. Suddenly everything had to be in the Western manner. All at once

his positions, partly taken before 1945, is also subjected to critical examination. I will only mention two such works: Yasukawa Junnosuke [2003] and Koyasu Nobukuni [2005].

⁴ Dutch was, due to the presence of a Dutch trade mission in Nagasaki, the language of most European books known in Japan during the period of isolation.

customs were broken and manners changed, and people's hearts and minds ran ever more frivolous and shallow" [quoted from *Watanabe 2012: 373*]. On the other side, a whole wave of books and brochures portrayed the positive achievements of "civilization" [*Watanabe 2012: 380*]. Against both approaches, Fukuzawa stresses his own concern at the very beginning of the book: "A theory of civilization concerns the development of the human spirit. Its import does not lie in discussing the spiritual development of the individual, but the spiritual development of the people of the nation as a whole" [*Fukuzawa transl. 2008: 1*]. He declares that the sole purpose and goal of humanity is civilization: "Hence, in evaluating our criteria must be the level of civilization. In other words, outwardly adaptation of the Western way of life alone should not be the aim of the Japanese in the beginning time of transformation" [*Fukuzawa transl. 2008: 1*]. Furthermore, and notwithstanding the primary emphasis on a spiritual dimension, Fukuzawa also sees civilization as the key to the prosperity of the West. It follows that the level of civilization realized in the West should also be achieved in Japan [see *Watanabe 2012: 378*].

It is important to understand that in Fukuzawa's work, civilization is conceived as a process, not as a state. As Maruyama notes, this interpretation is linked to the double meaning of the word in Western languages. Fukuzawa mostly uses it in the processual sense, corresponding to *Zivilisierung* in German (*bunmei-ka* 文明化) [see *Maruyama 1986, v. 1: 93–94*]. The emphasis is thus on historical dynamics, and that makes the concept historically relative, as can be seen from Fukuzawa's comparisons of Japan with various world regions.⁵ In his three-stage evolutionary model, countries and societies are classified in terms of their level of civilization, without implying that this level is fixed or unchanging: "When we are talking about civilization in the world today, the nations of Europe and the United States are the most civilized, while the Asian countries, such as Turkey, China and Japan, may be called semi-developed countries, and Africa and Australia are to be counted as still primitive lands ... While the citizens of the nations of the West are the only ones to boast of civilization, the citizens of the semi-developed and primitive lands submit to being designated as such. They rest content with being branded semi-developed or primitive, and there is not one who would take pride in his own country or consider it on par with nations of the West. This attitude is bad enough" [*Fukuzawa transl. 2008: 17*].

At any rate, the designations "civilized", "semi-developed" and "primitive" have been universally accepted by people all over the globe. Why does everybody accept them? Clearly because the facts are demonstrable and irrefutable" [*Fukuzawa transl. 2008: 17–18*].

The three developmental stages of civilization can now be described in greater detail: "First, there is the stage in which neither dwellings nor supplies of food are sustainable ... At this stage man is still unable to be master of his own situation; he cowers before the forces of nature and is dependent on the favors of others or on the chance vagaries of nature. This is called the stage of primitive man. It is still far from civilization. – Secondly, there is the stage of civilization wherein daily necessities are not lacking, since agriculture has been started on a large scale. Men build houses, form communities, and create outward

⁵ The Sino-Japanese expression consists of the two terms *bunmei* 文明 and *kaika* 開化, often translated as "civilization and enlightenment". But Watanabe Hiroshi has convincingly shown that Japanese writings on the subject contain no example of *kaika* used separately in the sense of "enlightenment". He therefore proposes, and I follow his statement, that the expression as a whole, written with four Chinese characters, should be translated as "civilization".

semblance of a state. But within this façade there remain very many defects. Though book learning flourishes, there are few who devote themselves to practical learning (*jitsugaku* 実学). They know how to cultivate the old but not how to improve it. There are accepted rules governing society (*jinkan* [no] *kōsai* 人間[の]交際), but slaves of custom that they are, they could never form rules in the true sense. This is called the semi-developed stage. It is not yet civilization in the full sense. – Thirdly, there is the stage in which men subsume the things of the universe within a general structure, but the structure does not bind them ... This is what is meant by modern civilization” [emphasis WS].

Fukuzawa further clarifies the differences between these three stages. However, a warning immediately follows: “Since these designations are essentially relative, there is nothing to prevent someone who has not seen civilization (*bunmei*) from thinking that semi-civilization is the summit of man’s development. And, while civilization is civilization relative to the semi-development stage (*hankai* 半開), the latter, in its turn, can be called civilization relative to the primitive stage (*yaban* 野蠻, *mikai* 未開). Thus, for example, present-day China (the China of 1875, WS) has to be called semi-developed in comparison with Western countries. But if we compare China with countries of South Africa, or, to take an example more at hand, if we compare the people of mainland Japan with the Ainu, then both China and Japan can be called civilized. Moreover, although we call the nations of the West civilized, they can correctly be honored with this designation *only in modern history*” [Fukuzawa transl. 2008: 18–19; emphasis WS].

This means that only in this period of history can the nations of the West be regarded as the highest stage of civilization. But they might attain an even higher position, because the West itself is constantly changing. And “we [the Japanese] cannot be satisfied with the present level of attainment of the West ... But shall we therefore conclude that Japan should reject it? If we did, what other criterion would we have? ... Those who are to give thought to their countries’ progress in civilization must necessarily take European civilization as the criterion in making arguments ... My own criterion throughout this book will be that of Western civilization, and it will be in terms of it that I describe something as good or bad, in terms of it that I find things beneficial or harmful [for Japan]” [Fukuzawa transl. 2008: 20].

