

In Pursuit of Tolerance for Diversified Cultures and Religions



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Introduction

With the multipolarisation in international political structures since the end of the Cold War era, grave forms of friction and conflict have been on the rise in the international arena. It is clear that international relationships are going to become even more interdependent in the 21st century as a result of economic globalization and the information revolution. It is also clear that the destructiveness of science and technology (not only that of conventional weapons), arguably an agent of international conflict, is going to grow rapidly. The international disputes that erupt will thus result in an unimaginable amount of damage to the economic and military sectors. Consequently, containing outbreaks of international conflict can be no less than a matter of dire urgency in the 21st century. The same is also true regarding conflicts within a single nation that occur in extreme form or have a high probability of becoming extreme, and that exert a significant impact on international stability.

These kinds of conflicts are often deeply rooted in the intolerant attitudes shown by one of the disputing parties towards heterogeneity in terms of culture and religion held by the other party. Though it may seem that countless conflicts throughout history were directly caused by

cultural and religious differences, this is not really the case nowadays. The majority of such disputes begin as conflicts of interest in the political or economic spheres. The emotional response to these conflicts, then, is often expressed in the form of cultural or religious intolerance. This does not necessarily mean, however, that the importance of the role played by cultural and religious intolerance in the escalation of conflicts is going to decline.

The immune systems of advanced animal species are equipped at the DNA level to perform the function of distinguishing between the body and elements that are foreign to the body, and to expel those foreign elements. If we assume that the origin of the kind of intolerance discussed above is thus deeply rooted in our physiological make-up, then efforts to contain intolerance would run counter to our instincts and result in serious difficulties. Even if that were the case, however, the human race has no choice but to conquer these difficulties in order to overcome the challenges of the 21st century.

Since intolerance is often attributed to ignorance or misunderstanding of the other parties, the logical conclusion is that an effective means of combating it is to

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Cultural Diversity and the Dynamism of History

By Sasaki Takeshi

How should we approach today's diversity of culture and religion? How might we foster tolerance for diversity? Difficult questions, indeed. A meaningful discussion is impossible without first having a clear picture of the complex historical underpinnings of each one, and I believe it is necessary to treat specific phenomena with due caution when developing a general theory. For example, in recent years in Japan we have witnessed an increasing number of bizarre incidents involving cults such as *Aum Shinrikyo*, while at the same time arguments in favor of conserving Japanese culture - in all of its forms from corporate to traditional - are as popular as ever. It is reckless to attempt to discuss all these separate phenomena in the same breath. The social ecology of culture and religion is not a static thing, but changes day by day, and making sense of its constant metamorphosis of form and function is accordingly a never-ending task. In this essay, I will attempt to approach this problem with



March for independence in Dili, the capital of East Timor

Photo : Kyodo News

reference in particular to 20th century Japan.

I. The 20th Century and the Rise of Awareness of Diversity

One of the most salient features of

the 20th century is the fact that history unfolded on a truly worldwide scale, that events in one part of the world came to affect those in other parts to such an extent that to discuss one's own society or history without making any reference to world events became

provide accurate information to disputing parties about their opponents. Without a doubt, the increasing exchange of information has yielded a degree of mutual understanding, greater in this century than in the 19th century, and greater in the latter half of this century than in the first half. Nonetheless, it would be optimistic to expect intolerance to be alleviated in proportion to the rapid increase in the amount of information that is being shared as a result of advances in the information revolution.

"Clearly Francis Fukuyama and Samuel P. Huntington view Islam as the greatest challenger to Western values in the post-Communist world. However, they do not attempt to theoretically analyse the reasons that the various ideological parts of the Islamic faith pose a threat to Western values."¹

The lack of use of information on Islam in spite of its plentiful availability is a typical example of the tendency

toward a phenomenon referred to in classical psychological terms as the selective absorption of information. In other words, information of little interest to the individual is ignored or discarded.

