

From the Persian Wars to the War in Iraq – The New Order in the Middle East, and Options for Japan, Seen through the Prism of History –

By Yamauchi Masayuki

“I like to read history and discover more about what the people of long ago did, because that helps me set my own goals. This is what Mencius meant by ‘relying only on the past experiential facts’.” (From *Ko-mo Yowa* [Records of Lectures on Mencius] by Yoshida Shoin, republished by Iwanami Shoten, 1999.)

“They boasted insolently of their victory, and were elated that they could commit outrages with impunity for so long. But their boasts and elation end with the same result – the immortal gods often let people who should be punished for their guilt enjoy greater prosperity and impunity for a long time, so that they will suffer even more after a reverse of circumstances.” (From *Garia Senki* [The Gallic Wars] by Gaius Julius Caesar, translated by Chikayama Kinji, republished by Iwanami Shoten, 1964.)

History as a Guide to Understanding the War in Iraq: Is War a Random Choice, or an Inevitable Tragedy?

When we look back through history we see that events often occur as if by hazard – perhaps a dictator acts on a whim, or citizens rise up in a random fit of anger. Even many of the dramatic wars waged as an extension of politics cannot be explained only through historical reasoning. The recent war in Iraq reminds one of the famous War of Jenkins’ Ear between Britain and Spain, which began by random chance in 1739. Like the Spanish regime of that time, Saddam Hussein provoked his adversary unnecessarily, and suddenly found himself in a war he was evidently not prepared for. As Professor Nakanishi Hiroshi of Kyoto University recently wrote, international politics has not been a systematic and stable ground resembling domestic politics,

and the fundamental reason of this is the “this time only” exception. I agree with this opinion. (See Nakanishi’s article, “Military Force as a Tool of International Politics,” in the September 2003 issue of *Gaiko Forum*).

To obtain a better understanding of the haphazard yet inevitable nature of the war in Iraq and the Middle East crisis in the 21st century, I will throw out a few facts from history.

The foundation for the Middle East of today was laid by the Turkish Ottoman sultan, Bajazet I (1360-1403). Bajazet’s gout changed the course of a war in a haphazard fashion. In 1396, at Nicopolis in present-day Bulgaria, his army defeated a confederate army of 100,000 Christians. Bajazet boasted that he would continue north and west to subdue Germany and Italy, then feed his horse oats on the altar of St. Peter’s in Rome. But unfortunately for him, he could not accomplish any of this because of a long and painful attack of gout. This account comes from *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, by the British historian Edward Gibbon. Gibbon claims “his progress was checked, not by the miraculous interposition of the apostles, not by a crusade of the Christian powers, but by... gout,” and that a serious pain transmitted by a single nerve in one man “may prevent or suspend the misery of nations.” But Gibbon does not mention what happened to Bajazet later. After his gout subsided, he fought the Mongol leader Timur (Tamerlane) at Ankara, to determine who would control territory in the east. Bajazet’s army was defeated, and this crafty leader, whose nickname was Thunderbolt (Yıldırım), died in a fit of anger while being taken off to prison. Thus, a random attack of gout brought him defeat in the Balkans, and his recovery led to his overreaching and

being defeated in Ankara.

The French Bourbon king, Louis XIV, suffered from hemorrhoids, and this played a large role in the outcome of France’s wars of conquest. The Sun King (*Roi-Soleil*), caught typhoid fever and had to endure two chronic ailments, gout and hemorrhoids. He was probably in pain every time he sat on the toilet, like the protagonist Tsuda Yoshio in the novel *Meian* (Light and Darkness, by Natsume Soseki). Louis’ court physician gave him laxatives on a regular basis by reason of health benefit, and in one year on record he had 212 enemas and 47 bloodlettings. It cannot be said that the absolute ruler’s chronic ailments had only coincidental consequences on history. Rather, we can assume that his excruciating pain influenced his political and military decisions. Indeed, the historian Jules Michelet separates his discussion of the reign of Louis XIV into two periods: before the king began suffering from hemorrhoids, and after. Louis’ wars of conquest continued to expand France’s territory until his hemorrhoids set in. After that, Michelet writes, France lost land, and by the time Louis died his country had shrunk almost to its previous boundaries – hardly a laughing matter.