In this way, “European civilization”, meaning Western Europe, becomes not only the unit of reference for empirical comparison, but also a criterion of value orientation. Consequently, the title of the second chapter – “Western civilization is our goal” – expresses the thrust of the whole work. In the context of the times, this means that civilization is associated with progress, and conversely, progress can only be achieved by raising the level of civilization.

Fukuzawa has to face the objection that the world is divided into separate countries whose populations differ in regard to mentalities and customs, as well as national polities and forms of government, and that therefore European civilization cannot become a model for the modernization of Japan. He answers that half-civilized countries like Japan are surely capable of learning lessons from more advanced ones. The approach will of course have to be selective, and the ability to distinguish between the visible exterior and the inner spirit of a civilization will be decisive. It is also important to follow the right sequence when adopting elements of Western civilization. There is no uniformity of customs among Western nations, and even less so among Asian ones. The externalities of civilization include

all empirical details, from food, clothing and shelter to government, decrees and laws. The imitation of Western ways of life in their entirety should not be called civilization. Examples are given: "Can we call those [Japanese] men with Western haircuts whom we meet on the street civilized? Shall we call a person enlightened just because he eats meat?" [*Fukuzawa transl. 2008: 21–22*]. In Fukuzawa's time, it was of course not customary to eat meat dishes.

At this point Fukuzawa goes on to clarify what he means by "spirit of civilization". Even after the observation of all specific differences between the two regions, Asia and Europe, there would still be a less tangible differentiating factor to be defined. It may be called "spiritual entity", and it is an almost invisible background to the obvious contrasts. That is difficult to describe, "but if we look at its real manifestations within present-day Asia and Europe, we can clearly see it is not illusory. Let us now call this the 'spirit of a people'.⁶ In respect to time, it may be called 'the trend of the times'. In reference to persons, it may be called 'human sentiments'. In regard to a nation as a whole, it may be called 'a nation's ways' or 'national opinion' ... What I mean when I say that we should take European civilization as our goal is that we should turn to Europe in order to make the spirit of civilization ours" [*Fukuzawa transl. 2008: 22–23*].

Contrary to what many Japanese thought, Fukuzawa's thesis is that the first adaptive step should be the appropriation of a "spirit of civilization", and then it would be possible to assimilate the external achievements.

Obstacles to Further Development of Japanese Society

What conclusions did Fukuzawa draw from his direct observation of Western conditions? In the first place, this experience opened up to him comparative perspectives on his own society. The impressions collected during his official travels obviously made him more aware of contrasts than he had previously been. On the social level, he came to stress several structural obstacles to further advance of civilization in Japan; this was most obviously the case with the emphasis on lineage and the hereditary stipends of the samurai class [*Watanabe 2012: 397*]. These institutionalized dividing lines affected the whole society, and they were only beginning to be questioned, even though the stagnating structures which they had helped to maintain were crumbling.

"The Japanese people suffered for many years under the yoke of despotism. Lineage was the basis of power. Even intelligent men were entirely dependent upon houses of high lineage. The whole age was, as it were, under the thumb of lineage. Throughout the land there was no room for human initiative; everything was in a condition of stagnation. But the creative powers of the human mind are irrepressible. *Even in all that stagnation, there was some progress,* and by the end of the Tokugawa period antipathy to lineage started fermenting" [*Fukuzawa transl. 2008: 84, emphasis WS*].

Fukuzawa knew from his own experience the estate system and its barriers against social mobility. They not only made the advancement of individuals from certain social strata almost impossible; they also blocked the energies of individuals at all social levels.

⁶ It hardly needs to be noted that this "spirit of a people" has nothing to do with the Hegelian notion of a *Volksgeist*, as Maruyama writes, and of course all the less with "Volksgeist" in the National Socialist sense.

“I was born into a family of minor retainers in the service of a weak *fudai* daimyo during the time of the Tokugawa shogunate. When within the *han* (藩) I met some illustrious high retainer or vassal, I was always treated with contempt; even as a child I could not help but feel resentment. However, unless one also were of the same status one could not understand how I felt. The high retainers and vassals would, even today, be unable to imagine how I felt” [*Fukuzawa transl. 2008: 243–244*].

Due to the social power of lineage, the lower samurai found it especially difficult to improve their social position on the basis of their abilities.

