

Roundtable with Prof. Shinichi Kitaoka, Prof. Nobukatsu Kanehara, Prof. Chisako T. Masuo, Prof. Nobuhiro Aizawa & Masakazu Toyoda (May 31, 2024)

# How to Rebuild an International Order in Chaos

By Japan SPOTLIGHT

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## Participants



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## Introduction

**Toyoda:** Russia's invasion of Ukraine has created a menace to the existing international order. But it seems also to have unintentionally exposed the major limitations of the post-World War II international order. On the international political front, the United Nations seems dysfunctional, in the sense that the Security Council itself is divided and unable to stop violations of the UN Charter. The United States, while supporting Ukraine, is restricting the capability of the weapons it provides to Ukraine to prevent excessive confrontation, including a nuclear war with Russia. The G7 is acting together on economic sanctions against Russia, but it has not gained enough support from China and the global South. So I think it must be said that these measures are not very effective.

To this situation was added the conflict between Israel and Hamas in Gaza. The G7 was basically pro-Israel, but now there are voices of support for Palestine within their respective countries, and I think it is fair to say that Israel is becoming isolated. The International Court of Justice has ordered an immediate halt to military operations in

Rafah, but Israel has not stopped its attacks.

The same is true on the trade and financial fronts: the dispute settlement function of the WTO, which consists of a two-tier system, is not functioning, as members of the WTO's Appellate Body have not been appointed; as for the WTO's legislative function, the unanimous consensus approach has set the Doha round adrift and it is no longer expected to be concluded except for a few plurilateral agreements. On the international financial front, the regulation to exclude Russia from the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunications (SWIFT), an international network for money transfers and settlements by US dollars among banks, which was introduced soon after the Ukraine crisis, has not been fully effective. In fact, there has even been an emerging alternative network by competing currencies.

As described above, unfortunately, it appears that "the rule of law" has been forgotten in an age of multipolarity, both in international politics and in trade and finance, and that we have moved into the age of power games. We are joined today by four experts in international politics, and we would like to discuss the following

three points. First, why has the international order entered this period of turmoil? Second, what kind of international order should the world seek? Third, what role is expected of Japan, which has no power, and can it even play a role?

I would like to introduce Prof. Emeritus Shinichi Kitaoka of the University of Tokyo, who chairs the Future International Order Study Group organized by our foundation and who has served as ambassador and deputy permanent representative of Japan to the United Nations and special advisor to the president of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). Then Prof. Nobukatsu Kanehara of Doshisha University, who was originally at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and he for many years as deputy chief of the National Security Secretariat in the Cabinet Secretariat. And then Prof. Chisako T. Masuo of Kyushu University who specializes in Chinese political diplomacy, and Prof. Nobuhiro Aizawa of Kyushu University, who studies trends in the Global South, including Southeast Asia.

## Factors in the Disruption of the International Order

**Toyoda:** I would like to begin our discussion by asking why the disruption of the international order has occurred. First, I would like to ask Prof. Kitaoka. The US, which until now has prided itself on being the world's policeman, has become extremely inward-looking. Moreover, even within the US, the Republican Party and the Democratic Party differ to a considerable extent in their opinions. Some even call it a split in national opinion. There is a theory that the main cause is the change within the US itself, but what do you think about this?

**Kitaoka:** The Cold War was over, but the Cold War was, in a sense, an international order. The US and the Soviet Union had a tight control on their respective camps, the capitalist camp and socialist camp. Although there were minor conflicts, they managed to avoid major clashes. This order was over.

There were two consequences from the end of the Cold War. One was that the world became dominated by the US, and the US no longer needs to control its own camp carefully in the exercise of its leadership. At the same time, though the US used to pay much attention to the UN because it was in conflict with the Soviet Union there, this approach has disappeared now and disrespect for the UN has been increasing. Meanwhile, there has been the spread of Islamic extremism, including 9/11. This is not coming from a nation state, but from extremist terrorism. There is no easy way to deal with this. In war, all that is needed is for the other side to surrender, but terrorists do not surrender. The US, having insisted on saying that this must be the war against terrorists, has tried to fight against

them too much. And I think that has caused their failure to build trust with the Muslim nations.

Meanwhile, in the 1990s, globalization made significant changes to the economy. The end of the Cold War, along with the development of technology, having encouraged globalization, has created many gigantic billionaires in the US. But the lives of those who are not so rich are not getting better, and even their average life expectancy is not increasing. It is often said that the lower-middle class, especially those who are not highly educated, thus tend to believe that their standard of living is getting worse and that what threatens it comes from the excessive US involvement in international affairs and the increased numbers of immigrants from overseas. Thus, there emerges a significant divide between the rich and the poor, or elites and non-elites, which has been a vital cause of domestic political disruption in the US.

**Toyoda:** Prof. Kanehara, having been involved in foreign policy for a long time, from a bird's eye view, what do you think has changed?

**Kanehara:** For the first time, the relative size of the G7 economies is beginning to shrink. Leading the G7 has been the US. The US alone used to account for half of the world's GDP, but it is now at 25%, and the G7 economies accounted for roughly 70% to 80% in their heyday, but now account for less than 50%. Unfortunately, the newly emerging nations do not yet have much sense of responsibility to support this liberal international order together.

Then there are two countries that have turned their backs on this liberal international order. One is Russia, which has left the G8 and turned its back on it completely. President Vladimir Putin's "anti-West" stance has become a value in itself for him, and he wants to return to 19th century-style power politics and once again have Russia take on the status of a major power on the Eurasian continent. But I believe the war in Ukraine will now take a dark turn for Russia. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has started to say that he will allow Ukraine to use US weapons to attack Russian territory, and the course of war will change again.

The other is China. Since the normalization of diplomatic relations with Japan and the US in 1972, China has come into the West and has grown larger by absorbing the capital and technology that the West has. The Chinese economy, which was the same size as the Japanese economy at the beginning of the administration of late Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in 2012, is now four times that size.