Bajazet’s gout and Louis’ hemorrhoids may have inadvertently saved some people from a tragic war, and brought others to victory. Not all of these historic events can be put down to random chance, of course. No serious person who believes that wars are caused by socioeconomic factors or some lofty policy-making process would agree that the gout of a sultan temporarily ended an Ottoman dynasty or that the hemorrhoids of a king weakened the Bourbon dynasty. But anyone would at least agree that coincidence and chance can influence the outbreak of a war, even a war with horrible

repercussions. This view of history is supported by the Persian interpretation of events during the Persian Wars (c.500-449 B.C.).

The History of Herodotus, by Herodotus of Greece (5th century B.C.), relates episodes from the Persian Wars. He includes fictional accounts of events too fanciful to have happened, yet many parts of his *History* seem most logical, given what we know about the nature of humankind.

Here is how the Persians viewed the war that was launched against them. Alexander (also called Paris) was the son of Priam, the Phoenician king on the Persian side. He kidnapped Helenē from Sparta, Greece, and decided to make her his wife. The Phoenicians did not think this would blow up into a serious crisis – after all, they reasoned, although kidnapping a young woman was wrong, the Greeks had done the same or more in the past. Tit for tat, they said, and thought that only a fool would take up arms in revenge. Herodotus says they believed that men of sense care nothing for such women, since it is plain that without their own consent they would never be forced away. (From *Rekishī [The History of Herodotus]*, Volume I, translated by Matsudaira Chiaki, published by Iwanami Shoten, 1971. English translation borrowed in part from that of George Rawlinson.)

However, the Greeks rose up in anger, went to Troia to rescue Helenē, and destroyed Priam's kingdom. Herodotus tells us that after the Trojan War the Persians regarded the Greeks as their enemies. He says the Persians thought of Asia, "with all the various tribes of barbarians who inhabit it," as their own. Whatever we may think of this account, it is obvious that the kidnapping of Helenē and the revenge taken for this action were in some way causes of the Trojan War and the subsequent Persian Wars. At first sight, this may seem like a fanciful tale. And yet, the feelings behind the story somehow seem contemporary, even if we ignore today's gender implications.

There is a legend that Marcus Antonius (82-30 B.C.) was attracted to

Cleopatra's (69-30 B.C.) nose, and that this precipitated a chain of events that remind us of the human condition today. But his attraction may not be the logical, direct cause of the sea battle at Actium in 31 B.C. Like all other historical events, wars are caused by many factors that flow together. The recent war in Iraq is no exception. The old "Cleopatra's nose" theory will probably occupy historians far into the future, far longer than the theory of Saddam's paranoia. Antonius' attraction was only a random piece of trivia in history, and the sea battle at Actium, which began as a drama illustrating the human condition and led to Octavianus (63 B.C.-14 A.D.) being made emperor of Rome, has elements that cannot be put down to random chance. The same is true for Saddam's Iran-Iraq War, the use of poison gas at Halabja, and the subsequent Gulf War. When viewed alone, these events from the recent and distant past could be seen as random happenstance, but when seen as part of the flow of history they can be explained as logical causes of subsequent events, whether it be the founding of the Roman Empire or the fall of Saddam Hussein's dictatorship.

One day, biographers may discover some secret chronic ailment or psychological obsession that afflicted President George W. Bush or Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. If they do, their discovery could change the historical perspective on the war in Iraq. Certainly, any person who suffers from the same type of ailment would have an extreme interest in such biographers' account of the war.

Interpreting the War in Iraq through History: The Importance of Seeing through the Prism of History

In *Shiji* (Records of a Grand Historian), the Chinese historian Sima Qian (c.145-86 B.C.) quotes this famous aphorism of Confucius: "Rather than engage in idle talk, it is better to look closely at actions."