The Imbalance of Power

For Fukuzawa, the imbalance of power (*kenryoku no henjū* (権力の偏重) that had been characteristic of Japanese society for many centuries was another fatal problem. As he saw it, an unequal distribution of power had been a recurrent feature of Japanese history and resulted in lastingly one-sided power balances. This affected all social relations, even in the private sphere. People at lower levels of the hierarchy transmitted the oppression from above to those of even lowlier status. “If this ubiquitous cycle of dominance and submission could be broken and each individual established in his independence, prosperity and progress would follow” [*Watanabe 2012: 397*]. This is Watanabe’s reformulation of Fukuzawa’s ideas. “The Japanese warriors were raised amidst this kind of imbalance of power, the definitive rule of social relations right from the dawn of our history. They did not consider it shameful to be constantly subservient to someone else. We can see a marked difference between these men and the peoples of the West, who valued their own positions and status and who proclaimed their individual rights ... Every man submitted to overbearance from those above and demanded subservience from those below. Every man was both unreasonably oppressed and unreasonably oppressive. While bowing before one man, he was lording it over another man” [*Fukuzawa transl. 2008: 202*]. The inhibiting force of this imbalance of power in Japanese society exists since ancient times and exhibits this division between rulers and ruled. “Needless to say, the common people never asserted their own rights. Both religion and learning were under the control of the ruling class and never succeeded in becoming independent ... Whether in war or in peace, the whole fabric of social relationships, from the highest to the lowest, exhibited this imbalance of power” [*Fukuzawa transl. 2008: 206–207*]. Even a society striving to overcome this situation would still need a central government, but the participation of the people, including all social strata, would be essential. Fukuzawa indicates doubts about the role of the imperial family, whose position reflects the traditional imbalance: “Because warrior relationships were organized in this way, the maintenance of the system required that there be some kind of supreme authority. This authority supposedly rested in the imperial family” [*Fukuzawa transl. 2008: 203*].

When Fukuzawa raises the question why this imbalance of power was never seriously challenged, he notes – first and foremost – the lack of communication among the broader population; themes like social and political contradictions or divergent interests cutting across regional boundaries did not reach the level of public awareness and conversation. “Let us look at Tokugawa rule to see how the people who lived under this state of imbalance of power viewed the affairs of society, and how they conducted themselves. The

millions of Japanese at that time were closed up inside millions of individual boxes. They were separated from another by walls with little room to move around. The four-level class structure of samurai, farmers, artisans, and merchants froze human relationships along prescribed lines. Even within the samurai class there were distinctions in terms of stipends and offices" [Fukuzawa transl. 2008: 209]. This societal framework obstructed discussions about fundamental political and social questions.

Horizons of Knowledge and Learning

On the individual level, Fukuzawa wants to change modes of thought and behaviour. Several chapters of his book are devoted to the clarification and critique of Neo-Confucian ideas about knowledge [*chi* 智] and virtue [*toku* 徳], compared to the western notions of "intellect" and "morals". Fukuzawa's extremely sharp criticism of Neo-Confucian foundations of ethics and morals was not only relevant to the interpretation of political domination; it also related to the private sphere. He defended the thesis that "the progress of civilization refers to both the intellectual and moral development of a people as a whole" [Fukuzawa transl. 2008: 99]. Here I cannot enter into the details of these themes, but I will at least note how strongly Fukuzawa exhorted every single Japanese to broaden their horizons and acquire knowledge of the world. This advocacy is linked to the development of a national consciousness, not yet victorious over the dominant particularist mentality that tended to focus on territory of a *daimyo* [see *Maruyama 1952 (1974): 323–368*]. A good example of the gradual extension of geographic-political consciousness is the following statement by Sakuma Shōzan (1811–1864), a politician and thinker of the late Tokugawa period: "From the age of twenty I understood that the common man is connected to a country (*kuni* 国, in the then dominant sense of a feudal domain, WS); from the age of thirty I understood that he is connected to the realm; from the age of forty I understood that he is connected to the five continents" [quoted from *Maruyama German transl. 2020: 56*].

The intellectual opening towards the West had already been prepared during the phase of seclusion, and the turn towards a learning attitude towards the West had begun some decades before the publication of Fukuzawa's book. Together with a radical shift in perceptions of the West, the Japanese image of the Chinese world order changed dramatically, especially in the decades before and after the Sino-Japanese war of 1894–1895 [for a detailed discussion, see *Watanabe 2012, chs 17 and 18: 315–352; and Zachmann 2009*].

Communication and the Public Sphere

A modern national state necessarily needs a political public sphere. But before such a sphere can take shape and find expression in institutions like – e.g. – newspapers, communication must in principle be possible. Fukuzawa was quick to grasp the importance of a public sphere where the problems of internal reforms and of Japan's situation in the world could be exposed to discussion and controversy. In this regard, too, the Western European countries with their functioning public spheres were for him models to be followed. On the other hand, his call for the creation of a political public sphere was not without historical presuppositions. Even the Tokugawa shogunal government had, before

its fall in 1868, made some attempts to initiate free discussions. Recent historical scholarship, especially works dealing with political and intellectual history, has thrown light on some developments during the late Tokugawa period, and drawn on Habermas's work on the public sphere to analyze them. For example, Mitani Taichirō [2017: 50–52] speaks of a “network of political communication”, already emerging under the *bakuhau* 幕藩 system (the combination of shogunal government and autonomous feudal domains). A political community, such as the national state, cannot emerge without political communication, and the latter must in turn draw on certain preconditions. Mitani asks whether a literary public sphere existed in Japan before the beginning of the Meiji renovation in 1868; his positive answer is based on the claim that graduates of the *Shōheikō*, the schools for classical Chinese education founded in the domains, pioneered such an innovation. This was a horizontally integrated stratum of intellectuals, in control of a network of communication, and an intellectual community does seem to have been taking shape.