China has begun to turn its back on the liberal international order. I think the Chinese realize that they grew up thanks to the open Western economy, but President Xi Jinping is beginning to think that liberalism is an ideology that will kill the communist dictatorship. I think Xi is completely wrong in thinking in that way, but he has established an absolute personal dictatorship, and that will last

another 10 years and more.

Respect for freedom and democracy was an Enlightenment idea born in Europe, but since the American Revolution, the US has embodied it as an actual nation and has vigorously promoted its ideals on a global scale. Until the first half of the 20th century, however, because of racism and colonialism, Western liberalism and democracy were not universal at all, but local ideas with limited application only in Europe and the North American continent. It was Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and President Nelson Mandela who greatly expanded the universal values of today – freedom, democracy and the rule of law – to all human society in the latter half of the 20th century.

When Europeans and Americans hastily insist on respect for human rights, freedom, and democracy, newly emerging countries that have now gained power will respond by saying, “You are the ones who did terrible things to the colonies.” In response to their views, Japan would stand up and need to say, “In World War II, we took up arms and raged against the injustice of the international order such as racism and European domination of Asia, but nothing good came out of it. Humans grow ethically and justice prevails in the end. You can rise in this liberal international order as much as you want if you work hard and honestly in it. Postwar Japan succeeded in doing so.” We need to get a message out from Japan that the liberal international order is a fair system with universal values, so let’s support this system globally together.

By the way, emerging developing countries are more interested in economic development than in issues of values, as they want to make money and prosper first. I believe that Japan has an important role to play here as well. That is the promotion of free trade. It is necessary to properly say that it is in the free trade system that developing countries can find a way to succeed. Since the beginning of this century, Japan has helped to create huge free trade zones and mega trade zones, such as the RCEP, CPTPP, and the EU-Japan EPA. Japan is the only country that has done this in this century. Under the free trade system, capital and technology are transferred to emerging countries in the form of direct investment. While developed countries will suffer from declining birthrates, aging populations, and industrial hollowing out, emerging countries will grow, and the world economy as a whole will grow even more. I believe that Japan must become a leader of free trade and tell emerging and developing countries that we will work together within this free trade system.

**Toyoda:** I would like to ask Prof. Masuo what she thinks about the view that the change in the international order has been brought about by China’s remarkable high growth or by China’s transformation?

**Masuo:** Xi often says, “What is going on in the world today is a transformation that has never happened in the past 100 years.” I believe he mentions this with the international system since the Industrial Revolution in mind. It is often asked whether China’s transformation has brought about changes in the international order. But perhaps the international order is not so rigid in nature. From a realist point of view, the international order gets universally transformed when the old power structure that supports it from the ground is changed.

Xi thinks that we are now experiencing the deepest level of transformation since the Industrial Revolution. I myself believe this may be true to some extent. In short, I believe we are now facing an international regime change at a point in history where the Western ruling regime that has continued for several hundred years may collapse due to the impact caused by China, a non-Western rising power. My understanding is that the current change in the international order has certainly been triggered by China, but this would have happened at some point eventually and cannot all be attributed to China.

However, when we consider how it is actually occurring, it is still closely connected with the situations on the Chinese side. If we cast our eyes at China, I must say that the Xi generation is very special even in China. They were the very people who, during the Cultural Revolution, worked as Red Guards and engaged in revolutionary activities to destroy the existing system. Xi, for example, did not even graduate from middle school because he stopped studying at the second grade when the Cultural Revolution broke out. In Confucian Chinese society that generally favors and respects higher education, this is a generation with unusually low level of education.

China usually has a strong tradition of elite-leading politics. But since they spent their youth as Red Guards, they are nationalistic and inclined to populism. They tend to move collectively and go extremes. They also had a strong antipathy to the existing system. It is this special generation that are now in charge of China.

Thus, the global power shifts and Chinese internal power shifts are joining together to form a new international current at this moment. China is a socialist country founded on Marxism, which is basically a materialist ideology. The idea is that politics is built on economic foundations. Therefore, the Chinese naturally expect changes in political structures will occur on the basis of global tectonic change, caused by China’s economic rise. In other words, they believe that China’s economic rise may finally overturn the Western dominance of the world, and that it must be the mission of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to make this happen. In order to realize the “common destiny for mankind” – a political slogan of the CCP – China must overturn the rule of the West at all costs and come to hold power over the international order, or else there will be no beautiful future for mankind. The Xi administration has been creating

this narrative domestically and spreading it to the world. It also seems that not a few countries actually agree with it. This is because many people have been dissatisfied with the West's centuries-long grip on the mainstream of international relations.

**Toyoda:** Prof. Aizawa, from the perspective of the Global South, such as Southeast Asia, how do you see the Ukraine crisis or the conflict in Gaza? Why doesn't the Global South join in sanctions against Russia? I would like to know more about this issue.

**Aizawa:** The term "Global South" is basically a term for a political movement, and while I think it is relevant to say "We in the Global South" as a political statement, it is still misleading to talk about the Global South as a unit of analysis, especially in our strategic conversation. This is because the strategic locations and socio-economic realities among the countries categorized in the terminology are too different from each other. It is not just misleading, but we will lose our strategic edge if we avoid articulation. In this roundtable talk, therefore, on the question of the Global South, I would like to limit my answer to Southeast Asia, in which the strategic diversity in itself is already wide enough to risk irrelevancy.

I think that the war in Ukraine and the war in Gaza, from the perspective of Southeast Asia, raise primarily the issues of justice. The main reason for most Southeast Asian countries not joining in sanctions against Russia is to object to the international trend in justifying economic sanctions. Without question, they are with the international rules and principles, adhering to the inviolability of territory. But on the other hand, there is a strong objection to the justification for collective economic sanctions in terms of enforcement. Southeast Asian countries have been subjected to economic sanctions in the past, so they know the harsh reality of being on the receiving end of them. In addition, if they are part of the collective economic sanctions this time, it will be difficult for them to defend themselves when they are faced with a similar situation that may eventually happen to them. So, in addition to the principle of justice, I think there is also a strategic rationale behind the decision.