"Alexis de Tocqueville, who visited the United States in the 1830s wrote: 'So, of all countries in the world, America is the one in which the precepts of Descartes are least studied and best followed.' Even now, the United States is a country in which transcendental thought is strong, and a country that believes in a single justice, does not doubt progress in the modern sense, and has a strong Cartesian tendency. Until very recently, the Soviet Union, which raised the banner for another concept of modern progress, was a worthy opponent, but now neither Japan nor the European countries can challenge the force of this belief in progress."²

"The civic morality emphasised by Thomas Jefferson was inextricably intertwined with the concept of freedom.

meaningless. In former times, diversity was by and large accepted as a given, on the premise that regions and nations are by nature isolated and separate entities, but this world order changed for good in the 20th century. Of course, the occasional rise of empires sometimes destroys independence based on the premise of isolation and separation, as the history of the Mongol empire illustrates, but looking back through the ages, such examples are if anything exceptions in history. The 20th century was however different. In terms of their geographical spread, temporal scale, and depth of social penetration, events occurring in different regions of the world began to significantly impact the lives of people throughout the world. The main reason for this is the way in which stunning advances in science and technology brought about unprecedented changes in our daily lives and enabled a heretofore unimaginable telescoping of time and space.

Even Europe and the United States, who could justifiably regard themselves as the principal players in the recent history of the world, found that the way in which history increasingly tended to boomerang on them was troublesome at times. Imagine, then, the tremendous impact that technology and rapid change must have had on those regions and nations who were on the fringe of world events, and found themselves being dragged willy-nilly onto the world stage. Contact with the modern age put enormous pressures on their political and economic institutions, pressures which often resulted in their colonization.

The culture of such nations was also affected deeply, the shock of contact often bringing about a crisis in identity. This emotional and intellectual stress was great not only for colonized regions, but also for countries such as Japan which appeared to be very successful in this historical challenge. Natsume Soseki (1867~1917), Japan's most famous Meiji-era literary figure, warned astutely that the impact of the modern era had left Japan emotionally scarred, and voiced his concern about the path that such a Japan would take. The reason for the enduring popularity of Russian literature in Japan was the often vivid depiction of battles for identity fought between supporters of the Slavic and western world views.

Moreover the emergence of a single stage for the enactment of history has had the effect of heightening awareness in the people of different regions or nations of their distinctiveness vis-a-vis the rest of the world. The more that a particular nation or region considers its role on the world stage, the more its people will be forced to ponder their own diversity and identity. And the more successful a nation is, the more it will be tempted to reject the role or rules assigned to it, and instead assert what it claims to be its "real self." Victory in the Russo-Japanese War led Japan to fall into just such a temptation, resulting in internal divisions that eventually led to the tragic political events of the 1930s. The most barbaric and simplistic form that the assertion of identity can take is racism or ethnic hatred, and sure enough the beginning of the 20th century

witnessed a surge in racism which in time threatened to destroy human society. It is clear that a major theme in the history of the 20th century has been the tension between the forceful imperative for unification on the one hand and aggressive claims of distinctiveness on the other.

Japan too made strenuous efforts to play a major role on the world stage, sometimes eagerly pursuing a strategy of rapid westernization, at other times engaging in rapid nationalism, but whatever behavior it took becomes understandable to some extent against the backdrop of world history in the 20th century. Thus, we see how China's defeat in the Opium War made a deep impression on Japan's leaders, triggering in them a deep fear of colonization by the Great Powers. It was such a fear that forced them to thoroughly rethink their system of government, which was built on an isolationist stance. The leaders of the preceding Edo period had used the premise of isolation to build a system that succeeded superbly in containing all social and political dynamism, as a result of which Japan enjoyed a period of unbroken peace lasting an unprecedented 200 years. But this system, which so brilliantly combined isolation from outside influences with internal stability (or stagnation, if you will), a system which in the final analysis was characterized by the naive complacency of its creators, was to crumble abruptly in the face of growing pressure from external events.