The tendency to discuss political questions in a countrywide context was also, even if in a very restricted social framework, evident in the principles of the so-called Charter Oath, published in April 1868. This document consisted of five articles, nominally formulated by the fifteen years old Emperor Mutsuhito (later known as Meiji Tennō), but in fact written by the small group of court nobles and samurai that had engineered the restoration of imperial rule. Article 1 read: “Deliberative assemblies shall be established and all matters decided by public discussion.” But Watanabe Hiroshi [2012: 413] comments, in a critical vein: “At the time, the Meiji government, which had purportedly been founded on the concept of ‘public deliberation’, was still neglecting to create a national assembly, suppressing criticism, and labelling those who rose up against such oppressions as traitors.” Fukuzawa himself stressed the extraordinarily narrow social basis of “intellectual forces” involved in the process, when he discussed “the causes of the successful revolution of 1868” [*Fukuzawa transl. 2008: 88*]. The driving forces of the innovative movement that led to the renovation (*Meiji ishin* 明治維新) were, statistically speaking, a very small minority: only some five million people, out of a population of about thirty millions, were in one way or another involved. Fukuzawa continues: By contrast, the weight of public opinion in the West is something greater than the talent and knowledge of each individual in that country. The explanation of this discrepancy lies in Japanese custom. By “long-ingrained custom” in England or France people are used to taking part in national affairs, whereas in Japan common people are indifferent to national affairs, “they do not have even enough spirit to argue about the difference between political factions and public discussions” [*Fukuzawa transl. 2008: 94*]. For that very reason, it was necessary to “change our habits” (those of each individual as a member of the population, WS).

Government, Political Form and Nation

The limited horizon of the government was not least due to the state of the national polity (*kokutai* 国体). The latter was not a free or democratic one; it was embedded in a specific system of power, backed up by the Japanese tradition. How did Fukuzawa see these limitations?

Apart from his own direct observations, his interpretation of European civilization drew on various major works by Western authors, such as the American edition of

François Guizot's *General History of Civilization in Europe* (9th American edition, 1870; French original, 1828) and John Stuart Mill's books *Considerations on Representative Government* (1861) and *Principles of Political Economy* (1848). As a participant observer of the transformation of Japanese society, he carefully weighed the arguments for and against specific political forms; he reconstructed Guizot's ideas about monarchy and republic, and then moved on to a comparison of Japan and China. He strove to clarify implications for the relationship between ruler and subject. Consequently, he raised the question of the real meaning corresponding to the Japanese concept of national polity (*kokutai* 国体) and discussed the problem of an adequate political form in that context. If the social fabric was breaking down, the political system had to face that test. What did this mean for the national polity? [See *Fukuzawa transl. 2008*: 25–30.] It is crucial to the understanding of Fukuzawa's thought that he did not regard the national polity as unchanging or essential for the existence of the country; this is particularly important because of the later canonization of *kokutai*, however, without a clear definition in constitutional terms until 1925. For Fukuzawa, the development of civilization was a higher priority than the preservation of an existing political system or form. Long before the crisis-ridden developments in the first half of the twentieth century, he paved the way for a relativization of the political regime: "In view of the above, monarchy is not necessarily good, but neither is a democratic government necessarily good. The political form (*seiji* 政治; this refers here to the political system in a broad sense, and could therefore also be translated as "national polity", WS) is only one element in society (*jinkan kōsai* 人間交際).⁷ It should not be taken as the criterion of an entire civilization. If that form proves inconvenient, it should be changed; if it does not, it can be kept. Civilization is the only purpose of mankind, but there are many roads to it. Reasonable progress will come only through a long process of trial and error ... "Hence, in evaluating forms of government, our criterion must be the level of civilization to which a people has attained. There never has been a perfect civilization, and there never has been a perfect form of government" [*Fukuzawa transl. 2008*: 57].

But above all else, it must be remembered that if a higher level of civilization is to be reached, it is not enough for the country to have a government; it needs a nation. "Therefore, we might even say that Japan has never been a single country. If today an incident should break out which pitted the whole of the Japanese nation against a foreign country ... we could calculate in advance how many would actually be interested in fighting and how many would be spectators. This is precisely what I meant when I once took the position that in Japan there is a government but no nation" [*Fukuzawa transl. 2008*: 187].⁸

Preconditions of National Independence: Foreign Relations in the National Consciousness

At the beginning of his book, Fukuzawa had presented a model of civilizational development where Western European societies exemplified the highest stage; in the tenth and last chapter, titled "A discussion of our national independence", he turns somewhat

⁷ At this time, there was no accepted Japanese translation of the concept of society. The expression used by Fukuzawa means literally "the way humans behave to each other".

⁸ This formulation is first found in Fukuzawa's 1874 book, *An Encouragement of Learning*, ch. 4.

unexpectedly to other aspects of the West, so emphatically that it results in a contradictory picture. He takes a look at the *reality* of international relations and describes Japan's subordinate position in the "Western European state system" that has now been extended to Asian countries. Even so, the perspective that he thinks is opening up for Japan can only be understood in light of the preceding analyses of society, economy and politics. The raising of Japan's civilizational level remains Fukuzawa's main concern, but now it is to be discussed in the framework of international relations. The explicit theme is "national independence", but it presupposes the comprehensive theory of civilization. Fukuzawa distinguishes three positions in the Japanese debate on the opening of the country in 1853, its consequences and the possible reactions to them; all three try to respond to the main challenge of the times: how to maintain and consolidate national independence. But all three lack understanding of the need to extend this debate to the broader population.