There is another justice issue regarding the war in Gaza as well. It is the issue of colonialism. Many countries in Southeast Asia have experienced colonial rule, and the issue of Gaza is connected to the issue of international norms regarding self-determination. Israel's expansion of its settlements is recognized as a colonial act, and the US and other countries that fall short in stopping Israel's expansion and remain silent have been seen as not upholding the international norms of self-determination. Thus, while condemning the attack by Hamas as violating international principles, countries that have experienced colonial rule will be firm in rejecting Israel's position.

With regard to the Ukraine crisis, there is an economic issue

besides justice. For Southeast Asian countries that need to grow their economies in a speedy manner, the war will cause a crisis in food and energy supplies and a rise in international prices, which will indirectly deprive them of opportunities for economic growth. In order to minimize the negative impact of the war on their own economies, Southeast Asia is clearly expressing its position that an immediate ceasefire is a priority over a long-term war for the complete withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine.

## What Kind of International Order Should We Seek?

**Toyoda:** The next major theme is also one that I would like to ask you to discuss: what kind of international order should the world seek? I would like to hear from Prof. Kanehara. Next year will mark 80 years since the end of World War II. The long era of peace seems to be coming to an end. Has the era of rules ended and the era of power arrived? Japan is also moving forward to double its defense spending. Does this mean that Japan is preparing for an era of power? In addition, in the midst of rising geopolitical risks, the discussion of economic security has come up, but how should we think about this in the overall context?

**Kanehara:** The international community is a decentralized one. Since there are no fools who will kill each other forever, in the end people instinctively seek stability and peace by managing power relations. It is just like the balance of factions in a company. If the major actors in international politics change and the power relations change, it is only natural that the balance will change, so we must think about how to create a new stable balance.

Japan unfortunately became ideologically and politically divided within the country during the Cold War, with the Socialist Party supporting Beijing, the Communist Party supporting Moscow, and the members of the Diet who thus became part of the East holding more than one-third of the seats. There is no such country in the West. In the West, both the ruling party and the major opposition parties were members of the West. As Dr. Henry Kissinger astutely pointed out in his book *The World Order*, in reality Japan was not part of the Cold War. Since it has been 30 years since the end of the Cold War, the Japanese people have completely forgotten the harsh domestic and ideological divisions of that era.

That does not mean that the Japan-US alliance was ineffective. In particular, the military bases that Japan offered to the US were vitally important. Without the Japan-US alliance, the defense of South Korea would not have been possible in the Korean War. Without the US-Japan alliance, the defense of the Philippines and Taiwan would collapse in any future Taiwan contingency. Without Japan, the US military cannot protect these countries and regions.

The peace and prosperity of East Asia as a whole rests on the regional stability supported by the Japan-US alliance. Today, China's rise is remarkable, and the situation over the Taiwan Strait is becoming increasingly tense. In order to maintain the deterrence of the Japan-US alliance, I believe that Japan's conventional forces must be drastically increased and enhanced. The efforts should be extended to new fields such as outer-space, cyber-space and cognitive warfare.

The other issue is free trade. China's economic power is attractive to emerging and developing countries. However, as long as free trade spreads the wealth of the West to the South, everyone will follow the West. The economic power of the West as a whole is still twice that of China, so as long as we are not only strong and prosperous but also united, we should be able to continue to take the leadership.

What is worrisome is that the US is beginning to reverse the course from free trade. The US seems to be returning to protectionism and isolationism. I think it will get worse if Donald Trump becomes president again. This is where I believe Japan needs to support free trade. Japan was maligned as a "bastion of protectionism" in the last century and only in this century is it being recognized as a "leader of free trade".

A recent argument to complement free trade is economic security, aimed at regulating free trade from the national security perspective. The US is not saying "regulate all trade with China", but it is saying that it will not allow the export of cutting-edge technology to China, because it can be used in a war that results in the deaths of US soldiers. In particular, they are asking that the export of cutting-edge semiconductors and their manufacturing equipment to China be stopped at all costs. They are going to build a high wall around the export of cutting-edge semiconductors, and those semiconductors only. I think this is the right approach.

In the world of naval law, there is a rule that allows belligerents to regulate the cargoes of neutral countries. This is a system known as "contraband", and I think it can be said that this argument is now seeping out a bit into peacetime with regard to cutting-edge semiconductors, but this is only a correction of free trade, not a distortion of the free trade system itself.

There is one more thing that must be done in Japan's particular situation. In other countries, the government puts huge amounts of money into companies and universities for the development of national security-related technologies. There is a common understanding that if a technology is state-of-the-art in any areas of basic research, applied research, and R&D, it is national security-related technology, and the national security-related technologies are not understood as just narrow military technologies. In Japan, however, both academia and industry remain strongly anti-military and pacifist in ideology, and have long shunned anything related to

national security. This is why Japanese industry has lost out in the world. The Pentagon has a science and technology budget equivalent to 10 trillion yen for research institutes in industry, government, and academia. In the Japanese private sector, the military sector is small, and even in the defense industry, the civilian sector accounts for about 95%. Academia has completely turned its back on defense cooperation with the government. Industry leaders are also largely reluctant to be engaged in business related to national security. There is no other country in the world like this.

If we can properly utilize the talents of Japan's excellent civilian engineers for national security, Japan can be included in the AUKUS and cooperate in defense technology as a real part of the West. From now on, I believe that Japan must bring national security into the core of its industrial policy-making process.

Finally, there is the question of values and leadership. As I mentioned earlier, there is still a dark anger of anti-colonialism burning in the guts of the nations of the Global South. Japan did not become a colony and has only been subjected to racism, so I don't think we really know what their anger is about. After hundreds of years of being discriminated against because of the color of their skin and forced to work as slave labor in colonial farms and mines, their anger is not easily released. It is up to Japan to unleash that anger and nurture the emerging nations as leaders of the international liberal order.

Medium-sized countries like South Korea and Australia should be allowed to join the G7 in the future. It may be still too soon for South Korea to join the G7, because if the opposition Democratic Party of Korea (DPK) comes back to power, it will turn ideologically anti-American, anti-Japan, pro-China, and pro-North Korea again. I hear that Canada is being mean to Australia and saying it will not let her in, but I think this is a typical example of sisters quarreling when they grow up.