According to a recent report, Japan's economy grew more than that of any other country in the world during the

For example, what Sir Isaiah Berlin called 'negative freedom,' or the freedom to do anything you want to do including making judgments about politics and religion without the intervention of any other person, even given the existence of an omnipotent God, may be self-evident in the context of Anglo-Saxon values. Without even mentioning Englishmen John Locke and John Stewart Mill, when we consider these things, which were born of thinkers like Benjamin Constant de Rebecque and de Tocqueville from France, a country which experienced the bloodshed of the French Revolution, it may be said that a keen sense of 'the scope of a minimal inviolate personal freedom' has been cultivated in the modern Western world, drawing upon the Christian tradition. Regardless of the propriety of that assessment, it at least explains the origins of the concern over human rights that is a feature of contemporary U.S. diplomacy. However, sometimes in the world of Islam, freedoms and rights are not thought of

in this way. Islam, which recognises the equality of all people before God, is wholly different from Anglo-Saxon democracy, but does not rule out the possibility for its own 'theocratic democracy.' Because Islam is a belief system about the authority of the sacred laws of God, it cannot unconditionally approve of the right of people to freely choose their own belief systems and to live without being bound by religious prohibitions, such as condemnation of Islamic doctrine."³ Also, "even in the new millennium it would be unthinkable for Muslims to try to implement the kind of separation of church and state that Europe carried out during the 16th and 17th centuries in an attempt to redefine the relationship between God and humankind and the relationships between people."³

"But the non-Western cultures and civilizations, with their long history, have at least a certain degree of

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20th century. And yet, almost all of the foreigners who visited Japan in the last years of the Edo period and the beginning of the Meiji era had the same to say about the Japanese - that they were a lazy people. Nowhere in the reports of foreign observers was there any hint that the Japanese were capable of such dramatic success, which strongly suggests that the popular image of the Japanese as "tireless workaholics" is little more than myth, or at the very best, a product of recent history. The same can be said of the image of Japanese as a "warlike people"; to liken present-day Japanese to their counterparts of the 1930s is nothing more than simplistic demagoguery.

What we can say now with some certainty is that the social diversity of a particular group, nation or region is to a large extent "manufactured," a product of history closely connected with the concrete economic and political circumstances of the nation or region concerned. There is in fact a large historical element to almost all social diversity, but in contrast to the past when the slower pace of change gave such identity the appearance of having "grown" naturally, the frenetic pace of change in the 20th century has made us more keenly aware of its "manufactured" nature. Taking 20th century Japan as an example, we find in the first half-century an inordinate emphasis on militarism, while life in Japan in the latter half-century has been dominated by economic endeavors. The success of the Japanese economy led in the 1980s to a great deal of theorizing about the apparent uniqueness of the Japanese

economic system, but while this system looks on the surface to be deeply embedded in Japanese history and social mores, it is now common knowledge that its history goes back little further than fifty years. In fact, Japan's economic system before the 1920s, far from being dominated and controlled by bureaucrats, was much closer to an Anglo-Saxon model. Moreover the system, which until ten years ago was considered to be almost inseparable from Japanese national identity, has in recent years become the butt of criticism as a system that serves only to benefit the bureaucracy and other parties with vested interests. Japan's social system has frequently been explained as a manifestation of some unique Japanese character, but the fact is that this Japanese character is more often than not an artifice which has been "invented" to provide support for and justification of the social system. This way of thinking encourages an attitude of smugness which, when the system loses its muscle, serves only to deepen the sense of dependency and provoke the kind of identity crisis that we have been witnessing in Japan since the beginning of the 1990s.

In contrast to the above, it is possible to argue for the existence of cultural differences and distinctiveness which are much more independent of the prevailing economic and political system at any given juncture in history. The most obvious examples are moral values or religious beliefs that have become established over a long period of time, together with traditional customs that are often the products of those beliefs. Such

cultural elements could perhaps be better described as having "grown" naturally as opposed to being "manufactured," and as such are far less likely to be affected by the twists and turns of history. These beliefs and values undoubtedly influence individual behavior and have important consequences for society over the long term. Japan is no exception in this respect, being regarded as possessing its own unique identity, but insofar as that identity is not closely connected to any particular religious belief system, it is highly elusive, giving rise to Japan's reputation for inscrutability. It is in fact this very elusiveness which has attracted the Japanese people's attention to their own character. Maruyama Masao, the world-renowned authority on the history of Japanese thought, identifies what he calls an "*basso ostinato* (ancient layer)" in Japanese consciousness, and argues that this "*basso ostinato*" has served to dampen or otherwise control the influence of foreign religious beliefs and ideologies on Japanese thought.

