# The Political Discourse of International Order in Modern Japan: 1868–1945

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## Abstract

This article discusses what constituted Japan's conception of the world order, by analyzing political discourse of international order in modern Japan. It has been generally assumed that the Japanese vision of international order in the pre-World War II years was dominated by a belief in the supremacy of the sovereign state. Contrary to the conventional supposition, this paper will argue that modern Japan actually abounded in discourses of transnationalism, and that most of them cannot be seen as the product of liberal ideas but rather the result of an unstable image of the sovereign state system. Surveying the historical development of political discourse of sovereignty and colonial administration in modern Japan, the way in which the ambivalence of Japanese transnationalism had affected the theoretical construction of the international order will be elucidated. Keeping in mind that previous studies on the genealogy of international relations have focused exclusively on the paradigmatic debate over the League of Nations, this article will also pay more attentions to the fact that rearrangement of empire had occupied the significant place in building the image of the world order. Based on the historical considerations mentioned above, the conclusion will offer generalized consideration of what constituted Japan's conception of the world order.

## Introduction

This article discusses what constituted Japan's conception of the world order, 1868–1945, by analyzing political discourse of the international order in modern Japan. This implies that 'international society' is not a universally accepted and objectively defined concept but rather a historically and culturally constructed reality. It is true that previous studies have not always neglected these historical and cultural aspects of international society. The English School, for example, has continued to pay attention to the historical dimensions of international society (Dunne, 1998). The term 'international society',

however, has often presupposed the 'family of western nations', and it is necessary to maintain some reservations about using this term in order to consider the conception of the international order in East Asia.

While international society is currently understood to be a system constituted of legally equal sovereign states, in the mid-nineteenth century, when Japan was forcibly incorporated into the western state system, non-western nations needed to meet the 'standard of civilized nations' to be recognized as fully fledged members of international society. In other words, the 'imperial order' has existed in non-western areas, where most of those nations were not recognized as civilized throughout the nineteenth century. While for western nations the 'imperial order' seemed to exist outside of 'international society', for East Asian nations the 'imperial order' was the framework they acted within. It was in this context that the ambivalence of transnationalism prevailed in modern Japan.

This paper thus reexamines the historical development of political discourses of international order in modern Japan. By focusing on the critiques of sovereignty and colonial administration in Japanese political sciences, I attempt to elucidate the ambivalence of transnationalism in pre-World War II Japan. Surveying the international environment in which modern Japan was situated, the first chapter will discuss Japan's 'premature transnationalism' and its significance in East Asian politics at the turn of the century. The second and third chapters will deal with the liberalist oriented transnationalism in the 1920s and its transformation into hegemonic regionalism in the 1930s. The fourth chapter will analyze the formative process of post-World War II discourse of international order in wartime Japan. Based on the historical considerations mentioned above, the conclusion will offer generalized consideration of what constituted Japan's conception of the world order.

## 'Premature transnationalism' and its significance in East Asian politics

International society initially had a hierarchical structure according to the stage of civilization each nation had reached. East Asian nations, including Japan, were not regarded as having fully attained the standards of civilized nations, and were forced to conclude 'unequal' treaties with western nations, which stipulated extraterritoriality and the abandonment of autonomy in the determination of tariffs. Japan's newly established government after the Meiji Restoration in 1868 took a series of demonstrative overseas actions while institutionalizing domestically modern legal arrangements in order to acquire recognition as a civilized nation. Japanese international legalists played a central role in impressing western societies with an image of Japan as a civilized nation. The Japanese government urged them to submit reports on Japan's observance of international law of war during the Sino-Japanese War and succeeded in presenting seminal books to the western media (Ariga, 1896; Takahashi, 1899). The establishment of the Japanese Association of International Law in 1897 was also the product of collaboration between the Japanese Foreign Ministry and international legalists.

The Euro-centric bias of international society must have made the Japanese feel stigmatised. This does not mean, however, that Japan immediately advocated Asianism, which urged East Asian solidarity against the threat from western imperialism. On the contrary, the Japanese government carefully refrained from being seen as an Asian nation during the Meiji Period (1868–1912). At a time when western societies shared a skeptical attitude toward Asian nations' capabilities to reach to a civilized stage of development, it would have been detrimental to the national interest to claim that Japan was an Asian nation.

One episode illustrates the dilemmas for the Japanese in those days. Konoe Atsumaro, a most distinguished leader in Meiji Japan, placed an article in a German newspaper, insisting on a Sino-Japanese alliance in order to win the struggle between white and yellow races. Having read the article, Nakamura Shingo, an established international legalist, then studying in Germany, wrote to Konoe, and took pains to persuade him to refrain from advocating such a racial alliance in the western media for fear his article could make western nations suspicious of Japanese intensions. Even Konoe, a representative Asianist, followed this advice and thereafter desisted from advocating any racial alliance (Sakai, 1970: 74–5). Despite such efforts, however, dilemmas could not be utterly resolved and it is a common pattern throughout modern Japanese history that the most westernized intellectuals were capable of becoming the most ardent Asianists. It is not coincidental that the greatest canon of Asianism, *The Ideals of the East Asia*, was written in English by Okakura Tenshin, who one time worked for the Museum of Fine Art, Boston (Okakura, 1903).

