



## **A Vision of Japan in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

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Today, 60 years after the end of World War II, Japan has entered a time of momentous change. It is tantamount to the dawn of a new era, marking the rise of the curtain on Japanese culture of the 21<sup>st</sup> century premised upon the culture of postwar Japan.

For Japan, the 60 years following World War II began with rebuilding the nation on a foundation of freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, in the framework of the U.S. occupation policy, advocated by the new Japanese Constitution, and the Fundamental Law of Education. Concurrently, Japan adopted a policy of light armament and placed priority on the economy. During the Cold War, with the Japan–U.S. Security Treaty in place, Japan was able to achieve high levels of economic growth and rose to become the world’s second largest economy.

In this way, Japan achieved remarkable results in the realm of material prosperity. However, in spiritual terms, excessive dependence on the United States and the erosion of Japan’s traditions and education injected confusion into the national consciousness, consequently blurring national goals and leading to a loss of national dignity for this venerable, culturally rich country. Thus Japan was left only with its position as a big economic power in the world.

Historically in Japan, the Emperor has retained authority as the symbol of our nation while real power was held by an influential strongman at a given time. Reverence for peace and harmony on the part of the people of Japan and their support for preservation of Japan’s unique culture and development of the nation have never wavered. Even during the postwar period, Japan’s traditional values have remained steadfast.

There is also broad awareness of the historical significance of the Meiji Constitution originating in the Meiji Restoration, and the genesis of the Showa Constitution



following Japan's defeat in World War II.

However, with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War in 1991, world circumstances in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and early 21<sup>st</sup> century have shifted dramatically. Freed from dependence on the bipolar U.S.–Soviet political structure brought about by the Cold War, nations and regions experienced a flood of nationalistic sentiment that drove them to assert their own identities and independence, thus igniting conflicts among nations with different religions or cultures. The relative stability of the Cold War era has given way to a time of confusion, instability, and unrest.

Especially requiring attention in Japan's vicinity is China's continuing military build-up and the serious impact this exerts on our regional military balance. Military conflict in the Taiwan Strait remains an undeniable possibility, and the development of weapons of mass destruction by North Korea poses a direct threat to Japan.

In addition to the destabilizing elements on the Korean Peninsula and in the Taiwan Strait, there is a possibility that over the next 30 years East Asia will be faced with a power transition as China grows economically and militarily. This holds true even though the United States will maintain its position as a superpower. The recent rise of India is also a factor that warrants attention. Historically, during dramatic shifts in the balance of power between great nations, there has been a tendency for the international situation to become volatile, and there is a strong fear that military conflict could erupt. Since the end of the Cold War, the international–political situation surrounding our nation has been extremely fluid, and there is a distinct possibility that, in the future, the speed of change could accelerate.

In light of the rapidly changing world situation, Japan's people are beginning to demand a break with the outdated existing order within the country, and for a more assertive and strategic approach in diplomacy. To break with the outdated existing order, reflecting on our experiences over the last 60 years, we need to free ourselves from the antiquated remnants of the postwar occupation policy. Reform of domestic policy will involve taking on important issues, such as the revision of the Constitution, which forms the foundation of the national system, and the Fundamental Law of Education, and reform of matters that have been left unattended for too long, such as government finance, social security, population policies, as well as diplomacy and national security structure.



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That is, the crucial flaw of postwar politics in Japan has been a lack of awareness of our own identity as a nation. In terms of national politics, as well as the people's consciousness, especially in the spheres of academia and journalism, there has been no clear awareness of the state and society, which have been historically and internationally acknowledged, and national matters have been discussed and treated ambiguously and opportunistically.

The time has come for Japan to wholly rework these turbid and unstable systems of postwar Japan and elucidate the Japanese identity to our people and the world. The symbolic manifestation of this is obviously the revision of the Constitution. It is incumbent upon us to revise the Constitution as soon as possible with the cooperation and backing of the people.

With the enactment of a new constitution, which is a revitalization on par with the Meiji Restoration or the end of World War II, the hearts and minds of the people will be renewed; Japan will then start to take the first steps toward a new future, and the traditional vitality of the Japanese people will re-emerge and exercise its potential.

Under these circumstances, we have drawn up a basic framework for Japan as it should be now and in the future—a vision of our national identity—to be presented domestically and internationally. In this framework, the following matters are of particular emphasis.

- Rebuild our national identity and convey a unique Japanese message**
- Formulate principles to foster collaboration within the family, local community and throughout society as a whole**
- Provide education that encourages development of individual capability of the citizens, the bedrock of the nation**
- Promote resolute and trustworthy diplomacy—strengthen Japan's strategic diplomacy as a maritime nation**
- Respond to new threats—formulate an independent defense strategy**
- Establish a National Intelligence Bureau under direct control of the prime minister**
- Invest in tomorrow—develop a science and technology strategy to drive**



**security and prosperity**

**Secure sustainable labor and social security measures**

**Achieve a robust economy and carry out long-term fiscal restructuring**

### **Rebuild our national identity and convey a unique Japanese message**

Following the end of the Cold War and East–West polarization, a time of confusion has ensued, and from it Japan must rediscover and reappraise the value of its history, tradition, and culture and reconstruct its national identity.