When the influence of this kind of cultural diversity and identity is limited to personal interests and everyday life, it rarely warrants discussion. When, however, a clear political or social function is attached to traditional beliefs and values, they can easily become confused with the historically "manufactured" elements mentioned earlier. For example a sudden threat from outside might result in an appeal to the power of tradition, leading to the use of social mores as a political weapon. Had

consistency. This, however, will not be apparent through the spectacles of modern progressivism. What will be apparent will only be the logic of a 'state of deficiency,' which is to say that the observer is aware that something remains unobserved when seen through these spectacles. Of course, the spectacles of modern progressivism are excellent, but they cause a number of biases and oversights. In the first place, it is impossible for humanity to have absolutely clear spectacles. And if this is the case, there is no way to proceed but to compare and contrast what we see by wearing the various spectacles."⁴ This is the case where the Islamic world is looking at the Western world, or the other way around.

"As long as the United States tries to sustain its progressive / transcendentalist tendency, there will be no means for the American people to orient their own intellectual position other than as either an intellectual conversion of the world or intellectual isolation. Thus

there is a danger that the United States, in dealing with international questions, will rely on abstract concepts and reject other kinds of ideas."²

"It would be natural for the Muslim community to detest being instructed by Westerners priding themselves in justice and good faith even in the most excellent of democracies. This is because they have developed a sense of identity in which they share a common fate, for better or for worse, with despots who share the same language and belief system. The 16th century Moroccan legal scholar Al-Wansharessy aptly wrote that 'a Muslim tyrant is preferable to Christian justice'."⁶

"Is it because of this quality, which does not start with a single justice, that the United States became particularly irritated with the Japanese way of thinking? Japan is in no way a country that rejects change; it adapts to change. But the adaptive changes Japan makes do not follow previously determined principles. The so-

Shinto not been used as a tool to promote national policies, it would likely never have become the subject of so much discussion. In short, religious beliefs and traditional customs have little political significance unless they are deliberately employed as a means of establishing a group identity, but once they are used in such a way, they have to pay the political consequences. Japan's Emperor system owes its survival in part to its isolation for much of its history from the political arena, but when the system was given a central role in politics with the Meiji Restoration, it was once more automatically exposed to political risks. One could say that for Japan the 20th century was characterized by the political exploitation of cultural resources, that it was a century of inexorable, politically motivated mythmaking. With its relative stability/stagnation threatened by outside pressures, Japan embarked on the path of deliberately politicizing its apolitical customs and social mores.

II. The Upsurge in Assertion of Cultural Identity in the Post-Cold War Era

It was Edmund Burke who argued famously that the French revolution was the first revolution to have been instigated by theoretical arguments, and by and large the 20th century inherited that current. People came to realize that theory and ideology, far from reflecting reality, had the power to "create" it. Ironically Marxism, an ideology which maintains among other

claims that economic sub-structure will determine ideology, demonstrated a remarkable ability to change society and "create" a new reality. When ideology is combined with the power of the state, it has proved to be relatively easy to "create" a certain reality, and the Cold War was in fact a dangerous game played out under the premise that it was eminently possible to use ideology to "create" reality. And it proved possible to make not only the political and economic system, but also a nation's culture part of that reality. However, the "creation" of a reality by theory does not necessarily result in a reality possessing its own diversity and distinctiveness. On the contrary, such experiments invariably promote homogeneity and uniformity, and the Cold War made effective use of ideology to promote an enforced uniformity on an unprecedented world-wide scale.