What influences did such an ambivalent attitude toward western nations have upon the conception of international order in modern Japan? Let us begin with Kuga Katsunan's treatise, *On the International*, which appeared in 1893 as the earliest systematic text on international relations in Japan. Kuga was a member of Seikyo-sha, the association of nationalistic journalists in Meiji Japan and was vehemently opposed to the Japanese government's policy of westernization, even though this was a policy designed originally to acquire the recognition from western nations necessary to revise the 'unequal' treaties. Keeping that controversy in mind, in *On the International*, he posited two types of domination of one state by another: absorption and elimination. Absorption, in Kuga's definition of the term, is the direct domination of one state by another and most often this is achieved through the annexation of territories. Elimination is the exercise of indirect influences by private agents, including traders, missionaries and academics, ranging from the export of capital and goods to the transplanting of culture and knowledge. Although absorption was seemingly the most dangerous for national independence, Kuga claimed that much more attention should be paid to elimination because it tended to be overlooked owing to the fact that it was carried out by private agents. It can be clearly seen that his cultural nationalism against westernization appeared here (Kuga, 1968).

It should be noted, however, that Kuga's ideas did not remain within the framework of nationalist discourse. Focusing on the concept of elimination, he implicitly referred

to the transnational activities of non-state actors and the dynamics of the penetrative political process in international relations. The shared wisdom is that in the disciplinary history of international relations the mainstream at first was the realist approach, which insisted on the importance of power politics among sovereign states. This was then followed by the transnational relations approach, which paid more attention to the importance of non-state actors and their transnational activities. Surprisingly enough, Kuga's text, which appeared more than a century ago, had predicted the current trend of transnational relations. We could call it 'premature transnationalism'.

What is the reason why we call it 'premature transantionalism'? It is because transanationalism is usually understood to be one of liberal ideas on international relations in western society, but it did not always hold true in the case of modern Japan. Around Kuga existed numerous other Asianists, who had undertaken a variety of activities in China: as businessmen, traders, and journalists. Whilst pursuing these activities as private citizens, they also acted as agents for Japanese expansion to China. In China, the main theater for Japanese diplomacy, in tandem with the formal channel between diplomats, a network of informal channels was in operation. Professor Watanabe Akio has characterized this feature of international relations in East Asia as 'international relations without states' (Watanabe, 1977: 136). It may be understood that the difference in transnationalism between modern Japan and Europe corresponded to the difference in the conception of international society here and there. While in Europe 'international order' was constituted of a set of legally equal sovereign states in Europe and could be seen as 'anarchical society' separated from 'imperial order' outside of Europe, in East Asia 'international order' and 'imperial order' seemed indivisible. It would be impossible for Japan to situate herself utterly outside of the 'imperial order'. It is a reason why transnationalism could not always be connected to mature liberal internationalism in modern Japan.

At the turn of century, new factor appeared in East Asian politics. The American Secretary of State, John Hay had twice issued diplomatic notes, stipulating an open-door policy toward China. What was the impact of the newly surfacing American factor upon Japan's conception of the international order? The work of the distinguished early twentieth-century American political scientist Paul Reinsch and the reception of his work in contemporary Japan provide insights into this problem.

As a mid-Western intellectual, Reinsch immersed himself in the trend of progressivism and was also an ardent supporter of liberal internationalism. President Woodrow Wilson, himself also a political scientist, thought highly of Reinsch's works on international affairs and appointed him as Minister to China during the first world war (Schmidt, 1998: 70–1). What marked Reinsch as an American founder of international political science was his *World Politics* published in 1900, in which he analyzed world politics at the end of nineteenth century, with particular emphasis upon the 'China problem'. The age of 'national imperialism' began in the late nineteenth century, and can be seen as falling into two broad categories; the territorial acquisition of the nineteenth century and the commercial expansion of the twentieth century. This new national

imperialism based on commercial expansion, he imagined, would not cause conflicts among the great powers but rather enhance international cooperation in developing China. He flatly rejected prevalent views that competition between European powers to acquire the leased treaty ports in China would bring about the division of China, and claimed that, if equal commercial opportunities were insured within each power's sphere of influence, it would not be opposed to America's open-door policy toward China (Reinsch, 1900).