Here we can take "idle talk" to mean the abstract spoken word, and "actions" to refer to specific deeds. Any discus-

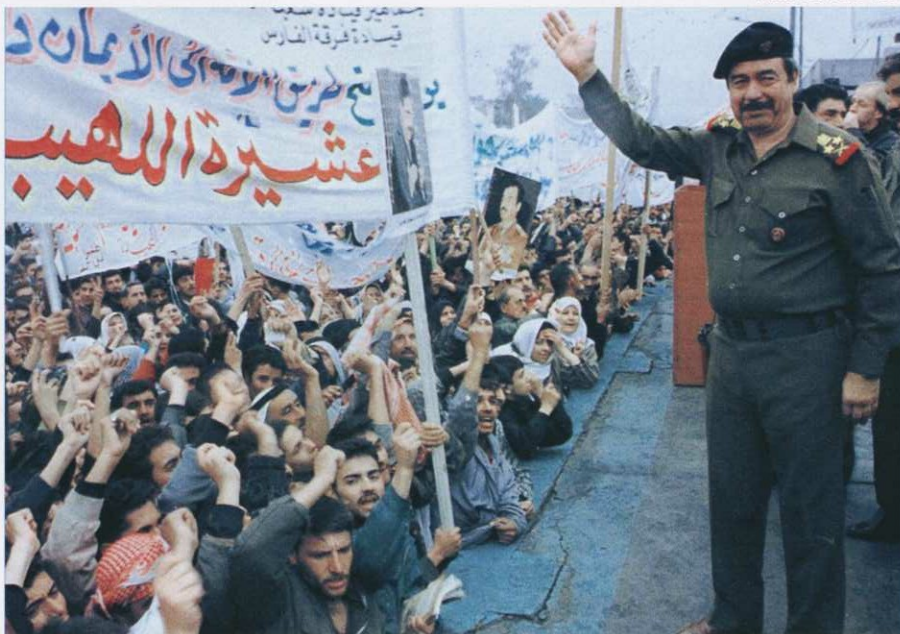
Photo : World Photo Service / Paris: Musée du Louvre



The fact that Louis XIV suffered from hemorrhoids played a large role in the outcome of France's wars of conquest

sion on the causes and meaning of the war in Iraq should be based not on abstract, unsubstantiated statements or philosophical concepts, but on efforts to determine real facts, as seen in the actual historical actions of people involved in the war. This approach is more convincing, it is far more certain, and it leads to an understanding that is not open to doubt. Vain speculation has been indulged in not only by Japanese commentators and scholars but by theorists in the West as well, such as Jean Baudrillard of France and the late Edward Said of the United States. Such people, perhaps because they are held down by philosophical concepts and rhetoric – such as that found in Aristotle's *Poetics*, "The difference between the historian and the poet is ... that the one relates actual events, the other the kinds of things that might occur" – pay too little attention to time and the concrete facts of history. Some people may feel that analyzing different aspects of the international situation, which is basically "poetry" (philosophy), is far more glorious than learning from history, because they mistakenly believe a philosophical interpretation will lead to general knowledge and "universal truth." The position taken by the French President Jacques Chirac and his Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin just before the war in Iraq depended too much on philosophy, showed no concern for Iraq or the historic role being played by Saddam Hussein. They should have followed

Photo: REUTERS • SUN



Saddam Hussein provoked his adversary unnecessarily, and suddenly found himself in a war he was evidently not prepared for

Confucius' maxim, "Look closely at actions."

Aristotle's term "poets" basically refers to philosophers. In Japan around the time of the political and revolutionary crisis of the dying days of the Tokugawa Shogunate, one important question was, is it better to study the thought of Confucius, or study history? The study of Confucianism basically involved interpreting the *Five "Confucian" Classics* and other sacred writings, and exploring metaphysical principles, tasks similar to the study of philosophy today. This argument was part of a fascinating debate between Yoshida Shoin (1830-1859) and his mentor, Sakuma Shozan (1811-1864). Sakuma favored the study of Confucianism and exhorted his pupil to carefully read *The Analects of Confucius*. Yoshida countered with, "It is better to read history and discover more about the wisdom and glorious deeds of the past, because that stimulates people more." Sakuma rejected this, saying it would lead to error, and that any discussion on the "correct way" should not emphasize history, but should be based simply on Confucianism.

Even so, throughout his life Yoshida used history as his guide when considering such questions as the human condition and the causes of the political crises he was caught up in. This is evi-

dent from his maxim I quoted at the beginning of this article. He was swept up in the Ansei Purge (1858-1860) and thrown in prison. From his cell in Hagi (Yamaguchi Prefecture), he wrote to his older brother, "I cannot abandon my belief that we can gain a lot by examining history." He also quoted similar aphorisms from Confucius; "It is not idle talk that makes history, but actions," and Mencius; "Concentrate only on the wise truth of the past." In this regard, he was following principles expounded by Sima Qian and Chang Hsüeh-ch'eng (Qing [Manchu] dynasty period). (Extracts from a letter to his brother Sugi Umetaro, early 1855, in *A Collection of Letters by Yoshida Shoin*)

In other words, Yoshida feared that if his contemporaries depended too much on the study of Confucianism (i.e., philosophy), when attempting to defuse the current crisis, the result would be only abstract conjecture and a loss of realism. His message, when applied to today, is: knowledge of history and a sense of realism are essential in order to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the causes of the war in Iraq and the situation in the Middle East.