Moreover both liberalism and socialism were hampered by the content of their ideologies when faced with such problems as ethnic differences. Liberalism is naturally tolerant of diversity, but being a basically individualistic ideology, displays a keen aversion to any debates which treat groups as a given reality. And socialism regards ethnic distinctiveness as a problem that needs to be overcome in the course of history, as a result of which it has tended to avoid dealing directly with the subject. Proponents of both of these ideologies seem to have adopted the attitude that with the defeat of fascism, ethnic distinctions basically became a "problem of the past." The

Cold War managed through ideology and military power to keep a lid on problems of ethnic and cultural diversity. As a result, the end of the Cold War, far from bringing about a solution to such problems, succeeded only in exposing them once more to the light of day. Particularly in the former socialist nations where the economic and political systems had collapsed, appeals to ethnic affiliation proved to be highly effective in bringing people together, as a result of which the free expression of ethnicity came to be regarded as an almost inseparable element of democratic government. Moreover the upsurge in ethnicity had a snowball effect, stimulating similar feelings in one ethnic group after another, and to such an extent that independence movements and ethnic cleansing escalated in tandem, feeding into and off of each other, as we saw in the tragic events following the break-up of Yugoslavia.

The end of the Cold War had two major effects on the power of states. Firstly, since the Cold War had had the effect of freezing national boundaries by upholding the status quo in the name of international stability, the end of the Cold War meant that such constraints no longer operated. The effects of this were felt most tragically in Africa, where without anyone attempting to mediate, one bloody ethnic dispute after another took place. (If any such disputes had occurred during the Cold War era, either the United States or Russia or their proxies would have stepped in to bring the area concerned under their sphere of influence.)

*called American revisionists always point this out as Japan's problem. Certainly, given the present rapidly changing international situation, there is a danger that the Japanese pattern of gradual adaptation will cause serious friction. At the same time, dealing with specific problems one by one, without rejecting them ideologically, may be Japan's strong point."*⁵

*"Considering the question more broadly, with reference to the United States and Japan, what is now most necessary to create an international society that incorporates various cultures and races? Until now, the usual answer has been that an abstract, universal framework is needed, which can accommodate the uniqueness of individual cultures. Even if such a framework could be developed, it would bring with it difficulties almost like those of a new 'super-religion'."*⁵

"Until now, the overwhelming military and economic force of Western culture has blocked viewpoints

(spectacles) other than those originating in the West. From now on, however, with the decline in the significance of military force and the spread of economic power, if humanity is to continue to exist, all cultural units (natio) will have to search for a way to coexist and understand each other. Non-Western countries will have to create societies unlike the West, and Westerners will have to accept the polymorphism of such a future world. It is erroneous to imagine that in a world with thousands, or rather tens of thousands, of years of history, all societies will gradually become identical. No doubt 'mutual understanding' is necessary [for dealing with a world that is not converging simply toward homogenisation], but simply repeating this mantra is insufficient. What is really necessary is to redefine what 'understanding' is, and to do this, [a] methodology must be created that demands tolerance for the wearing of

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Secondly, the end of the Cold War freed borders to market penetration, and accordingly heralded a rapid globalization of the market economy. Governments were forced to restructure their economies and adopt policies that were attuned to the so-called global standard, and affiliation to East or West was no longer of any relevance. Viewed in this light, it is no coincidence that the end of the Cold War also signaled an intensification in economic friction between Japan and the United States. Moreover, the emphasis of the global standard shifted from the opening up of markets to regulation of economic activity according to the rules of the financial market, and nations found their authority suddenly subordinated to the vagaries of the international money markets. The fact that government bonds came to be rated on international money markets pushed home the point that nations were now the object of regulation. As they began to lose political methods to manage their national economies in the face of invasive market forces, national governments witnessed concomitant erosion of the power they had managed to accumulate since the 1930s. Little by little, they have had to relinquish their authority to international organizations, to the market place, and even to local governments. The European Monetary Union can be viewed in this regard as an attempt at a new political union in response to the erosion of the power of nation states. At the same time, the way in which one Asian country after another succumbed to financial crisis in the 90s also serves to

demonstrate how nations have been weakened by the globalization of markets.