Professor Peter Duus describes China's position in international relations in the early twentieth century as that of 'collective informal empire'. This concept means that, while China was not in a position to be exclusively dominated by any one great power, it was subordinated to the great powers in total via the treaty system (Duus 1993: 73). It may be understood that Reinsch had found possibilities for liberalists to enhance international cooperation via the commercial activities of non-state actors within the framework of 'multilateral imperialism' in China. It should also be noted that he maintained concern about activities of non-state social groups and common law and custom distinct from positive law (Reinsch, 1970). While he had published *Public International Union* immediately before World War I, which could be seen as a prototype of today's governance theory in international relations, he was also the author of *Colonial Government*, in which he criticized assimilationist colonial policy and praised the policy of respecting local customs in colonies (Reinsch, 1911; Reinsch, 1902). The common feature of the various topics, including the China problem, international governance, and colonial administration, was the attention he paid to the transnational activities of non-state actors across the international and imperial order.

Reinsch's works gained popularity in contemporary Japan. *World Politics*, which had dealt with the China problem, was immediately translated into Japanese and had no small impact upon the political discourse of imperialism in early twentieth-century Japan (Takada, 1901). *Colonial Government* was also translated into Japanese by colonial officials in Taiwan and had a tremendous influence on the subsequent development of Japanese study of colonial administration (Kanemochi, 1934: 422). Although Reinsch is known as a diplomat who was vehemently opposed to Japan's expansionism to China during World War I, his works ironically had influenced the political discourse of imperialism in contemporary Japan. The unexpected resonance of American and Japanese transnationalism in the early twentieth century highlights the complicated nature of Japan's conception of international order.

### Liberalist turn in the 1920s

The outbreak of World War I released a wave of skepticism concerning the balance of power mechanism in international politics. The establishment of the League of Nations was legitimated upon the criticism of supremacy of state sovereignty. Japan was no exception. The trend of Japanese political thought in the early 1920s is often characterized as the 'discovery of society', because criticism of supremacy of state sovereignty was theorized by presenting the concept of 'society' (shakai) as distinct

from 'state' (Kokka) (Iida, 1997: 171–6). How did the 'discovery of society' cause liberalist turn to transnationalism in 1920s Japan? What were the limits, if any, of this liberalist movement? The 'international' and 'imperial' order was represented in the academic form as international political science and the study of colonial administration correspondingly. Although previous western studies on the genealogy of international relations have ignored its significance, the study of colonial administration occupied the important place in the genealogy of international relations in Japan (Schmidt, 1998: 124–5; Sakai, 2007: 194–5). Therefore let us here deal with one representative of each field in 1920s Japan; Royama Masamichi and Yanaihara Tadao.

Royama was the founder of international political science in Japan as distinct from traditional international law and diplomatic history. His pioneering book *International Politics and International Administration* published in 1928 has been increasingly gaining a reputation as forerunner of theoretical work on international governance (Shiroyama, 1997: 2). He was an intellectual who had deep sympathy with British social democrats. Influenced by *International Government* written by Leonard Woolf who had worked for the Fabian Society as a specialist on international affairs, Royama presented *International Politics and International Administration*, in which he developed his ideas on the functionalist approach to international relations and searched for possibilities to apply them to international relations within the Pacific region.

As in the West, the plural state theory had gained currency in Japanese political science immediately after World War I. The theme of plural state theory finds echoes in the framework of Royama's work. The state can no longer be seen as monolithic, but should rather be understood as a functional body that provides a series of services. Government should be the arena where social groups engage in a bargaining process. Some policies could be implemented domestically but not others. Problems not solved by any individual state would necessarily be referred to an organ for international cooperation for resolution. Since such an international administration would be based upon shared interests, it should be interpreted as a realistic requirement rather than a cosmopolitan idea. Domestic politics and international politics thus could not be seen as divisible, he claimed, for functionalism would be working in each domain.

One difficult question, however, remained unsolved for him. Would the functionalist approach hold true equally in European cases and East Asian ones? Royama was not insensitive to this problem. While in twentieth-century Europe the spirit of the age had shifted from nationalism to internationalism, in the Asia-Pacific Rim, the twentieth century would be the age of nationalism. Therefore regional order in the Asia-Pacific Rim should be constituted, taking the currently surfacing nationalism into consideration. What he had attached importance to was the rise of the Chinese Nationalist party and American activities in international finances across the Pacific (Royama, 1928: 176–8, 224–6). He supposedly had imagined a scenario where regional order would surface as a result of China's incorporation into the interdependent network of advanced countries. As measures to generate functional integration, he paid attention to the Four Power Consortium for financial aid to China and the Institute

of Pacific Relations. In tandem with the international administration of the League of Nations, these regional organs seemed destined to enhance functional integration within the Asia-Pacific Rim (Sakai, 2007: 127–8).