The main contenders in East Asia are India and Indonesia, and they will grow very rapidly. ASEAN as a whole and India will overtake Japan's economy in 10 years, so it is important to capture them. But India and Indonesia, as well as Brazil, are large, have strong egos, and will not always listen to the US. How to build up the new leadership of a multipolar international liberal order in this century is a big problem. The US probably would not like to include India and Brazil in the G7.

Although we are talking about the Global South, what we actually mean by it is the second wave of the industrial revolution worldwide. The countries that are riding this huge wave are becoming emerging powers. How to incorporate these new powers into the liberal international order is a major issue, and Japan must take the lead in bringing them together. Especially in the Asia-Pacific region, there is no single powerful leader, so I think we have to bring the leading Asia-Pacific nations together. At the same time, we must seriously

consider how to restrain China and Russia from using force unilaterally, how to enable Ukraine to win, and how to keep China from going to war over Taiwan.

**Toyoda:** I would like to ask Prof. Masuo the next question. The Xi era has been seen as challenging to the extent that it has been called “wolf-warrior diplomacy”. Amid the escalation of the US-China confrontation, there was the recent China-Japan-Korea summit. While there are concerns about armed reunification with Taiwan by China, the summit agreed on “commitment to the international order through the rule of law”. But what does China really think of a rules-based order?

**Masuo:** You have indicated an important point. I myself believe that “wolf-warrior diplomacy” was made because Chinese diplomats were ordered to protect Xi’s domestic authority, which had been damaged by the pandemic. On the other hand, how China thinks about the rule of law is an important issue. Simply saying, China is hostile to the “rules-based order” advocated often by the West gets us nowhere. In Chinese, it is always written in brackets. In other words, the Chinese authority judges it to be “a fake without substance”. In the Sino-Russian joint statements of March 2023 and May 2024, the two countries even argued that the countries implementing hegemony were advocating it.

The portion of the Joint Statement of the recent Trilateral Summit mentions, “We reaffirmed our commitment to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and to an international order based on the rule of law and international law.” Perhaps this wording itself was the outcome of the negotiations between the diplomats of the three countries. Here, for China, it is important that it was able to place the UN Charter before the “rule of law”, which Japan emphasizes. China, at least on the surface, is UN-oriented. It considers itself an authentic permanent member of the Security Council, having been part of the UN since its formation (actually, the People’s Republic of China participated in the UN Security Council only in 1971; prior to that, the Republic of China was its member representing all China). After World War II, Japan replaced the Japanese word for the UN from *rengo-koku* to *kokuren* to conceal its hostility toward itself, but in truth they are the same group of countries with the Allied Powers. In other words, for China, advocacy of the UN Charter coincides with its insistence that its own vested interests as a founder be defended. If the UN Charter is implemented “correctly” according to China’s wishes, China is happy. Nor is China totally opposed to the “rule of law”, though China’s interpretation of it actually differs greatly from that of the West. But I don’t think China understands this.

The Sino-Russian Joint Statement issued the week before this Trilateral Summit is a very interesting document. Here the two

countries state that “countries that espouse hegemony and power politics seek to replace and subvert the universally accepted international order based on international law with a ‘rules-based order’.” It presents a distorted worldview in which the Western powers are showing nothing but menace to the world order.

Another very interesting point in the statement, which is related to Japan, is the very end of the first section. Here it states that “Both sides remain resolutely committed to upholding the outcome of the victory in World War II and the postwar world order as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, and oppose the denial, distortion, and falsification of the history of World War II.” It goes on to specifically pledge that both countries will “educate people to a correct view of history” and even states that “both sides plan to solemnly celebrate the 80th anniversary in 2025 of the Chinese people’s anti-Japanese war against Japanese aggression and the Soviet Union’s victory in the Fatherland Defense War, and jointly promote a correct view of World War II history.”

What is of concern here is that since 2023 there has been a fairly active discourse in China that the San Francisco Peace Treaty should be revised. At the “Future of Asia” conference held by *Nihon Keizai Shimbun* in May 2023, Yang Bojiang, director of the Institute of Japanese Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, who was appointed by the Chinese Embassy in Japan to attend the conference, made such a bold statement unapologetically. The San Francisco Peace Treaty was, of course, concluded by Japan with the Allied Powers. But due to international circumstances at the time, China and the Soviet Union did not sign it. Recently, there has been a growing perception in China that the Chinese were the victors in World War II, having defeated Nazism, Fascism, and Japanese militarism, and should therefore have a better position in the UN. In the latest Sino-Russian Joint Declaration, China invites Russia to call for the same. And in order to promote such new claims, it is activating a new historical issue of World War II and the UN.

To put this abstract argument into a more realistic perspective, China is very concerned about reinforcement of the US-centered alliance network in the Indo-Pacific region, especially the actions taken by Japan and the US to strengthen the defense alignment in Japan’s southwest islands and integrated operations to keep an eye on Chinese military activities throughout the Pacific region, not just around Taiwan. Living in Fukuoka, I can clearly see that China has been rapidly strengthening its approach toward dissidents in Okinawa recently, mainly through the Chinese Consulate General in Fukuoka. China does not have a consulate in Okinawa, so the Consulate General in Fukuoka is in charge of Okinawa issues within the Chinese bureaucracy. China sends its agents, sometimes masquerading as academics, to Fukuoka and Okinawa under the cover of academic exchange. And it is the Consulate General that is orchestrating them.

In short, to bolster its security against the strengthened US-centered alliance network in the Indo-Pacific, China is pumping up a new history issue and infiltrating other country's domestic politics to offset its weak points. Under the cover of spreading a correct historical view of World War II around the world, it wants to reassert its position in the UN as a permanent member and create a system that will not allow others to challenge it. And in doing so, China will try to bring developing countries onto its side.

For Japan, this means that the Chinese have been trying to overthrow the existing international order that we have enjoyed since the end of the World War II. We have also learned that its new target for operating this strategy is summer 2025. We should increase our vigilance over it.

So, to sum up the whole thing, from China's point of view, the "rules-based order" is nothing but a deception, and it is even against the idea of adhering to it. That is how difficult it is to achieve the "rule of law" with China.