Japanese culture, with a deep spirituality characterized by a reverence for peace and harmony and living compatibly with nature, has been underpinned by cultural plurality supported by open-mindedness toward international cultures.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century faces risk of conflict stemming from increased tension involving such factors as race, religion, and the nation state. In this environment, a uniquely Japanese message originating in our country's cultural pluralism should be crafted and relayed to the world with the aim of achieving mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence internationally. This action should transcend the confines of narrow-minded nationalism and enhance the influence of Japan's presence in the world.

### **Formulate principles to foster collaboration within the family and local community and throughout society as a whole**

In modern Japan, what is worrisome is that the family, local community, and corporations are being ravaged by the shift away from the traditional concept of the community as a collective entity to a society in which profit is the prevailing measure of success. In addition, as a consequence of long working hours, opportunities to spend time in the conventional sphere of the individual, namely in the home or community, have decreased, leading to a lack of appreciation for the social collective and an inability to build mutually supportive relationships with others.

For people to deepen family ties as well as further their involvement in the community, it is essential to secure opportunities to engage in activities outside of work. In this regard, a labor market that permits diverse forms of employment and encourages a balance between work and private life is important. As we try to urge society to shift to a direction in which corporations acknowledge the importance of home and family, a mechanism should be created to evaluate the family friendliness of a corporation and supports this shift.

Furthermore, revival of local communities is crucial in terms of securing public safety, creating an environment conducive to raising children without hindrance, and providing opportunities for people of various talents to participate in society. Local citizens should be encouraged to play a central role in administrative affairs of the community. Toward this end, it is necessary to let localities do what they are capable of doing themselves without involving central government by establishing a society in which power is thoroughly decentralized and independent local communities are further developed.



## **Provide education that encourages development of individual capability of the citizens, the bedrock of the nation**

Faced with the specter of a shrinking population, maximizing the abilities of each and every individual while fostering a highly competent pool of human resources with advanced technical skills will prove pivotal in cultivating the underlying power of our country's next generation. To accomplish this, an attitude rooted in acceptance of and respect for diverse values is required.

At the same time, ensuring that all youth are equipped with the requisite scholastic skills via our compulsory education system—the doorway to learning—is critical to secure equal opportunity, upon which a competitive society is premised.

To achieve this, we should aim to promote individuality, independence, and diversity in primary education and vigorously decentralize power to local entities, abolish the board of education system, and place responsibility for improvement in education with local governmental authorities and schools. If a regional gap in scholastic ability emerges, it should be the responsibility of the national government to actively step in and take necessary measures.

Moreover, with regard to the three pillars of education—intellectual, physical and moral—it is important to recognize that moral education forms the foundation of individual character and begins at home, and that families, communities, and schools should work together to develop a solid educational environment.

Furthermore, for future development of Japan's economy, strengthening higher education is indispensable to producing individuals capable of shouldering the work in knowledge-based industries. Similarly, boosting international competitiveness through specialized research and education is required.

## **Promote resolute and trustworthy diplomacy—strengthen Japan's strategic diplomacy as a maritime nation**

To attain an international order in favor of our national interests, and to foster its stability and prosperity, we should develop a multifaceted and proactive diplomatic approach through efforts to promote Asian diplomacy designed to stabilize and strengthen the regional order side-by-side with UN diplomacy aiming at rational development of the world order on the basis of a close relationship with the U.S., which shares similar values with us as a maritime nation.

We should strengthen our ties with the U.S. and formulate a clear national strategy as a maritime nation, and, from the perspective of comprehensive security, put in place the infrastructure to ensure our development as a maritime power.

First, we should establish an organization for economic cooperation in the greater Asia region—which includes the United States, India, and Australia and others—and use this to strive to form a more integrated East Asian community. In addition, we should establish collaborative organizations for political, economic, and cultural issues with the goal of developing integrated East Asian cooperation.

In the interests of developing positive relations as good neighbors with China and Korea,



it is incumbent upon Japan to work to communicate more closely on issues such as conflict prevention, cooperation on the environment and energy, improving regional order, and history. To facilitate this, a trilateral summit meeting should be institutionalized.

At the same time, having benefited from a stable world order, Japan, as a global power, must strive to achieve rational development of the international order and world peace through reform and strengthening of the U.N. In this regard, while intensifying our efforts in the capacity of our unique national role, we should continue to persist in our endeavor to gain a permanent seat on the U.N. Security Council.

### **Respond to new threats—formulate an independent defense strategy**

Based on the structure of the international order in the wake of the Cold War, Japan needs to establish a proactive defense strategy hinging on the Japan–U.S. alliance.

Article 9 of the Constitution should be revised and the Self-Defense Forces should be specified as a military force. In addition, Japan should find a way to exercise the right of collective self-defense and clarify in a fundamental law on national security the modalities in which this right can be exercised.