The study of colonial administration in 1920s Japan also dealt with the transnational activities of social groups as a major theme. Yanaihara Tadao was representative of such a new trend in the study of colonial administration. He criticized the state-centered bias of previous study of colonial administration and tried to broaden the objects of research by adopting a new definition of 'colony' (shokumin). In *Colony and Colonial Policy*, published in 1926, the most systematic text on colonial administration in Japan, he presented two types of colony: the 'formal colony' and the 'substantial colony'. While the 'formal colony' signified political domination of the colonized area, the 'substantial colony' signified the transmigration of social groups. Whereas previous studies had dealt exclusively with the political domination of the colony, he claimed that the dynamism of social interaction triggered by transmigration should be the main topic of colonial administration as a social science. Widening the scope of research into the social problems within the empire, he anticipates many of the problems caused today by globalization, including issues such as immigration and the status of foreign laborers.

The empire occupied the central position in his vision of world order. It does not mean, however, that he was an ardent supporter of Japanese imperialism. On the contrary, his vision of empire was rather idealistic. The final chapter of *Colony and Colonial Policy* is titled as 'The ideal of colonial policy'. The ideal of colonial policy, he insisted, should be founded not upon assimilationism, but upon recognition of the collective personality of each social group. Claiming that neither liberalism nor socialism could complete the necessary measures to accomplish this ideal, he then compared the League of Nations with the British Commonwealth and attached more importance to the latter than to the former. He concluded as follows:

> The British Empire can be seen as a League of Nations within the League of Nations, a more solid unity of nations than the League of Nations. Each Dominion has its autonomy as a nation and the British Empire is not supposed to have colonial domination over any of them . . . The relationship between metropolis and colony is neither political domination nor isolation. It can be supposed that British Empire would present the trend to organize a great community via solidarity of autonomous nations, if we recognize the fact that the development of modern economy has required the basis of regional economic zones. Such an autonomous unity must be the rational basis for connection between metropolis and colony, not only from the utilitarian point of view but also as social justice to demand recognition of group personality. (Yanaihara, 1963: 478– 83)

It should be noted that Yanaihara presented empire as a model of international community, regarding the British Commonwealth as a community founded upon the principle of mutual aid. It was broadly accepted wisdom during the interwar years in

Japan that the League of Nations could be merely a partial world order constituted of mainly the western nations and that the British Commonwealth would be the model of a more comprehensive world order because of its inclusion of underdeveloped areas as well as developed nations. Although this kind of criticism of the League of Nations was increasingly exploited after Japan left the League in 1933, the remark on the significance of empire itself as a model of world order is helpful in discovering the hitherto ignored aspects of political discourses of international order. Since previous studies on the genealogy of international relations have focused exclusively on the paradigmatic debate over the League of Nations, that the rearrangement of empire had occupied a significant place in building the image of the world order has been overlooked. Contemporary Japanese intellectuals, however, were sensitive to the competitive images of the world order during the interwar years.

Japan in the 1920s experienced democratization in various fields, including Diet politics, male universal suffrage, and social movements. It was in this context that Royama and Yanaihara developed their ideas of liberal transnationalism, both in the international and the imperial order. Given the Washington System, the framework of international cooperation in the Asia-Pacific Rim, Royama embraced the vision of a functionally integrated regional order. Keeping the British Commonwealth in mind, Yanaihara claimed that the Japanese Empire should be rearranged by allowing Korea and Taiwan autonomy to initiate colonial congress [Sakai, 2007: 210–14]. Both of them shared concerns about the transnational activities of social groups and the pluralistic conception of the state. What would become of their liberal ideas during the next decade? In order to understand the theoretical background, how communal social construction affected hegemonic regionalism in the 1930s will be discussed in the next section.

### Communal social construction and Japan's regionalism in the 1930s

The outbreak of the Manchurian Incident forced Japanese intellectuals to reformulate political discourses of international order. The first reaction came from Japanese international legalists. It was because Japanese action during the Manchurian Incident could be viewed as a challenge to the existing order of international law, including the Covenant of League of Nations, the Kellogg–Briand Pact, and the Nine Power Treaty. Since the study of International Law in Japan had developed hand in hand with Japanese diplomacy, most Japanese international legalists felt a keen attachment to the Foreign Ministry. Not surprisingly, they acted as if they were solicitors whose tasks were to defend the legitimacy of the Japanese government's position *vis-à-vis* international society.

Japanese legalists exploited the concept of the right to self-defense in the face of the Manchurian Incident. This may seem odd, given the fact that the Incident was actually caused by the Kwantung Army. Nevertheless, given the Kellogg–Briand Pact's renunciation of war as an instrument for resolution of international disputes, the right to self-defense was one of few measures available for any power to legitimize the use of

military forces. The Japanese Foreign Ministry as well as international legalists had been sensitive to the increasing importance of the right to self-defense since the conclusion of the Kellogg–Briand Pact (Shinohara, 2003: 137–9).