**Toyoda:** Prof. Aizawa, what kind of international order is Southeast Asia seeking?

**Aizawa:** I think there is at least a very charged sense of danger and crisis about the current international order. Perhaps, considering history since 1945, we may represent it as a peaceful period in the sense that there were no world wars, but from the perspective of the Global South or Southeast Asia, wars have been going on for a long time. The period known as the "Cold War" was a time of war in Southeast Asia, starting with the Vietnam War. When the US became the sole superpower, the war on terror was fought in the Global South all over the world, and now we have the problems in Ukraine and Gaza. It is the arrogant historical view of the G7 that the international order that has been created has been a peaceful era so far, and from the perspective of the rest of the world, excluding the developed countries, the previous international order did not guarantee peace.

This has been reaffirmed by the Syrian crisis in particular, and I believe that a major characteristic of the current situation is that it is filled with frustration over the dysfunctional nature of global governance and the deceptiveness of managing conflicts between major powers at the expense of peace in specific regions and small and medium-sized countries.

The question, then, is what kind of international order can be created to seek peace and stability for such countries. What we can do, at least as a group of nations inferior in military and economic power, is to raise our voices and try to make the international community more decentralized so that political legitimacy in the international community is not formed exclusively by the major powers. Specifically, we should try to foster political legitimacy

through regional institutions, and the best approach is to be involved as much as possible in setting the stage whenever there are negotiations on rulemaking or power coordination that may result in a transformation of the regional order.

If Southeast Asia seeks a new international order, the biggest problem it will face is disparities in various aspects. In particular, I think of disparities in access to science and technology. This is because science and technology will play an increasingly important role as a factor in shaping the new order. If advances in science and technology are accessible to people all over the world, they may reduce global disparities, but today science and technology have come to define national interests in great power competition. If more science and technology is viewed as a strategic resource and its fruits are monopolized by a few countries that have the funds available to develop it, the difficulties that countries had in accessing vaccines during the recent pandemic disaster are likely to occur more frequently in the future. Southeast Asia, and other countries in the Global South, are concerned that access to science and technology will become a lever in the formation of the security order and that they will be shut out of the tools.

Therefore, how do we manage science and technology? I believe that the core of a stable international order will be to create a mechanism to make science and technology not a tool for national security but a global commons, an international public good.

**Toyoda:** Prof. Kitaoka, you were ambassador and deputy permanent representative of Japan to the UN, so you know it well. There is a sense of powerlessness in the air about the UN, but in this age of rules the UN really needs to function. Japan has long sought to be a permanent member of the UN Security Council, but what do you think the UN should be, including that point?

**Kitaoka:** The UN is by nature, powerless, because it has no military power and no economic power of its own. It cannot even run a peacekeeping operation without cooperation with the member countries. In fact, to run any military force, you need something like a general staff headquarter, which operates 24/7. But the UN has no such thing.

Though the UN was designed to maintain the world order, five permanent members were appointed to take special responsibility for peace and security in the world. However, these five were soon in conflict with each other, which brought about the Cold War, and although there had been tension during the Cold War, the UN had been able to serve as a kind of balancer in the conflict between the two camps. As such, in the independence of many Asian and African countries, the UN played a relevant role.

So, what can the UN do now? It is still important as a venue to provide a forum to mobilize international public opinion because

there is no organization of this kind in the world other than the UN. In this regard, I think Japan should stay on the Security Council as a non-permanent member as long as possible. So far, Japan has been on the council longer than any other country, but when Japan's term ends at the end of this year, Japan will take the next nine years off, as announced by the government. This would be the longest break Japan has ever had. I think this is truly to be avoided. Because now that Japan is on the Security Council, when there is an incident in Palestine, for example, Japan can make a statement like the other members of the Security Council, and the global media may carry this message. The world will know about it, and it will be carried in Japan. If Japan were not a member of the Security Council, it could happen that no one would know what Japan thinks about what happens in Gaza. I think we should work more on educating the Japanese public and communicating to the world Japanese views on international affairs, and we should seek a way of staying longer in the Security Council for that purpose.

To this end, there were two proposals in 2005, Model A and Model B. Model A is, in essence, for Japan to become a permanent member. Model B is to get a semi-permanent position, for example for a term of about four years, with the possibility of re-election. In other words, if elected, Japan would serve for four years, and if re-elected, Japan would serve for eight years. So, I think we should seek a direction to stay longer by introducing Model B after taking a break for four years. Model A is not possible because even in 2005, when Japan's financial contribution to the UN was much larger and opposition from Russia and China was not so strong, it was not possible. We should change our strategy to Model B as soon as possible.

There is very strong public antipathy against the permanent members of the Security Council having veto power. If a resolution were to be proposed to limit the veto power at the Security Council, I believe that almost all the member countries except for the US, China, and Russia, might agree to it. One way to do this would be to abolish the veto completely, but even if that is impossible, it could be logically possible, though extremely difficult, to change the veto system so that any veto would have to be supported not by one country alone but by around two countries together. Also, the secretary general's capacity and authority are seriously declining now, and in order to deal with this, I think it is possible to add a more powerful staff around the secretary general.

In addition, Japan has no friends in the UN. Unless a country has its friends, its presence in the UN is limited. Europe has about 30 members, so it has a certain voice. Even the small countries of Singapore, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Jordan, and Costa Rica have formed a group called the S5, and when they speak as the S5, people listen to them a little. I think Japan should make a little more effort to communicate as a big mass by establishing a group with Southeast

Asian countries and Pacific Island countries.

## Next Steps for Japan

**Toyoda:** I would now like to ask you to talk about what Japan should do in these times. Many people are concerned about China trying to reunify with Taiwan by military force. I think this must not happen, but is it possible to avoid a Taiwan conflict? Prof. Masuo, what should Japan do to prevent this?