The first position was defended by scholars who invoked so-called "Imperial way Learning" (*kōgakusha* 皇学者). These people, whom Fukuzawa describes as "superficial", maintained that the absence of well-founded political decisions was due to the neglect of "tradition". Consequently, they demanded a return to the past. This meant that the long-forgotten "true relations between sovereign and subjects should be revived. But now the notion of subject referred not only to vassals obeying a lord, but to the whole population. The 'doctrines' of national polity (*kokutai ron* 国体論), supposedly contained in old Japanese mythology, would strengthen public sentiments. However, when it came to the crunch, these scholars argued that it did not really matter whether their ideas were old or new. Then they were not demanding a genuine return to the past; the important thing was to develop public sentiments loyal to the imperial family. Against this view, Fukuzawa emphasized that for the last seven centuries or so, since the beginning of shogunal rule in 1192, Japanese people had not had any personal experience of the imperial family. It was not true that the restoration of imperial rule (*ōsei fukko* 王政復古) in 1868 had been based on such experiences; rather, the restoration was entirely due to the people's desire to reform the shogunal government of their time, and there was no way of recreating close ties overnight" [*Fukuzawa transl.* 2008: 231–232].

A second group, namely Christian intellectuals criticized the superficiality of contemporary sentiments; being "aware that even use of the national polity theory" cannot avail the situation, they preached "a theory of spiritual renovation through Christianity, so as to rectify men's errors, bestow spiritual peace and enlightenment, convert and thereby unify the masses, and establish a single great purpose at which mankind can aim" [*Fukuzawa transl.* 2008: 232]. After a careful examination of Christian principles Fukuzawa objects to this line of argumentation: "The Christian religion should not be spread about, extended to the political sphere, and be set up as the foundation for the nation's independence ... The theory that we can establish the basis of national independence by propagating a religion and extending it to the political sphere should be branded as a mistake" [*Fukuzawa transl.* 2008: 235]. As he saw it, what was needed was – in the last instance – to develop a patriotic attitude to the questions of international trade, war and peace [*Fukuzawa transl.* 2008: 234].

The third alternative, proposed by some scholars versed in classical Chinese learning (*kangakusha* 漢学者) was to rely not only on nostalgia and feelings inherited from the good old times, but to make the most of the knowledge possessed by state officials.

Fukuzawa was explicitly opposed to this approach. For "in the final analysis, this is the school of thought which would control the lower classes with the old Confucian ideas of ritual, music, and chastisement, and would attempt to bolster people's hearts by a combination of paternalism and law. It therefore cannot at all be made to suit the present social conditions" [*Fukuzawa transl. 2008: 236*]. If this school of thought, based on classical Chinese education, were to be followed, the knowledge needed for political decisions would be sought exclusively among government personnel and state officials, while the people would be barred from participation. Instead of basing the judgment of situations on the knowledge acquired by individuals, a narrow stratum of officials would claim a cognitive monopoly.

Fukuzawa thought that Japan found itself in a dangerous situation: "Our nation is facing a critical period at the present time, but the people do not realize it. They seem to be happily relaxed after having, as it were, thrown off the yoke of the past." Everywhere one heard the comment: "Men say our country is in trouble, but exactly what trouble are they talking about?" In many respects the general conditions of life had improved since the administrative unification of the state in 1872. But the present condition, comparable to illness (*yamai* 病), was beginning to cause concern. The first step would be to find a name for this illness, then it would be necessary to clarify its character. Fukuzawa calls the illness "foreign relations" (*gaikoku kōsai* 外国交際) [*Fukuzawa transl. 2008: 236–237*].⁹ But this expression had to be clarified. If trade was the reason why foreigners arrived in Japan, then an economic understanding of Japan's relationship and attitude to the Western nations was needed. What kind of knowledge was needed for the people to wake up to this problem?

How the Western nations grew rich would be better understood if international trade was taken into consideration. In Fukuzawa's terms, these were (in his times) "manufacturer nations", while Japan was a "producer nation", and as long as it remained in that condition, it would – contrary to the West – be disadvantaged in trade. Moreover, the Japanese samurai were an unproductive social stratum, incapable of accumulating wealth. "Again, the Western nations have grown rich through manufacture. Their populations increase year by year because of the ever new achievements of civilization. England, for instance, is outstanding in this regard." The Englishmen scattered all over the world contribute to the successes of the English economy. From this Fukuzawa concludes that "when civilization progressively moves forward and human affairs go well, population increases" [*Fukuzawa transl. 2008: 239–240*]. But how can a country control such an increase, which leads to scarcity of space and foodstuff etc.?

In view of the unproductive character of the samurai, Japanese economists of the times, learning from Western economists who were confronted with similar problems before, were experimenting with various plans for the strengthening of the economy. One proposal was to "export goods manufactured domestically and to import foodstuffs and clothing from more naturally blessed nations". A second proposal was to send Japanese citizens abroad, where they would become active "colonists" (*shokumin* 植民 / 殖民). But that would in Fukuzawa's opinion be expensive and might not be effective. He adds that "it is not easy to step in from an alien land, mingle with them [the foreigners], and hope to gain

⁹ This expression means literally "interaction with foreign countries". The translation "foreign relations" suggests a reference to diplomacy as an activity of the state; but what Fukuzawa has in mind is a broader field.

some benefit ... Therefore, a third plan would be to make profits by lending capital abroad and putting the interest into domestic circulation" [Fukuzawa transl. 2008: 238–240]. Finally, a fourth plan was to be based on a strong military. There could be no doubt about the need to build up a unified imperial army and thus to defend the independence of the nation against threats from abroad. Fukuzawa concludes his excursus into economics with the recommendation that Japan might compete with the Western powers in international finance. He asks where the funds for rising expenses due to the living standards rising with the advances of civilization come from, and finds the answer – to a significant extent – in less advantaged parts of the world: "In the underdeveloped countries, where the poverty of the whole world tends to become concentrated. To borrow the capital of civilized countries and pay them interest makes the rich richer and the poor poorer" [Fukuzawa transl. 2008: 240]. Lending to poorer countries and using the interest to finance a part of rising expenses at home might be of some use. Nevertheless, lurking in the background is the concern that Japan could slip into a similar situation as the poorer countries. But in the final instance, Fukuzawa takes the view that a purely economic approach provides no satisfactory solutions.