Naturally, the weakening of state power erodes their abilities to suppress potentially troublesome elements such as cultures or religions, which as a result gain new opportunities for asserting themselves. Erosion of the economic autonomy of nations and the emergence of groups challenging their authority will escalate apace through a process of mutual amplification. Accordingly, we have witnessed a dramatic increase in the number of minorities clamoring for autonomy in recent years. Moreover, governments attempting to suppress such movements through military force are increasingly likely to become the targets of international censure in the name of upholding human rights. For example, policies such as ethnic cleansing in the successive wars which plagued the former Yugoslavia resulted in military intervention by Western nations, and intervention by the UN enabled East Timor to achieve independence. Such events suggest that the international environment is now ripe for pressing home claims for democratization and independence.

However, states in the present day are also undergoing a different kind of change. Both liberalism and socialism, differing though they do in their claims, are firmly grounded in modern-day secularism. Both ideologies agree on the point that the state should play a basically secular role, and differ only in what they see to be the extent of that role. However since the end of the Cold War, we

have seen a growing number of examples where the common premise of political secularism is being called into question. The rise in Islamic, Hindu and other religious fundamentalism are typical examples. Contrary to the claims of minority groups, those fundamentalist movements are noteworthy for being grounded in universal religions. Secularism is based on the premise that a government should concern itself only with the outward behavior of people, and when a government starts to involve itself in deciding religious matters, it is bound to collide with peoples' notions of freedom. It is still difficult to judge whether religious fundamentalism is merely a self-defense response to the spread of secularism, or whether it represents a viable new choice for the world. While it has been proven time and again that religion can be a tremendously powerful tool when exploited for political ends, it is equally true that fundamentalist movements tend to be limited in their influence by their very religiosity.

III. The Future for Cultural Diversity in the 21st Century

It would be reasonable to assume that in the 21st century too, any discussion about group, regional or national diversity would be fruitless without reference to the global context. The problem is: what should one select as the central axis around which world events unfold? Presently the most prominent candidate for such a role is global capitalism, which is not only eroding existing economic

spectacles other than those produced in the West. This will of course not be easy, but it constitutes perhaps the core of 'understanding'."⁴

"A new composition for the 21st century world will likely have to be drawn by setting aside the enforcement of unilateral value systems while suppressing the biases of various theories of civilization. There is much to learn from European philosophers, such as Giovanni Battista Vico, who taught people to understand other cultures, and Johann Gottfried Herder, who emphasised the fact that each civilised world has its own richly unique way of life. Even an attempt to take a critical look at the Muslim world requires that the observer should take the stance of trying to cross the barriers of time and space in order to understand that world's principles and beliefs. The observer certainly need not agree with those principles, but he or she will not be able to deny the importance of what Herder calls understanding through

sympathy, insight, and 'emotional ingression' in an attempt to sophisticate imagination required to deal with heterogeneous ways of thinking."⁷

"The question of the polymorphism of liberalism of action has been debated for a long time. The first example was perhaps the argument of John Locke, who discussed freedom of religious action in British society after the Puritan revolution, advocating the need for 'toleration' between the various sects. In fact, freedom of belief is the argument that is easiest to draw directly from freedom of thought. But what Locke was talking about was something more than simply freedom of religious action. He was discussing something more than 'relativism' as regards religion. He affirmed that each religion is orthodox (not heretical), and that there should be 'charity, meekness, and good will in general towards all mankind, in other words, the presence of natural companionship, and that toleration stems therefrom.'

structures but also sending shock waves through the political structures of nations. I regard this as a very significant shift in the direction of history, one which may even represent a reversion.

In the 19th century the system of individual nations was based on the economic and social control exercised by the international market mechanism, but the Great Depression put an end to this system and heralded the start of the age of strong national governments. One could say that World War II and the emergence of welfare states were two sides of the same coin of strong government. Looking back on Japan's history, it financed its war with Russia by issuing government bonds on the world financial market (New York), and up until a certain date even displayed a readiness to implement domestic restructuring in order to maintain the gold standard. However when the world economic order gave way, the Japanese government realized that it need no longer be bound by the constraints of the international financial market, and could freely pursue its own policies. And compared with other countries, Japan appears to have managed to maintain a strong national government right to the end, but those days are now clearly numbered. The mechanism governing the direction of world history seems to be reverting once more to that of the 19th century.