**Masuo:** I believe that the situation surrounding Taiwan is still uncertain and that we cannot confirm an emergency will definitely happen. There should be a way to prevent it. If China could invade Taiwan, when and under what conditions would this occur? One possibility is if China views itself to be capable of doing so. This includes both military and economic capacity. This condition would be met if the invasion is expected to succeed at a relatively small cost, or if the countermeasures taken by the Western powers, particularly by the US and Japan, would not impact China that much.

I believe that Japanese experts have discussed a lot about our national defense capability in relation to China. To strengthen deterrence, Japan has been boosting integrated military operations together with the US and facilitating other ways of cooperation. Perhaps a little more consideration will be given to its economic strength.

China itself is no doubt concerned about its own economic problems. It appears to have been preparing for war-time economic control over the past several years, putting so much emphasis on food security. If such preparations progress and a situation arises in which China sees its own economic development as continuing even if its supply chains are cut off from those of the West, while Japan's economic strength is considered insignificant by them, it will be an incentive for them to initiate an invasion over Taiwan. Reestablishing Japan's robust economy is very important for increasing Japan's attractiveness to China. I believe that more can be done in this effort.

Another important factor that impacts China's invasion is the desire of the regime. The Xi administration has not yet firmly decided to "liberate" Taiwan. China does not actively want to reunify Taiwan by force. Many pundits have said that this is a last resort, and I believe the administration is of the same view. China is more likely to invade if the Taiwanese independence movement accelerates and its friction with the West becomes so extreme that Beijing believes it no longer needs to fear a breakdown of relations with the West. The likelihood of an invasion also increases when internal political conditions become so desperate and the Xi regime believes it needs to bolster domestic nationalism at any cost. These are all fairly extreme cases.

On the other side, I am concerned about the recent sharp decline



in exchanges between China and the rest of the world, especially with the West. In Hong Kong, the National Security Ordinance was passed in March, and we have already seen the first arrests based on this. Perhaps it has already become dangerous for us to go to Hong Kong and Macau. I often exchange views with Western researchers, but discussions between them and China are also rapidly decreasing. So there has been almost no real discussion among the experts of the true feeling that “No, we don’t really want this to happen, but we can’t help it because your country is doing this to us.” Chinese researchers have no choice but to write reports based on information they can get on the controlled Internet that asserts “Western countries are trying to encircle China to continue their domination.” Their judgment of the situation has become biased unfortunately.

The recent Sino-Russian Joint Statement does not logically explain why Xi would support the Russians to that extent. Unlike Russia, China is not at war, has deep economic exchanges with the free world, and is a beneficiary of the existing international order. It is not in China’s interest to depart from the current international order by being on the side of Russia. I guess the number of people within China, who have a proper understanding of the situation overseas, who can write fair reports and make rational policy recommendations to the top, has been decreasing.

I think Japan could make a little more effort on these issues in relation to information flows. Recently, the government has been very negative about joint research with China, and bilateral exchange programs have almost disappeared. However, this is precisely the right moment that we should make the effort to invite Chinese researchers to discuss things over drinks in Japan. It is much cheaper and easier than purchasing defense equipment. I believe that such a steady exchange is now desperately needed.

**Toyoda:** I believe that Japan has a long history of cooperation with Southeast Asia. Prof. Aizawa, is it possible for Japan to walk with the people of the Global South in Southeast Asia?

**Aizawa:** It is essential that we walk together, and not only walk together, but build a deeper relationship. Rather than a de facto alliance or a security alliance, we must work together with the intention of forming a social alliance with Southeast Asia. Furthermore, I would even propose that Japan should seek to join ASEAN. If we are to leverage the trust between ASEAN countries and Japan, that has been fostered by the long-standing cooperative relationships cultivated by our predecessors, this ambitious proposal could show and prove the political will in building up a new relationship, a relationship no longer relying heavily on economic cooperation and direct investment, as has been the case in the past. Frankly speaking, we should seek a relationship in which Southeast Asia can help Japan with its economic and social challenges, and we

should be prepared to change Japan’s domestic legal and customary settings to demonstrate our earnestness and seriousness in this regard.

One bold idea to showcase this point is to reform foreign language selection in university entrance examinations. Currently, the Standard university entrance exam includes German and French, as well as Chinese and Korean. I think it would send a strong message if we could make language choices such as Vietnamese and Indonesian as well. If Japan is serious about seeking human resources from Southeast Asia, this would be a very significant positive signal giving strong social legitimacy to the linguistic background of such human resources. I believe that such a decision would demonstrate Japan’s seriousness and willingness to form a social alliance, and would be the foundation for building a new relationship of trust in the coming years.

Remember, it is not only Japan that is trying to attract Southeast Asia. The same is true everywhere else in any region, including the US, which is looking for talents in Southeast Asia. Therefore, if Japan remains idle, it will soon lose out in this competition in attracting Southeast Asian talent. At the moment, Japan has a relationship of trust with Southeast Asia. That is why Japan must now take full advantage of its existing relationships with Southeast Asia and change.

The last thing I must say is that there is not much time left for Japan to further tighten relations with Southeast Asia. If anyone in Southeast Asia can think positively about forming a social alliance with Japan there, it is probably people in their 40s today, the group of people who were born in the 1980s and grew up in the 1990s, who at least knew Japan when it still had power, are just now in their 40s and now becoming political and economic leaders. If this group is taken over by the younger generation, and Japan’s perspective on Southeast Asia does not change, I believe Japan’s credibility and attractiveness will continue to decline. I think there are only 3-10 years left for Japan to send a signal that it wants to build a stronger relationship with Southeast Asia, and for this signal to be socially and politically effective.

**Toyoda:** I would like to ask Prof. Kitaoka if, looking at the current situation which could turn into a clash of powers, it is possible for Japan to uphold the rule of law? Also, with reference to your book published a few years ago titled “A Western-Pacific Union: Japan’s New Geopolitical Strategy”, what kind of role could this Western-Pacific Union play in the new international order?

**Kitaoka:** As far as the rule of law is concerned, the international community is an anarchical society because there are no police or courts. Meanwhile, it is the developed countries that are leading the rule of law today; the rule of law that the EU and other countries are

advocating for is too far advanced from the point of view of developing countries. Take, for example, the issue of gender. Gender equality is one of the fundamental principles, but such equality will not be immediately accepted in the Muslim world.