History and the Causes of the War in Iraq: Stated Reasons, and Reasons That Could Not Be Stated

The Iraqi situation is developing fur-

ther and further into a quagmire, as is evident from the difficulty of dealing with suicide bombings and terrorism. Debate will most likely continue to swirl over just why war was waged in Iraq.

In *Comment on écrit l'histoire* (Writing History), the French scholar of ancient history Paul Veyne introduces retrodiction as a way to "predict" backwards into the past, to determine what the past would have looked like. How can a historian accurately explain why a given event occurred in the past? The answer lies in determining the degrees of probability of each of the various causes of the event. Questions regarding the war in Iraq, indeed all questions of a historical nature that do not involve criticism or commentary, can be explained through retrodiction, which establishes cause and effect. Anyone can understand that Saddam's refusal to turn over weapons of mass destruction (WMD) could be considered a reason to go to war. But if he had such weapons, why did he not turn them over? Or, did he think he would gain an advantage by keeping the issue ambiguous? If the implications behind these questions are correct, could it be said that the question of the WMD has no relevance as a justification for war, and that the war itself cannot be justified? This is a question that can only be answered in the political domain.

Because Saddam did not learn from the moral to the story of the War of Jenkins' Ear, he put his own finger on the trigger for war. But why did the United States feel it had to initiate war? What was the real reason? Why was war the inevitable result? These are questions that can be asked outside of the political domain. People who completely deny the inevitability of a war, or a justification for a war, do not truly understand the historical realities of the Middle East, especially those of Iraq. They may be compared to the Pyrrhonist skeptics of the 16th century. The ancient Greek philosopher Pyrrhōn said there was no objective truth in history, but modern skeptics cannot suspend judgment on everything – they cannot adhere to the beliefs of Noam

Chomsky, who gives the impression that only the United States is wrong and that we need merely hope for tranquility in our own heart.

Thomas Friedman lists four reasons for the war in Iraq. Let's use the retro-diction process to examine the question.

Friedman's four reasons are: (1) the "stated reason," which was the notion that Saddam had WMD; (2) the "real reason," which was the desire of the United States to take revenge on terrorists and those who supported terrorism; (3) the "right reason," an idealistic one, which was to build a progressive Arab regime and a decent Iraq that would serve as a model for others; and (4) the "moral reason," which was to overthrow Saddam's dictatorial regime.

According to Friedman, the "real reason" – the need to hit countries and people in the Arab-Muslim world that were supporting terrorism – was never stated. He says that after the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks the United States "needed" to hit someone or a country in the Arab-Muslim world that was supporting terrorism. It is true that the "terrorism bubble," which had built up in Afghanistan, posed a real threat to the open societies of the West. Some preachers in Arab and other Muslim countries had been raising those who practiced terrorism up to the status of martyr, and charities were legally collecting donations for surviving relatives of those "martyrs." Indeed, among some Muslim extremists there was a feeling that suicide bombings would establish a balance between the Arab world and the power of the United States – that while the United States, as a free and open society, detests the idea of sacrificing oneself in revenge, some Arab activists are prepared to die. Friedman wrote that, because of the logic behind the "real reason" for the war, the only way to render the terrorism bubble ineffective was for American soldiers, both men and women, to go into the heart of the Arab-Muslim world and show that the United States was fully determined to protect its open society.