Japan should maintain its stance as a non-nuclear nation and work to strengthen the non-proliferation treaty regime. At the same time, in order to prepare for drastic changes in the international situation in the future, a thorough study of the nuclear issue should be conducted.

We must define our respective roles in strategic goals shared with the United States and further solidify our alliance while working to consolidate and rationalize military bases in Japan. To ensure that we can appropriately respond to any national security situation, we should boost our defense capabilities. As one component of this, if Japan faces an imminent security threat, the use of force against enemy bases as an act of self-defense should not be ruled out.

An effective response system for first responders is needed to ensure that the civilian protection plan can be implemented effectively. At the same time, efforts to strengthen our crisis management system and improve our state of emergency decision-making process are required, and a legal framework addressing these issues will also need to be developed.

With an eye to encouraging confidence-building and mutual understanding with our neighboring countries in Asia, dialogue and collaboration on defense issues should be conducted at every level. Simultaneously, legislation needs to be enacted to promote collaborative international peace-keeping activities, participation in which will be made possible by flexible political decision-making.

### **Establish a National Intelligence Bureau under direct control of the prime minister**

International circumstances after the Cold War have created a state of affairs in which we will face an increasing number of situations that we must resolve ourselves, without relying too heavily on the U.S., based upon our own best judgment and decision-making according to our long-term strategy. Our country must improve its intelligence-related abilities and overall diplomatic capabilities.



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In order to significantly enhance the government's security-related intelligence capabilities, a National Intelligence Bureau should be established under the direct control of the prime minister. This bureau will undertake central management of domestic and international intelligence so that it can be used to contribute to the formulation of national policies.

In conjunction with this and our foreign policy in the context of our nation's comprehensive security, we will develop broad conclusions premised on our country's character as a maritime nation and act upon them. To serve this purpose, a National Security Council should be set up through strengthening the current Security Council.

### **Invest in tomorrow—develop a science and technology strategy to drive security and prosperity**

Science and technology are the cornerstones of economic activity and the foundation of national security. In the near future, the challenges posed by a dwindling birthrate and an aging population will only become more serious. Without development in science and technology, Japan will be incapable of maintaining its economic power and preserving national security. Given this, how best to bolster science and technology will be a core strategic issue and integral component of Japan's vision for the future.

Encouraging science and technology will be premised on the basic understanding that this will contribute to national security in a broad sense. Protecting our citizens from disaster and disease, achieving economic growth while protecting the environment, securing energy for a resource-poor nation, promoting regional development, maintaining national pride and contributing to the international community—these are all national strategic issues that should be answered by science and technology.

It is essential that institutional reform be conducted in parallel with the development of science and technology. Scarce mobility among researchers, a lack of incentives for research activities, and obstacles to the hiring of foreign and female researchers are all institutional barriers that need to be removed if science and technology are to make dramatic strides.

### **Secure sustainable labor and social security measures**

As we find ourselves in a time of demographic transition, with fewer children and the proportion of elderly on the rise, we must work to create a labor market that provides employment opportunities for women, the elderly, and youth, and secures our workforce. To this end, fundamental reform of the labor market is required, including a rethinking of the current permanent versus contracted/non-permanent employee structure as well as recognition of more diverse ways of working. The first order of business should be to conduct a review of the permanent employee labor system, to facilitate more diverse working choices, and to expand the social insurance system to include non-permanent workers. Apart from this, working to rectify disparities in remuneration and ensuring equal pay for equal work, by striving to recast the nation's labor laws, is essential. In addition to the above, an examination should be carried out focusing on how to cover labor shortages, including the accepting of foreign workers and the use of robots.

As we enter an era of low levels of economic growth with fewer youth and a greater



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number of elderly, we need to rebuild the social security system into something that is highly sustainable and funded by the people. Our goal should be a system less generous than the one seen in the European Union, but more substantial than that of America. Therefore, emphasis should be placed on policies to boost the birthrate as this will translate into the fostering of the next generation of citizens. Support measures will be shifted from a system in which support is provider-driven to one in which childcare services are more easily available on a need-based method regardless of the recipient's lifestyle. Moreover, to see that a reliable pension system is maintained, a sustainable system that eradicates any sense of unfairness between and within generations must be realized by switching the basic pension system from the current social insurance system to one financed entirely from tax revenues. For medical care, the national health insurance system should be perpetuated.

### **Achieve a robust economy and carry out long-term fiscal restructuring**

Equalizing the primary balance is only the starting point for a genuine rebuilding of the state's financial affairs. The ultimate objective is achieving an overall balance of fiscal expenditures and revenues and shrinking the public debt outstanding. To achieve this, the government role should be to focus on five priority areas: social security, science and technology, education, diplomacy and national security, and public safety. All other government expenditures should be substantially reduced with the aim of achieving a more streamlined and efficient government. This policy direction is important to ensure that Japan can compete in the world and will have a robust national economy. To achieve this kind of sweeping fiscal and economic structural reform, unity of purpose and an unflagging resolve by both the government and the private sector together will be necessary.