The right to self-defense as well as Japan's special position in Manchuria stipulated by the treaties, however, had its own limits because each of these would merely serve the defensive logic of vested interests. The establishment of Manchuko had changed the status quo in Manchuria. This new situation could not be legitimized by defensive measures of vested interests but needed a new theoretical device. It was in this context that Royama began to advocate 'regionalism'.

Three points should be noted here about Royama's arguments during the Manchurian Incident. The first point refers to the special relationship between Japan and Manchuria. He criticized the Japanese international legalists' attempt to legally defend Japan's special position in Manchuria as aggregated interests stipulated by a series of present treaties. Royama thought that Manchuria was an area where international law to presuppose modern sovereign states could be limitedly applied. Therefore, the Manchurian Incident, he claimed, could not be settled by a legal fiction but rather required a political arrangement based upon fact. The special relationship between Japan and Manchuria should be a political one and one that was distinct from any legal arrangement for special interests in Manchuria.

Secondly, Royama stressed the importance of Japan's cooperation with the League of Nations in settling the disputes over the Manchurian Incident. In doing so, he took into consideration politics within the League of Nations itself. While Britain and France, major powers in the League, had experienced Chinese antagonism toward imperialism and were generally sympathetic toward the Japanese position in Manchuria, some European minor powers were rather critical in principle of Japan's activities during the Incident. These minor powers were also concerned to follow the proper procedures strictly, not because of the Manchurian Incident itself but because of any precedents the affair might set that would later affect future possible conflicts in their own spheres. In order to meet such concerns, Royama claimed that, due to the peculiarities of Manchuria mentioned above, the Manchurian Incident would not be regarded as a general case but rather as an exceptional one. There can be no doubt that he greatly valued the League of Nations' role in the realm of social policies, but he was skeptical about the League's capabilities in terms of international security and had been so even before the Manchurian Incident. He believed that Britain and France had such tremendous influence upon the security policy of the League of Nations that the League itself would follow the great powers (Sakai, 2007: 129–30, 132–3). Such an assessment of the League of Nations might be instrumental for him in expecting the great powers' mediation in settling disputes over the Incident.

Japan finally decided to quit the League of Nations. Royama's articulation of 'regionalism' began at about this time. He claimed that a regional peace organization, taking the peculiarities of Far Eastern affairs into consideration, should be established and connected to the League of Nations in order to overcome Japan's diplomatic

isolation. He tried to exploit Article 21 of the Covenant of the League of Nations, which mentioned explicitly the Monroe Doctrine. Exaggerating a perceived analogy between the Monroe Doctrine and the Japanese–Manchurian relationship, he anticipated Japan's cooperation with the League of Nations. His idea of regionalism was that it should complement the League of Nations in maintaining the integrity of the international order. It was the last aspect of his arguments made during the period of the Manchurian Incident (Sakai, 2007: 132–4).

After the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937, however, Japan's sense of regionalism had shifted from complementing the existing international order to total criticism of it. It was a moment when various types of ideas on 'The East Asian Community' (Tōa Kyōdō-Tai Ron) had surfaced. Whilst being fully aware of the differences in nuances among these ideas, I will note here three points about the theoretical construction of 'The East Asian Community'.

The first refers to criticism of social contract theory. It was supposed that social contract theory founded upon individualism had reached an impasse and should be superseded by some communal social construction representing concrete social realities. Such criticism would also hold true with international society based upon an atomistic construction of sovereign states. The League of Nations should be dismissed as abstract cosmopolitanism. 'The East Asian Community' would overcome the modern sovereign state system and thus could be characterized as 'completely new; Gemeinschaft superseding Gesellschaft' (Miki, 1968: 526).

Secondly, as a corollary of the first point, criticism of nationalism and right of self-determination had emerged. Nationalism had surely played a positive role in modern liberalism in the nineteenth century, but now its historic mission had ceased. The right of self-determination, a cornerstone of Wilsonism, had disturbed regional organic unity because of its automatic application. It should be noted that such criticism of nationalism was not only a logical product of Japanese intellectuals' arguments on regionalism, but was also closely related to the character of Japan's expansionism in the 1930s. In order to counter Chinese nationalist resistance to Japanese aggression, it was necessary to introduce a logical refutation of nationalism in general. Furthermore, obviously, it would be impossible to legitimatize the establishment of Manchuko and the measures for the scission of North China by appealing to the Japanese right of self-determination. In this regard, the logic of Japanese expansionism differed from that of Nazi Germany. It is well known that Nazi Germany exploited the right of self-determination of ethnic German populations in areas of other nation states adjacent to the German border in order to justify and legitimize German expansionism (Iriye, 1987: 55, 65). It was not the case with Japan's expansionism in the 1930s. Japan's dominant ideology for expansionism was thus destined to be not national self-determination but rather 'cooperation among nations'. In fact, it was common for Japanese intellectuals during the Sino-Japanese War to criticize the narrowly minded 'völkisch' discourse of Nazi Germany, comparing it with Japan's allegedly far-sighted policy of cooperation among nations (Oguma, 1998: 424–7). The argument of E.H. Carr, who claimed the

collapse of the principle of self-determination, was also exploited in legitimating Japan's regionalism during the war (Carr, 1942: 40–2; Sakai, 2004: 86–7).