This explanation is quite persuasive. But we cannot forget that the notion of

fighting a war without casualties was first developed in the United States. This cautious approach is far different from the support Russian voters gave to the idea of Russians sacrificing their lives in the Chechen Republic. It is my personal view that, although other possible countries that could have been chosen for a showdown included Iran, Saudi Arabia and Syria, Saddam's Iraq was chosen mainly because of its involvement in the Gulf War. That war had not been completely terminated. It is true that Saddam lost that war, but he survived politically and was able to carry his regime into the 21st century. This fact, coupled with the fact that Bush the father was forced to leave the political stage after losing a democratic election, was something that Bush the son could not tolerate. Probably the second President Bush, unlike some experts and media personnel in Japan, was not at all perturbed by the fantasy of the universal noble cause of Arab nationalism. He realized, as Samuel Huntington rightly says in *The Clash of Civilizations*, that the Islamic world has no "core state," no key nation state that is the center of Islamic civilization, no major power with a predominance in population, industrial strength, or military might. This means that the various Arab states will not unite in opposition to the United States. As far as this point is concerned, Bush was basically correct. He accurately saw that the Arab countries would be too coldly egotistical and realistic to come forward and reconstruct postwar Iraq, offer humanitarian assistance, and maintain security there.

The 12th century Arab historian, Ibn al-Athir al-Jazāri, wrote that Palestinians escaped to safety in Baghdad after the Crusaders attacked. Once there, they entered a mosque and brazenly ate a meal before sundown, during the month of the Ramadan fast. The local Iraqis were infuriated that they were breaking a sacred commandment. The Palestinians replied that the Iraqis had shown no interest in the horrors that were occurring in Jerusalem, and had offered no assistance – so why should they work themselves into such a fren-

zy when seeing their fellow Arabs eating? This candid reply reflects the disunity among Arabs today. In their fight against the Crusaders, the Palestinians were joined by forces under the Kurd Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn (Saladin), the Turk 'Imād al-Dīn Zangī, and the latter's son, Nūr al-Dīn. These men, too, had to endure the jealousies, antagonisms and other symptoms of internal divisions among the Muslims. The Arab disunity of those days, reminiscent of the divisions among them today, is characterized as dancing on the palm of the hand of Israel by Karen Armstrong, in *Holy War: The Crusades and Their Impact on Today's World*.

In our own time, Saddam Hussein responded to the strong feelings of the Arab street by providing housing to Palestinian immigrants in Iraq, and sending money to the families of terrorist "martyrs" in Palestine. Postwar Iraqis have not forgotten how their ruler Hussein hypocritically perverted Arab nationalism and ignored their need for a return to stability and prosperity. The Palestinians have lost the homes they received from Hussein, but the average Iraqi probably feels that this was a natural turn of events, more natural than the indifference and callousness shown to unfortunate Iraqis by Arab countries in the past and today.

Although the war in Iraq did not directly inflict damage on other Arab countries, Iran, Pakistan or elsewhere, it was still a great shock to them. It showed the people of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Syria and elsewhere in the region that they do not have the physical means or know-how to resist the United States. One could also say it showed, indirectly, that even the people of Israel feel powerless against the United States. Israel has often demonstrated the military impotence of the Arab countries, and now the war in Iraq has given a lesson to Arab countries – that nations at an inferior level of development, held back by distorted social and political systems, have extremely weak attack systems and even weak defense systems. Saddam brought upon himself a modern version of the War of Jenkins' Ear, proving that

bluffs and provocation will simply anger a powerful antagonist, and that the bluffer, especially one that is weak militarily, needs to take steps to avoid an inopportune war. The governments of all neighboring Arab countries have certainly understood the American message.¹ And it is not through coincidence that the Palestinian government has made changes (see below), that Syria has softened its stance, and that Saudi Arabia now exhibits considerable unease.

The French historian Emmanuel Todd has stated with a great deal of irony that the Arab world was an ideal place for the United States to take reprisals and make a show of force. This may be so, as may be his statement that victory there was as easy as playing a video game. (See Todd's *Après l'Empire* [After the Empire]). But I must include another of his observations – the American military establishment has taken its defeat in Vietnam to heart and believes that U.S. ground troops are incapable of victory, and that the only kind of war the United States can wage effectively is one in which the enemy has no defenses against air attack.