Equal Rights for Everybody in Japan?

After 1853, two aspects of the Japanese situation were decisive for foreign relations: In the first place, knowledge about foreign and more specifically Western powers was insufficient. Secondly, real contacts between Japanese and Westerners were still rare, even if increasing with the arrival of traders and diplomats from abroad, and practical dealings with them could result in conflicts. Fukuzawa therefore finds it necessary to deal with the influence of relations with foreigners on the behaviour of "our people". In that context, the legal status of foreigners in Japan, defined in the first treaties about trade and friendship, becomes relevant.

Independently of this, a debate on theories of equal rights had begun among intellectuals, and Fukuzawa responds to it in a chapter on equality in interpersonal relations. He does not accept the commonly advanced arguments for equal rights; he describes them as "not elaborate enough, for they are not arguments based on personal experience but arguments set down for the benefit of other people. Hence, when people discuss the harm of an imbalance of power [in Japan], their arguments cannot avoid being superficial." From this scepticism about the theory of equal rights in interpersonal relations among Japanese – because of the lasting imbalance of power – he moves on to discuss applications of the same theory in the area of foreign relations and in the context of power struggles with foreigners. A comparison based on facts in both fields shows that there is no abstract equality between nations, even less than between individuals from different social strata in the same society [Fukuzawa transl. 2008: 244–245].

Because of the presence of foreigners in Japan, Fukuzawa must now briefly deal with problems concerning them. What happens to the theory of equal rights when it is not a matter of interpersonal relations between Japanese, but between individuals of different nations? In such cases, too, practice reveals a *de facto* inequality. "However, while there have been, ever since the foreigners came to our country and began trading, clear provisions in their treaty documents for equality between them and us, in actual practice things

have been different" [*Fukuzawa transl. 2008: 240*]. It should be noted that like other intellectuals of the times, Fukuzawa saw the opening of the country as a positive development: "If the ports had not been opened, not even a learned man could have predicted when the power of human intelligence would have tipped the scales in its favor. Fortunately, Commodore Perry's arrival in the 1850s provided the favorable opportunity for reform" [*Fukuzawa transl. 2008: 86*]. To illustrate the negative consequences, Fukuzawa quotes from a report by his disciple Obata Tokujirō: "How beautiful [Commodore] Perry's words, and how unseemly his deeds! His speech and conduct were diametrically opposed." After the Japanese had experienced the behaviour of Perry and his people, as well as the effects of the 1858 treaty about trade and friendship with the US, the situation in Tokyo appeared as follows: "When they [the foreigners] get into an argument with anyone, be he a patrolman, a passerby, or a carrier-bearer, the Westerners behave insolently, they punch and kick at will, and the cowardly, weak common people lack the courage to pay them back in kind because they say [with resignation], 'they are foreigners' ... It is disgusting just to look at this" [*Fukuzawa transl. 2008: 241*].

Fukuzawa argues that the Japanese are not yet prepared for interaction with Western foreigners. In actual fact, no equal rights prevail in this context; despite "lip service to equality of rights, in reality the idea of equality and equal rights is unrealized. Because we have already lost our equal rights with foreign countries, and yet nobody pays any attention to this, the conduct of our citizens cannot help but deteriorate day by day" [*Fukuzawa transl. 2008: 241–242*]. But why is it, he asks himself, that his compatriots – the higher nobility and the samurai as well as the commoners – are incapable of adequate behaviour towards diplomats and traders visiting their country? He notes two reasons. In the first place, the defenders of the equal rights theory, originally related to native Japanese but now supposed to be applied to foreign visitors, are mostly intellectuals of samurai origin, who did not have personal experience of oppression, but were rather on the side of the oppressors. Secondly, the Japanese were only at the very beginning of personal contacts with foreigners from the West. In 1875, this was a new theme in Fukuzawa's thought; he knew the internal Japanese aspects of the problem from his own experience, but encounters with people of foreign origin and nationality made him more and more aware of tensions between real life and the abstract theories of equality developed in the 1860s and 1870s. It should be noted that this criticism also affected his view of the emerging oppositional Freedom and Popular Rights Movement (*Jiyū minken undō*). Some of its supporters were, as he thought, making premature demands.