As I hinted at earlier, global capitalism is not necessarily at odds with cultural and religious diversity or with groups asserting their distinctiveness. Particularly if these claims

are basically apolitical, or if they serve to erode the authority of the nation state, there is no reason for global capitalism to be hostile to them. In fact we see in progress a joining of forces between global capitalism and movements in support of human rights and democracy which is making it increasingly difficult for states to resort to military suppression. As a result, governments find themselves obliged to accommodate such demands through such measures as decentralization of authority or adoption of a federal system. Of course it is not admirable to see that groups asserting their identity will join forces with a national government to target global capitalism as the enemy without going against democracy and human rights. However the weaker the concept of a national economy becomes, and the more the power of national governments to influence the economy decreases, the less likelihood there is of such an outcome. In the event of the break-up of a powerful nation, global capitalism has already proven itself eminently capable of "accommodating" the claims to cultural identity of the various groups. What one finds, in fact, is that those groups that have allied themselves with a state in asserting their distinctiveness have tended to be hard hit when that state goes into decline, while those with no national affiliations have tended to flourish in such situations. In short, claims to distinctiveness are likely to be influenced differentially by the decline of nations, depending upon how closely they are affiliated to the nation concerned.

It cannot be denied that some of the Japanese equate the United States with the present global standard, and harbor more than a little mistrust and hostility towards U.S.-centered global capitalism. Such hostility is of course understandable. There is considerable nostalgia for the post-war *Belle Epoque*, and some people voice fears that Japan will lose its identity. Such arguments are however retrogressive, and smack of wishful thinking based on simplistic notions of Japanese exceptionalism. One has only to ponder the vast economic resources that Japan has squandered over the past ten years or so to realize that such arguments are indulgent. The kind of hostility and mistrust for global capitalism seen in present-day Japan is probably not particularly rare in other parts of the world, too. The immediate problem is that no amount of mistrust or hostility can do anything to replace the present global system, since, although a world of diversity awash with mistrust and hostility might be an ideal stage for "the clash of civilizations," it is not a particularly alluring prospect.

A number of important points remain to be addressed. Firstly, there is the problem of the sustainability of global capitalism. If any big structural distortions pushed the system to the limits of its powers to regulate itself, we could well see a repeat of the kind of situation faced by the world in the 1930s. Particularly over the last twenty years, the influence of the global financial market has grown considerably, and the speed and scope of market fluctuations is such that these risks are very real. Compared

Locke's concept of toleration was derived by believing in a commonality that transcends religious positions. This fact distinguishes Locke's concept of toleration from ordinary relativism. When the link provided by God at its core is lost, the philosophy of natural rights, which posits that human beings have an innate right to freedom, easily becomes a relativism with no interest in relationships with others. At present, liberalism is globally exposed to this danger. It is only 'natural companionship' among all mankind that has the capacity to save us from this danger and nothing is thus more important than mutual understanding that can cultivate this companionship. We cannot discover a just criterion for action that should be applied to the whole world."⁸

"In a sense, the assertion that human beings are the same, or should be the same, is dangerous because it can be too easily betrayed and tends to foster indifference or apathy. Our starting point should be to believe that

human beings, or societies, are different but that they have some commensurability. The key to ensuring that liberal societies continue should be mutual tolerance that differentiates itself from relativism, commensurability that differentiates itself from sharing of common identity, and the creation of a set of rules that bases itself on this perception.

This is the substance of the 'understanding' for which I have consistently argued. There may be those who perceive that this may be minimal, or unreliable. But given the present conditions, even such an understanding is difficult to obtain. It is now necessary to start out from such a minimum understanding. Adam Smith, for example, sought in 'sympathy' the way to achieve this minimum understanding. In the terms of this book, this would mean to control the impatient predilection for a single justice and universal principle, and to make an

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with the gold standard days, the financial market has become more flexible, but there is a danger of that very flexibility being used to postpone dealing with problems and allowing contradictions to accumulate. In particular, regulation of the financial markets is presently largely dependent on the U.S. government, and world financial markets are in turn very much dependent on the U.S. market. This situation gives much cause for concern, since the U.S. government will always be tempted to put U.S. interests above those of global capitalism - and we shouldn't forget that the United States itself is vulnerable, burdened as it is with a huge current account deficit. If global capitalism, shouldering as it does the responsibility for global homogeneity, should ever cease to command trust on a worldwide scale, we will be beset with the dilemma of a veritable flood of assertions of self-determination without any means in place to deal with them.