His observations may be a little extreme. And yet, they seem to be accurate when we consider how the use of force, even to eliminate a hated and dangerous regime such as Saddam's, has led to considerable tension and division in Iraq, with tremendous post-war costs. Results include a difficulty in maintaining order there, and hostility and attacks against the United States, unlike its experience in Japan and West Germany when those countries were being reconstructed after the war. If the United States continues resorting to force and its pre-emptive strike doctrine, there is a possibility it will eventually wear down the American people, disrupt society and upset the economy. The United States risks tasting a Pyrrhic victory – winning on the battlefield as the forces of King Pyrrhus did in 279 B.C., only to incur greater damage to themselves and lose more than they gained through victory. I expressed such a possibility at the

Vienna Conference on Japan's Cooperation with the Middle East. (See also "Pyruos no Shori" [A Pyrrhic Victory], in the evening edition of the newspaper *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, Sept. 4, 2003.)

Let us examine once more Friedman's "right reason" for the war in Iraq – that the implicit motive of the United States was to build a progressive Arab regime. Actually, this explanation focuses on a result of the war, not a reason for it. If we take the retrodiction approach, we come to the conclusion that such a motive would not justify sacrificing young American men and women in a war. As Friedman says, the real WMD threatening the United States were never Saddam's missiles – the real weapons are angry, humiliated young Arabs and Muslims, the enfants terribles born from the ruinous policies and corruption of failed or failing Arab states. Because their hatred of the United States is stronger than their love of life, many young Arabs and other Muslims turn to terrorism and revenge. Building a democratic Iraq as a model for others, and solving the Palestinian conflict in order to change Palestine into a democratic Arab nation living in peace with Israel, are both necessary steps for defusing the ideas of mass destruction. It is those ideas that are the real threat to the United States. But this idealistic reason for the war – furthering the cause of democracy – was based on thinking that was too metaphysical for people to accept.

The "moral reason," as suggested by Friedman to justify the war, was that Saddam's dictatorial regime had to be overthrown because it was an engine of mass destruction and genocide that had killed many of his own people and had invaded neighboring countries. The American administration did not announce this openly as a war aim, but there can be no doubt that it was a motive – a motive that could not be stated publicly. But if WMD were the "stated reason" (as Friedman calls it) to justify the war, why could the other three reasons – the "real," "moral" and "right" (idealistic) reasons – not be mentioned? The answer is probably

that they were too ideological to have won the agreement and support of people in Japan, Europe and elsewhere. The American government believed that the idea of preventing Iraq from possessing and proliferating WMD would continue to bring it international sympathy in the post-Sept. 11 era, and that this stated reason would be considered valid enough to transform the broad coalition against terrorism into a coalition against Iraq.

It is worth recording that, as part of the broad sweep of history, Saddam did not pose a threat to the United States, did not have ties to Al Qaeda, and could possibly have been ignored. If the United States and Britain deceived their way into war – an issue currently under debate – this would have been wrong. Novelists are free to have their characters do stupid things, but in a democracy not only historians but politicians as well must respect facts and try to interpret events correctly. Investigations should continue to examine whether Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair were aware of the true facts and acted appropriately. Retrodiction leads us to the conclusion that if Bush had launched the war after candidly giving the "right reason" and the "moral reason," he might have withstood any future historical scrutiny.

At any rate, the war is now over. "History is past politics; politics is current history," says a historian of Japan's Meiji period, Yamaji Aizan. Now that we know more about the catastrophes and destruction caused by Saddam's regime, it seems apparent that focusing obsessively on whether the WMD existed and why they have not been found risk preventing a more balanced historical interpretation of events. Those who overemphasize the importance of what, exactly, was said and written, or who see only the small streams of history – the insignificant factors and petty motives – miss seeing the great river of history which is formed by a multitude of small factors coming together. We need to examine the entire picture to gain a proper understanding of history. What was the actual situation in Iraq under Saddam

and the Baath Party? How much did the Iraqis suffer under that regime? Why did Arab nationalists and those who followed them sing his praises and call him the hero of the Arabs? In a collection of essays called *Genshi Shiroku*, the Confucian scholar Sato Issai (1772-1859) writes, "The past leads to the present, then to a future we can experience vividly. The past and the future are both part of history." Understanding this will lead to a true knowledge of history.

Japan and New Options for the Middle East: An Argument for Dialogue and Interaction

At this moment in history, when the postwar situation in Iraq occupies the attention of Japan and other countries, Palestine is undergoing a quiet regime change of its own – the recently installed Prime Minister, Mahmoud Abbas, was setting a course different from that of Chairman Yasser Arafat, who is soft on terrorism. This change represents a bloodless coup d'état. From whatever perspective one takes, one can only say Arafat has lost much of his authority. Since the Palestinian government has been reformed, even European and Arab countries that once supported Arafat have distanced themselves from him. Financial affairs and security, which were his responsibility, have been entrusted to the new cabinet, and this can be regarded as a step toward democracy in the Arab world. Arafat has not been kicked out of the stronghold of authority, but he has been pushed upstairs, out of the way.