After this intermezzo, Fukuzawa returns to the question of equal rights in international relations and reiterates his findings about the gap between theory and practice. His first example concerns the relationship between England and India. Needless to say, he knew that India was an English colony, but he thought that this condition could nevertheless be seen as a mirror "which can reflect the situation of Japan" [*Fukuzawa transl. 2008: 244–245*]. As he saw it, the methods of British colonial administration in India were cruel and heartless. He comments on the ways of excluding Indians despite their abilities and achievements: "As regards employment of men of talent in the Indian government, Englishmen and natives have equal rights, and there are laws providing for examinations that test both ability and learning. However, the testing of native Indians is confined to those under eighteen years of age; the examination material is, of course, in English, and

if one is not conversant with things in England he is unable to answer the questions. As a result, by the age of eighteen the native Indians have to finish both native subjects and in addition English subjects, then compete with Englishmen on the basis of English studies. If they are not better than the Englishmen they cannot pass the examinations. If one completes his studies at the age of nineteen, because of the age limit he is disqualified regardless of his talent, learning, or personal qualities, and is not permitted to take part in any local government affairs. The English are not content with these heartlessly severe laws; they even enact laws by which the examinations are always to be held in London ... Such a disadvantageous position defies comparison. The English tyranny is truly clever" [*Fukuzawa transl. 2008: 245–246*].¹⁰ This is in fact the obverse of the quintessentially civilized England to which Fukuzawa so frequently referred elsewhere.

Another example, more important for Fukuzawa, is Japan's involvement in international trade. Fukuzawa does not only note the given unfavourable conditions in this field; he also condemns the attitude of his compatriots, and that applies to the government as well as ordinary people, to intellectuals and state officials. "And so we look on in indifference at matters connected with foreign countries. This is one reason we Japanese people have not *contended for power with foreign countries*. Those who know nothing of a situation cannot be expected to be concerned about it" [*Fukuzawa transl. 2008: 247–248, emphasis WS*]. To put it another way, the Japanese should study what they are in for when they establish relations with Western powers.

The passionate tone of these statements, different from the preceding chapters, continues when Fukuzawa takes a look at the United States, its history and the record of its behaviour towards Japan: "Whose country was present-day America originally? Is it not true that the Indians who owned the land were driven away by the white men and now the roles of master and guest were switched around? Hence the civilization of present-day America is really the civilization of the white man and cannot be called the civilization of America. What about the countries of the East and the islands in Oceania? In all places touched by the Europeans are there any which have developed their power, attained benefits, and preserved their independence?" Fukuzawa asks what had been the outcome of Western domination in Persia, India, Siam, Luzon and Java, and – more generally: "What does this so-called development mean?" [*Fukuzawa transl. 2008: 249*]. He also finds developments in China after the Opium War disturbing. In this vast country the Westerners had so far only settled on the coasts, but the probable outcome was that China too would become nothing but a garden for Europeans. To sum up, Fukuzawa casts serious doubt on the idea that colonial domination (a term he did not use) has benefited the oppressed peoples by initiating economic and social development. The Japanese could only find this misconception plausible because they knew so little about the world. He exhorts every single Japanese to seek and use antidotes to this ignorance.

To conclude, Fukuzawa's view on international relations and Japanese ways of shaping them may be summed up in three points. First, he criticizes the intellectuals who think only in short-term perspectives and rejoice in the new opening to the world, "seeing that social conditions have changed in recent times, and call this civilization. They think that

¹⁰ Fukuzawa drew on a report by his disciple Baba Tatsui (1850–1888), who studied in London from 1870 to 1878.

our civilization is a gift bestowed on us by foreign relations; the more foreign relations flourish the more our civilization can advance apace. But what they call civilization is merely its outward appearance, in which I have no interest. Even if such civilization were refined to very high degree, if our people had not even a shred of independent spirit, civilization would be of no use for us. We could not call that Japanese civilization" [*Fukuzawa transl.* 2008: 249].

A second point is formulated as follows: "Certain scholars hold that, since foreign relations are based on universal justice and men are not necessary intent on exploiting others, nations should trade freely, ply back and forth freely, and merely let nature take its course. If we were to lose our rights and our benefits, we would have only ourselves to blame. It is a poor principle not to cultivate oneself and yet seek much from others. And there is truth in what they say. Yet, though in private relationships between individuals there must indeed be this kind of trust, relations between countries and private relationships are completely different things." It should be remembered how until recently in Japan the interests of the individual feudal domains were precisely not regulated on a basis that followed principles of Japanese justice. "If this was the relation with regard to the various *han* within Japan itself, what is the likelihood that we can rely on universal justice when it comes to relations with foreigners who have come from different areas from opposite directions of the globe? This is unbelievably loose thinking ... As long as there are countries which set up national governments, there can be no way to eliminate self-interests. If there is no way to eliminate their self-interests, then we too must have our self-interests in any contact with them" [*Fukuzawa transl.* 2008: 251]. In addition, it should be taken into account that images of defeat survive in the memory of nations, and may even be consciously kept alive, in order to stimulate the desire for revenge. Fukuzawa cites examples from conflicts within Japan during the middle ages as well as the wars between Prussia and France. "Both sets of behavior stemmed from a wicked spirit of revenge, so they cannot be termed praiseworthy. However, from them it is possible to know how people suffer when they cannot defend their nation" [*Fukuzawa transl.* 2008: 251].