Lastly, we should note that 'The East Asian Community' was theorized by an idea of regional welfare planning. In his article 'The theory of East Asian community', Royama wrote that the supreme aim for Japan's management of the Chinese Continent lay in regional planning for development (Royama, 1941: 20). From this point of view, he further tried to rearrange Sun Yat-Sen's doctrine as stated in *The Three Principles of the People*, placing socialism or people's livelihood at the highest position above the other two principles, democracy and nationalism (Royama, 1938: 213). This kind of episode depicts well his concern in the 1930s to pay more attention to substantial care for welfare than any formal procedure for decision making. The functionalist approach, which had tremendous influence upon him in the 1920s, could have some affinity to cooperation for welfare in international society. The case of Royama in the 1930s can be interpreted as the one in which such concern for welfare was represented within the hierarchical international order.

As suggested in those three points mentioned above, the idea of 'The East Asian Community' surfacing during the Sino-Japanese War founded its theoretical basis upon communal social construction. It is evident that communal social construction was an apparently anti-liberalist discourse, but it should also be kept in mind that such construction developed out of the critique of sovereignty in the 1920s. The case of Hirano Yoshitaro can be seen as a typical here.

A number of critics have debated over the reasons why Hirano, the most prominent Japanese leader of academic theoretical Marxism in the pre-World War II years 'converted' to Greater Asianism during the war. In order to gain a better understanding of Hirano's intellectual evolution, it is best to look at his earliest work, *Roman Thought and German Thought on Civil Law*, which has not been studied in detail in the past (Hirano, 1924). This book, which begins with a quotation from Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West*, illustrates well how Hirano embarked on the study of law with an initial interest in exploring the theoretical possibility of a social configuration based on communal organizations. Focusing his analysis on the theory presented by Otto Friedrich von Gierke, and drawing largely on his argument, he proposed the possibilities for a fundamental restructuring of society, from that based on the idea of the social contract to one founded upon communally based social units. Already implicit in this argument is his concern for exploring the measures for 'overcoming modernity', which, it is suggested, can be pursued through the realization of such fundamental social restructuring. Acknowledging the fact that Hirano embraced a Gierkean vision of order at the start of his career gives a new perspective to the understanding of the overall significance of Hirano's academic endeavours. This kind of theoretical approach should be more fruitful than merely focusing on why and how his 'conversion' to Greater Asianism occurred.

The foregoing discussion should make it easier for us to understand why the theme of 'superseding the nation state' occupied a significant place in the discourse of

hegemonic regionalism in the 1930s. Gierke's theory, which had a substantial impact upon the development of the pluralistic conception of the state, finds correspondence in Althusius in the genealogy of sovereignty theory. As opposed to Bodin and Hobbes, who contended that sovereignty is one and indivisible, Althusius saw sovereignty as residing in the union of various social organizations. It should also be noted that the concept of subsidiarity in the European Union has its theoretical roots in the lineage of the Althusius–Gierke–Plural state theory in the genealogy of sovereignty (Endo, 1994).

Tachibana Shiraki is another example where it can easily be seen that such a view had affinity with the vision of Japanese architects of hegemonic regionalism. Tachibana, a distinguished specialist on Chinese society, spent most of his life as a journalist in China. Although he had shown deep understanding of Chinese nationalism throughout the 1920s, he made a 'turn of direction' after the Manchurian Incident and, as an influential opinion leader in Manchuko, became the advocate of Asianism. Tachibana's theoretical framework for this was actually based on guild socialism, which had gained currency in the 1920s. Chinese society, where the network of various intermediate groups between state and the individual – including family, lineage, village communities, and guild halls – acting on the principle of mutual aid, had been extensively developed, seemed to him as an ideal realization of his envisioned guild socialism (Sakai, 2007: 169–70).

Tachibana's vision of Asianism, therefore, consisted of autonomous agricultural communities gradually expanding their power, penetrating through various layers of the social stratum, and eventually breaking down the walls of the nation-state, realizing a social construction that stretched across national borders. The process by which this kind of vision, rooted in his socialist critique of the sovereignty of the nation-state, was reinforced by historical progression that saw the emergence of Manchukuo and eventually became integrated with the rising current of the Asianist ideology is not hard to follow (Tachibana, 1932: 10–11).