The second remaining point concerns the tension between democracy and global capitalism. The two are not necessarily at odds, but neither are they natural bedfellows. This has become clear in recent years with the rise in unemployment and growing social unrest. Insofar as it positions itself as "government for the people," democratic government cannot afford to sit on the sidelines and allow the law of the jungle, the survival of the fittest, to take over. The rush of births in recent years of moderate left-wing governments can be taken as a sign that the relationship of tension

between global capitalism and democratic government is reaching a certain equilibrium. The so-called "Third Way" does not necessarily represent a direct challenge to global capitalism, but by arguing for the need of a social sphere which is not at the mercy of global capitalism, and calling for the mobilization of "social capital" to create such a sphere, it clearly distances itself from a situation in which global capitalism dominates all aspects of human existence. Where in the past socialism attempted to modify capitalism through political means, the Third Way is attempting to do the same through more purely social means. One can interpret this in a way as an appeal for respect for cultural diversity. In the past, Karl Polanyi has argued that it is only natural for society to oppose the millstone of capitalism, and it could be that such a movement has already begun.

What I expect to see in that direction is a trend towards using respect for diversity as a means of actively restricting the dynamism of capitalism. In other words, I foresee the creation of a new set of rules for global capitalism, the purpose of which would be to provide active support for cultural diversity from the stage of liberating it from the control and suppression of state authorities. If one also considers factors such as the need to protect the natural environment, global capitalism cannot continue singing the praises of freedom forever. A point of vital importance is that, while global capitalism is not necessarily at odds with cultural diversity, it could be a

culture in itself, and moreover one which tends to force itself on its surroundings to the exclusion of other cultures. There is in fact a distinct possibility that a closer examination of its cultural aspects will lead to a heightening of tension between global capitalism and cultural diversity. Here it is important to note that this is not a problem that any single state would be capable of solving. The only way in which this problem can be tackled is to establish the rules for economic activities through international agreement, and then see that those rules are enforced. This requires democratic governments to expand their point of view from that of the single state to one encompassing the whole world, and if and when that happens, the way in which the emerging global democratic government handles the problem of diversity will certainly be the subject of careful attention. In our present position as democratic governments of single states, we are engaged in an unequal confrontation with global capitalism. The major theme of the 21st century may concern the relationship between global capitalism and global democracy, but the immediate problem is how long it will take for us to arrive at the doorstep of global democratic government. **JTI**

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*effort to seek commensurable points by means of overlapping images of diversified individuals and societies."*⁸

There are many cases in history where general cultural intolerance was deeply rooted in religious intolerance. Nonetheless, it is encouraging to see a certain epoch-making development in progress steadily though quietly which could be expected to find out a way out of the impasse with regard to this issue. That is to say, the Christian church has taken the initiative, based upon a decision made by the Second Vatican Council, to embark on dialogue with non-Christian religions, and interactions with adherents of Buddhism have been proceeding especially well. Ways of thinking that have given impetus to these interactions must have much in common with the ways of thinking discussed above.

1. Masayuki Yamauchi, *Islam and the United States (Japanese Version)*, p.321.
2. Yasusuke Murakami, *An Anticlassical Political Economy (Japanese Version)*, p.528. (*An Anticlassical Political-Economic Analysis: A Vision for the Next Century*, trans. Kozo Yamamura (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).)
3. Yamauchi, p. 80-81.
4. Murakami, pp. 472-473.
5. Murakami, p. 529
6. Yamauchi, p. 84.
7. Yamauchi, pp. 57-58.
8. Murakami, pp. 506-508.