For example, people believe that women must be protected and are not allowed to go afar. As a result, they cannot go to school, leaving the literacy rate very low for woman. What do we, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) do in Pakistan? Rather than criticizing this belief straightforwardly, we build small schools in the neighborhoods of villages to encourage women's education. Instead of simply advocating for law and criticizing the developing nations for their lack of law, we should take a more long-term, indirect and conciliatory approach to compromise with the developing nations' culture, and I think it should be the responsibility of developed countries not to provoke antipathy from the developing countries by simply advocating for the rule of law while being reluctant to improve their social, political and economic system. I believe that Japan is the only developed country that has not done such a thing.

Another thing I find very regrettable in relations with developing nations is the actual lack of academic and scholarly exchanges with China. Everyone thinks that if you go to China and speak too frankly about any international political issue, which could be interpreted as criticism against the Chinese government, you may be arrested by the Chinese authorities and not be able to come back home. So, we have to discuss it outside of China. We should be able to openly and vigorously discuss about what China is doing in the world. For example, in the UN Charter, it says "national self-determination". This means that Taiwan should not be threatened by force. And there is the Uyghur issue on alleged violations of human rights, and China also has many areas where it could be severely criticized. These things should be discussed with Chinese scholars. I often say that the mainland Chinese political authorities did not actually rule Taiwan for that long. The longest period was from the beginning of the 17th century, and it was only for two decades or so that they effectively controlled the mountainous areas and even the west coast of Taiwan. These facts should be discussed properly with Chinese scholars.

Now, the Western-Pacific Union you are asking about is a concept I came up with six or seven years ago. To have a big voice in the international community, you must have a group. Japan is part of the JUSCANZ group (Japan, US, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand), but this is a group that listens to what the US says. If we have a conflict with the US, the US will leave the group, so in the end JUSCANZ will not be the right venue to express our voice. It is with Southeast Asian countries that we can express our opinions most frankly. I used to think that Japan should join ASEAN. I think it would be better for Japan to work together with each of the ASEAN countries to the point where we are on equal relations.

Basically, we have common interests. After all, Southeast Asia is

also afraid of China, but does not want to become a subordinate of China. To some extent, Southeast Asia know that the US military presence in this region is necessary in this regard. But Southeast Asia would not trust either China or the US. They believe that Japan is the one they can trust. Therefore, it is important for Japan to create special relationships with Southeast Asia in various places. We should build the social alliance that Prof. Aizawa mentioned with Southeast Asia. For example, Japan is supporting the creation of coast guard agencies in various countries in Southeast Asia. Since the Japan Coast Guard is not a military force, JICA can cooperate with them. This can serve as a kind of deterrence to China and improve information sharing among us.

Also, several years ago, when Indonesia experienced a major earthquake and people from all over the world rushed to help. During the second phase of reconstruction assistance, the Indonesian side decided, "We can't get together with various leaders to think about reconstruction, so we're going to ask Japan to do this; we're going to ask JICA to do this." I hope we can somehow create such a relationship. What is important to deepen our relationship with these Southeast Asian countries is closer interaction. I would like to see a special study abroad program, for example, the creation of a graduate university with Southeast Asian students as its core, and more frequent dialogues among young researchers.

I myself have participated in various dialogues with Japan and China, Japan and the US, Japan and the United Kingdom, Japan and Germany, Japan and France, but very few with Southeast Asia. It is the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry that is interacting with Southeast Asia. We need to expand and deepen this to the academic level. Southeast Asia has several countries that are now among the prime, emerging economies. Indonesia, of course, but also Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam, and the Philippines are among them. We must try to attract these to the democratic side, the internationalist side, as much as possible. It is important not to let them go to the Chinese side, and there is a tug of war here. I think it is important to guide them in the direction of joining the OECD, not the BRICS.

**Toyoda:** In closing on this matter, I would like to ask Prof. Kanehara how Japan should approach the restructuring of the international order, especially with regard to the Global South.

**Kanehara:** For the first time in 200 years, the advanced industrial democracies are shrinking in proportion. The countries of the first wave of the industrial revolution are beginning to shrink, and a huge second wave is emerging like a tsunami. We call those emerging countries growing on this second wave the Global South. How to incorporate new countries in our liberal international order to maintain the balance of power relations to our advantage is extremely important. For Japan there is no alternative to the Japan-

US alliance. However, the Japan-US alliance alone is no longer sufficient to cope with the rise of China, so the question is what to do now. South Asia, starting with India, which is gaining strength, and Southeast Asia are important partners for Japanese diplomacy in the immediate future.

Since the Meiji Era, Japan has only looked up to the developed countries of the West. Finally, now our eyes are beginning to look down toward the South, but then we know nothing about those countries, neither about the history of Indonesia nor about the history of Vietnam, for example.

Today, a large number of Southeast Asians are entering Japan as foreign workers. For Japan, which is experiencing a population decline of several hundred thousand every year, it is inevitable to bring them into the labor market. There are 2.5 million foreign residents in Japan today, and this number will probably increase to about 10 million, or 10% of the population.

From now on, we must engage in earnest and serious diplomacy with Southeast Asia. The Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs is also sending its most talented ambassadors to Southeast Asia and West Asia. I think we have to deal with Southeast Asia and Western Asia with the same weight as we once did with Europe and the US.

Let me say a few words about the rule of law. The term “rule of law” involves values. The countries of the Global South now think that what the West says about the rule of law, democracy, and liberalism is a double standard. The countries of the Global South think, “Don’t lecture us now about the ‘rule of law’ as if you were always behaving respectfully. You were discriminating against us in the past.” It is true that in the 19th century, the liberal international order was centered on the West and was a local and partial order with clear regional and racial limits, but in the latter half of the 20th century, thanks to the efforts of people such as Gandhi, who helped lead India to independence, King, who spearheaded the civil rights movement, and Mandela, who overthrew apartheid, the liberal order has spread and become universal on a global scale.