It has now become clear that most of the Japanese architects of regionalism in the 1930s had followed in the lineage of the Althusius–Gierke–Plural state theory in the genealogy of sovereignty theory. It is no wonder that they felt sympathy with the transnational activities of social groups. Japan's hegemonic regionalism was not legitimatized by a naked imperialism advocating the supremacy of a sovereign state. It was actually theorized by the reinterpretation of a pluralist critique of sovereignty tailored to accommodate a hierarchical order. Before 'premature transnationalism' developed fully into its mature phase as liberal internationalism, transanationalism had again mutated so as to acquiesce to the imperial order.

## Emergence of Post-World War II Discourse of International Order in Wartime Japan

How did the outbreak of the Pacific War influence Japan's hegemonic regionalism? The first outcome was in the definition of Japan's war aims. Since the occurrence of war itself was brought about by a series of miscalculations by Japan concerning American attitudes, the Japanese government initially did not have a well-defined set of the war

aims. Although in early 1942, Prime Minister Tojo Hideki had declared self-defense and the liberation of Asia as war aims, it was not clear what was actually meant by these two aims and how they were logically related. The retreat of western powers from Southeast Asia, however, could not allow the Japanese government to maintain this ambiguous attitude, because self-determination in South East Asia necessarily surfaced as a critical issue.

Among Japanese leaders, the most sensitive to this issue was Shigemitsu Mamoru. He had experienced the rise of Chinese nationalism throughout the 1920s as a diplomat in China and knew well the importance of nationalism in Asia (Sakai, 1989). After the outbreak of the Pacific War, he was appointed as Ambassador to China. As Ambassador, he had advocated a 'new policy toward China', one which denunciated extraterritoriality and formally established an equal relationship between Japan and China. After becoming Foreign Minister in the reorganized Tojo cabinet in April 1943, he further extended this 'new policy toward China' into a 'new policy toward Greater East Asia'. Shigemitsu was critical of the prevalent view of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, because he believed that its hegemonic character would inevitably clash with the rising tide of Asian nationalism. Therefore, he clung to the idea of establishing a regional order founded upon formally equal relationships among Asian nations.

This 'new policy toward Greater East Asia' had three main characteristics as follows. First of all, it envisioned a redefinition of Japanese war aims by putting forward a 'Greater East Asia Charter' as a counterweight to the Atlantic Charter signed by Roosevelt and Churchill in 1941 before the United States entered the war. He designed these measures so as to prepare for peace with the Allied Nations by shortening the policy distance between Japan and the Anglo-American alliance via declaration of Japan's war aims that were not only akin to Anglo-American ones but would also be likely to gain the support from Asian nations (Iriye, 1978: 149–51).

The second point refers to the independence of Southeast Asian nations and the establishment of formally equal relationships. Shigemitsu took the position that self-determination should be granted to the nations of Southeast Asia as soon as possible. His attitude surely reflected his concern for Asian nationalism, but it was also product of the bureaucratic politics in the Japanese government. The Foreign Ministry had its own sectional interest in independence of Southeast Asian nations, because, in so far as diplomacy was a game played between sovereign states, the Southeast Asian nations, unless they were independent nations, would not be handled by the Foreign Ministry but rather fall under the auspices of the Ministry of Greater Asian Affairs, which dealt with administration in the occupied areas.

Lastly, the idea of a 'new policy toward Southeast Asia' was designed to restore the 'unification of diplomacy' by appealing to the Foreign Ministry's capability to present 'ideas'. It is generally assumed that the Japanese Foreign Ministry had little influences in policy making during the Pacific War. In defining war aims, however, the Foreign Ministry was more capable of presenting sophisticated ideas than the Japanese Army and Navy. Ideas are not spells on paper but resources of power during wartime. It is

one reason why the Japanese Foreign Ministry was able to regain unexpected influence during the Pacific War.

Shigemitsu's diplomacy reached its climax at the Greater East Asia Conference held in November 1943. Reflecting on the rivalry between the Foreign Ministry and the Ministry of Greater Asian Affairs, the Declaration of Greater East Asia adopted at the conference has an ambiguous character; it consists of a preface influenced by the Ministry of Greater Asian Affairs and contents influenced by the Foreign Ministry (Hatano, 1996: 161–73). What was the impact of such diplomacy upon the subsequent development of political discourse of international order in wartime Japan? The controversy over the legal construction of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere provides the answer to this question.

This controversy took place over the concept of the equality of states. The prevalent view was that the concept of the equality of states as a fundamental principle of modern international law should be superseded. It was a corollary of the negation of social contract theory and the atomistic construction of the international society. According to this view, the relationships among states in the co-prosperity sphere should not be ruled by contract or alliance. The co-prosperity sphere should instead adopt a more organic communal construction.