We cannot underestimate the significance of these developments. Just before initiating war against Iraq, the United States released its road map for peace in the Middle East, in the expectation that Palestine could play a positive role as a reformed Arab state, and that it could coexist peacefully with Israel. The road leading in this direction is not smooth. But Egypt, Jordan and the Gulf states are basically on friendly terms with the United States, and if reforms in Iraq, Lebanon and Palestine lead to autonomous rule and

liberalized markets, these three Arab countries could also transform themselves into a beachhead of support for the new Middle East order envisioned by the United States. However, for this to occur the U.S.-led road map must succeed, and this success depends on the following conditions: (1) international opinion and the governments of the various countries involved must support Abbas' efforts to prevent terrorism by Hamas and other militants; (2) the Israeli government must refrain from retaliation aimed at curbing terrorism, so that Abbas can set about curbing it effectively himself; and (3) the United States must apply pressure on Israel to refrain from retaliation and remove not only illegal settlements but also walls and fences that separate it from the Palestinians.

For its part, Japan has a responsibility to persuade Israel (and the United States as well) that: (1) unless they promote the development of a new Palestinian leadership, with Abbas at its head, Israel will not be guaranteed security over the long term; (2) unless they obtain the trust of Arabs in the region, a comprehensive peace in the Middle East will not be attainable; and (3) unless Palestine and Israel establish a stable relationship with each other, American efforts to promote democracy in Iraq and a new Middle East order will probably founder. Japan must also do what it can to persuade the Palestinian Authority (and all other Arab countries) that: (1) within the territory controlled by the Palestinian Authority, the activities of armed groups other than those of the government and police cannot be permitted, and indiscriminate suicide bombing should be treated as a domestic crime; (2) Arafat must respect the fact that much of his authority has been ceded to Abbas, and must support him with all his power; and (3) they must accept the fact that all future Japanese support for the reconstruction and development of Palestine will be provided through the office of the Prime Minister.

Of course, we cannot expect that democracy will blossom in Palestine and Iraq overnight. It is difficult to

transform a political mindset and social consciousness that has been distorted by many years of dictatorship. Japan and the West must trust the Iraqi and Palestinian reformers and their supporters, while respecting their determination to eliminate terrorism and oppression. It is also essential that other Arab countries quickly democratize their political and economic systems. The Arab people should accept the end of the "age of Arab nationalism," an age in which faltering democratic reforms, economic stagnation and political instability were all considered to be the fault of the West and Israel. The Arab Human Development Report, issued under the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) by Arab experts in 2002, calls for greater political freedoms, an expansion of the role of women and efforts to address the knowledge gap. The Report should be followed by the people and governments of Arab states as they move toward democratization.

If the United States is serious about bringing freedom and democracy to Iraq, it should limit the role of its occupying force, try to accomplish those goals as soon as possible, and leave immediately after. Those efforts will only meet with success if the United States encourages the full establishment of a reliable Iraqi government, and ensures that the Iraqis themselves gain control over their security and bring stability to their social infrastructure. The democratization of Iraq will be difficult because the Iraqis do not have the democratic and parliamentary roots of the post-war Japanese and Germans – the early 20th century experiences of the Taisho Democracy movement, and the Weimar Republic. To ensure the blossoming of a democracy for the Iraqis, by the Iraqis and of the Iraqis, Iraqi politicians imbued with national self-respect and a tolerance for all religions must be nurtured and permitted to stand for election. The United States needs to create conditions that foster the development of a modern program of democratization in Iraq and political parties that will cooperate with the United States and promote the program.

These goals will not be achieved unless the extreme policies of the “neo-cons” (neo-conservatives) are removed from Middle Eastern politics, or if Arab progressives are seen as pawns of American imperialism. If the Israeli-Palestinian conflict continues, pro-American Iraqis striving for democracy will probably be seen as minions of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel. This would wipe out the growing desire for democracy in Iraq, kill similar desires in other Arab states, and turn the Middle East peace process toward further tragedy. These conditions, unfortunately, are part of political reality in the Arab world.