A third group of patriots, "somewhat more far-seeing than the *jōi* 攘夷 (expel the barbarians) advocates, has no wish indiscriminately to expel all foreigners, but sees the problem of our relations with foreign powers as basically a matter of simple military weakness ... For instance, there is no lack of men in society who hate foreigners, but their hatred of them is misplaced. They do not hate what should be hated, and hate what should not be hated. Harboring jealousy and envy, they are angered by trivial matters they see in front of their noses. They bring harm to Japan by their assassinations and their advocacy of the expulsion of foreigners ... As I stated above, proposals to assassinate and expel foreigners are not worth discussing; even efforts to expand military preparedness are of no practical avail" [*Fukuzawa transl.* 2008: 252–253]. The goal must be the preservation of the independence of the country, and the means to that end is the civilizing of the nation. Fukuzawa accordingly calls for "national independence through personal independence". But in pursuing this path, one should not expect every single citizen to become actively involved. "Moreover, although I make independence the goal, I am not trying to turn all men in society into political debaters, nor do I wish people to be engaged in such debates from morning to night. Every man fulfils a different function. I only wish that their intense preoccupation with their own endeavours would increase their sensitivity to what bears

on the country's independence ... National independence is the goal, and Japan's present civilization is the means of attaining that goal" [*Fukuzawa transl.* 2008: 255–256].

Concluding Remarks

Nationalism, in 1875 still of a defensive kind, was one side of Fukuzawa Yukichi's thought. Another side was his effort to achieve – through his writings – an “internal spiritual change” among his compatriots. The Chinese scholar Ou Jianying, who teaches in Japan and has also translated Maruyama Masao's texts on Fukuzawa into Chinese, summarizes this aspect of Fukuzawa's work as follows: For him, the progress of material civilization, supported by the policies of the Meiji government – the growth of industry and trade, the increase in national wealth, and the military buildup – was of course important, but non-material civilizing was more fundamental. On that level, the main task was to “change the mentality of people in this country” and inculcate “the spirit of independence and self-respect” (*dokuritsu jison* 独立自主). It was not enough to establish a constitutional form of government; a free and autonomous spirit of citizenship was also needed, and only on that basis could the essence of constitutionalism be realized [*Ou Jianying* 2016: 67].

Fukuzawa's consistent and influential orientation towards “developed” Western European societies should not be taken to mean that he saw them as having already reached the highest possible level of civilization. Whatever his most emphatic formulations may sometimes suggest, he did not regard them as a model to be unconditionally imitated by Japan on its way to modernity. His main concern was to raise the level of Japanese civilization, so as to guarantee political independence and qualify for a prominent role in world affairs. That would only be possible if people were not blinded by the material and technical achievements of Western societies, and if they all – and the nation as a whole – strove for autonomy and self-respect in thought and behaviour. In the field of international relations, readiness for conflict and ability to cooperate were equally necessary. But he also stressed that decisions about these alternatives should not be left to the government alone; they should involve the whole population.

That was Fukuzawa's position in 1875, when he published the work most lastingly associated with his name. The story of his attitudes and contributions to later political decisions will not be discussed here. The whole trajectory of the Meiji era (1868–1912) was conditioned by the international situation in Asia and by pressures of Western powers; no self-contained pursuit of Japanese projects was possible.

After Japan's defeat in the Asian-Pacific war (1931–1945), Maruyama Masao wrote: “Among the nations of the East, Japan is the only one to have lost her virginity so far as nationalism is concerned. In contrast to other Far Eastern areas, where nationalism brims with youthful energy and is charged with adolescent exuberance, Japan alone has completed one full cycle of nationalism: birth, maturity, decline” [*Maruyama (1951)1969: 137*]. Japan's road from 1875 had had its ups and downs, but it ended in disaster. In his concluding remarks on the three-volume publication of lectures explaining Fukuzawa's book, Maruyama mentions an interesting encounter. An Iranian female student had asked for permission to sit in on the course (it was optional, and there were no marks). He was surprised at the request, because of the very limited number of female students at his

faculty of Tokyo University, and all the more so because this was a foreign woman, "dressed in black from top to toe". During consultation, he asked the student why she was interested in this course. "Her answer was: 'My country, Iran, was once a uniquely powerful empire, proud of the excellence of its culture. With the advent of modernity, it sank to the level of a colony, and only now [at the beginning of the 1980s, WS] is it beginning to overcome this condition. By contrast, Japan did not become a victim of Western imperialist aggression; in the nineteenth century, it was the only East Asian country that managed to build an independent state. Because I want to know more about the Meiji renovation, I would like to study Fukuzawa, its leading thinker.' I remember responding by stating an opinion which I had often expressed before: if she saw modern Japan as a model, she should not study the Meiji renovation only as a success story, but also as a lesson showing how *not* to realize reforms" [*Maruyama* 1986, v. 3: 328–329].

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Wolfgang Seifert studied political science, Japanology, sociology and philosophy at the universities of Bonn, Frankfurt (Main) and Tokyo. He was Professor of Japanese Studies at the University of Heidelberg from 1992 to 2011, with a focus on intellectual history and politics in modern Japan. Relevant publications include the entry on Maruyama Masao in G. Ritzer (ed.), Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology (2nd edition 2016); Maruyama Masao und seine Beziehung zu deutschen Autoren in Philosophie und Wissenschaft (Japonica Humboldtiana 20, 2018). Among his translations with glossaries and detailed comments are Maruyama Masao, Denken in Japan and Loyalität und Rebellion (both with W. Schamoni); Maruyama Masao, Freiheit und Nation in Japan (selected articles 1936–1949, in two volumes); and Takeuchi Yoshimi, Japan in Asien. Geschichtsdenken und Kulturkritik nach 1945 (selected articles 1948–1963), with Christian Uhl. He is editor of the series Japan in East Asia/Japan in Ostasien, published by Nomos, Baden-Baden.