The legal construction of the co-prosperity sphere was provided by the German theory of the 'greater zone' (Groβraum). The greater zone theory consisted of three elements, namely the greater zone, the leading nation (Reich), and the non-intervention principle. The prevalent view was to place the leading nation above the greater zone. For example, the idea that the greater zone had already existed and then members of the greater zone elected a leader should be rejected. The right idea should be that the leading nation's will itself would insure the integrity of the greater zone. This kind of construction illustrates well that the greater zone theory deserves to be characterized as 'hegemonic regionalism'.

This prevalent view, however, was exposed to criticism after Foreign Minister Shigemintsu embarked on establishing formally equal relationships among Asian nations. The representative of such critics to the prevalent view was Tabata Shigejiro, who would be the most influential international legalist in post-World WarII Japan. Reexamining the flat negation of equality of the states in the co-prosperity sphere, Tabata criticized the prevalent view in that the concept of the greater zone was subordinated to the concept of the leading nation. Although he did not abandon the concept of the greater zone itself, he stressed that the concept of the greater zone should occupy the highest position, even above the concept of the leading nation. The implication of this argument was that Declaration of Greater Asia, the universal norm in the greater zone, could and should lay restraint on the activities of the leading nation of the greater zone, Japan. Although it still remained an amendment within the framework of the greater zone legal theory, in recognizing a universal norm and reassessing the equality of the states, Tabata's argument can be characterized as the legal counterpart of Shigemitsu's diplomacy (Tabata 1943: 16; Sakai, 2007: 53–6).

Japan's conception of international order was undergoing a sea change during the Pacific War. The independences of Southeast Asian nations had made it difficult for Japan's hegemonic regionalism to keep itself intact. An international society constituted of legally equal sovereign states was surfacing in the Asia-Pacific Rims. The dual arrangement of disciplines, international politics, and colonial administration, was in the process of becoming a unified discipline, international relations. The post-World War II discourse of international order had already germinated in wartime Japan. It was in this context that Yanaihara Tadao, the most distinguished scholar of colonial administration in prewar Japan, became the founder of the Department of International Relations in the University of Tokyo in 1952.

## Conclusion

It has been generally assumed that the Japanese vision of international order in the pre-World War II years was dominated by a belief in the supremacy of the sovereign state. That this kind of presupposition needs to be questioned becomes clear now that we have taken a closer look at the political discourse of the international order in modern Japan. What should be elucidated, therefore, is exactly how the critique of the idea of the sovereign nation-state became incorporated into the discourse of the international order in prewar Japan.

Contrary to the conventional presupposition, prewar Japan abounded in discourses of transnationalism. It was not mainly the product of liberal ideas but was rather caused by the instability of the image of the sovereign state system in modern Japan. In East Asia, where the Chinese Empire system had traditionally prevailed, the concept of the sovereign state system had come from outside. It is true that Japan succeeded in gaining entry into the western state system, but the absence of the sovereign state system inherent in this region could not be completely resolved. The instability of China due to the collapse of Ching Dynasty had accelerated Japan's 'premature transnationalism' in 'international relations without states'. The liberalist turn in the 1920s could not last for long and the critique of the superseding sovereign nation state transmuted into hegemonic regionalism in the 1930s. In most cases, the criticism of supremacy of state sovereignty was not connected to liberal internationalism but rather resulted in justifying the imperial order in pre-World War II Japan.

Japan's case, however, cannot be resolved completely by reference to her peculiarity, because the empire should be reconsidered as a problem of the world order. As suggested in the second chapter, since previous studies on the genealogy of international relations has focused exclusively on the paradigmatic debate over the League of Nations, what role the rearrangement of empires played in building the images of the world order has not yet been fully scrutinized. As Professor Duus has pointed out, the interwar years saw the age of 'imperialism without colonies' (Duus, 1992). The principle of self-determination was certainly introduced, but the empires still actually existed. Granting autonomies to colonies within the empire, instead of allowing independences to them, the empire tried to maintain itself through an act of reinterpretation as a reciprocal

community founded upon the principle of mutual aid. Communal social construction seemed viable in such a discursive space. The metaphor of organism for international order prevailed in most of the rearranged empires. As clearly shown from the example of Jan Smuts, the political leader in the Union of South Africa and an ardent supporter of the League of Nations and the British Commonwealth, holism attracted the western as well as Japanese intellectuals during the interwar years (Smuts, 1926; Dan, 2001). Japan's experiences, therefore, might also be pertinent to any reconsideration of western conception of world order.

International society has always had vertical as well as horizontal aspects. The concept of 'empire' still has some validity when trying to understand the hierarchical structure of international society. The ambivalence of transnationalism in modern Japan, even if not an unstained case, is helpful in depicting Janus' face of international society

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