To prevent this dark scenario from happening, the United States must abandon its double standard – total hostility toward the Palestinian intifada and toleration for the expansion of Israeli settlements – and must look more sympathetically on efforts to improve the sanitary and environmental conditions of the Palestinians. The United States has already had some success in swaying Israel. Bush’s road map for peace in the Middle East has been welcomed by the Arab people and can serve as a springboard for democracy in the region. One worrisome aspect of the war in Iraq was the apathetic and despairing attitude of the Arab people. Against this backdrop, Palestinian suicide bombers – the ultimate symbol of despair – continued to strike. To end the cycle of apathy and despair, all parties must recognize that the people of Iraq and Palestine cannot enjoy dignity unless their countries are reborn as independent states. It is the responsibility and obligation of the United States and Israel to ensure that this happens.

When Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi Jun-ichiro visited the United States a while ago, he succeeded in persuading Bush to announce at a press conference the latest news – that Israel had accepted the road map for peace in the Middle East. During his subsequent visits to Egypt and Saudi Arabia, Koizumi persuaded the leaders of both countries to do their best to eliminate Palestinian terrorism. In those two

countries, agreement was reached on support for the road map that had been endorsed in principle by both Israel and Palestine. If Iraq rebuilds and peace is achieved in the Middle East, the breeding grounds for terrorism will be undermined. This goal can be promoted through programs such as the medical support envisioned under the agreement between Japan and Egypt to encourage South-South cooperation.

During Koizumi’s visit to the Middle East, Japan and the two Arab countries agreed to establish a “Dialogue Forum.” The Forum represents an attempt to foster trust among different parts of the world, and is designed to help eliminate terrorism over the mid to long term. Like the United States, Japan is calling strenuously for the eradication of terrorism, but Japan should take a different approach, for example, with regard to overpopulation. The worldview of the U.S. government and the values of the American people often conflict with those of the Arab-Muslim world, and taking a Christian approach when addressing population problems will not work. The gap between birthrates in developed and developing countries has tended to narrow recently, but even so the situation in some parts of the world is challenging. In 1981, the number of children per woman of childbearing age was 1.8 in both the United States and Japan. In 2001 it was 2.1 in the United States, 1.3 in Japan. On the other hand, the 2001 rate in other parts of the world was: Syria, 4.1; Egypt, 3.5; Iraq, 5.3; Pakistan, 5.6; Saudi Arabia, 5.7; and Afghanistan and Mauritania, 6.0. A number of sub-Saharan Muslim countries registered above 7.0. Greater support is needed for public awareness campaigns in developing countries, in order to boost their literacy rates and improve health and sanitation. Raising literacy levels and lowering the birthrate are the minimum steps required to resolve the problem of underemployment and end the culture of hate. The Japanese people are basically free from religious beliefs and concepts that could get in the way of

such public awareness campaigns, and have much to contribute in this regard.

In addition to offering development assistance, Japan can promote a comprehensive program that encourages international dialogue and mutual trust. Actually, Japan is already doing so. One example is the Seminar on the “Dialogue among Civilizations” for scholars, to be held in October in Tokyo (the second meeting). Another is the Japan-Arab Dialogue Forum held in early September in Tokyo (the first meeting). The September meeting was chaired by Hashimoto Ryutaro, a former Prime Minister of Japan, and offered much potential in the way of track two (unofficial) diplomacy. Participants came from the political, financial and academic spheres. In addition, the Japanese government sent a Mission to the Middle East for Cultural Exchange and Dialogue in late September, to Saudi Arabia, Iran, Syria and Egypt. The basic goal of exchange and dialogue is to gain a proper awareness of history and an accurate understanding of facts. As Michel de Montaigne said in one of his *Essais*, history is a record portraying various aspects of the human condition and the many events that threaten human beings. We need dialogue and interaction to understand the inner complexities of people we want to know more about, and to learn the essence and various elements of truth. JTI

Note

1. Friedman claims “98 % of terrorism is about what governments let happen.”

* This article was written in early September before the resignation of Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas.

Yamauchi Masayuki is a professor at the Graduate School of Arts and Science at the University of Tokyo (Komaba). He specializes in studies of the Middle East and the history of international relations.