There is no order that can replace the liberal international order. The core principle is that we are all equal and free, have a right to life and to pursue happiness and realize ourselves, and that we establish a government for that purpose and its legitimacy is based upon peoples’ free will and consent. This principle can very well go along with Asian political tradition. Nobody is against this except dictators. Therefore, I think we need to tell the emerging countries that we must support this together.

Europe and the US are radical, and when it comes to human rights and democracy, they are quick to impose sanctions, which is counterproductive. As in the case of corporal punishment in schools, students who are beaten resent it more than they feel remorse. Japan must be responsible for persuading Asian and African nations of the value of liberalism, democracy, and the rule of law, as these

are ideas that are commonly associated with the traditional values of Asians; they are universal, not just European. Only the Japanese, as Asians, can say that these ideas have been held by Asians for centuries. I think we need to continue to issue such a message.

Finally, I would like to mention the actual generational divisions within Japan, since it is because of these divisions that Japanese diplomacy has not been as effective as it could have been. People of the older generation beyond their 90s who knew about the Japanese Empire believe that the racial attitudes and colonial histories of the white democracies embodied a double standard. Then came the leftist generation in their 70s and 80s steeped in radical socialist and communist ideology. A liberal generation like ours, in our 50s and 60s, followed and we are the generation now responsible for Japan. We need to look squarely at our values and say out loud that Japan has practiced modern democracy, liberalism, and the rule of law for a long time now and has helped the liberal international order to spread on a global scale. In order to do so, I think we must quickly overcome the generational divisions within our country.

One last thing about Taiwan, if you look at international power relations as a whole, especially in terms of the size of the economy, it is two to one between the West as a whole and China, and the West is still strong right now. If we stay united, I do not think China will start an adventurous war. It is vital that the West does not become divided. I don’t think China is yet strong enough to start a Taiwan war and win in the end, but it can anyway start one. Once a war breaks out, there is no other way but to push back with military force. The human and material damage that would result from a Taiwan contingency is beyond imagination, so it is very important not to let it start.

The Taiwanese, who had lived in Taiwan before the end of WWII, are known as “native Taiwanese”. They are people who lived a very different history from that of mainland China for 150 years. They are brave people. After the Sino-Japanese War ended and Taiwan was ceded to Japan, the native Taiwanese fought bravely against the Japanese, though the Qing soldiers swiftly returned home. After Chiang Kai-shek tried to move to Taiwan, they again rioted. Each time, tens of thousands of people died. For the indigenous Taiwanese people, Chiang Kai-shek was after all a tyrannical intruder. Their feelings of national self-determination came to the fore in the constitutional amendments and free elections of 1994 and 1996. The native Taiwanese people still have a complicated fractured identity, but the growth of the “Free Taiwan” identity has not stopped.

The freed Taiwanese people aspire to national self-determination. On the other hand, a situation is being set up where China can invade Taiwan with its massive military power. In this context, the status quo must be maintained. Japan must say to Taiwan, “We must avoid a war,” and clearly say to China, “We support the status quo.” The tension over the Taiwan Strait will continue until China becomes a

democracy one day. And I think we have no choice but to resolve to hang on for maybe 100 years.

## Conclusion

**Toyoda:** Finally, I would like to ask each of you to briefly state what you value most.

**Kitaoka:** Since power is necessary to maintain order, I believe we should enhance our deterrence capability and be careful not to provoke China, while at the same time strengthening our power so that if something happens, we will not remain silent. It would take a long time. When the US came to Japan in 1945, its first goal was to make Japan a country that would never again be able to produce the Zero fighter. That still lingers today.

Many products are today dual-use, military and civilian. To be or not to be a weapon is an almost impossible boundary. The strengthening of Japan's industrial capacity by collaboration among universities, the private sector and the government will lead to the strengthening of its military and deterrence. I believe we should strengthen our military power while making it clear that we will not use it first.

**Kanehara:** I believe that the cornerstone is to maintain a military balance with China by building up Japan's conventional forces more and more, based on the Japan-US alliance.

In terms of the economy, we need to stop thinking in terms of a national economy, but instead think first and foremost about the wealth of rising Asia as a whole in the context of free trade. We need to change our thinking so that Japan can absorb the growing wealth of Asia. We also need to correct the 80-year postwar mistake of not utilizing the technological capabilities of academia and the business community for national security at all. Our military, industry, and academia are too much divided. This is not good. We need to take it to the next level, such as producing all semiconductors for making cutting-edge weapons domestically. I think there are still big barriers in the way of industry-academia-government cooperation for security technology, such as the Science Council of Japan.

Finally, back to values again, I think we need to explain freedom and democracy in Japan's own words. John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau are important, but what is it that the Japanese have been seeking for 150 years after the Meiji Era? Wasn't it freedom and democracy? If we cannot explain in our own words what we have struggled to achieve since the Meiji Era, no one in the Global South will come closer to us. If Japan cannot talk about freedom, democracy, and the rule of law in its own words, it will be difficult for Japan to become an international leader in the enhancement of universal values.

**Masuo:** There are many things that can be done, but I think the most important thing is to develop human resources that can work well in contributing to the international community as a whole. The next 10 years will probably be the most difficult period for the international community. But after that, a new generation will be reproduced. Japan has a good number of human resources who can engage with Western society, but this is not enough in times of change. It is crucial for us to develop a large number of people who understand the various positions of developing countries, and who can discuss and negotiate issues on equal terms with Russia and China that have completely different worldviews.

**Aizawa:** I still think that Japan must design and articulate our new model of the social contract: in other words, a social contract that pursues prosperity, security, and freedom, all three at the same time. Also, this social contract is not only for the Japanese but also for those who come to and live in Japan. I agree with Prof. Kanehara that it is very important to explain freedom in Japan's own language and terms.

We are now in a time when the relationship between state and society is being transformed by digital technology. This is not only a time of change in the international order, but a time of change in social order and both are intertwined. Each country, therefore, is looking at others to see what kind of society and state relationship each will create. I believe Japan must create a model that other countries can subscribe to – a new type of social contract that is suitable for this era. I think that this approach, dealing with social order as an international order, will have a great geopolitical effect.

**Toyoda:** Thank you very much for your views in this discussion. **JS**